

Eastern European Baptist History: New Perspectives



Edited by
Sharyl Corrado and Toivo Pilli

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International Baptist Theological Seminary
of the European Baptist Federation. o.p.s.
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Søren Carstensen and John P. Pitt

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Preface

During the past fifteen to twenty years, following the collapse of Communism, considerable research has been undertaken in the field of free church history in Eastern Europe, a subject matter which was almost impossible to explore impartially during the Soviet years. Presently a new generation of scholars focusing on this topic is emerging. As to – more specifically – Evangelical Christian and Baptist history and identity, scholars from the Baptist Theological Seminary in Odessa, as well as St Petersburg Christian University and other institutions in the former Soviet Union, have begun the important work of collecting sources, analysing this material and publishing the results.

In addition to *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* [History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR], published in Moscow in 1989, valuable material has been published in Russian in recent years by Marina Karetnikova, Sergei Savinskii, Iurii Reshetnikov, Sergei Sannikov and others. The Euro-Asian Accrediting Association has undertaken an important project of transferring primary sources on Slavic Baptists onto a series of CDs. Significant books and articles have been published in English by scholars from Eastern Europe and the West, also covering some areas beyond Russian or Ukrainian-speaking Eastern Europe, such as the Baltics or the former Yugoslavia. As to the history of Baptists in the former Soviet Union, volumes by Walter Sawatsky and Michael Bourdeaux remain classics. However, a considerable number of books in this field have recently been published in Germany, both in Russian and in German.

In this growing interest in the Eastern European Baptist story, the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic, has played a significant role. Since the mid-1990s, the Baptist and Anabaptist Studies Department has counted as one of its main research aims to support and encourage the writing of local Baptist histories, especially in

the regions of continental Europe where this research was hindered for so long due to political and atheistic pressures. Some results of these recent research efforts have been published in the *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, as well as other publications, written both by the academic team and students of IBTS. More of this quality of research is available in the IBTS library in the form of student dissertations.

This volume is based on papers delivered at the conference “Baptist Histories in Eastern Europe”, which took place 25-29 May 2005 on the IBTS campus in Prague. As the papers in this volume demonstrate, conference attendees and presenters discussed the impact of the socio-political background on Eastern European Baptist life, as well as Baptist theological distinctives. As different cultural contexts have shaped Baptist churches in different countries, the conference deliberately had a plural form for its title: “Baptist histories”. Every generation needs to rewrite its history and the same events need to be analysed from different angles. In addition, Baptist history in Eastern Europe is a mosaic. Many stories together form a wider picture. The conference in Prague offered an opportunity for historians to meet, exchange ideas and learn more about recent research in Eastern European Baptist history.

It is certainly impossible for one conference sufficiently to cover the wide range of Baptist “stories” in Eastern Europe. The majority of papers at the May 2005 conference dealt with issues related to Baptist history and identity in Russia or Ukraine, which reflects where the focus of Baptist historical research in Eastern Europe can be found today. However, it also reminds researchers that more can be done regarding other regions, such as Romania, Hungary, or other areas of the former socialist bloc. It is often the case that research has been done in the local language and is not yet available for a wider audience in English, Russian or German. Hopefully this volume will encourage Baptist historians in Eastern Europe to “go the extra mile” and continue publishing their valuable research results for an international audience.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship for their help in providing travel scholarships for several participants from Eastern Europe. Without the participation of these colleagues, the conference would have lacked an important contribution. Warm words of thankfulness should also be given to IBTS for providing both financial and human resources which made this conference and the present volume possible.

Toivo Pilli

Introduction: In Search of an East European Baptist Identity

Sharyl Corrado

What does it mean to be Baptist? How do Baptists differ from those of other confessions or faiths? How does the Baptist tradition in Eastern and Central Europe relate to what is called by that name in other parts of the world? How have Baptists historically understood themselves as part of the state and society in which they lived? The fall of Communism and subsequent dramatic growth of religions and religiosity in what had been officially atheist lands left long-time Baptists as well as new converts struggling with their identity. Ambiguity ensued as Baptists of the formerly Communist lands strove to claim their place in the community of Baptists worldwide, while maintaining a historical and cultural distinctiveness. Both secular institutions and seminaries, within and outside the post-Soviet lands, have begun to support research into such crucial questions, which the opening of state and private archives has made possible at a deeper level than previously undertaken. Yet such opportunities leave historians, guardians of the collective memory of generations past, with a deep responsibility before God and the communities of faith.

The May 2005 conference, "Baptist Histories in Eastern Europe", hosted by the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic, provided a place in which junior and senior scholars working on Baptist and evangelical history could meet, share ideas and resources, and discuss the implications of their work. The wide diversity of participants, including researchers of multiple generations, academic backgrounds, denomina-

tions, and East European and Western nations, challenged participants to look beyond their own fields of expertise, to identify historical patterns and broader trends, and to consider new or unfamiliar approaches. With the English-language publication of these papers, the rich work begun on various aspects of Baptist and Evangelical history is made available to an international audience, with the hopes of stimulating depth and breadth of research in years to come.

Attentive readers will note a number of key themes common to many of the articles in this volume, the unintentional recurrence of which makes it possible to identify experiences shared by East European Baptists and Evangelicals throughout the regions. At the same time, authors with knowledge of national or local sources, inaccessible to most researchers for linguistic or practical reasons, make clear the diversity of experiences of those who share the name *Baptist* today.

Especially evident in the majority of articles in this volume is the international cooperation and influence among the worldwide Baptist family. While political or practical considerations have often led to the production of purely national histories, these papers make clear that the true picture is multi-national, that Baptist identity transcends ethnic, geographic and political boundaries. The German roots of the Baptist faith in the Russian Empire, including Russia, Ukraine and Poland, are clearly identified in papers by Gregory Nichols, Johannes Dyck and Zbigniew Wierzchowski. Interaction with British evangelicalism is highlighted as well by Nichols and Sharyl Corrado, primarily in St Petersburg, and by Ian Randall, who traces the involvement of the Evangelical Alliance with Eastern Europe and the Russian Empire, in particular advocating for religious liberty. Yet the influence was not merely one-way, with Western ideas moving eastward. Davorin Peterlin, in a case study of his own grandmother, demonstrates the significant role of Russians in the Baptist Church in Yugoslavia, while Wierzchowski notes the influence of Russians and Ukrainians in Poland. Dyck and Nichols make note briefly of Russian Baptist leaders serving in Romania, Poland and Bulgaria, while Valdis Tēraudkalns explores the political positions of Latvian Baptist communities in North and South America. Further research will be necessary to tell these stories in full.

While the advent of Communism complicated the situation for Baptists – and other religious bodies – in Eastern Europe, international connections, while hindered, did not end. Michael Bourdeaux notes the role of Western advocacy on behalf of persecuted Baptists in the Soviet Union, much of which he himself initiated as founder of Keston College in 1969.

Toivo Pilli also acknowledges support in Estonia from Finnish and German believers. When the Soviet period ended, international support in terms of both funds and personnel initially poured into the formerly Communist lands, and then was gradually withdrawn. Walter Sawatsky and Mary Raber tell stories of Western cooperation with Russian and Ukrainian Baptists, as well as local and national responses as international aid diminished. While each state has its own past, its own heritage, and its own cultural distinctives, the significance of Baptists historically as an international, rather than national, community cannot be denied. This emphasis at an international conference at an international seminary demonstrates this to the present day.

Another recurring theme is that of cross-denominational influence on the historical Baptist movements in Eastern Europe. While it is natural to self-define in terms of difference from those around you, papers in this volume demonstrate that the Baptist heritage must include, rather than exclude, other branches of the Christian faith. Johannes Dyck's detailed analysis of the formation of at first an informal, and later formal Baptist structure in South Russia (now Ukraine) demonstrates the significant influence of German Pietism in the egalitarian governance of early congregations. Early Russian and Ukrainian Baptists, he notes, in addition shared much with neighbouring Mennonite congregations, although the Russian Orthodox background of the majority of early converts left its mark as well. Dyck details the development of what became a Baptist structure, a story continued by Sawatsky, who examines the workings of national Baptist unions throughout perestroika and the dissolution of the USSR. Gregory Nichols develops the theme of non-Baptist influence in his discussion of Ivan Kargel, often considered the first Russian Baptist theologian, whose spiritual pilgrimage nonetheless included ministry among the Mennonite Brethren, training among the German Baptists, and funding by members of the Victorian Holiness movement. Nichols also notes the Russian Orthodox and Molokan influence in early Baptist churches in the Caucasus. Sharyl Corrado focuses on the interdenominational heritage of the Pashkovites in St Petersburg, a group that later joined the Baptists, but in its early years emphasised revival and unity among Orthodox, Lutheran, and Congregationalist participants under the Holiness teaching of English Evangelical Lord Radstock. Walter Sawatsky brings the story up to the present with his analysis of friction – as well as cooperation – in the post-Soviet period among those formerly united.

Perhaps in part due to sources recently made available – as well as the

fact that it remains an issue of contention – another topic receiving special attention is the interaction of Baptists and evangelical believers with both the state and the predominant or national churches. While certain experiences were shared by Baptists throughout Eastern Europe, church-state relations varied according to time and place. The antagonism of the Russian Orthodox Church toward evangelicals in the Russian Empire plays a role in the papers of Randall, Dyck, Nichols and Corrado, while Soviet oppression sets the stage for Konstantin Prokhorov, Aleksandr Negrov/Tat'iana Nikol'skaia, Michael Bourdeaux and Toivo Pilli. In Catholic lands, however, Baptists faced different issues, hinted at in works by Peterlin and Wierzchowski, and certainly deserving of further exploration. The influence of the predominant Lutheran Church in Estonia and Latvia was not a primary focus of Tēraudkalns or Pilli, yet attentive readers will note conspicuous divergence from the patterns described in primarily Orthodox and Catholic lands.

During the Soviet period, literature in the West, as well as samizdat publications, tended to focus on the limitations and persecution faced by Baptists in Soviet-bloc countries. Individual believers – about whom few details were available – were often viewed as larger-than-life heroes whose great faith had been strengthened through suffering. Recent research, however, has presented a more complex picture. While persecution by the Soviet regime indeed took place, Bourdeaux and Pilli demonstrate that believers were not simply passive victims. Bourdeaux describes the open protests of Russia's unregistered Baptists in the 1960s as Russia's first democratic movement – indicating a savvy manipulation of the situation, rather than passive acceptance, as they demanded what they held to be their rights under the Soviet constitution. Pilli describes the relationships of the registered Baptist church in Estonia with Soviet authorities as bordering on mutual respect, in which Baptists strategically navigated the system, often preferring informal methods of resistance, while the Council for Religious Affairs turned a blind eye toward certain church activities. Meanwhile, Konstantin Prokhorov and Valdis Tēraudkalns boldly investigate the initial acceptance by Baptists of communist ideas and the early collaboration of some evangelicals with the regime. Prokhorov notes that the early years of the Soviet regime were “golden years” for Russian Baptists, whose significant growth was at times at the expense of the persecuted Orthodox Church, and some of whom enthusiastically endorsed a “Christian Communism”. Tēraudkalns observes that Christianity is not inherently opposed to communist ideas *per se*, with numerous Christian leaders in Latvia and

elsewhere historically supporting aspects of the communist cause.

Certain topics, however, remain to be investigated in future research. While the number of women, in virtually all accounts, equalled or surpassed that of men in most Baptist congregations, their historical role remains little explored. Of the authors in this volume, only Davorin Peterlin focuses explicitly on a Baptist woman (his grandmother), including her involvement with the Baptist Women's Association in Yugoslavia. While he provides fascinating data – and hopefully his sources will be opened to future researchers for further analysis – he does not draw conclusions concerning the roles or experiences of Baptist women overall. Likewise, women make up many of the leading figures in the papers of Mary Raber and Sharyl Corrado, both on evangelical social and compassion ministries, yet neither paper examines them as women explicitly, focusing instead on the ministries in which they happened to participate. As those who made official decisions and left written records have often been men, research on women's roles in Baptist history will be a special challenge requiring diligence in seeking out sources beyond the official records, such as the personal correspondence, photographs and oral histories used by Peterlin. Nonetheless, such research is necessary in order to tell the Baptist story in its fullness.

Certain other avenues of research remain underexplored also, yet will certainly prove crucial in the development of East European Baptist history. While scholars regularly examine the relationship between Baptists and the state, only recently have scholars begun to explore the image of Baptists in society. Perhaps the paper that provoked the most discussion in Prague was that of Aleksandr Negrov and Tat'iana Nikol'skaia, who explore the image of Baptists in the Soviet period as a symbol of a foreign and dangerous sectarianism, a stereotype which endures to this day. They note, however, that such negative attitudes coexisted with a positive image of Baptists as hardworking and faithful. How does Baptist self-identification correspond to the identity bestowed upon them by a secular society, and how should Baptists respond to such misrepresentations and stereotypes? What can be learned about the goals and fears of society by examining its attitude toward Baptists? As such stereotypes remain powerful in much of the formerly Communist world, exploration of their origins and influence are vital.

Another aspect of Baptist life that remains unexplored, likely due in part to a dearth of sources, is the area of personal experience of the faith. While theologians have emphasised Baptist doctrine and prescribed rituals of the faith, often emphasising the conversion experience, little research has

been done on what personal spirituality actually entailed, or how Baptists themselves experienced their faith. How did they make sense of the rituals and teachings given to them? How did they understand their relationship to the God, the local church body, and to their society? Several papers, including those of Corrado, Wierzchowski and Raber, make special note of how evangelical teaching was reflected in people's lives, particularly in the areas of personal morality and social responsibility, yet little research has been done to explore the nature of that connection. Pilli and Wierzchowski acknowledge the emotional appeal of worship and prayer during certain periods, yet do not investigate further the emotional experiences of Baptists or the role of emotion in creating a shared Baptist identity. Sources, of course, are one difficulty, yet the emerging collections of memoirs (now often published), correspondence, and oral histories provide a beginning for such work.

Finally, an approach conspicuously lacking in this volume is the comparative. While the variety of nations and time periods represented, from the 1840s to the present, Siberia to Yugoslavia, allow readers to make comparisons themselves over time and place, scholars as yet seem to have avoided such analysis. This is perhaps no surprise, as successful comparison assumes detailed knowledge of histories and languages of multiple time periods or nations, and often requires extensive travel, which can be expensive and time-consuming. Nonetheless, comparative research is an essential component in the delineation of national and international Baptist identities, especially given the international influences in the Baptist faith throughout Europe acknowledged by so many scholars in this volume. Hopefully institutions such as IBTS, with its international student body, can help facilitate such research.

French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, in his seminal work, *The Collective Memory*, noted that with the emergence of a written history, social or collective memory tends to disappear.¹ Written accounts by professionals replace the pasted together memories, oft-repeated myths, and colourful tales repeated orally among families and friends. Well-researched lectures by seminary-trained historians and theologians, rather than anecdotal accounts, now tell the Baptist story to the next generation, and books, journals and denominational archives serve as repositories in which the past is preserved. While such developments are laudable for their role in creating a

¹ See Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 78-87.

history that is scholarly and accessible, as well as systematically preserving critical oral and written sources, with them comes a heavy responsibility. Those writing history and developing archives have become the stewards of the past. It is our responsibility to our historical subjects to avoid demonising or heroising them – treating protagonists and antagonists alike with respect – and to seek to understand them, portraying their stories with sensitivity and as much accuracy as sources allow. Likewise, it is our responsibility to future generations to report the results of our research honestly, acknowledging weaknesses as well as strengths, sin alongside saintliness, such that our audience can relate to, identify with, and learn from past generations. While the complete picture will never be truly known this side of eternity, we are privileged to share in piecing together the puzzle which makes visible the working of God in His people called Baptists throughout the generations.

Eastern European Baptists and the Evangelical Alliance, 1846–1896

Ian M. Randall

In 1850 Johann Gerhard Oncken wrote from Hamburg to inform members of the Evangelical Alliance, especially members in Britain, of evangelistic endeavours by Baptists across many parts of Europe, including Poland, Hungary, Prussia and several Baltic towns and cities, such as Memel (now Klaipeda, Lithuania). He spoke in standard evangelical language of “great success”, with hundreds of conversions taking place and Baptists distributing about fifty thousand copies of the Bible and 1.5 million tracts in two years. Here was classic evangelical conversionism, biblicism and activism. A number of British Evangelical Alliance leaders, most of whom were not Baptists, wrote in support of Oncken’s ministry in Germany and beyond.¹ Oncken’s Baptist work in Hamburg began in 1834, a decade after his own evangelical conversion in a Methodist church in London. Oncken, often referred to as the “father of continental Baptists”,² was one of the founding members of the Evangelical Alliance, which had been formed in London in 1846. Continental European Baptist life, including Baptist life in Eastern Europe, had strong links with the Evangelical Alliance. I will seek to examine those links during the first fifty years of the life of the Alliance, from 1846 to 1896, exploring what they meant for Eastern European Baptists.

¹ *Evangelical Christendom* [Hereafter EC], vol. 4 (1850), p. 364.

² J.H. Rushbrooke, *The Baptist Movement in the Continent of Europe* (London: Carey Kingsgate Press, 1923), p. 76.

Laying Foundations

The formation of the Evangelical Alliance in 1846 was a result of forces that had been encouraging evangelical unity over several decades. Edward Bickersteth, an Anglican leader central in the founding of the Alliance, was involved in pan-denominational bodies that brought Anglicans, Wesleyans and Baptists together in joint evangelical endeavour. Of the 922 people who signed as attendees at the founding conference of the Alliance, 84% came from Britain, over 8% from the United States and of the remaining 7% most were from continental European countries. In his contribution to the 1846 conference, Oncken made a speech encouraging steps that would broaden the worldview of British Christians, especially relating to Europe, where their knowledge was, he asserted, “sadly deficient”.³ His contribution paralleled presentations by Adolphe Monod, a French professor of theology, and Friedrich August Tholuck, professor at Halle University in Germany.⁴ The real tension at the founding conference was between the British and the Americans – principally over holding slaves. The British representatives, including Baptist leaders such as James Howard Hinton, joint Secretary of the Baptist Union, insisted that slave owners could not be members of the Alliance. American delegates, well aware that many evangelicals in the southern states had slaves, disagreed. Hopes for a worldwide Alliance proved unrealisable, and so national branches were formed. In the period 1846–1896 the British Evangelical Alliance had a major influence within the worldwide evangelical network and Baptists such as Oncken wished to foster that evangelical identity.⁵

A year after the founding of the Alliance, the monthly journal of the British Alliance, *Evangelical Christendom*, reported on the growth of the Baptists in Hamburg, suggesting that like the Hebrews in Egypt, the more they faced opposition, the more they grew.⁶ A number of Lutheran members of the Evangelical Alliance in Germany, however, were unsympathetic to the Baptists. In September 1847, Sir Culling Eardley, a Congregationalist who chaired the London inaugural meetings, warned the British Alliance’s Executive Council about this, commenting that many “Lutheran brethren”

³ *Report of the Proceedings of the Conference held at Freemasons’ Hall, London, From August 19th to September 2nd Inclusive, 1846* (London: Partridge and Oakley, 1847), p. 242.

⁴ N.M. Railton, *No North Sea: The Anglo-German Evangelical Network in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. xvi–xviii.

⁵ I. Randall and D. Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2001), chapter 3.

⁶ *EC*, vol. 1 (September 1847), p. 276.

in the region of Bavaria were proving “exclusive in their sentiments”.⁷ The problem of bad relationships between Lutherans and Baptists would continue. Political changes in Germany in 1848 produced legislation that technically removed most of the restrictions on the work of the Baptists, but difficulties persisted.⁸ One German state prohibited a small Baptist community from observing the Lord’s Supper and barred their pastor from home visitation. This prompted the British Alliance to appeal to the German Minister of the Interior, and a degree of liberty was then granted.⁹

Edward Steane, who was joint Secretary (with Hinton) of the Baptist Union, was the first Honorary Secretary of the British Alliance and was editor of *Evangelical Christendom*. He was part of a delegation to the German Lutheran Church in 1853 to plead the Baptist cause.¹⁰ Steane told a meeting of the British Alliance’s Executive Council in 1853 that German Baptists continued to be imprisoned for their convictions and reported that two British Members of Parliament, Arthur Kinnaird and Morton Peto, both well known evangelicals (Peto was a Baptist), had called on the British Foreign Minister, Lord Clarendon, to intervene. Some progress had been made in Prussia, and it was suggested that the openness exhibited by Frederick William IV, the King of Prussia, might be presented as an example. The Executive Council of the Alliance was involved in seeking religious freedom in many countries and this commitment would prove important in Eastern Europe. The Council stated:

The Council...place on record their deep sense of obligation to his Majesty the King of Prussia for the personal interest which he has manifested in the wrongs endured by his subjects who have suffered from the operation of intolerant laws, and the enlightened and liberal views by which he has guided the recent measures of his government in relation

⁷ “Statement Laid on the Table by Sir Culling Eardley Respecting the Continent, September 29th 1847”, in *Evangelical Alliance Executive Council Minutes*, 29 September 1847. The *Evangelical Alliance Executive Council Minutes* are held at the *Evangelical Alliance* offices, Whitefield House, 186 Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4BT, UK. The minutes are referred to hereafter as *Executive Council Minutes*.

⁸ *EC*, vol. 4 (1850), p. 364.

⁹ J.W. Ewing, *Goodly Fellowship: A Centenary Tribute to the Life and Work of the World’s Evangelical Alliance, 1846–1946* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1946), p. 63.

¹⁰ J.H. Rushbrooke, *The Baptist Movement in the Continent of Europe*, p. 39; J.H.Y. Briggs, *The English Baptists of the Nineteenth Century* (Didcot: Baptist Historical Society, 1994), pp. 227–34 for Steane, other English Baptists and the Alliance.

to this subject. They offer their Christian congratulations to their brethren of the Baptist denomination on the new liberty they have acquired in that kingdom.¹¹

There was, however, a reaction. In 1854, a year later, August von Bethmann-Hollweg, who was Vice-President of the Second Chamber of the Prussian Parliament and President of the Lutheran Church's *Kirchentag*, wrote to the Swiss evangelical leader, Jean Henri Merle d'Aubigné, to complain that the German Baptists were "turning away from the great Church [the Lutheran Church], for the most part, persons who are already awakened...to unite them into little sectarian flocks". Taking Old Testament strictures against religious plurality as his guide, Bethmann-Hollweg argued *against* religious freedom. Sir Culling Eardley, for the British Alliance, publicly opposed this restriction of religious liberty. Eardley's information was that most converts to Baptist churches were drawn "not from the Church, but from the world".¹² Eardley was convinced that his position should be the Evangelical Alliance's official position. Given the strong opposition they faced in Germany, however, Baptists there needed British evangelical support.

Eventually, after months of negotiation and with help from Eardley and from Friedrich Wilhelm Krummacher, the court preacher in Berlin, German Baptist representatives secured an interview in 1855 with the King of Prussia. The interview was reported in detail in *Evangelical Christendom*. The Baptist representatives were Oncken, Gottfried W. Lehmann from Berlin, Julius Köbner and C. Schaufler. The King assured them that he opposed all religious discrimination. He then enquired how many Baptist chapels there were in Prussia. "Three or four, your Majesty", was the reply. "No more?", the king asked. Then came a typically optimistic Baptist reply: "The erection of several others is contemplated". The King also asked why Baptists did not join with the Mennonites. Lehmann said that they had made overtures, but the Mennonites were wary. Since Mennonites were losing members to the Baptists, this was not surprising. Oncken added that Mennonites baptised their children indiscriminately at the age of fourteen to sixteen, whereas Baptists required evidence of faith in Christ. Also Baptists baptised by immersion, not pouring. Finally, Oncken emphasised, Baptists, unlike Mennonites, did not refuse to take oaths or

¹¹ Executive Council Minutes, 11 May 1853.

¹² *EC*, vol. 9 (1855), pp. 49-52.

perform military service. The king (who may not have been interested in finer points about baptism) was happy to hear this last point. He seems to have had sympathy for Baptists, having taken advice from Christian Karl Josias Bunsen, his ambassador in London, and had representations from Daniel Barnard, the American envoy. The king promised to take action about persecution – something “so foreign to my conviction”. But Oncken, writing to Edward Steane, had no faith that the king’s wishes would prevail, as leading Lutherans wanted to impede Baptist progress.¹³ Oncken felt the need for continued wider evangelical support.

Throughout the 1850s and the early 1860s the issue of liberty for Baptists and other groups in Prussia and across Eastern Europe remained an important one for the British Evangelical Alliance. Meanwhile the German Evangelical Alliance continued to experience severe tensions. It was alleged from the Lutheran side that Baptists accused evangelicals in the Lutheran Church of “infidelity”. Baptists, for their part, said that false accusations were being made about them. All of this weakened the German Alliance and made it difficult for other Alliances to know whom to support.¹⁴ At the same time there was increasing interest in European evangelical progress further east. At an international Alliance conference held in 1857 in Germany there were reports from Protestants in Hungary, Bohemia and Russia.¹⁵ James Blackwood, a well-known Anglican clergyman, writing in *Evangelical Christendom* in 1857, called for new evangelical enterprise in Bulgaria. The New Testament had been translated into Bulgarian and sales were extensive. American missionaries were becoming involved, and Blackwood suggested that money raised in Britain to support work in Bulgaria should go to the Baptist minister Edward Steane.¹⁶ Baptists were active pan-evangelically across Europe.

The area that was attracting growing Evangelical Alliance interest, indeed fascination, was Russia. *Evangelical Christendom* had no correspondent in Russia until the 1860s, but it did receive some reports. For example, a missionary with the Basle Mission, Mr Roth, met a member of the Russian Molokan community in 1848, and they discussed the second advent

¹³ *EC*, vol. 9 (1855), pp. 83-86.

¹⁴ *EC*, vol. 16 (September 1862), pp. 447-448.

¹⁵ E. Steane (ed), *The Religious Condition of Christendom, Third Part: Exhibited in a Series of Papers Prepared at the Instance of the German Branch of the Evangelical Alliance and Read at the Conference Held in Berlin, 1857* (London: Office of the Evangelical Alliance, 1859).

¹⁶ T. Nestorova, *American Missionaries Among the Bulgarians, 1858-1912* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1987), p. 8; *EC*, vol. 11 (February 1857), pp. 63-65 for appeal by Blackwood.

of Christ, including the ideas of the Lutheran scholar Johann Albrecht Bengel, which were evidently known by Molokans.¹⁷ Interest in Russian spiritual movements such as the Molokans continued. German links also provided a window on Russia. From 1861 a group of evangelicals, mainly Germans, who were interested in mission, began to meet in St Petersburg every Monday evening for prayer, reading devotional books and hearing missionary reports. Collections were taken for the Basle Mission and other German missions, including the Moravians. Although the group members were mainly Germans, there were also some Russians. One member attended an Evangelical Alliance conference in Geneva in 1861 and this stimulated the group to join in the annual international concert of prayer organised by Evangelical Alliances during the first week in January each year.¹⁸ St Petersburg became a place of interest for the British Evangelical Alliance, and this link would be significant as the Baptist movement developed in Russia.

Building Baptist Networks

From 1863 there was much more awareness within Evangelical Alliance circles of the situation of Baptists in Eastern Europe. James Henry Millard, who was now joint Secretary with Hinton of the Baptist Union, placed information before the Council of the Evangelical Alliance in November 1863 about severe persecution of Baptists in the Baltic countries and in Poland. Baptists were seeking support from fellow evangelicals. The Foreign Secretary of the Alliance protested to the Russian ambassador in London and asked for the protest to be passed to the Tsar, Alexander II, who was widely known as a reforming leader. By January 1864 *Evangelical Christendom* could report that one Baptist, Brother Gaertner, who had been imprisoned, had been freed. A letter from Pastor Ferdinand Niemetz from Memel, which was by far the largest Baptist church in the Baltic region, said that the local governor had given orders that Gaertner should be released. The governor pronounced: "You can go to your house and pray there... It would be a disgrace to the Czar that pious people should have to go and worship in the woods". Gaertner went home and a few days later he baptised sixteen people by immersion – a baptism that took place "before many witnesses".¹⁹

¹⁷ EC, vol. 2 (1848), p. 186.

¹⁸ EC, vol. 17 (March 1863), p. 128.

The same issue of *Evangelical Christendom* reported that Gottfried Alf, the leader of the Baptists in Poland, had been taken prisoner by the authorities. This case was also reported to the Russian ambassador by the British Alliance. The first Baptist church in Poland was formed in a village near Warsaw, in the Russian part of Poland (the former Congress Poland), in 1861. Gottfried Alf, who was a German, a village teacher, and a member of the Lutheran Church, had earlier been baptised (in 1858) as part of a group of nine people who were converted through the work of German Baptists. Russian police began to look out for such baptismal services and on occasions arrested all who were at such events.²⁰ In 1864 *Evangelical Christendom* reported that members of the Baptist community in Poland, which then numbered four to five hundred, were leaving Poland for their own safety, migrating to western Ukraine.²¹ In several issues of *Evangelical Christendom* in 1864 there were reports of Baptists being persecuted, but also of significant Baptist growth in Saxony, Poland and Russia. On behalf of the Baptist communities that were suffering persecution, J.H. Millard expressed thanks for the support being given by the Evangelical Alliance.²²

At this point Baptist churches in Russian territories were largely German speaking. Oncken went to St Petersburg in 1864, stayed five weeks and baptised eight people from the German-speaking evangelical community.²³ He also had an interview with a Count Sievers, representing the Russian Ministry of the Interior, who made it clear to Oncken that no converts to Baptist beliefs from the Orthodox Church would be allowed.²⁴ At that stage the German mission was in any case concentrating on Germans rather than on Slavic people. In response to Sievers, Oncken stressed Baptist belief in

¹⁹ *EC*, vol. 18 (January 1864), p. 51; cf. R.S. Latimer, *Under Three Tsars: Liberty of Conscience in Russia, 1856–1909* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1909), pp. 89–90. For the church in Memel see Rūta Lysenkaitė, “Baptist Beginnings in the Baltic Countries: The Case of the Church in Memel” (unpublished MTh essay, International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, 2002).

²⁰ *EC*, vol. 18 (January 1864), p. 51; M.S. Lesik, “The Baptists in Poland”, *The Baptist Quarterly* [hereafter *BQ*], vol. 7 (April 1934), p. 81.

²¹ *EC*, vol. 18 (January 1864), p. 51; cf. A.W. Wardin, “Baptist Growth in Congress Poland”, *BQ*, vol. 39, no. 6 (2002), p. 298.

²² *EC*, vol. 18 (March 1864), p. 134; April 1864, p. 208.

²³ C.T. Byford, *The Soul of Russia* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1914), pp. 341–342.

²⁴ C.T. Byford, “The Movement in Russia”, in J.H. Rushbrooke (ed) *The Baptist Movement in the Continent of Europe: A Contribution to Modern History* (London: Carey Press, 1915), p. 74.

faith in Christ and did not place emphasis on believer's baptism. He told Count Sievers that the object of Baptists was to "win souls to Christ" and that Baptists preached a message about Christ's death "among the millions throughout Europe, who have rejected all revealed truth and who form a most dangerous element to all good governments".²⁵ This stress by Oncken on his commitment to general evangelical distinctives and to social stability was not quite the full truth, since Oncken's more radical aim was the setting up of Baptist churches across Europe.²⁶

The concentration on mission to Germans was to change. Martin Kalweit, a German born into a Lutheran family in Lithuania, who had been baptised as a believer in 1858 by a Prussian Baptist, settled in Tiflis (now Tbilisi, Georgia) in 1862, and became known within the evangelical circle in the city. Through a Bible colporteur, Kalweit met a Russian merchant, Nikita Voronin, a Molokan who was studying the question of baptism. After talking to Kalweit, Voronin became convinced about the truth of believer's baptism. Under cover of darkness, on 20 August 1867, Kalweit baptised Voronin in a mill creek on the Kura River in the Caucasus, near Tiflis.²⁷ Other baptisms of Russians followed in the later 1860s and early 1870s, with Baptist life drawing to a considerable extent from the German Stundists, who were concentrated primarily in Ukraine. Their origins lay in the practices of some German Mennonites and Lutherans who held weekly hours (*Stunde*) of Bible study and testimony. As was the case elsewhere in Europe, Baptists drew from existing movements.²⁸ Many people from a Russian peasant background became Baptists, reflecting to some extent the new freedom of Russian peasants, who had been emancipated in 1861 by Alexander II.

Links between British evangelical leaders and Russia were strengthened through the work of a prominent British evangelical, Granville Waldegrave – Lord Radstock. In 1868 he spoke about the evangelical faith to

²⁵ J.H. Cooke, *Johann Gerhard Oncken: His Life and Work* (London: S.W. Partridge, 1908), pp. 146-148.

²⁶ See I.M. Randall, "'Every Apostolic Church a Mission Society': European Baptist Origins and Identity", in A. R. Cross (ed), *Ecumenism and History: Studies in Honour of John H.Y. Briggs* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), pp. 281-301.

²⁷ W. Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 27-33.

²⁸ I.M. Randall, "'Pious Wishes': Baptists and wider renewal movements in nineteenth-century Europe", *BQ*, vol. 38, no. 7 (2000), pp. 325-6; cf. P.D. Steeves, "The Russian Baptist Union, 1917-1935: Evangelical Awakening in Russia" (PhD Dissertation, University of Kansas, Lawrence, 1976).

several members of the Russian aristocracy who were in Paris.²⁹ Radstock spoke fluent French. These contacts led to Radstock visiting St Petersburg several times and through his preaching several wealthy and influential figures became evangelicals, notably Count Aleksei P. Bobrinskii, at one time Russian Minister of Transportation, Count Modest M. Korff and Colonel Vasilii A. Pashkov.³⁰ Others from England who spoke at the meetings included George Müller, famous for his orphan homes in Bristol.³¹ British-Russian evangelical links were strong. There was growing concern about the prohibition on members of the Orthodox Church leaving that Church. This concern emanated not only from evangelicals, since some Russian aristocrats wanted to become Roman Catholics.³² There were also tensions between Russians and the German-speaking minority in Russia. Against this background, a high level Evangelical Alliance delegation met in 1871 with Prince Aleksandr M. Gorchakov, Chancellor of the Russian Empire, to discuss freedom of belief. There were nine leaders from America, including Philip Schaff, the main speaker, six from Switzerland, four from Sweden, four from Germany and others from Denmark, Holland, Belgium and Hungary. The biggest delegation, ten, was from Britain, and included Baptists such as Steane, by then Secretary of the Alliance.³³ *Evangelical Christendom* commented that Schaff was given the job of speaking because “between the Absolutism of Russia and the Republic of America there has been a certain kind of sympathy”.³⁴

The plea for religious liberty appeared to fall largely on deaf ears. The Prince insisted that there was religious liberty in Russia, except that no one who was a member of the Orthodox Church could leave it. He also told the visitors that their high level delegation could not be seen by the Tsar as this would seem to be the Tsar giving in to international pressure and he could not appear to be doing that.³⁵ Technically, the mission by the Alliance failed. However, in the course of the next year there was an order from the Tsar to relax religious laws in the Western part of the Empire.

²⁹ A. Trotter, *Lord Radstock: An Interpretation and a Record* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, [1914]), pp. 178-187.

³⁰ Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, pp. 188-200; J.H. Rushbrooke, *The Baptist Movement in the Continent of Europe*, pp. 138-139.

³¹ Latimer, *Under Three Tsars*, p. 75.

³² There were over two million Protestants in Russia, mainly Lutherans and Mennonites, and about the same number of Roman Catholics.

³³ *EC*, vol. 25 (August 1871), pp. 243-245.

³⁴ *EC*, vol. 25 (September 1871), pp. 255-257.

³⁵ *EC*, vol. 25 (August 1871), pp. 243-245.

There was some improvement for Baptists in parts of Lithuania and other Baltic regions. American Alliance literature certainly claimed the visit to Europe a success.³⁶ The Mennonites had particular problems in this period because obligatory military service was introduced in Russia. This issue was brought to the attention of the British Evangelical Alliance, but support of pacifists was not a priority for the Alliance.³⁷ From the mid-1870s it was the Baptists, usually seen in British reports as part of the Stundist movement, who received most support from the Evangelical Alliance in Britain.

Support was, however, given by the Evangelical Alliance to other groups across Eastern Europe, and some of these connections would prove valuable to Baptists. In Estonia the Moravian community received assistance, the contact in Britain being Bishop Alexander Hassé of the Moravian Church, who was a supporter of the Alliance.³⁸ There was interest in the early 1870s in evangelical activity in Hungary, Serbia, Croatia and Bulgaria. A report on a group called the Nazarenes, mainly Hungarian and Serbian speakers, noted that members of this rapidly growing group based their beliefs on the Bible and were being persecuted. They practised the baptism of believers. In some areas they had a meeting in almost every village.³⁹ Heinrich Meyer, the Baptist leader in Hungary, met Bible colporteur Adolf Hempt, a member of the Nazarenes, and in 1875 Hempt invited Meyer to visit a small group of Nazarenes in Novi Sad. A number of these Nazarenes, including Hempt, were baptised in November 1875 and were drawn into Baptist life.⁴⁰ In 1873 *Evangelical Christendom* also reported on church planting in Bulgaria. There was a plea for an evangelical training institution operating in the Bulgarian language. There was one college, Robert College, in Constantinople, but it was using English.⁴¹ In 1869, after a visit by Oncken, a Baptist church had been formed in Katalui (Cataloi), a German colony in Bulgaria. The Baptist work in the early 1870s had strong connections with British and Foreign Bible Society colporteurs in Bulgaria.⁴² In

³⁶ P.D. Jordan, *The Evangelical Alliance for the United States of America, 1847-1900: Ecumenism, Identity and the Religion of the Republic* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1982), pp. 115-116.

³⁷ *EC*, vol. 26 (June 1872), pp. 190-191.

³⁸ *EC*, vol. 23 (March 1869), p. 104.

³⁹ *EC*, vol. 21 (February 1867), p. 91; *EC*, vol. 27 (March 1873), pp. 95-96.

⁴⁰ J.D. Hopper, "A History of Baptists in Yugoslavia, 1862-1962" (PhD dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, 1977), p. 18.

⁴¹ *EC*, vol. 27 (July 1873), pp. 196-199.

⁴² A.W. Wardin, "The Baptists in Bulgaria", *BQ*, vol. 34, no. 4 (1991), pp. 148-149; T. Oprenov, "A Critical Account of Baptist Origins and Early Development in Bulgaria" (unpublished MTh essay, International Baptist Theological Seminary, Prague, 2002), p. 5.

many cases Baptists emerged from existing evangelical communities with which the Evangelical Alliance had contact.

Progress and Pressure

During the period from the early 1870s to the early 1880s, Baptists in Eastern Europe experienced significant progress, but were also subject to considerable persecution. The frequent visits to Eastern Europe of Lord Radstock and also of Friedrich W. Baedeker meant that Eastern European events were reported in England. Radstock had extended ministry in St Petersburg, and Baedeker, a German who had been converted in England in 1866 through Radstock, moved to St Petersburg and lived there for three years from 1877. German Baptists also continued to send information to the British Evangelical Alliance. In 1873 Edward Steane brought to the Executive Council of the British Evangelical Alliance a report received from the German Baptists about “acts of cruel persecution of Baptist Christians in the South of Russia”. Several had been imprisoned. The Foreign Secretary of the British Alliance, Hermann Schmettau, had been in correspondence with G.W. Lehmann, the Baptist pastor in Berlin. The Alliance set up a committee of enquiry to ensure that “reliable information can be furnished as to the alleged facts”.⁴³ A year later a detailed report from Odessa spoke of “Baptists and Bible-readers”, including women, being imprisoned, fined and beaten (sometimes naked) with whips and rods. In one village twelve men and four women were tied to the Orthodox church railings and people entering the church were ordered to spit in their faces. Near Kiev four women, one aged seventy, and four men, received twenty-five lashes with a whip. They had been robbed of their clothes and the contents of their homes. The author of the report (his name was not given) had himself been arrested and had presented his case to the Russian Minister of the Interior. He hoped the Evangelical Alliance could offer help.⁴⁴

By the mid-1870s the spread of evangelical beliefs in Prussia, Poland and southern Russia was common knowledge to many in British Evangelical Alliance circles. An *Evangelical Christendom* report spoke about meetings Lord Radstock was holding which were attracting the “elite of the Russian aristocracy”, with some “enabled to obtain joy and peace through believing”.⁴⁵ An international Alliance Conference in New York in

⁴³ Executive Council Minutes, 12 May 1873.

⁴⁴ EC, vol. 28 (April 1874), pp. 112-114.

⁴⁵ EC, Vol. 28 (July 1874), pp. 201-203.

1873 considered the pressures faced by Baptists and other evangelicals in Russia and a memorandum was presented to Baron d'Offenberg, a member of the Russian government, about the case of twelve Baptists arrested in Kiev. Baron de Rosen, a close friend of the Tsar, became involved, and told the American Evangelical Alliance in 1874 that he had advocated the cause of Baptists with the Governor-General of Kiev, Prince Aleksandr Dondonkov-Korsakov. All were released except one, Jerome Balaban, who was in Odessa. It is clear that the Russian government felt that the religious problems were being exaggerated by German Mennonites who had emigrated to America to avoid military service.⁴⁶ *Evangelical Christendom*, wanting to present a balanced picture, reported that one man who joined the "Stundists" and destroyed his icons was brought before the local magistrate by the Orthodox priest, but the magistrate dismissed the case. General Eduard Totleben, a Protestant, was sent by the Tsar to South Russia to assess the overall religious situation. The movements in St Petersburg and in South Russia were both widely seen as exhibiting a desire for "ecclesiastical reform" in Russia.⁴⁷

Progress seemed to have been made when a Russian Imperial decree was issued in 1879 allowing some liberty of worship for Baptists, Moravians and Mennonites. Ivan (Johann) Kargel, who had been serving as a Baptist minister in Poland, became minister of the German-speaking Baptist church in St Petersburg. Baptists developed four language-specific churches in St Petersburg – German, Estonian, Lettish and Swedish.⁴⁸ In becoming pastor, Kargel was required at a public ceremony to take an oath of fidelity to the emperor. Within Orthodox Church circles such an oath involved kissing the holy cross and the holy gospel. The procedure for Baptists was not clear to the officials present. In response to their instructions to kiss the cross, Kargel replied that he had no cross. Then, the officials sighed, kiss the gospel. Kargel explained that this, too, was not done by Baptists. The officials clearly gave up at that point and simply insisted that he sign a document and pledge to report any heresies that appeared among the Baptist communities.⁴⁹ Since the whole Baptist movement was a heresy in the eyes of some Orthodox Church leaders, it is not quite clear what was

⁴⁶ Letters of Prince Dondonkov-Korsakov to Baron de Rosen, 9 April 1874; Baron Andrew Rosen to Edward Young, Washington, 15 April 1874; printed in *EC*, vol. 28 (August 1874), pp. 234-237.

⁴⁷ *EC*, vol. 28 (July 1874), pp. 201-203.

⁴⁸ R.S. Latimer, *With Christ in Russia* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), p. 40.

⁴⁹ Latimer, *Under Three Tsars*, pp. 99-100.

expected of Kargel, but at this stage he signed.

Although there was much commonality between the evangelical thinking brought from England by Radstock and Baedeker and the emerging Russian Baptist movement, the thinking was not identical. The Brethren movement, with which Radstock was associated, advocated a form of church life in which there was no ordained leadership. The Pashkovite meetings (as they were called) to some extent mirrored this view. Those Russians affected by Radstock and other evangelicals in this period did not leave the Orthodox Church. The visiting evangelicals had little interest in existing ecclesiastical structures: Writer Feodor Dostoevsky, who attended one of Radstock's meetings, found Radstock ignorant of Orthodoxy.⁵⁰ Baedeker took a similar theological line to Radstock. This largely non-denominational outlook was later to produce the Evangelical Christians in Russia. After Baedeker's conversion in 1866, when in his forties, he was introduced by Radstock to the latter's contacts on the continent. From 1877 to 1880 Baedeker and his wife lived in Russia, and during that time and for years afterwards he was the British Evangelical Alliance's main Russian contact. He had a remarkable preaching ministry in prisons across Russia, his travels taking him across Siberia.⁵¹ Baptists such as Kargel, who had trained under Oncken, became more aware of wider evangelical thought through the connections forged by English evangelicals such as Baedeker. Kargel illustrates something of the tensions between Baptists and the Evangelical Christians.

The hopes in the late 1870s for a lessening of the pressure on Baptists and other evangelicals in Russia were soon dashed. In the early 1880s Colonel Vasilii Pashkov, who with his wife and family had been at the centre of the meetings in St Petersburg, was told to leave the country.⁵² *Evangelical Christendom* reported that a number of the evangelicals among the aristocracy in St Petersburg were leaving to avoid persecution. The view from the Alliance was that it was important not to give in to the pressure, but to resist. The Alliance expressed great sympathy with the poor people among the Stundists, who could not go abroad, but had to suffer a fresh wave of imprisonment and exile.⁵³ Many were exiled to Siberia. Others went to

⁵⁰ F.M. Dostoevsky, *The Diary of a Writer* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1949), vol. 1, pp. 267-269.

⁵¹ R.S. Latimer, *Dr. Baedeker and his Apostolic Work in Russia* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1907).

⁵² *EC*, vol. 34 (July 1880), pp. 207-208.

⁵³ *EC*, vol. 34 (August 1880), pp. 248-249.

Armenia, and the Evangelical Alliance featured many articles about the situation of evangelicals in Armenia. In 1875, for example, the British Alliance's Executive Council received a report from a minister who met with evangelicals in Erevan. He was fascinated when they told him about the influence of a book by the English Congregationalist, Philip Doddridge, *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*.⁵⁴ By the early 1880s, some in Evangelical Alliance circles held that the most significant spiritual developments were taking place among the ranks of the poor believers, particularly in southern Russia, rather than the elite of St Petersburg. St Petersburg was described as foreign Russia, Moscow as stagnant Russia, and the south as the future – the emphasis being on a spiritual future.⁵⁵

By the 1880s, however, believers in all parts of Russia and in several other parts of Eastern Europe had entered a new era of repression. When Tsar Alexander II was assassinated by a Nihilist bomb in 1881, the government intensified its control. Baptists were among those who mourned the assassination. An account of the tsar's memorial service was sent to British evangelicals by Pastor Ziehl, minister of the Baptist church in Cholossna, in the Volsk province (now Ukraine). Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, he wrote: "We Baptists have especially experienced the goodwill of the late Emperor; inasmuch as his laws protected our work in a manner which calls for the heartiest thanks, now and for ever, of the Baptists of Russia. I may say truly that at the Memorial Service there was not a dry eye amongst us."⁵⁶ Some Baptists were inclined to blame local officials and the Orthodox Church, rather than the Tsar, for the pressures they faced. Under the new Tsar, Alexander III, the situation for Baptists would become considerably worse.

Arms Stretched Out

The intensified persecution of Russian Baptists that took place from the early 1880s was led by the chair of the Orthodox Church Holy Synod, Konstantin Pobedonostsev. Evangelicals from St Petersburg, the Caucasus and South Russia came together for a conference in 1884 but it was almost immediately suppressed.⁵⁷ The British Evangelical Alliance became even

⁵⁴ *EC*, vol. 29 (October 1875), pp. 313-315.

⁵⁵ *EC*, vol. 36 (November 1882), pp. 332-333.

⁵⁶ Latimer, *Under Three Tsars*, pp. 121-124.

⁵⁷ I.S. Prokhanoff, *In the Cauldron of Russia, 1869-1933* (New York: All-Russian Evangelical Christian Union, 1933), pp. 55-56.

more deeply involved, as Robert Sloan Latimer put it: "It was the arm of the Alliance that was stretched out to keep above water the heads of the Stundists, when for years they were reduced to destitution by the floods of persecution, into which they were driven by Pobedonostsev and his agents". Baedeker was central in this ministry, bringing money, sharing news and speaking to the authorities. Through Baedeker and others, the British Alliance was seen as "a friend in need".⁵⁸ Although by this time there was a tradition of British Alliance leaders making their views known to authorities, in the 1880s many Russian believers felt that public representations from outside to the Russian government made matters worse.⁵⁹ A.J. Arnold, Secretary of the British Alliance from 1879, had to consider the best plan to adopt. Part of the strategy was to support evangelical work where there was freedom for that, rather than to focus on restrictions on such work. The remarkable evangelical movement under Rabbi Joseph Rabinovich in Kishenev (Moldova) was enthusiastically reported in *Evangelical Christendom* in the 1880s. In his synagogue, worship was offered in the name of Jesus. Rabinovich came to England in 1887 and in 1890 to speak to the Mildmay Conference in London, held in association with the Mildmay Mission to the Jews. The Orthodox Holy Synod had not hindered Rabinovich and the Russian Minister of the Interior officially licensed the worship of his congregation as "Israelites of the New Testament".⁶⁰

The more typical picture across Eastern Europe in the 1880s was of considerable difficulty for evangelicals. Incidents were reported in detail to the Evangelical Alliance. In Hungary, for example, Baptists in Promontor, a German village near present day Budapest, were beaten and the furniture in their prayer house was destroyed in 1882. Heinrich Meyer, encouraged by Oncken, had established a Baptist church in the city in 1874. By 1882 there were nearly five hundred members in fifty centres. Fifteen Baptists in the small Promontor group were imprisoned in 1882; Baptist prayer meetings were broken up and one member, a lady of seventy, was thrown up in the air like a ball, while others were stamped on. In some cases Baptists were being arrested, fined and imprisoned at the instigation of Reformed Church pastors. Lutheran pastors also made things difficult for Baptists. In one instance a Baptist mother had refused to have her child baptised, and

⁵⁸ Latimer, *Under Three Tsars*, p. 221.

⁵⁹ Report of the Evangelical Alliance Executive Council, 1891, p. 20; 1893, p. 11; Executive Council Minutes, 4 July 1889. Annual Reports of the Evangelical Alliance are held with the Executive Council Minutes at the Evangelical Alliance offices in London.

⁶⁰ *EC*, vol. 40 (August 1886), p. 243; vol. 44 (April 1890), pp. 113-115.

the child later died. She was allegedly kept away from the corpse by two policemen, while the local Lutheran pastor conducted – against her will – a Lutheran funeral.⁶¹ These details were sent by the British Alliance to the King of Hungary. A proposal was brought to the Hungarian Parliament that the Minister of Public Worship and Education prepare a law on religious liberty, but one speaker argued that while the followers of Heinrich Meyer should have freedom to hold meetings, they could not be recognised as a church. “I have a great respect for cabinet-makers, and also for agricultural labourers”, he stated, “but I do not consider them fitted to found and conduct churches”.⁶² Just as in Russia, national or “territorial” churches did not wish Baptists to have equal rights.

The anxiety felt by the national churches about the growth of Baptists was not unfounded. In 1891 the Orthodox Congress convened by Pobedonostsev said that fifteen years before there had been hardly one Protestant in the entire Orthodox Archbishopric of Kiev, but now “there is hardly a village free from the heresy”. This was with reference to Stundism and in particular to Baptist belief and practice. “In some places hundreds of families are infected by it”, the Congress was told. The bishops were said to be doing their best to destroy the heresy, but it was seen as increasing.⁶³ No doubt there was a measure of exaggeration in this, since a sense of alarm would give credibility to the Orthodox campaign. But the Baptist presence was significant. In 1893 it was suggested that 3,250 Stundists were in prison or in exile. Following this news, John Clifford, one of the leading English Baptists, who would be prominent a decade later in the formation of the Baptist World Alliance, became involved. Supported by British Evangelical Alliance Secretary A.J. Arnold, Clifford successfully moved a motion at the Baptist Union Assembly affirming the efforts of the Evangelical Alliance on behalf of religious dissenters in Russia.⁶⁴ Baptist and wider evangelical convergence was evident.

The efforts being made in the early 1890s to “stretch out arms” fell into three main categories. First, there was communication, which included encouragement and gathering of information for prayer. The Executive Council of the British Alliance received many reports in this period from those able to travel in parts of Russia. Baedeker’s activity was astonishing.

⁶¹ *EC*, vol. 38 (April 1884), pp. 123-124.

⁶² *EC*, vol. 39 (March 1885), p. 92. Annual Report to the Evangelical Alliance Council, 1884, p. 11.

⁶³ R.S. Latimer, *With Christ in Russia*, p. 125.

⁶⁴ Annual Report to the Evangelical Alliance Executive Council, 1893, pp. 11-13.

He became known in many cities in Eastern Europe, and wherever he travelled, he gathered information about evangelical life. In Tbilisi, in 1892, for example, he met a man whom he described as “an intelligent Christian” who had lost his job as an engineer because of his faith. “Why don’t you emigrate?” asked Baedeker. The reply was that “we love our native country and we know God rules”.⁶⁵ In autumn 1894 Baedeker included in his visits Bucharest, Odessa, Kiev, Tbilisi, Moscow, St Petersburg and the Baltic countries. Another reporter from England was J.D. Kilburn, a regular correspondent for the Alliance who travelled particularly in the Baltics in the early 1890s, describing Baptist growth, the poverty of many Baptists, and pressures from the police. Pastor John Frey [Jānis Freijs], he reported, the Baptist pastor in Riga, had been fined for holding a cottage meeting. He was finding it hard to provide for his “over-worked wife and four delicate children”.⁶⁶ A.J. Arnold also travelled in Europe, and was able to have a two-day conference with Russian evangelicals. He found conversations with Pashkov in Frankfurt especially helpful.⁶⁷

As well as communication there was channelling of funds. Kilburn asked for financial support from the British Alliance, but it seems that there was some caution about this.⁶⁸ Baedeker, who was much more central to Alliance work, often took money with him to distribute. In 1894 the British Alliance said that some supporters wondered why little action was being taken over Russian persecutions, and reported that £900 had been raised. This included gifts from Holland and Switzerland.⁶⁹ There had been efforts to raise money in the USA, but after 1885 the Alliance in the USA gave less attention to international affairs, and no financial assistance materialised.⁷⁰ In 1894 the British Alliance secured the help of an agent in St Petersburg (referred to, improbably, as Mr Smith) who distributed money to help those suffering.⁷¹ Some Alliance funds were also made available to those seeking to emigrate. The Alliance assisted some Baptists to escape to Romania.⁷²

⁶⁵ *EC*, vol. 46 (June 1892), pp. 173-174.

⁶⁶ Executive Council Minutes, 10 April 1890; *EC*, vol. 46 (September 1892), pp. 267-8; vol. 47 (January 1893), pp. 20-21.

⁶⁷ Executive Council Minutes, 14 July 1892; 30 November 1893.

⁶⁸ Executive Council Minutes, 10 April 1890; *EC*, vol. 46 (September 1892), pp. 267-268; vol. 47 (January 1893), pp. 20-21.

⁶⁹ *EC*, vol. 48 (January 1894), pp. 31-2; Executive Council Minutes, 18 May 1893.

⁷⁰ Executive Council Minutes, 12 September 1895; cf. Jordan, *The Evangelical Alliance*, pp. 116-117.

⁷¹ Executive Council Minutes, 13 December 1894; 13 June 1895.

⁷² *EC*, vol. 48 (September 1894), p. 279.

Baedeker's own interpreter had his home searched and papers seized and the British Alliance's Executive Council agreed to help him to move to Romania for safety. A number of Russian Baptists settled in Constanta, Romania.⁷³

The final activity of the 1890s was, again, public protest about persecution. In 1892 the British Alliance decided that a further effort was needed, and it asked the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Presidents of the Methodist Conferences, the Moderators of the Presbyterian Churches, and the Chairmen of the Congregational and Baptist Unions to join with Evangelical Alliances in different countries in making representations to the Russian Orthodox Church about the persecution of dissenters.⁷⁴ There was some delay since – to the annoyance of the British – the Americans lost the document with signatures on it, but after a year of intermittent activity, a document was signed by 123 church leaders from all the main Protestant denominations. It was translated into Russian by Pashkov and in March 1893 was sent to Orthodox Church leaders.⁷⁵ There was no reply – two years later there was reference to the fact that still no reply had been received⁷⁶ – and some Alliance members pressed for further action. In July 1893 the Executive Council of the Alliance heard from A.J. Arnold that he had talked to Athelstan Riley, a well known High Church Anglican layman and a friend of Pobedonostsev, and had asked Riley if it was worth going to St Petersburg to make representations on behalf of evangelicals. Riley's view was that any visit would fail.⁷⁷

In 1894, however, Alexander III died, and there was much discussion at the January 1895 Alliance Executive about whether to send an international delegation to see the new Tsar, Nicholas II. Baedeker was in favour, but Radstock and others strongly disagreed. Quiet diplomacy was the preferred route.⁷⁸ Baedeker, however, was not to be deterred, and a public meeting in London was held at which he and Miss von Kirchner, a Russian Baptist, spoke about Russian developments.⁷⁹ By this time Baedeker was in close contact with rising Russian evangelical leader Ivan S. Prokhanov (later the

⁷³ Executive Council Minutes, 14 June 1894; 21 October 1897.

⁷⁴ Executive Council Minutes, 18 February 1892; 21 April 1892.

⁷⁵ Executive Council Minutes, 15 December 1892; 9 February 1893; 9 March 1893; 11 April 1893.

⁷⁶ *EC*, vol. 49 (July 1895), pp. 219-220.

⁷⁷ Executive Council Minutes, 13 July 1893.

⁷⁸ Executive Council Minutes, 17 January 1895; *EC*, vol. 49 (April 1895), pp. 127-128.

⁷⁹ Executive Council Minutes, 14 March 1895.

leader of the All-Russian Evangelical Christian Union), then in his mid-twenties, who studied at the Bristol Baptist College for a year.⁸⁰ It was clear that there was a growing groundswell of opinion in favour of an approach to the new Tsar. In 1895, a petition signed by one thousand evangelicals was prepared for presentation to the tsar by Prokhanov, but this was not delivered, as Prokhanov was travelling and making Evangelical Alliance, Mennonite and Baptist contacts outside Russia.⁸¹ At the Alliance Conference in London in 1896, celebrating fifty years of Alliance life, Baedeker gave an address on Russia. He spoke movingly of evangelical leaders in chains, treated as criminals, and suggested that the revival in Russia was one of the most remarkable in history. Another speaker was Prokhanov, introduced by Baedeker as "my dear young friend". Prokhanov argued that representations to the tsar by the Alliance were not fruitless; they did influence the Russian educated classes and encouraged evangelicals.⁸² Subsequently a memorandum from the 1896 Conference was sent to the tsar, and Radstock tried to see him, but failed.⁸³ Victory in the evangelical fight for religious freedom seemed elusive.

Conclusion

The year 1896 is a suitable year at which to conclude this study. By this time A.J. Arnold, who had done much to foster Alliance links with Eastern Europe, was too old to continue as Secretary and for a time the Alliance lost momentum. This was also the year, however, in which it was agreed that a suggestion from Radstock should be taken up and that an official branch of the Evangelical Alliance should be established in St Petersburg.⁸⁴ The period from the 1850s to the 1890s was one in which increasingly strong links developed between the Evangelical Alliance in Britain and evangelicals, especially Baptists, in Eastern Europe. Personal contacts through people like Baedeker were vital in the fostering of these connections. Such contacts also raised questions about how far Baptists wished to

⁸⁰ Prokhanoff, *In the Cauldron of Russia*, pp. 97-100.

⁸¹ Executive Council Minutes, 12 September 1895; Prokhanoff, *In the Cauldron of Russia*, chapters 12 and 13.

⁸² *Jubilee of the Evangelical Alliance: Proceedings of the Tenth International Conference Held in London, June-July, 1896* (London: J.F. Shaw, 1897), pp. 307-313.

⁸³ Executive Council Minutes, 12 November 1896.

⁸⁴ Executive Council Minutes, 16 January 1896. Alliance development was reported in *The Times* (10 March 1897). See Executive Council Minutes, 11 March 1897.

have a distinctive identity and how far they were willing to be seen simply as evangelicals. At various points the Alliance hoped that its representations to governments would ensure greater religious freedom for Baptists. In the case of German territories there was some success, and there was also some optimism about changes further east. In the 1870s the British Alliance President, Sir Harry Verney, asked the British government to raise the subject of liberty for evangelicals and Jews at the Conference of European Powers.⁸⁵ The experience of Baptists in Russia in the 1880s and early 1890s, however, showed the limited nature of Evangelical Alliance influence. Nonetheless, for an emerging evangelical leader such as Prokhanov, partnership between Western and Eastern evangelicals in Europe was important. In 1896 Prokhanov stated with typical boldness at the Alliance Conference: "I want to invite all West European brethren to closer contact with Russian Christians."⁸⁶ The plea is still a relevant one today.

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⁸⁵ EC, vol. 37 (April 1878), p. 126.

⁸⁶ *Jubilee of the Evangelical Alliance*, p. 313.

Fresh Skins for New Wine: On the Structure of the First Russian Baptist Congregations in South Russia

Johannes Dyck

Introduction

One of the last books of antireligious propaganda produced by the Soviet state contains a remarkable statement about Baptists: "The popularity of the Baptist [movement] in many respects can be explained by its *specific organisation* ... It can be said that especially the Baptist [movement] shows the highest abilities for reproduction under conditions of a socialist society" (emphasis added).¹ The atheistic state knew well how to deal with the "discretion and valour" of Baptists, to use Trevor Beeson's expression,² but it acknowledged helplessness in fighting against the structure. Baptist structures in the Soviet Union were more stable and survived better than the other denominational structures in the country, and therefore deserve special attention.

This paper identifies "structure" using an inductive approach. In the social sciences, the term "structure" refers to "discernible patterns, observed regularities and noticeable configurations"³ which indicate a certain order. Order, in turn, is inherent to the concept of *system*, which has been success-

¹ *Protestantizm: slovar' ateista* [Protestantism: the atheist's dictionary], s.v. "Baptisty" (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo politicheskoi literatury, 1990), pp. 47-48.

² Trevor Beeson, *Discretion and Valour: Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe* (London: Fontana, 1974).

fully applied to a broad range of disciplines, including the social sciences,⁴ as well as historical⁵ and Biblical⁶ ecclesiology. The concept of structure can also be helpful in analysing the origins of Baptists in Russia and Ukraine. This paper restricts examination primarily to the Ekaterinoslav and Kherson provinces, which at the time of the early Baptists in the 1860s were part of South Russia. Today these territories belong to the Republic of Ukraine.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF BAPTIST STRUCTURES AT THE LEVEL OF INDIVIDUAL FAITH

Pietism and the Origins of the Baptist Movement in South Russia

Pietism, the local version of which was known in Russia as Stundism, was primarily a movement of lay people. It is considered to be a significant element in the beginnings of the Russian and Ukrainian Baptist movement, both by adherents of the “indigenous genesis theory” as well as supporters of the hypothesis of “foreign planters”. The former view, represented by Ukrainian Baptist historian Iurii Reshetnikov, claims that around 1867, having developed “Baptist views *on their own*, Ukrainian believers began to look for how and through whom they could be baptised” (emphasis added).⁷ A good illustration of the latter view is found in the voluminous document collection from the first decades of the Baptist movement in Russia, compiled by a strong opponent of Baptists at the end of the nine-

³ Peter M. Blau (ed), *Theorien sozialer Strukturen: Ansätze und Probleme* (Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1978), p. 11. [German translation of Peter M. Blau (ed), *Approaches to the Study of Social Structure* (London: Open Books, 1976)].

⁴ Rainer Prewo, Jürgen Ritsert, and Elmar Stracke, *Systemtheoretische Ansätze in der Soziologie: eine kritische Analyse* (Reinbeck: Rowohlt, 1973); Blau (ed), *Theorien sozialer Strukturen*.

⁵ Hans Küng, *Strukturen der Kirche*, 2nd edn (Freiburg: Herder, 1963).

⁶ Josef Hainz, *Ekklesia: Strukturen paulinischer Gemeinde-Theologie und Gemeinde-Ordnung*. (Regensburg: Friedrich Pustet, 1972); A. Gilmore (ed), *The Pattern of the Church: a Baptist View* (London: Lutterworth, 1963).

⁷ Iurii Ie. Reshetnikov, “Stanovlennia ta diferentsiatsiia ievangel’skogo rukhu v Ukraini” [The formation and differentiation of the evangelical movement in Ukraine] (Dissertation, Insitut filosofii im. H.S. Skovorodi Natsional’noi akademii nauk Ukraini, Kiev, 2000), p. 78. See also Iurii Reshetnikov and Sergei Sannikov, *Obzor istorii Evangel’sko-baptistskogo bratstva v Ukraine* [A Survey of the history of the Evangelical-Baptist brotherhood in Ukraine] (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 2000), p. 59.

teenth and early twentieth centuries. This collection begins documentation of Russian Baptist history with events in the German colonies in Ukraine in 1862.⁸ Rather than evaluating Pietism/Stundism in terms of a successionist approach, seeking the roots of the Baptist movement solely in Russia, this paper examines typical patterns of Pietism and their impact on religious life in South Russia.

At the time of Baptist beginnings in South Russia, Pietism in Germany already had a history of nearly two centuries. With rare exceptions, Pietism as a rule did not create new churches. Even if new church structures emerged, they did not depart from the framework of protestant theology and territorial division into parishes, as demonstrated by the example of the Herrnhut Brethren [*Herrnhuter Brüdergemeinde*] under Count Zinzendorf.⁹

Pietism was above all a religion of the heart, and it produced several factions within the protestant church body in Germany. The Pietism of the common people in Württemberg, as well as the Pietism of the academics in Halle, demonstrated its ability to activate the laity in the church, a feature important from the viewpoint of structure. Philipp Jakob Spener, known as the “father of Pietism”, organised the *collegia pietatis*, additional meetings of “true believers” within the main church body, which produced a new pattern in church life – a pattern of fellowship¹⁰ – alongside the pattern of the regular worship service. Fellowship became an important mark of Pietism. Pietism did not change the normative base of decision-making in the church (combining tradition with Scripture interpretation by university-trained clergy) or the parochial structure.

Russian and Ukrainian Baptists had actually a very short period of Stundism in their “pre-history”, before the organisation of their first congregations.¹¹ Nevertheless, it is helpful to explore the religious patterns

⁸ Episkop Aleksii [Dorodnitsyn], *Materialy dlia istorii religiozno-ratsionalisticheskogo dvizheniia na iuge Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX-go stoletii* [Bishop Aleksii, Materials for the history of the religious rationalist movement in the south of Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century] (Kazan: Tsentral'naia tipografiia, 1908).

⁹ Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf was a leader of the eighteenth-century Moravian Pietist revival in the town of Herrnhut, on his estate of Bethelsdorf, Saxony. The Herrnhut Brethren copied the Lutheran Church organisational structure dominant in the area. Johannes Wallmann, *Der Pietismus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

¹⁰ Throughout this paper, the word “fellowship” refers to the Russian *obshchenie*, which emphasises close personal and spiritual relationships and the sharing of a common faith.

¹¹ Reshetnikov, “Stanovlennia ta diferentsiatsiia ievangel'skogo rukhu v Ukraini”, pp. 53-56; *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* [History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR] (Moscow: Vsesoiuznyi sovet evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov, 1989), pp. 62-66.

of German immigrants in Russia because of the structural similarities between German Pietism and Russian Stundism. The classification into old and new Pietism commonly used by Russian authors¹² is very schematic and is based primarily on differences between the "chiliastic" and "common" Pietism in its Württemberg form. The latter strongly emphasised conversion. It has also been claimed that all of the stimuli leading to the pietistic revival in South Russia came from "common" Pietism, including the preaching of pastor Eduard Wüst in 1845-59, the work of Johann (1824-39) and Karl Bonekemper (1867-77), and the writings of Ludwig Hofacker.¹³ However, the reality was more complicated. Recent research has brought to light that several Mennonite communities in Russia were under strong Herrnhut influence,¹⁴ though it did not lead to the formation of a new church pattern.¹⁵ Even in the small space of Mennonite colonies, Pietism had many faces.

Stundism arose among the Russian and Ukrainian population through meetings which took place apart from the liturgical services of the Orthodox Church, in the same manner in which German Pietists living nearby practiced their piety. The term *Stundism* originates from the German word *Stunde*, meaning "hour". Though Russian Stundist meetings had taken place since 1861-62,¹⁶ the local government drew attention to the secret nightly religious meetings in the Odessa area only in March 1866,¹⁷ considering them a threat to the public order. The governor of Kherson did not regard the phenomenon as worth reporting to the Minister of Internal Affairs until 2 June 1869.¹⁸ Nine days later, the Mennonite Brethren elder Abram Unger baptised Efim Tsimbal upon profession of his faith.¹⁹ This

¹² *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, pp. 39-42. Such classification is not used in Germany, the homeland of Pietism.

¹³ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, pp. 39-41.

¹⁴ John Friesen, "Mennonite Churches and Religious Developments in Russia 1789-1850", in John Friesen (ed), *Mennonites in Russia, 1788-1988: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989), pp. 43-72, 64-66.

¹⁵ P.M. Friesen, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Brüderschaft in Rußland (1789-1910) im Rahmen der Mennonitischen Gesamtgeschichte* (Halbstadt: Raduga, 1911), pp. 79-80.

¹⁶ Reshetnikov and Sannikov, *Obzor istorii*, p. 76.

¹⁷ "Donesenie mirovogo posrednika 2 uchastka Khersonskago uezda Khersonskomu gubernatoru ot 14 marta 1866 g. No. 88", in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, p. 47.

¹⁸ "Vypiska iz predstavleniia Gubernatora ot 2 iunია 1869 g.", in S.I. Golovashchenko and Iu. Ie. Reshetnikov (compilers), *Istoriia evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizheniia v Ukraine: Materialy i dokumenty* [History of the Evangelical-Baptist Movement in Ukraine: Materials and Documents] (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 1998), p. 13.

¹⁹ "Donesenie Ispravnika Elizavetgradskago uezda Khersonskomu Gubernatoru ot 16 iunია 1869 g. No. 30", in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, pp. 71-72.

day marked the beginning of a strong Baptist movement in South Russia. The short period of Stundism among Russians and Ukrainians had come to a conclusion.²⁰

The Core of Pietism: Personal Faith

Pietism focused on personal faith and its expression in the believer's life. Spener succeeded in establishing conditions for the development of personal faith within the Lutheran Church, avoiding the danger of separatism and spiritualism propagated by some of his co-workers.²¹ A new accent on moral sanctification made the lay people responsible for proper Christianity in the same manner as clergy. Also, from its early days Pietism stressed revival and personal conversion. According to August Hermann Francke (1663–1727), the path to true Christianity led through the experience of a breakthrough in the battle for salvation of the soul.²² Such a conversion experience played a decisive role in the life and spirituality of a believer.

It is quite natural that revival preachers such as Pastor Wüst, with their message of repentance and conversion, gained enormous popularity in the German colonies in South Russia, which had already experienced the influence of Pietism. With “revival” in mind as the main factor of church life, the Pietist Wüst has been considered in Mennonite history to stand second only to Menno Simons.²³ From this point of view, as the famous Mennonite historian P.M. Friesen explained, the main emphasis of the Christian life is “having Christ dwelling in one's heart through faith, to be with one's life an open letter of Christ, spreading His name to the ends of the earth, and ‘to win the world for Christ, even if with one's own life-blood (Menno Simons)’”²⁴ In this way, through Pietist influence, “experience” as a primary manifestation of faith found its way into the Mennonite communities in Russia.

The Russian and Ukrainian peasants at the cradle of Russian and Ukrainian Baptism, including Fedor Onishchenko, Mikhail Ratushnyi and

²⁰ While Stundism in this sense ended when congregations began practicing believer baptism, the Russian Orthodox Church continued to use the term Stundist into the Soviet period. See *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, pp. 62–66.

²¹ K. Galling (ed), *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edn, vol. 1 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1957), s.v. “Spener, Philipp Jakob”, p. 1553.

²² *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, 3rd edn, vol. 6, s.v. “Bußwesen”, p. 239.

²³ Friesen, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Brüderschaft*, p. 174.

²⁴ Friesen, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Brüderschaft*, p. 174.

others, all went through the phase of the personal experience of salvation. This was the strongest reason and argument for their faith that they could provide their opponents, and at the same time, it was most difficult for their opponents to understand. This misapprehension put its mark on the subsequent history of Baptists in South Russia.

Personal involvement in matters of salvation assumed an increased personal responsibility. Not accidentally, the Baptist beginnings in South Russia coincided with the emancipation of peasants from serfdom in 1861.²⁵ The emancipation prepared the social environment for spiritual revival and provided a new self-understanding for the large group of peasants in the Russian Empire. At the same time, Russian society was not prepared to accept the consequences of emancipation in the form of religious dissent. The first Russian Stundists were therefore necessarily pushed to the periphery of society, which was not uncommon for Pietism in general. No depiction of the Baptist beginnings in South Russia misses the starting point of revival, making the Stundism the first phase in Baptist history. The requirement of a similar experience of faith, i.e., conversion, in the later Baptist movement promoted homogeneity and similarity, evidence of the continuance of the early structure.

Fellowship: the Driving Force of Pietism

One more structural element should be considered: Pietism usually reproduced personal faith in an environment of fellowship. *Collegia pietatis* became from the very beginning the *modus vivendi* of Pietism. In South Russia, the new faith among the Russian and Ukrainian populations began to gain firm footholds with the formation of groups of believers. Often the traditional strong closeness of a rural community was transferred onto the new community of faith. One example is a group of twenty-seven men and twenty-one women (half of the village!) who joined the new faith in Osnova near Odessa.²⁶

From the very beginning, the meetings of the new faith communities emphasised fellowship. A local official who attended Stundist meetings in

²⁵ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, pp. 43-44.

²⁶ "Svedeniia o sostoianii raskolov v Khersonskoi gubernii, trebuemykh tsirkuliarom ot 3 oktiabria 1868 goda No. 584", in Golovashchenko and Reshetnikov, *Istoriia evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizheniia v Ukraine*, p. 15; "Obshchestvo shundovykh na iuge Rossii (Zapiska g. Znachko-Iavorskago, predstavlennaia general-gubernatoru, P.E. Katsebu, 1867 g.)", in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, p. 61.

Ignat'evka and Osnova in 1869 reported that the believers primarily sang and prayed.²⁷ While the songs did not draw the attention of the visitor, the manner of prayer, as well as the way the meeting was conducted, was highly unfamiliar to him. The people sat on benches "like in the Roman and Lutheran Churches". Group prayer was led by one person, and the atmosphere was very emotional. By building emotional ties, the community was united and prepared for a totally different way of life. Fellowship was one of the main sources of power in this new movement.

Pietism promoted egalitarian structures of fellowship, rather than hierarchy. German colonists in Rohrbach [Rorbakh], when meeting their pastor Johann Bonekemper at Pietist meetings, came to know him as a brother in Christ. In the same manner, for the Stundists in Osnova, their leader was one of them. The equal treatment of leaders and members is a significant factor contributing to vitality during times of oppression and persecutions, which have often occurred in the history of the Russian and Ukrainian evangelical brotherhood. This egalitarian attitude was inherent to the movement from its early days.

Pietism promotes a very strong self-identification of individual members with the group, but does not guarantee the stability of a faith community or even permanent involvement of its members. The membership of the group in Osnova decreased after an initial phase of high interest.²⁸ Wüst's revival preaching produced only a temporary splash of activity in his own parish. A generation later, no significant Pietist activities were reported there. Moreover, at the end of his activity, some of his most enthusiastic followers separated from Wüst to form a group with a dubious reputation. Personal convictions and authentic sincerity alone are insufficient for the stability of a group. Here Pietism showed again its deep dependency on persons rather than principles.

From the viewpoint of structure, Pietism did not change the traditional patterns of leadership and authority, nor did it alter the pastor's role in the church. The Reformation focus on *sola scriptura* and mechanisms of taking decisions in the church did not change significantly, although the strong orthodox Lutheran hermeneutics became weaker. The interest in church structures within Pietism fell short against higher interest in mission, revival and personal faith. This helps to explain why Pietism did not produce its own theology of the church.²⁹

²⁷ "Svedeniia o sostoianii raskolov v Khersonskoi gubernii", p. 15.

²⁸ "Svedeniia o sostoianii raskolov v Khersonskoi gubernii", p. 15.

Even while in opposition to the mainstream Lutheran Church in Germany, Pietism remained an integral part of that church structure, and did not exist outside of it. Russian Stundism, on the contrary, was from its very beginning considered a foreign body within the Russian Orthodox Church. The old wineskins were not prepared to hold the new wine. The new faith community needed a new church structure.

FROM FELLOWSHIP TO CHURCH: A NEW STRUCTURE FOR THE NEW FAITH

Origins of the Russian Baptist Structure

Developing a congregational structure in the 1860-70s, the first Russian and Ukrainian Stundists had the opportunity to either create something absolutely new or – more unconsciously than deliberately – follow established patterns. The first adherents of the new faith initially remained in the Russian Orthodox Church. During this period, it slowly became evident that the potential existed for deep conflict between the totally new kind of personal piety and the liturgical manifestation of faith. The definite turn towards Scripture as the main source of faith meant at the same time strict rejection of traditional expressions of faith.³⁰ The distance of the new believers from the main Church resembles the distance of the Lutherans (or even Anabaptists) from the Catholic Church during the Reformation. From their very beginnings, Russian and Ukrainian Stundists were branded a sect, making it impossible for them to identify themselves with the Orthodox Church. The external causes urgently induced a need for Stundists' own church structure. Well-meant advice from German Pietist pastors to remain within the Russian Orthodox Church³¹ simply did not take into account the fundamental differences between the structures of the two churches.

In principle, Ukrainian and Russian Baptists could have assumed the structure of the Molokan communities, which was a genuine Russian model

²⁹ Volker Brecht, *Zwischen Landeskirche und Freikirche: Die Suche der Gemeinschaftsbewegung nach einem eigenen Gemeindeverständnis* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus, 2002), p. 23.

³⁰ "Vypiska iz predstavleniia Gubernatora ot 12 iunია 1869 g.," in Golovashchenko and Reshetnikov, *Istoriia evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizheniia v Ukrainie*, p. 13.

³¹ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, p. 59.

of a faith community apart from the Orthodox Church. Molokans, with their denial of church hierarchy, were much nearer to the newly emerged Baptist congregations in terms of church structure. However, especially in Ukraine, the first Baptist congregations formed by people coming from the Orthodox Church did not choose the Molokan pattern. The Baptist beginnings in the Caucasus in a Molokan environment in the 1860s constitute a different story, but this exceeds the frame of this paper.

Remaining examples of church structures include the German Baptists in Ukraine, which in the 1860s strongly resembled the Mennonite Brethren, and the Mennonite Brethren themselves. In the early years, the borders between these different religious groups were fluid, and they considered themselves one body, sharing similar views, and worked closely together. The Mennonite Brethren Church, being a fruit of the seed of Pietism on traditional Mennonite soil, came into being in 1860.³² The structural pattern of the church produced by the early Mennonite Brethren came from the well-established Mennonite Church order, which had a long tradition since the times of Reformation. Whereas the years before 1865 were shaped by extreme Pietistic developments,³³ the late 1860s and early 1870s were characterised by a striving for order and instruction. In this quest for stability, the Brethren were supported and even partially led by German Baptists. The recognised differences in church structure and theology between Mennonite Brethren and German Baptists were marginal at that time.

The ties that bound these two movements weakened after 1869.³⁴ The Brethren did not want to lose their Mennonite identity, and increasingly emphasised their non-resistance and non-violent position, being afraid to lose their privilege of exemption from military service. As is well known, Baptists did not oppose military service.

The organisational pattern of a free church in its Mennonite interpretation suited the Russian and Ukrainian Baptists well. Its similarity to the model of Johann Gerhard Oncken³⁵ (although they were not identical) made it easier for Russian Baptists to find a common ground with Caucasian

³² John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers* (Fresno, California: Board of Christian Literature, 1975), pp. 32-33; John B. Toews, "Baptists and Mennonite Brethren in Russia (1790-1930)", in Paul Toews (ed), *Mennonites and Baptists: a Continuing Conversation* (Winnipeg: Kindred, 1993), pp. 81-96.

³³ Jacob P. Bekker, *Origin of The Mennonite Brethren Church: Previously Unpublished Manuscript by One of the Eighteen Founders* (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1973), pp. 33, 39.

³⁴ Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, pp. 72-73.

Baptists, whose leader Vasilii Pavlov was a disciple of Oncken, including in matters related to church leadership and church order. For example, access to the pulpit in Tiflis was far more restricted than in Ukraine, and the closed church organisational meetings occurred far more often. At the same time, the development of the Russian and Ukrainian Baptist movements were different enough from the Anglo-Saxon or later German Baptists to form a distinctive branch in the world Baptist family.³⁶

Leading Russian Baptist historians acknowledge that the Russian and Ukrainian Baptist Church structure was borrowed from its “spiritual neighbours”. Russian Baptist historian Sergei Savinskii writes: “From whom could our brethren adopt organisational forms of local churches, if not from those with whom they lived as neighbours and maintained spiritual fellowship? ... They were children of a single epoch of evangelical awakening in Russia.”³⁷

Personal Faith in the Believers' Church Context

Where Pietism came to a stop, the believers' church continued. In a believers' church, personal faith is a required condition for obtaining church membership. Pietism, in contrast, omits the *demand* for conversion in confessions of faith, as shown in the example of the “Short rules of faith of Christians of the Evangelical creed called Molokans of the Don persuasion”.³⁸ Moreover, the requirement of baptism upon profession of faith constituted an unambiguous form of confession of faith which symbolised a decisive commitment, burning all bridges behind. The non-obligatory participation in Pietist fellowship hours was changed here to the binding nature of a “promise in good conscience” [*obeshchanie dobroï sovesti*], as formulated in the “Rules of the confession of faith of the newly-converted

³⁵ Oncken introduced a model in which authority rested on an individual, whereas Menonites tended toward group leadership. See Hans Luckey, *Johann Gerhard Oncken und die Anfänge des deutschen Baptismus*, 3rd edn (Kassel: J.G. Oncken, 1958), pp. 167-190; “Protokoly zasedanii Tiflisskoi baptistskoi obshchiny za 1879-85 gody i dva protokola (odin v proekte neokonchennii) za 1890 god”, in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, pp. 610-611, 614.

³⁶ Waldemar Gutsche, *Westliche Quellen des russischen Stundismus: Anfänge der evangelischen Bewegung in Russland*, 2nd edn (Kassel: J.G. Oncken, 1957), p. 9.

³⁷ S.N. Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii (1867-1917)* [History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Ukraine, Russia, and Belorussia (1867-1917)] (St Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 1999), p. 126.

³⁸ “Kratkii pravila very khristian Evangel'skago veroispovedaniia, nazyvaemykh molokanami Donskago Tolka”, in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, pp. 485-495.

Russian Brotherhood”,³⁹ a document discovered by a police officer in 1873, hidden in Ratushnyi’s home. Historians consider it the first known confession of faith of the newly founded Baptist brotherhood.⁴⁰

The new faith, embedded in the context of a church, exhibited a clear indication of authenticity: new life. The Christianity of the non-Baptist churches was now believed to lead to eternal destruction. Considering the binding nature of the “Rules”, it is evident that repentance had become a necessary condition for acceptance into the “system” of the Baptist congregation. Repentance is by its nature less of a theological confession and more of a personal spiritual experience, making the criteria for admittance comprehensible for the whole congregation, and not just for church leaders. Combined with missionary zeal, repentance and conversion very soon became the centre of faith and measure of piety among Russian and Ukrainian Baptists.

In the practice of baptism, the church as a system created very sharp boundaries, making unambiguous the difference between people inside the church borders and those outside. These boundaries were of such immensity that often they were mixed up with the system itself. For example, during the Reformation, the act of believer’s baptism provided the name for the Anabaptist movement, but it took considerable time before it was recognised that an entirely new church structure stood behind the name.⁴¹ Even inside the movement itself, it took time for a self-image as a church to development. This was certainly also true of Baptists in South Russia.

The Believer’s Church as Organised Fellowship

The first baptisms in South Russia were soon followed by the organisation of local congregations with their own members, presbyters⁴² and evangelists. In the Ekaterinoslav region, congregations existed in one form or another since 1870.⁴³ The establishment of the first Baptist congregations in the Odessa region is relatively well documented, and demonstrates

³⁹ “Pravila veroispovedaniia novoobrashchennogo Russkogo Bratstva”, in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, p. 479.

⁴⁰ *Istoriia evangel’skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, p. 438.

⁴¹ Franklin H. Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church: a Study in the Origins of Sectarian Protestantism*, 2nd edn (Boston: Starr King, 1958), p. XVI.

⁴² The term “presbyter” refers to the head of a congregation. The term “pastor” was not introduced until the 1990s. The Russian translation of the New Testament uses “presbyter” where the English translation uses “elder”.

⁴³ *Istoriia evangel’skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, p. 63.

that the “brethren” knew well what to do and how to operate as a church. The dynamics are remarkable: on 8 June 1871, Mikhail Ratushnyi was baptised here by Ivan Riaboshapka, along with fifty others.⁴⁴ On 8 October, Ratushnyi made his own copy of the “Rules of the confession of faith of the newly-converted Russian Brotherhood”⁴⁵; on 28 November of the same year Ratushnyi informed his archbishop of his desire to leave the Orthodox Church. Shortly after 3 August 1873, Ratushnyi wrote about the establishment of church order in a letter:

We have chosen church officers [*tserkovnosluzhiteli*]. They can baptise adults, but we do not baptise newborns; they also may marry believers with the consent of bridegroom and bride, the desire of parents on both sides, and the agreement of the Church... In addition they have the authority to baptise, administer the Lord’s Supper, marry, bury and conduct the business of the Church.⁴⁶

Only two years after the first baptism, Baptists in the Odessa region already viewed themselves clearly as a church.

The above-mentioned “Rules” consist of ten sections. Three of them deal directly with the topic of church structure. Designed according to the pattern of “the first Apostolic Church”, the visible church consisted of true believers only. Positions of primary responsibility such as presbyters, teachers and deacons were chosen from within its midst. Excommunication was included as a means of maintaining order in the church, as well as restoration of those who repented. Sections are also included on repentance, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. The imagery of the Body of Christ and the holy temple of the Lord (Ephesians 2:20-22; 4:11-16; and 1 Peter 2:5) were used in this document as structural patterns of the Church.⁴⁷

According to Archbishop Leontii, the “Rules”, “containing an exposition of Reformed faith,... expose their compiler to be a well-educated theolo-

⁴⁴ Reshetnikov and Sannikov, *Obzor istorii*, p. 99.

⁴⁵ “Pravila veroispovedaniia novoobrashchennago Russkago Bratstva”, in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, p. 482.

⁴⁶ “Pis’mo M. Ratushnago Nikolaiu Liashkovu, pisariu kantseliarii Chernigovskago voin-skago nachal’nika ot 1873 g.”, in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, p. 189.

⁴⁷ Cf. Paul S. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), p. 164; Avery Robert Dulles, *Models of the Church*, 2nd edn (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1988), p. 20.

gian not completely competent in the Russian language".⁴⁸ Aleksii mistakenly ascribed authorship of the rules to Karl Bonekemper.⁴⁹ The truth can be found in a thirty-four-page document written by Johann Wieler, now in the archive of St Petersburg evangelical leader Vasilii Pashkov at the University of Birmingham, England:

In Odessa, Wieler picked up the threads of his earlier activity and was soon able to establish a small congregation of Russian and German believers in the city... For a long time already, the Russian brethren have accepted the teaching of Wieler on the questions of baptism and establishing congregations... Finally, the brethren decided to make a complete break with the Orthodox Church and form a fellowship of their own according to God's Word. A number of brethren met in Wieler's home... From this resulted the drawing up of a confession of faith including ten articles, which set out the principal points of the Christian faith. It agreed essentially with the statement used by Baptists in Germany. The brethren then submitted copies of the statement to all their groups for discussion and approval. With few exceptions, all the members agreed to form a Baptist fellowship based on this declaration.⁵⁰

According to this document, the "Rules" were accepted in January of 1870. Wieler's role as architect of the Baptist church structure in South Russia is clearly identifiable.⁵¹ Fluent in Russian and Ukrainian, he joined the Mennonite Brethren in his early twenties during the first years of their existence, and worked until 1865 in a government office in Odessa, and then as a teacher in Berdiansk. After spending 1868-69 in Switzerland and

⁴⁸ "Iz pis'ma Arkhiepiskopa Odesskago Leontii k Ober-Prokuroru Sinoda grafu D.A. Tolstomu 30 apreliia 1875 g.," in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, p. 240.

⁴⁹ "Pravila veroispovedaniia novoobrashchennogo Russkogo Bratstva," in Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii*, p. 477, note 1.

⁵⁰ Cited in Lawrence Klippenstein (transl and ed), "Johann Wieler (1839-1889) among Russian Evangelicals: A New Source of Mennonites and Evangelicalism in Imperial Russia," *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, vol. 5 (1987), pp. 49-50.

⁵¹ See Hans Kasdorf, "Die Mission der Mennoniten in Russland," in Gerhard and Julia Hildebrandt (eds), *200 Jahre Mennoniten in Russland: Aufsätze zu ihrer Geschichte und Kultur* (Bolanden-Weierhof: Verlag des Mennonitischen Geschichtsvereins, 2000), pp. 123-151, 135.

Germany with Oncken, he was ordained in 1872 by Unger. Beginning in July 1883, he worked fulltime for the Russian brotherhood, with full financial support from Pashkov.⁵² The next year, 1884, Wieler became the first president of the Russian Baptist Union.⁵³ After 1885, he worked in hiding from the Russian police. In 1887, he left Russia to become pastor of the Baptist congregation in Tulcea (Romania) and died there in 1889.

The "Rules" emphasise the role of church leaders, acknowledging their responsibility in the fields of instruction and exhortation. Taking the "Rules" as an example of giving directions, we observe that a large part of the document consists of full-text Scripture quotations with short explanations. On the one hand, this method gives the reader the impression of a solid biblical foundation. On the other hand, this approach corresponds to the readers' understanding of Scripture and fits their needs exactly. Even if this straightforward approach is sometimes regarded as "primitive",⁵⁴ it was effective in providing additional strength to the young Baptist movement.

The "Rules" and practices of the churches did not include any special rights or privileges for leaders. Neither were there formal requirements for leadership other than spiritual criteria. This made the transition into the status of leader open to almost every man skilled in preaching and explaining the Word. The only way the authority of a leader was enforced was through his personal integrity and pastoral abilities, combined with simplicity of proclamation and quality of exhortation and fellowship. This made the church structure very flexible and adaptable to severe circumstances.

With the shift from Stundism to Baptism, the congregations became characterised by a kind of "institutionalised Pietism" combined with baptism by immersion and an established leadership structure. This stage in the formation of congregational structure was entirely complete by 1884. The next steps of building centralised vertical church structures were made by Wieler's successor as president, Dei I. Mazaev⁵⁵ and discussion of this falls outside the framework of this paper. Nevertheless, the role of a local church as the main point of missionary activity and spiritual nurturing, as well as the autonomy of the local churches, remained untouched.

⁵² Klippenstein (transl and ed), "Johann Wieler (1839–1889)", p. 55.

⁵³ Klippenstein (transl and ed), "Johann Wieler (1839–1889)", pp. 45, 48–49. See also Oksana V. Beznosova, "Pozdnee protestantskoe sektantstvo Iuga Ukrainy (1850–1905)" [Late Protestant sectarianism of southern Ukraine (1850–1905)] (Dissertation, Dnepropetrovskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, 1997), pp. 88–89, 212.

⁵⁴ See Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, p. XVI.

⁵⁵ See Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Kitchener: Herald, 1981), p. 79.

THE LONG-TERM IMPACT OF CHURCH STRUCTURE

Church Structure has a Long Life

Church structure is usually a very stable factor and changes slowly, a tendency confirmed by Russian Baptist history. Attempts to establish a congregational superstructure in the form of a union with a strong central leadership, made by people like Dei Mazaev or Ivan Prokhanov,⁵⁶ did not touch the structure of the local congregations in the Russian evangelical movement. The turmoil of the Revolution and Civil War affected only the union's superstructure in Russia, which broke into several local unions. The structure of the congregations remained unchanged from the 1870s into the 1920s. According to Waldemar Gutsche, an active Baptist worker in the 1920s,

the practice of church leadership in Ukrainian and Russian Baptist congregations most of all resembles the order in the Mennonite Brethren church. The presbyter together with preachers, deacons and experienced brethren, all of them elected by the congregation, constitutes the brethren council, which discusses and together with the congregation decides all questions of spiritual and practical life. There are very few presbyters and preachers who are fully paid by the congregation, but a lot more union or regional itinerant preachers, who spend two months on the road and one month at home. These itinerant preachers were ordained and often were equal in rights with presbyters. They were very effective when settling difficult topics in churches. In their home churches, their role was less significant.⁵⁷

During the partial restoration of Baptist life after the catastrophe of Stalinist repression in the 1930s, the congregational structure as well as the union work was re-established. Evidently a strongly centralised church structure was considered by the government to be the best means to apply regulatory mechanisms. Yet even this reduction of congregational autonomy positively influenced church life.⁵⁸ During the post-Stalin thaw,

⁵⁶ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, pp. 155-158.

⁵⁷ Gutsche, *Westliche Quellen*, p. 129.

⁵⁸ Beeson, *Discretion and Valour*, pp. 97-98.

fellowship as the foundation of congregational life helped to integrate new believers and old ones who returned from prison. At the same time, tendencies toward fellowship caused conflicts with existing church leaders⁵⁹ who had adapted themselves to the restrictions of the times. Establishment of centralised control over a large system consisting of a many satellite systems with their own degrees of freedom is a difficult undertaking. The next wave of oppression after 1958 only confirmed this.

Church Structure and Oppression under Khrushchev

During the late 1950s, Khrushchev's church policy took shape, and the entire Baptist structure on all levels – from union leadership to ordinary church members – was exposed to immense pressure. It seemed that religion had been made the sole ideological enemy of Soviet society. A decision of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of 16 March 1961⁶⁰ delegated to regional authorities the responsibility for fighting against religion. In this way, local congregations and individuals became the focus of oppression. Every level of Baptist structures fought for survival, sometimes at the expense of neighbouring parts of the structure. As a result, the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB) in December 1959 issued new church statutes and a "Letter of Instruction"⁶¹ producing a "storm in the congregations", as AUCECB general secretary Aleksandr Karev put it.⁶²

The key role in the further development of Baptist church life passed from the union level to the leaders of local congregations. They had to manage a balance between fellowship-oriented activities (such as attempts to create an underground union of youth)⁶³ and government pressure. This conflict showed once again that the main strength of the Baptist movement consisted in local congregations, with their relatively loose structure and patterns of close fellowship, rather than in the central leadership structures of the union.

⁵⁹ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, p. 239.

⁶⁰ See S.N. Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii (1917–1967)* (St Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2001), pp. 305–306.

⁶¹ Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii (1917–1967)*, pp. 322–327.

⁶² Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii (1917–1967)*, p. 201.

⁶³ Reshetnikov and Sannikov, *Obzor istorii*, p. 191.

The crisis was not resolved completely, and had grave consequences. A split in the Baptist "brotherhood" occurred and a second centre was established, the Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists, representing the so-called Reform Baptists. Work under conditions of conspiracy and other circumstances led this branch of Baptists in the Soviet Union toward a highly centralised structure with a strong centre. The price of this process was the diminished independence of the local congregation. Nevertheless, the fellowship patterns at local level did not disappear altogether.

After oppression declined, the main line of church development, at least in the AUCECB, consisted in a gradual and cautious return to team leadership. Structures promoting fellowship increasingly gained ground, until a complete layer of church activity – namely youth ministry of the 1970s and later – was built entirely on the principle of fellowship. The generation in leadership today experienced this period personally and continues to support such fellowship activities to this day.

Conclusion

Content without form is not concrete, while form without content has no life. Both are interdependent and have a structure. In the best cases, they correspond with each other. The revival among the Russian and Ukrainian peasants in southern Russia produced the Stundist movement, which was closely related to Pietism of their German neighbours. Common to both was the high value of fellowship among converted people, fellowship based on their common relationship with their Lord. This emphasis on fellowship finally provided the unique touch to Baptists in South Russia and determined the way of life of these new communities of faith.

With the organisation of Baptist congregations in southern Russia, genuine Stundist/Pietist fellowship did not diminish, but became the driving force in the Baptist movement. The congregational structure of these churches integrated the strength found in fellowship, giving it a binding nature and using it as a regulating force. The newly converted believers, who were to be known as Baptists, did not need to use trial and error to search for the best structure. The path towards this structure had been prepared for them by their brethren of Mennonite origin, who had remained in the free-church tradition since the Reformation.

Community structures change slowly. The Russian and Ukrainian Baptists have maintained their congregational structure for over a century.

Due to their congregational structure, their steadfastness has been preserved throughout times of trial and long periods of suffering and victory.

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The Gospel in Society: Pashkovite Social Outreach in Late Imperial Russia

Sharyl Corrado

Generally written within a paradigm of denominational history, literature on Baptists and Evangelical Christians in the Russian Empire and early Soviet Union has tended to emphasise the institution of the church and focus on leading figures and events, including congresses, the opening (and closing) of churches, baptisms and the ordination of leaders. Until recently this has been true as well for literature on Orthodoxy, as well as Lutherans, Catholics and the so-called Russian “sectarians”, although popular religion and “lived religious experience” have recently gained the attention of scholars.¹ Rather than viewing faith from above – church doctrine, structure, leadership and policies – this paper seeks to investigate how faith was experienced and expressed from the “bottom up” by both participants and observers. Rather than looking at the doctrines and policies of church authorities, I focus on the evangelical faith as practiced by participants in the Pashkovite revival among the St Petersburg high society of the late 1800s. Social outreach – reaching into the community with the message of the Gospel, often with actions more than words – was a defining characteristic of Pashkovism. While the well-attended salon meetings of Lord Radstock served as catalysts, it was through establishment of schools,

¹ Examples of important recent books about popular Orthodoxy in pre-revolutionary Russia include Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal St: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000); and Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

hospitals, prisons, orphanages, homeless shelters, soup kitchens and other ministries to the Russian people that Pashkovism gained its foothold in society.

The Pashkovite movement began in St Petersburg in 1874 when high society women invited the British aristocrat and evangelist William Waldegrave Lord Radstock to hold European-style evangelistic meetings in their palaces.² These salon meetings soon became popular, even fashionable, in the nation's capital, among a troubled people that was spiritually searching. Tsar Alexander II's Great Reforms were pushing Russia down the painful path of modernity, with the abolition of serfdom, judicial reform, educational reform, urbanisation and industrialisation causing new problems as they solved old ones. Lord Radstock's simple messages of Christ's love, forgiveness, mercy and justice addressed relevant issues, and large numbers of people turned to Christ from among the richest and most influential in the land. When meetings were held in the Russian language by local aristocratic converts, rather than the English and French of Radstock himself, members of the lower classes began to attend, and the gatherings became known for their diversity. Rich and poor joined for extemporaneous prayer, congregational singing and simple sermons calling listeners to allow Christ into their lives. St Petersburg was one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Europe, and the meetings attracted Protestants, Orthodox and Catholics, including Russians, Swedes, Finns, Germans, Poles and even Jews. Both Radstock and his successor, the retired colonel Vasilii Pashkov, emphasised the individual's relationship to Christ, rather than doctrine or denominational politics.

For those who underwent deep conversion experiences, who "found Christ", as Radstock would have said, the movement soon came to fulfil roles previously held by the Church. Not only the Orthodox, but also various Protestant clergy gradually withdrew their support, finding that Radstock and his followers were drawing people away from their congregations. When Radstock departed and Russian aristocrats assumed leadership, the movement grew in number and activity, yet so did Orthodox opposition. By 1884, just ten years after Radstock's arrival, Pashkov and

² For more on Pashkovite ministry overall, see Sharyl Corrado, *The Philosophy of Ministry of Colonel Vasily Pashkov* (M.A. Thesis, Wheaton College, 2000); in Russian, [Sheril Korrado], *Filosofia sluzheniia Polkovnika Pashkova* (St Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2005); or Mark McCarthy, *Religious Conflict and Social Order in Late Nineteenth Century Russia: Orthodoxy, the Protestant Challenge and Sectarianism, 1861–1905* (Ph.D. dissertation, Notre Dame University, 2004).

co-leader Count Modest Korff [Korf] were banished from the country. The state closed down the majority of formal ministries and banned the large public meetings, leading to smaller informal meetings in homes throughout the city, generally led by younger and less educated men, as well as women. The believers were not reunited until the 1890s, when new leaders arose and the political situation allowed them to meet openly for worship. Participants in these “house churches”, many of whom became disillusioned with Orthodoxy, formed the basis of the congregations of Ivan (Johann) Kargel, Wilhelm Fetler, and Ivan Prokhanov in the 1890s and early twentieth century, to which St Petersburg Baptists today trace their roots.

Personal Relationships with Societal Outcasts

Social work was a distinguishing characteristic of the Pashkovites, both when gathering openly in the 1870s–1880s, and later, when meeting in secret. The high society Pashkovites can be profitably compared to Count Leo Tolstoy, whose life was also changed when confronted with the Gospel. Yet while Tolstoy rejected his riches in solidarity with the poor, Pashkovites took a different approach, utilising their wealth and positions in service to God. While philanthropy was popular among Russian high society of the time,³ the degree to which the Pashkovites put their faith into practice contradicted traditional Russian social order and societal norms. Their commitment was mocked by opponents. An Orthodox bishop criticised Pashkov publicly for his practice of “going to homes, and not only of the rich, but also the poor”. Chief Procurator of the Holy Synod Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the lay administrator of the Orthodox Church, reported with concern that the rich aristocrat was visiting the lodgings of lower class coachmen.⁴ Pashkov’s followers soon joined him in this enterprise. In addition, Pashkov and his associates opened schools, orphanages, hospitals, cafeterias, teahouses and shelters; published and distributed inexpensive Christian literature; visited hospitals and prisons; and provided work for the unemployed. Such intimate contact with the lower levels – and

³ See Adele Lindenmeyr, *Poverty is Not a Vice: Charity, Society, and the State in Imperial Russia* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

⁴ [Episkop Feofan], *Pismo k odnomu litsu v S.-Peterburg po povodu poiavleniia tam novogo uchitelia very* (Moscow, 1880), p. 1; K.P. Pobedonostsev, “Vsepoddanneishaia zapiska oberprokurora Sviateishego Sinoda, predstavleniia Gosudariu Imperatoru v Maie 1880 goda”, in *Svedeniia o sekte Pashkovtsev* (n.p., n.d.), p. 1.

even outcasts – of society was unheard of among the aristocracy. Those who have seen the elegant palace of Princess Vera Gagarina on Bolshaia Morskaiia Street in the centre of St Petersburg can appreciate the comment of her niece, Princess Sophië Lieven [Sofia Liven], describing Gagarina's visits to families in poverty:

Anyone who has not been to such an apartment cannot picture it. The stairways smelled like cats and sunflower oil. There were apartments in which each room was rented to several persons, each possessing only a corner. In order to conserve heat, no fresh air was allowed in, and the stench was suffocating... Yet my aunt [Gagarina] rejoiced in suffering this disgrace for the sake of the Lord.⁵

Pashkovites regularly visited hospitals, where both Pashkov and Korff were reported to exercise the gift of healing. When visiting his estate in the Nizhnii Novgorod region, Pashkov held Bible readings in the village hospital each morning at ten o'clock.⁶ German Reformed Pastor Hermann Dalton recalled that a Pashkovite Bible reader regularly visited prostitutes receiving treatment for sexually transmitted diseases. Writing to the British public, journalist William Stead claimed that

It was no uncommon sight to see a great lady, to whom all the salons of St Petersburg were open, scurrying through the streets on a humble droshky, to read and to pray by the bedside of some dying girl in the foul ward of the local hospital. No infection deterred them from the discharge of their self-imposed duties; no place was too dark for them to refuse to illumine it with the radiance of their presence.⁷

Unlike “slumming”, however, in which the upper classes visited the poor

⁵ Sophie Lieven, *Eine Saat, die reiche Frucht brachte* (Basel: Brunnen-Verlag, 1952), p. 43.

⁶ Lieven, *Eine Saat*, p. 16; Modest M. Korff, *Am Zarenhof: Erinnerungen aus der geistlichen Erweckungsbewegung in Rußland von 1874–1884* (Wernigerode am Harz: Licht im Osten, 1927), p. 33; “Zapiska iz del kantseliarii ober-prokurora Sviatishego Sinoda o vrednoi dlia pravoslavnoi tserkvi deiatel'nosti obshchestva pooshreniia dukhovno-nravstvennogo chteniia”, in *Svedeniia*, p. 13.

⁷ Hermann Dalton, “Recent Evangelical Movements in Russia: Lord Radstock and Colonel Pashkoff”, *The Catholic Presbyterian*, vol. 6, no. 32 (August 1881), p. 110; William T. Stead, *Truth About Russia* (London: Cassell and Company, 1888), pp. 355–356.

for entertainment or to soothe a guilty conscience, Pashkovites established long-term relationships with social outcasts, inviting them even into their homes. Pashkov, for example, helped a young woman obtain permission to marry her fiancé, exiled to Siberia, and to accompany him into exile. He also presented her with Christian tracts and inquired about her soul. For five years young Madame Papova lived in exile with her husband, but health problems forced her to return to Moscow. Near death, she was visited in the hospital by the Pashkovite Countess Elena Shuvalova and recognised the booklets offered her as those she had received from Pashkov years before. Pashkov visited her regularly that summer, and when his family returned to St Petersburg for the winter, Papova returned with them, where she was treated in the nearby Mariinskii Hospital. Despite her suffering, this wife of a Nihilist became a witness to the nurses and patients around her, remaining close to the Pashkov family until her death.⁸

Count Aleksei Bobrinskii, the former Minister of Transportation, and Princess Natalie Lieven [Natal'ia Liven], also invited outcasts into their homes, and continued to do so well after Pashkovism had passed its peak. The Lieven palace served as a gathering place for lower class believers as well as aristocrats, and British evangelical teacher Jessie Penn-Lewis noted in 1897 that the princess and her coachmen worshipped together.⁹

When the young Nihilist Nikolai Gorinovich was attacked with sulphuric acid in 1877 and left for dead, blind and burnt beyond recognition, Count Bobrinskii took him into his home. Pashkov had visited Gorinovich in the hospital and after hearing his story, asked him, "Do you wish to hear about my Saviour?" While Gorinovich found it arrogant of him to speak of *my*, rather than *our*, saviour, Pashkov's words about a Jesus who had forgiven his sin and filled his heart with love made an impression. Pashkov again asked if Gorinovich believed. As Gorinovich explained, "I answered 'yes', and from that moment, I had no more doubts. I understood that I had found something that I had never had; I understood that while I could no longer see the light of the sun, I had found the True light."¹⁰ Taken into the Bobrinskii home to recover, despite his disfigurement, the young man

⁸ See "Interesting Incident of the Lord's Work in Russia", in copybook "No. 2" (orange paper inserted in the back of copybook), in the personal archive of Andrew Semenchuk, San Diego, California, USA. Copybooks "No. 1" (in Russian) and "No. 2" (in English), in the Semenchuk personal archive, contain contemporary handwritten accounts of Pashkovite and other pre-revolutionary Russian evangelical ministries.

⁹ Jessie Penn-Lewis, "Reminiscences of My Visit to Russia", *The Friend of Russia*, no. 6 (June 1921), p. 10.

¹⁰ [N.E. Gorinovich], *On liubit' menia* (Gal'bstalt': tipografiia G.Ia. Brauna, n.d.), pp. 3, 5.

married a believer. Pashkovite aristocrat Ada von Krusenstjerna met him in Berlin years later with his wife and two children, where he was learning to weave baskets. "I am happy", he told her, "that I can return to my homeland and teach other blind people the handiwork that I am learning, and tell them about a Jesus who can help them, too, in their troubles."¹¹ Despite the stigma of Gorinovich's revolutionary past, physical disfigurement, and social class, Count Korff also remained in contact with him for years after his own banishment to Europe.

Prison Visitation

Pashkov and his followers also frequently visited prisons. According to Pastor Dalton,

For years, the hours which were formerly devoted to sleep have been spent in visiting the abodes of criminals. And this work has been done in such an unpretending way that scarcely anyone would think of recognising in the gentle and kindly Bible-reader who day after day makes her appearance in the prison-cells, one who bears an honoured and princely name in the Russian metropolis.¹²

Pashkov himself was a frequent visitor to prisons, and many reportedly deserted their lives of crime and misery due to his word and example.¹³ Minister of Justice Count Constantine von der Pahlen [Konstantin fon der Palen] granted Pashkov permission to visit all prisoners in the capital, including political prisoners, a privilege Pashkov lost when Pahlen no longer held the position.¹⁴

Princess Sophie Lieven recalls her aunt Vera Gagarina speaking to a young political prisoner, who claimed that Nihilist teachings were no different than those of Christ to love your neighbour. Upon hearing this,

¹¹ Ada von Krusenstjerna, *Plauderstunden mit meinen Freunden* (Giessen: Brunnen-Verlag, 1937), pp. 44-47. See also Dalton, "Recent Evangelical Movements in Russia", pp. 110-111; Mrs Edward Trotter, *Lord Radstock: An Interpretation and a Record*, 2nd edn (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), p. 195; Korff, *Am Zarenhof*, 34-35; *Khronika sotsialisticheskogo dvizheniia v Rossii 1878-1887: ofitsial'nyi otchet* (Moscow, 1906), pp. 84-85.

¹² Dalton, "Recent Evangelical Movements in Russia", p. 110.

¹³ Emile J. Dillon, "A Russian Religious Reformer", *The Sunday Magazine*, no. 4 (April 1902), pp. 333-334.

¹⁴ Pashkoff Papers, Buswell Library Archives and Special Collections, Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois, USA, fiche II/1/a, pp. 8-9.

the princess asked him if he loved all people. “Yes”, he replied without hesitation. “Even that policeman?” she questioned. Receiving an answer in the negative, the princess reportedly explained: “You see, this is the difference. Jesus Christ teaches us to love all people, just as He died for all, even that policeman.”¹⁵

On another occasion Pashkov visited in prison a young man who had killed a child to rob him of one hundred roubles for something to eat. The murderer, Petr Smirnov, later shot himself, but the police called a doctor to remove the bullet from his breast. Smirnov nonetheless refused to cooperate, and the doctor finally called upon Colonel Pashkov, who had a reputation for calming difficult prisoners. As the young man lay near death, the colonel read aloud to him Luke 15:4-7, about Jesus searching for the lost sheep. At this the prisoner reportedly became alert: “What? Jesus came to rescue the lost? I am a murderer!” When Pashkov assured him that Jesus had come to save even him, Smirnov broke into tears, and Pashkov knelt beside his bed with the man’s hands in his own. Sentenced to hard labour on Sakhalin Island, the murderer witnessed to those around him, distributing Christian literature and New Testaments, which Pashkov regularly provided. Pashkov maintained his relationship with Smirnov for years to come, writing and sending him literature even after his own banishment abroad.¹⁶ Such close and long-term relationships of the highest of society with the lowest – based on personal experience of Christ’s love and genuine desire to share it – demonstrate the power of the Gospel message in the lives of the aristocracy.

Caring for the Poor

One of the most well known of Pashkovite social ministries was an inexpensive cafeteria for the poor of St Petersburg, which reportedly fed up to one thousand people each day. Students especially appreciated the eating-place, with its good food, inexpensive prices and friendly staff.¹⁷ Years later, Princess Sophie Lieven met an elderly Russian believer in Paris, who recalled how he, as a poor student with revolutionary tendencies, had visited the

¹⁵ Lieven, *Eine Saat*, pp. 29-30.

¹⁶ Korff, *Am Zarenhof*, pp. 35-40; Pashkoff Papers II/1/b53, pp. 1-4; Pashkoff Papers II/2/384 and 391. See also “Life of Criminal Smirnov”, in “Interesting Details of the Lord’s Work in Russia”, Pashkoff Papers 3/1; “Life of Criminal Smirnov”, in copybook “No. 1”, in the personal archive of Andrew Semenchuk, San Diego, California, USA, pp. 66-82.

¹⁷ S. Glebov, “Polkovnik Pashkov”, *Missionerskoe obozrenie* (February 1904), p. 204; Lieven, *Eine Saat*, pp. 39-40.

cafeteria regularly for inexpensive soup. The Pashkovites hoped with this eating establishment to deter students from joining the revolutionaries, who also offered material advantages and a sense of security to those who supported their cause.

Although the purpose of the cafeteria was to feed the poor, rather than turn them from their Church, the Orthodox Church viewed it as a threat. In 1882, Chief Procurator Pobedonostsev reported in a confidential memo to the Minister of Internal Affairs, "Mr Pashkov has opened at his own expense a free cafeteria for the poor, into which people are allowed under the condition that they listen to the sermons and teaching of Pashkov and Bobrinskiĭ."¹⁸ A 1912 anti-sectarian report explained, "In order to maintain his sectarian propaganda in our capital, Pashkov created an inexpensive eating-house, where impoverished visitors were fed a cheap meal, even for free, if they demonstrated a tendency toward conversion to sectarianism."¹⁹ Soon the authorities ordered the Bible verses removed from the walls, and later the establishment was closed altogether, one of the cooks expelled from St Petersburg for giving a New Testament to a policeman on the street. Yet three more such soup kitchens were opened in late 1880, feeding 1,800 persons daily for a few kopecks each.²⁰

With their eyes opened by the Gospel message, the Pashkovites also became aware of the social injustice that prevented many from earning a living, and developed a programme to provide income to poor women, offering an alternative to prostitution. Iulia Zasetskaia, daughter of 1812 war hero and poet Denis Davydov, established sewing cooperatives in various districts of St Petersburg, which were taken over by other Pashkovite ladies after Zasetskaia's death in 1882.²¹ Even when public preaching was forbidden, Pashkovite ladies invited poor women to meet in their homes to sew and complete various handicrafts. The sewing and handwork done at these events, however, comprised only a small portion of the overall business. The majority of piecework was completed at home. Participants picked up prepared material at the evening gatherings, returning the work they had completed the previous week, for which they immediately received fair payment. The Pashkovite women arranged social events for

¹⁸ Pobedonostsev, "Vypiska iz konfidentsial'nogo otnosheniia Ober-Prokurora Sviateishego Sinoda k Ministru Vnutrennykh Del ot 22 aprelia 1882 g. za no. 81", in *Svedeniia*, p. 8.

¹⁹ D.I. Bogoliubov, *Kto eto Pashkovtsy, Baptisty i Adventisty?* (St Petersburg, 1912), p. 29.

²⁰ Lieven, *Eine Saat*, 39-40; Untitled document beginning "In 1883 Mr Almanovsky" in copybook "No. 2"; Dalton, "Recent Evangelical Movements in Russia", p. 114.

²¹ McCarthy, *Religious Conflict and Social Order*, p. 133.

the participants in the programme, especially at Easter and Christmastime, in which women and children were fed, entertained and introduced to the Word of God. The society ladies were also responsible for regular visitation of the women from their groups at home.²²

To sell the completed sewing and crafts, Princess Natalie Lieven held an annual bazaar in her palace. Buyers came from all levels of society, high society friends and acquaintances, as well as complete strangers. After a few years, however, this yearly bazaar was closed, as small pieces of malachite began to disappear from the Corinthian columns in the luxurious malachite hall. Other opportunities were found for the distribution of the women's handiwork, including a small shop, which became popular among well-to-do women who made purchases especially at Christmastime for charity purposes. The two Pashkovite salesladies became missionaries in their own store, at times asking their rich customers if they, too, belonged to the Saviour. While not all appreciated such direct questions, some customers were moved by the concern. It is reported that some even visited the shop especially when in need of comfort or admonition.²³

Dr Karl von Mayer [fon Maier], the founder and head doctor of the St Petersburg Evangelical Hospital, oversaw financial matters associated with these sewing circles. He was a close friend of the Korff family, and also preached at various Pashkovite gatherings, where he was loved and revered by the people. Princess Gagarina later recalled her amazement at the doctor's patience. The society women he worked with, in the words of Sophie Lieven, were not typical pious Baptist women:

With noble dispositions and warm hearts, these lively and eccentric women had genuinely turned to the Lord. However, at that time they still lacked in the area of holiness. One friendly, yet naive, ... the other clever and rather critical, and the third shrewd, but explosive as gunpowder, and all generally holding differing opinions[,] ... the meetings were almost always stormy. Dr von Mayer claimed, however, that these meetings were tremendously interesting, and considered them among the most pleasant hours of his life.²⁴

²² See Aleksandr V. Karev, "Russkoe evangelsko-baptistskoe dvizhenie", in M. S. Karetnikova (ed), *Almanakh po istorii russkogo baptizma* (St Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 1997), pp. 130-131; Lieven, *Eine Saat*, pp. 40-45; Korff, *Am Zarenhof*, pp. 47-48.

²³ Lieven, *Eine Saat*, pp. 44-45.

²⁴ Lieven, *Eine Saat*, pp. 41-42.

Dr von Mayer's efforts had consequences lasting well beyond the women's sewing circles. In 1901 his daughter Jenny (Evgeniia), at the time an orphanage volunteer on the Far Eastern penal island of Sakhalin, encountered the criminals exiled to the island for life. Once freed from prison, these men and women were forced to settle on the remote island, yet with no means to earn a living, they remained in poverty and despair. Many soon returned to crime. Following the model her father had used years earlier on the opposite side of the empire, Jenny organised a "home of labour", [*dom trudoliubiia*, literally, "house of industriousness"] providing tailors, shoemakers, carpenters, bookbinders and rugmakers with opportunities to earn an honest living. One hundred men and twenty women participated in this voluntary programme, which included recreation such as Gospel talks and stories on Sunday afternoons. Their products were sold throughout the Far East. Jenny de Mayer later wrote about her call to such work: "I understood soon that the Lord, when sending me out to this Island, had added to this unique *call* the necessary gift of *love* for these most disinherited souls.... He had given me also the gift of organisation and the needed authority" (emphasis in the original).²⁵ Her organisational skills were likely the result of years of participation in similar St Petersburg ministries. Her authority was due to her social class and connections, the benefits of which she used to aid victims of injustice.

Schools and Children's Homes

The Pashkovites also ministered to poor and orphaned children, founding schools, workshops and orphanages in which pupils learned about God, as well as trades and literacy. The authorities monitored these activities closely. Archpriest Filosof Ornatskii considered the "most dangerous" practice of the Pashkovites to be

the raising of small children in a sectarian spirit in Pashkovite shelters and workshops, where children are taught not to pray according to the Orthodox tradition of beginning and ending

²⁵ Jenny E. de Mayer, *Adventures with God in Freedom and in Bond*, 2nd edn (Toronto: Evangelical Publishers, 1948), p. 168. See also A.M., "Podvig russkoi zhenshchiny sredi katorzhnikov na o. Sakhaline", *Tiuremnyi vestnik*, no. 8 (August 1904), pp. 592-594. Correspondence concerning the Home of Labour is found in the *Russkii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv dal'nego vostoka* [Russian State Historical Archives of the Far East] (RGIA DV), Vladivostok, f. 702, op. 3, d. 178.

each day and each activity in prayer, and praying before meals and thanking God afterwards. They are taught not to go to the priest or ask for a priest's blessings. Such a workshop exists now [1903] in St Petersburg, at one of Pashkov's buildings... and one must be shocked that Orthodox parents allow underage children to work there.²⁶

In January 1883 Police Chief Petr Gresser had attempted to close the establishment, accusing Pashkov of failing to properly maintain the property. Pashkov was not easily discouraged, however, explaining that it was not his intention to infringe upon the law, and that the snow piles would be removed shortly.²⁷ His sister-in-law Elizaveta Chertkova also ran a children's shelter in St Petersburg with fellow Pashkovite Mariia Sergeevskaia.²⁸

Schools were opened as well on the provincial estates of various Pashkovites, and some aristocratic ladies themselves taught peasants to read.²⁹ Pashkov supported a school at his estate Matcherka in the Tambov region, in which the teacher gathered her pupils on Sundays to learn hymns from the two Pashkovite hymnbooks, *Favourite Verses* and *Joyful Songs of Zion*.³⁰ She was later transferred from her position by order of the government for engaging in anti-Orthodox religious propaganda.³¹ In February 1884 Bishop Veniamin of Orenburg attacked two schools supported by Pashkov near his copper mines in the Urals, claiming that as well as refusing to honour Orthodox holy days, the schoolmaster distributed Protestant brochures among pupils and in the public library.³² At his estate of Vetoshkino in the Nizhnii Novgorod region, Pashkov maintained not only a hospital, library and homeless shelter, but also a school and an orphanage.³³

Pashkovite influence was felt in children's homes in a variety of countries long after the 1884 banishment of Pashkov and Korff from Russia. As

²⁶ F.N. Ornat'skii, *Sekta Pashkovtsev i otvet na "Pashkovskie voprosy"*, 2nd edn (St Petersburg: Obshchestvo rasprostraneniia religiozno-nravstvennago prosvishcheniia v dukhe Pravoslavnoi tserkvi, 1903), pp. 8-9.

²⁷ Pashkoff Papers II/1/a/7, pp. 11-12.

²⁸ L.N. Tolstoi, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 85 (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo "Khudozhestvennaia literatura", 1935), p. 94.

²⁹ Dillon, "A Russian Religious Reformer", p. 332.

³⁰ "Zapiska iz del kantseliarii", p. 21.

³¹ "In 1883 Mr Almanovskiy" in copybook "No. 2".

³² "Zapiska iz del kantseliarii", pp. 21-22.

³³ "Tainy pashkovskoi usad'by", *Monitor: Nizhegorodskii biznes-ezhenedel'nik*, no. 44, 12-18 November 2001, <http://www.monitor.nnov.ru/2001/number44/art20.phtml> (accessed 2 August 2005).

mentioned above, the daughter of doctor Karl von Mayer, who followed in her father's footsteps in caring for the poor, also started several orphanages on Sakhalin Island. Mayer, whose preparation for ministry included studying to become a medical assistant and joining a sisterhood of the Russian Red Cross, was sent to the Russian penal colony by a charitable society run by a lady-in-waiting to the Empress, to care for the children of convicts. While serving as director of the main orphanage on the island, with seventy children in her immediate care, she founded two smaller regional orphanages, and even more significantly, reorganised the programme of child-raising and trained others to take over and expand the work.³⁴

A Pashkovite in Finland also opened an orphanage. In 1890, believer Laura Grundberg opened a children's home in the village of Kellomäki (now Komarovo, Russia), with the goal of raising the children "in the spirit of evangelical Christianity".³⁵ As Grundberg herself explained, she received new birth from the Lord in 1883 through one of Pashkov's sermons, and wished to serve as a missionary in China. God, however, had prepared for her a different ministry. She opened her "Baby Home" in 1889 with four Estonian orphans, soon joined by two Finnish infants. Soon Russian, Polish and Jewish children arrived, all of whom were raised in the spirit of the Gospel. The children's home went through struggles, threatened by hunger and cold, lacking means to sustain itself, but Grundberg reported that the Lord was faithful, the home remaining open for over two decades. Visitors described the songs and heartfelt prayers of the children. Children raised in the home themselves came to serve as missionaries to those around them.

One of these children even fulfilled the early dream of the home's founder, becoming a missionary to China in the early 1900s. Estonian orphan Anna Renberg, raised in the children's home after her parents' death in 1889, later served with China Inland Mission, where she experienced God's blessing in her ministry to Chinese children.³⁶ In addition, Russian Pashkovite Nikolai Federov founded an orphanage for Eskimo children in Kodiak, Alaska.³⁷ The existence in the early twentieth century of these and similar

³⁴ Sonia E. Howe, "Nachwort", in Jenny E. de Mayer, *Eine Zeugin Jesu Christi in alten und neuen Rußland* (Basel: Brunnen-Verlag, 1948), p. 245.

³⁵ "Detskii Priut", *Bratskii listok*, no. 9 (September 1908), pp. 1-6. (Quote from p. 1).

³⁶ "Detskii Priut", p. 2. See also *Bratskii listok*, no 11 (November 1908), pp. 2-6.

³⁷ Coe Hayne, "A Story of the Founding of the Kodiak Baptist Orphanage in Alaska that is Better than Fiction and a Wonderful Illustration of Gospel Power and Providential Guidance", *Missions* (March 1922), pp. 132-135.

institutions tracing their roots directly to the Pashkovite meetings of the 1870s–1880s provides compelling evidence of the movement’s continuing influence despite the banishment of its leaders and lack of institutional structure.

Homeless Shelters

The Pashkovites also ran shelters for the poor. Iulia Zasetskaia opened the first overnight shelter in St Petersburg for both men and women in 1873, before Pashkov’s own conversion. She ran the shelter herself, personally financing what the five-kopeck nightly fee did not cover, and her efforts attracted the attention of such prominent people as Feodor Dostoevsky and Nikolai Leskov.³⁸ As well as the shelter at his estate of Vestoshkino, Pashkov ran a boarding house for women in one of his homes on Vasil’evskii Island. Private rooms were available to women for eight roubles per month, and shared rooms for three roubles per month. Making use of every opportunity to discredit Pashkov and his followers, the St Petersburg *Novosti* [News] wrote about the suicide of a young woman residing at the shelter, indicating that the woman had gone insane due to religious pressure. Although he normally avoided public debate, Pashkov chose to make an exception in this case, since, as he explained, “The article does not attack me personally, but casts a shadow on the way of Truth.”³⁹ Jenny de Mayer also opened a shelter for homeless ex-convicts on Sakhalin Island, and another on the nearby mainland at Nikolaevsk-na-Amure.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 provided unique opportunities for the believers to put their faith into practice. The war became first a catalyst for prayer meetings, with Pashkovites of all classes and nationalities meeting to pray that the shed of blood might be avoided.⁴⁰ It also became an opportunity for acts of love and compassion. Pastor Hermann Dalton recorded

³⁸ Nikolai Nasedkin, *Dostoevskii entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Algoritm, 2003), p. 596-597. See also McCarthy, *Religious Conflict and Social Order*, p. 133.

³⁹ Pashkoff Papers, II/1/a/19, pp. 19, 18-22.

⁴⁰ According to a letter from Ivan Kargel, “Russians, Germans, Lithuanians, Swedes, Estonians, Finns and Englishmen found themselves together in Pashkov’s home for this purpose”. Cited in Jakob Kroeker, “Der achtzigjährige Verfasser. Zur Einführung”, in Johann G. Kargel, *Zwischen den Enden der Erde unter Brüdern in Ketten* (Wernigerode am Harz: Licht im Osten, 1928), p. ix.

that many society ladies left their comfortable homes to serve as volunteer nurses. When the wounded were brought to the hospital, Dalton recognised a “plainly-dressed lady” known only as a “Sister of Mercy” – actually a princess – reading the Word of God to a dangerously wounded soldier.⁴¹ Ada von Krusenstjerna recalled sewing for wounded soldiers, while some evenings were spent with soldiers in the Mikhailovskii Palace, which had been turned into a military hospital.⁴² St Petersburg author Elizabeth Ward de Charrière based a novel on Pashkovite activities during the Turkish War. According to scholar Edmund Heier, the novel is fictional in its storyline alone, as dates and accounts of battles are accurate. In each scene the reader finds a Pashkovite comforting those who have lost a loved one, serving the wounded in a military hospital, or in the midst of a battlefield, coinciding with the actual activities of the Pashkovites at that time.⁴³ Certain scenes in the novel appear to be based on the ministries of Dr Karl von Mayer, who led fifty to sixty women volunteers to establish field hospitals near Shipka Pass and Plevna (Plevna) in the Balkans, locations of major battles. As well as serving the wounded, the volunteers worked with prisoners of war, distributing 23,000 copies of the Scriptures before the war’s end.⁴⁴

Misunderstood Philanthropy

The generosity and selflessness of the Pashkovites, while well intentioned, was not without problems. Some people exploited Pashkovite generosity, and rumours spread that Pashkov was “buying” followers at so many roubles per head.⁴⁵ A 1904 article in the Orthodox *Missionerskoe obozrenie* [Missionary Review] claimed that two different types of people attended Pashkov’s meetings: those seeking connections and those seeking handouts.⁴⁶ Some even suggested that Pashkov was victim of a peculiar

⁴¹ Dalton, “Recent Evangelical Movements in Russia”, p. 110.

⁴² Ada von Krusenstjerna, *Im Kreuz hoffe und siege ich*, 7th edn (Giessen: Brunnen Taschenbuch, 1962), pp. 85-86.

⁴³ [Elizabeth Ward de Charrière], *Serge Batourine: Scènes des Temps Actuels en Russe* (Paris, 1879, 1882). See also Edmund Heier, *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy 1860-1900, Radstockism and Pashkovism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970), pp. 77-78.

⁴⁴ *Religious Tract Society*, No. 5, 1877, pp. 123-124; cited in McCarthy, *Religious Conflict and Social Order*, p. 106. His daughter Jenny de Mayer established similar field hospitals in Manchuria in 1900 during China’s Boxer Rebellion.

⁴⁵ Stead, *Truth About Russia*, pp. 360-361. According to Stead, there were rumours that Pashkov paid cabmen three roubles to listen to his talk, and that he paid peasants as much as they would have earned from sunrise to sunset.

⁴⁶ S. Glebov, “Polkovnik Pashkov”, *Missionerskoe obozrenie* (January 1904), p. 84.

type of blackmail, choosing a path of virtue to dispense with his wealth.

Yet a more serious accusation was that Pashkov and others were using their wealth as a “fearsome and purely demonic” means to “seduce” the poor into joining their sect.⁴⁷ Pobedonostsev claimed that Pashkov required those he served to listen to preaching, and various Orthodox reports indicated that Pashkov refused to assist those remaining in the Orthodox Church. According to an 1896 report, when peasants in the village of Aleksandrovka requested wood from his forests to build an Orthodox Church, Pashkov refused them. Another report indicated that when an Orthodox woman turned to Pashkov for financial help after her home burned down, Pashkov scolded her: “You got what you deserved... That’s how God is punishing you. How many times have I told you that you are clothed in the devil and do not believe in Christ?” Another anti-Pashkovite article claimed that the works of charity were not done in love, but were “a type of payment for their betrayal of Orthodoxy.”⁴⁸ Yet such accusations were printed decades after Pashkov’s exile. Earlier enemies did not bring evidence of this type against him, and in fact there are recorded cases of Pashkov’s aid to Orthodox believers and others. Pastor Dalton in 1881 recorded that Pashkovite donations were being distributed “with the sole desire that the Lord Jesus should be honoured in the person of the poor and the afflicted.”⁴⁹

Publishing and Literature Distribution

Lord Radstock, Colonel Pashkov and their followers were also aware of the growing literacy of the population and the unavailability of appropriate reading material, as well as the spiritual hunger felt by many during this time of change and social unrest. Following the example of the Religious Tract Society of London, they soon began printing and distributing literature to assist people in their spiritual journeys.⁵⁰ In 1876 they founded the Society for the Encouragement of Spiritual and Moral Reading, the goal of which was to make Old and New Testaments, as well as religious and moral literature, available to the common people.⁵¹ During the eight years of the society’s existence (1876-84), it published more than two hundred

⁴⁷ Bogoliubov, *Kto eto Pashkovtsy*, pp. 29-30.

⁴⁸ Ornatskii, *Sekta Pashkovtsev*, p. 8.

⁴⁹ Pobedonostsev, “Vypiska”, p. 8; “Sluchainaia vstrecha moia i beseda s Pashkovym (Iz dnevnika Missionera)”, *Missionerskoe obozrenie*, no. 1 (January 1896), p. 78; Bogoliubov, *Kto eto Pashkovtsy*, pp. 29-30; Dalton, “Recent Evangelical Movements in Russia”, p. 114.

⁵⁰ Dalton, “Recent Evangelical Movements in Russia”, p. 108.

⁵¹ “Pashkovtsy”, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’*, vol. 23 (St Petersburg: I.A. Efron, 1898), p. 63.

brochures, some of which appeared in up to twelve editions. The society was founded with the approval of the Holy Synod and strove not to publish material in opposition to Orthodox teaching. They included among their publications Orthodox writers such as St Tikhon Zadonskii, which Pobedonostsev approved wholeheartedly.⁵²

The first tracts published by the new society, however, were translations from English and German tracts circulating in the West. Others were written by Radstock, and over time by the Pashkovites themselves. Not all their literature was initially successful. Early editions of popular English tracts were translated precisely, tolerating “no change of the Jameses and Johns of the original into the more current Jacob Fedorovitch and Ivan Ivanovitch of the language into which the tracts were rendered”. Yet the well-intentioned aristocrats of St Petersburg could perhaps not be blamed for this oversight, speaking French, German and English at home, and having travelled throughout their lives. According to Pastor Dalton, these difficulties were overcome with time.⁵³

An 1881 letter from Chief Procurator Pobedonostsev to Count Korff well illustrates early problems with the publications, as well as efforts on the part of the Pashkovites to correct them. After some Pashkovite literature had been reviewed by the Holy Synod, Pobedonostsev granted permission to continue distribution, but noted:

I cannot help but mention that it would be best if you withdrew from circulation the book “Favourite Verses”. It is written in such disgraceful language, filled with religious affectation connected with the strange worship services held in Pashkov’s home, such that it would be sensible on your part to withhold it.

Of the books, several I can praise and approve... But in many I see such lack of taste and estrangement from the soul and way of life of the people, that I cannot cease to marvel at who would have thought of including them among reading for the common people. What a funny and alien understanding, how artificial all those careless translations, how full of misprints, and tales imbued with affectations, using English names and forms artificially taken from the English way of life!

Pity that such affairs are obviously handled by people who

⁵² See “Pashkovtsy”, *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar’*, p. 63; Ornatkii, *Sekta Pashkovtsev*, p. 7.

⁵³ Dalton, “Recent Evangelical Movements in Russia”, p. 109.

are in no way Russian, estranged from Russian life, and unfamiliar with the treasure of our native spiritual literature which the people understand.⁵⁴

Despite Pobedonostsev's strong criticism, Pashkovite literature – and the songbooks in particular – became extremely popular, and were distributed not only in the capital, but in the provinces as well. *Russkii Rabochii* [The Russian Workman], an eight-page monthly newspaper geared to the working class, by 1882 had approximately three thousand subscribers. There are estimates that, had the government not interfered, circulation would likely have reached five to six thousand monthly.⁵⁵

The Pashkovite Legacy

The Pashkovite story is often considered to end in 1884, when Pashkov and Korff were banished abroad, much of the literature removed from circulation, and public meetings forbidden. Yet quietly, privately or in cooperation with Orthodox and secular aid societies, Pashkovites continued to reach out to their communities and country. Prison and hospital visitation in the capital continued. Large donations were still given to worthy causes. Bible distribution continued in prisons throughout Siberia. Western preachers such as Friedrich Baedeker, Otto Stockmayer, George Mueller, and Jessie Penn-Lewis visited St Petersburg to encourage and teach the believers. Those raised in the movement eventually began their own ministries throughout Russia and even internationally.

While histories of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in pre-revolutionary Russia emphasise the church as an institution – the development of its doctrine, structure, traditions and relationship with the state – on a daily basis, the young evangelical movement was known for its actions, the role it played in society. The message of Radstock and Pashkov penetrated not only the expressed beliefs of their followers, but their values, priorities and ways of life. Reputation and social position no longer held their previous attraction, as Pashkovites gave up prestigious positions, willingly faced scorn, and associated with the lower class. Pashkov himself accepted public mockery, refusing to defend himself in print.⁵⁶ The comforts of the

⁵⁴ K.P. Pobedonostsev to M.M. Korff, 2 August 1881, in copybook “No. 1”, pp. 245-247.

⁵⁵ Stead, *Truth About Russia*, p. 340.

⁵⁶ Ioann Ianishev and V.A. Pashkov, “Sushchnost’ ucheniia g. Pashkova, izlozhennaia im samim”, *Tserkovnii vestnik*, no. 19 (10 May 1880), pp. 3-7.

high-society lifestyle lost their importance, as Pashkovites spent time in prisons, hospitals, slums and peasant huts. Wealth was turned over to the cause of the Gospel, with riches devoted to charitable causes and private homes converted into shelters, schools, hospitals and book warehouses. Leisure time and even sleep were devoted to the cause of Christ, as days were filled with preaching, travelling, personal work and social outreach. A shared faith led to close relationships with those of other social groups, while relationships with former high-society associates lost their appeal. Public meetings were indeed a crucial element of the Pashkovite revival, yet it was in their social outreach that the Gospel message became visible to the Russian public.

Pashkovite social work, more so than their teaching, drew attention to the movement. Pashkov was careful to avoid theological debate, remaining silent on controversial issues. The content of his teaching, therefore, aroused comparatively little criticism, at least initially, when Pashkov's teaching was considered compatible with Orthodoxy. Literature published by the Pashkovites was approved by the censor, even the conservative Pobedonostsev writing to Korff that he "did not find in [the Pashkovite literature] any reason to hinder their sale or distribution".⁵⁷ An Orthodox priest confided to Professor Emile Dillon that "Paschkoff was doing excellent work, and doing it better than many of ourselves".⁵⁸ Countess Aleksandra Tolstaia defended Radstock to her nephew Leo Tolstoy, who included positive depictions of Pashkovite outreach in his novel *Anna Karenina*.⁵⁹

But the changed priorities of the Pashkovites also led to criticism. When the results became evident, the Orthodox Church felt threatened by the Pashkovite activities, as they drew people from the Church. An Orthodox priest, for example, complained that church attendance in his village had dwindled to zero. He informed a high official sent to investigate that the congregation was "probably holding a meeting in the *izba* [hut] of one of their own peasants".⁶⁰ General Evgenii Bogdanovich, warden of St Isaac's Cathedral near Pashkov's home, also felt threatened by the Pashkovite cafeteria, requesting money from state secretary Aleksandr Polovtsov in 1883 to open a free soup kitchen that would "surpass the inexpensive cafeteria

⁵⁷ K.P. Pobedonostsev to M.M. Korff, 2 August 1881, in copybook "No. 1", p. 244.

⁵⁸ Dillon, "A Russian Religious Reformer", p. 333. See also p. 334.

⁵⁹ Lev N. Tolstoy, *Perepiska L.N. Tolstogo s grafinei A.A. Tolstoi, 1857-1903* (St Petersburg, 1911), pp. 267-268; Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (New York: Viking, 2001), p. 224.

⁶⁰ Robert Sloan Latimer, *Under Three Tsars: Liberty of Conscience in Russia 1865-1909* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1909), pp. 166-167.

run by Pashkov". Polovtsov refused, however, explaining that he did not understand religious conflict over cooking, and had no sympathy for hand-outs in any case.⁶¹ Pashkovite generosity, despite good intentions, was not always appreciated by Church or State.

Despite such problems, however, Pashkovites remained actively involved in their society. While operating openly for less than ten years, their impact remained long after the initial leaders were banished abroad. Indeed, their programmes of Bible and literature distribution, home-based meetings, hospital and prison visitation, and charity caused the movement to live on for generations. Many practices of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the former Soviet Union have roots in the Pashkovite movement, and with the emigration abroad of many of those involved in the movement, their influence spread to Europe, North America and around the world. Christians today have much to learn from their example.

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⁶¹ A.A. Polovtsov, *Dnevnik gosudarstvennogo sekretaria A.A. Polovtsova*, vol. 1 (1883–1886) (Moscow: Nauka, 1966), p. 69.

Ivan Kargel and the Pietistic Community of Late Imperial Russia

Gregory Nichols

The Christian Church may be viewed as a rich tapestry of communities connected through time and space. One method often used to define particular connections between communities is to identify “reoccurring types” within the Universal Church, seeking to identify groups which share distinctive characteristics, yet are separated chronologically and geographically. According to theologian James McClendon, “what is vital is not that these movements influenced one another (though no doubt they sometimes did), but that under certain circumstances they took up in turn, in their own ways, a particular understanding of the gospel and of the Christian life”.¹ In the development of the evangelical movement in the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century, we find a variety of Christian groups of the same reoccurring type, rooted in different geographic areas and founded at different times and under different circumstances.

Late nineteenth-century Russia saw the coexistence of communities of German Pietists, Anabaptists, German Baptists, British Pietists, Russian Baptists, Russian Stundists, and later, representatives of the Holiness movement. These communities shared certain reoccurring defining themes, including commitment to the Bible as the source of truth, commitment to a visible Christian lifestyle, and a desire for evangelism. Although each held these three points to be crucial to its existence, they differed in how to apply

¹ James William McClendon, Jr., “The Baptist and Mennonite vision”, in Paul Toews (ed), *Mennonites and Baptists: a Continuing Conversation* (Winnipeg: Kindred Press, 1993), p. 214.

them to the work of God's kingdom. The communities found themselves together in the Russian Empire for different reasons, yet shared a commitment to the supremacy of the Bible, the understanding that belonging to Christ's body was more than membership in a parish, and a desire to spread the Gospel. As they came into contact with each other, they found that they were kindred spirits on many points. However, due to cultural differences, independently developed traditions, and their unique positions in the empire, while their histories overlapped, they functioned separately. By the mid-Soviet period, the sole representatives of this "reoccurring community" in Communist Russia were the Evangelical Christians-Baptists. The so-called "Baptists" in the Soviet era were a blend of several historical communities, each with a rich and unique history, but sharing the same emphasis on the Bible, a Christian lifestyle and evangelism. The crucible of the Soviet Union in which Russian Evangelical Christians-Baptists were formed contained separate religious communities forced into one organisation under intense pressure.

Ivan Veniaminovich [Johann G.] Kargel is a prime representative of this "reoccurring type". His statement of faith, written in 1913, united Soviet Protestants under the umbrella of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptist in 1944. His pastoral teaching in various Bible schools transmitted a belief in the centrality of the Bible to future leaders in the Russian evangelical world. His writings, with their concentration on holiness, provided believers in the nineteenth, twentieth and even twenty-first centuries with the spiritual vision to remain a vibrant Christian community despite an oppressive spiritual climate.

Kargel's theology developed throughout his life under a variety of influences. He began his Christian ministry in the embryonic Russian Baptist church in Tiflis. From there he travelled to the Mennonite community of Molotschna [Molochna] in southern Russia and attended the second conference of the emerging Mennonite Brethren in 1873. In 1874, he attended formal pastoral training in Hamburg offered by Johann Gerhard Oncken and the German Baptists. Hence, in these early years of ministry, he was exposed to Russian Baptists, Anabaptists, German Pietists and German Baptists. After pastoring a German Baptist Church in the Volhynia region (today part of Poland and Ukraine), he moved to St Petersburg in 1875 at the height of the revival among the aristocracy, where he was exposed to Victorian evangelicalism. In 1880 he founded the Baptist movement in Bulgaria, remaining until 1884, when he moved back to St Petersburg and was fully won over to the ideals of the Holiness movement, which he

encountered at the Lieven palace.² The fruits of these various spiritual and theological influences are evident in his later writings, giving him a unique place among the Russian evangelicals.

Ivan Kargel was baptised by Nikita Voronin, considered the first Russian Baptist, in Tiflis in 1869.³ The Tiflis church contained a unique blend of cultures. It had been started by Martin Kalweit [Kal'veit], a member of the Baptist church in Memel (today Klaipeda, Lithuania), who had been sent by the Memel church as a “tentmaker” artisan to spread the Baptist faith. In a letter to Oncken, he described the early worship services:

As some of us are Russian and some German, we use both languages in our services and sing hymns from a Russian collection, as well as from the *Glaubenstimme*. Some of the hymns are the same, and suit the same tune, but the German are the favourites, even with those who understand Russian best, as the words are simpler and the tunes more lively.⁴

Within months of his baptism, Kargel was accepted in the Hamburg Missionary School operated by Oncken, the father of the continental Baptist movement. It was possibly Kalweit who identified Kargel as a potential Baptist leader and, because Kargel's mother tongue was German, submitted his name to Oncken. In the autumn of 1869, Kargel and sixteen other men from central Europe and the Russian Empire were accepted to the Hamburg school. However, classes were postponed due to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. The school was to be reopened in February 1872, but it was postponed until spring of 1874 for lack of funds.

² The home of Princess Natalie Lieven [Nataliia Liven] in St Petersburg was a meeting point for many of the Russian aristocracy influenced by the Victorian Holiness revivals. When the main Russian sponsor of the revivals, Colonel Vasilii Pashkov, was exiled in 1884, the Lieven home became the central meeting point of locals and visiting foreigners interested in the Holiness Movement and evangelical activity. Kargel held Bible classes at the home.

³ Kargel wrote that he was converted [*bekehr*t] in Tiflis in 1869. Johann G. Kargel, *Zwischen den Enden der Erde unter Brüdern in Ketten* (Wernigerode am Harz: Licht im Osten, 1928), p. VIII. Princess Sophie Lieven [Sofia Liven] wrote in her short tribute to Kargel after his death that he had told her that he sang in a church choir as a youth and was brought to knowledge of his sinfulness by the words of the songs. See S.P. Liven, “Kratkii ocherk zhizni i deiatel'nosti brata I.V. Kargelia”, *Evangel'skaia vera*, vol. 9, no. 1 (1940), p. 8.

⁴ M. Kalweit, “Extension of the German Baptist Mission into Asia and Africa”, *Quarterly Reporter of the German Baptist Mission*, vol. 47 (October 1869), p. 382.

Mennonite Brethren

Kargel, however, did not waste his time waiting for classes in Hamburg to begin. In 1873, he found his way to the Mennonite communities in the Molotschna region (now part of Ukraine). One year earlier, in 1872, the first official meeting of the Mennonite Brethren had taken place in the German settlement of Andreasfeld. The Mennonite Brethren are a group within the Mennonite community influenced by Pietistic Lutheran preachers and German Baptists. They became convinced in 1872 that religious renewal of the individual must be evident after conversion and that immersion was the Biblical mode of baptism, rejecting the historic Anabaptist use of the mode of pouring. Kargel attended their conference in Klippenfeld in 1873, and during these meetings, received his calling into fulltime ministry.⁵ There he met Karl Ondra, a Polish-born German who had been ordained in 1866 to serve as a Baptist missionary among the Germans in Poland. Ondra had already baptised over seven hundred people in Volhynia by the time he met Kargel. It is likely that Ondra was sent to the Germans in Molotschna because they wanted to learn about immersion from the Baptists. At Ondra's suggestion, Kargel moved to Soroczin [Sorotschin], Volhynia (in present-day Poland) to pastor a German Baptist church. While involved in this ministry, he received word that the school in Hamburg was to be reopened. Both he and Karl Ondra, a returning student, left their ministries in Poland to attend the Hamburg Missionary School.

One of the important influences passed on by German Baptists to the Mennonite Brethren was their style of leadership and organisation. The Mennonite Brethren learned skills and practices from the German Baptists which led to a new administrative structure altogether. This included scheduled business meetings, standardised worship services, mission strategy and an overarching conference structure.⁶ Kargel learned these things well while in Hamburg. He also took hold of Oncken's version of the Baptist faith, including a strong Calvinistic approach to scripture, the centrality of pastoral authority and a strong emphasis on missions and evangelism. Oncken's detailed statement of faith sank deeply into all the Hamburg students, including Kargel.

In Hamburg, Kargel began to understand more profoundly his German

⁵ Johann G. Kargel, "Missionsreisen des Br. Kargel", *Missionsblatt aus der Brüdergemeinde* [Herrnhut], vol. 32, no. 5 (1874), pp. 83-88.

⁶ John B. Toews, "Baptists and Mennonite Brethren in Russia (1790-1930)", in Paul Toews (ed), *Mennonites and Baptists: a Continuing Conversation*, p. 95.

heritage. He was raised in a German household, but only his father was German. He had lived within the German colonies of the Russian Empire with their own distinct understanding of the German way of life. In Hamburg, he was in a Lutheran culture, no longer a colonist separated from the rich history of the homeland, but in his *Vaterland*. He returned to Soroczin as a German Baptist, echoing the voice of Oncken and implementing the tools that he had learned in Bible school.

Cultural Tensions

Many of the graduates from the Bible school in Hamburg seem to have adopted a certain confidence in the German culture, worldview and order, leading to conflicts when they worked as missionaries in other cultures. Such a conflict arose in the Russian context. Vasilii V. Ivanov, who later became a missionary to the Caucasus and Ukraine, explained that in Tiflis,

the Russian Baptists wanted to hold to many Molokan practices in the service, such as singing psalms in the Molokan way, and performing bows during singing and prayers and so on... [The Germans] wanted to toss out everything Russian and Molokan from the service and set up everything in the German manner.⁷

Vasilii Pavlov, who rose to leadership in the small German-Russian Baptist church in Tiflis, had been sent in 1875 to Oncken's missionary school in Hamburg, where he learned the German methods of church structure, orderly meetings and an overarching conference organisation. As Pavlov moved into the upper leadership of the Russian Baptists and remained there for years to come, he set a precedent for future implementation of German patterns in Russia.

Despite the tension between the German Baptist ways and the early ethnically Russian Baptist perspective, eventually Oncken's missionary preachers prevailed, and the Russian Baptists of the Caucasus developed strong ties to the German movement and copied their style of ecclesiology.⁸

⁷ *Gosudarstvennyi muzei istorii religii* [State Museum of the History of Religion] (GMIR), koll. I, op. 8, d. 516, l. 24ob; cited in Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905–1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), p. 96.

⁸ For political reasons, German-speaking Baptists in the Russian lands remained separate

Some early Russian Baptists found the German style cold and rigid. It was considered too confining for the Russian soul, which longed for an unstructured religious expression. They sought to combine Baptist theology with an Orthodox feel.⁹ The Russian Orthodox Church provided such an unstructured environment, but the Baptists considered the Orthodox Church full of false teaching and an un-Christian lifestyle. But even Ivanov was impressed during a trip to Poland, where he visited the German Baptists.

In a letter the following year (1900), Ivanov wrote of the mixed feelings he had had upon observing the lives of German Baptists in Poland.¹⁰ While he observed orderliness in their congregations, he had also felt a "cold formality". Yet he was discouraged by the Russian believers' inability to achieve a formal organisation like that of the Germans. Instead of practical advice, he claimed, the Russians seemed interested in borrowing from the Germans only that which "gratifies bodily feeling, bare phrases such as 'My sins are forgiven'".¹¹

In the 1870s, the Europe-wide conference of German-speaking Baptists paid special attention to the work in the Russian Empire. In 1869, Oncken stated,

The prospects in Russia among my countrymen ... are glorious indeed. I have at present with me a brother from the South, who is passing through a course of instruction to be initiated in to the practical working of a New Testament church. He will return in May or June (D.V.), and if I possibly can, I propose to accompany him. Numbers of converts are waiting there to be baptized, and to be united into churches of Christ. I have no doubt in my own mind that these churches are destined by

from the Russian Baptists. As colonists, laws governing them were different than those over Russian subjects. Neither nationals nor foreigners were permitted to convert Russians from Orthodoxy.

⁹ The early Russians who became Baptists had been influenced heavily by their Russian Orthodox culture. They felt that Christianity should have a certain amount of liturgy, ceremony, mystery and connection to the historic Orthodox Church. Despite the fact that most of them came from the Molokan sect within Russian Orthodoxy, they maintained certain practices in common with all the Orthodox Church such as bows, reading prayers and hymnology. Some early Russian believers attracted to the Baptist teaching on adult baptism felt that the free-church worship style was nonetheless foreign to their understanding of Christian worship.

¹⁰ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, p. 97.

¹¹ GMIR, koll. 1, op.8, folder 1, 1. 287, cited in Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, p. 97.

the Head of the church, ultimately to affect the first breach in the great Greek Church of the Russian Empire.¹²

Graduates from Oncken's school did make their way into the Russian Empire and much talk in the following conferences was concerned with the inroads of the Baptist faith into the heartland of Orthodoxy. However, Oncken did not acknowledge that Anabaptist communities had already existed within the Orthodox land, and that much of Oncken's harvest was among these German-speaking groups, rather than the native Russian population. Oncken's influence, combined with the classic Pietistic preaching of the Mennonite communities, led to the formation of the Mennonite Brethren.¹³

The idea of annual conferences was passed on from the Germans to the evangelical communities within Russia. This was certainly not unique to the German Baptists – the Evangelical Alliance had long practiced annual conferences as a place to exchange ideas, give reports and scout for potential leadership – but the whole-hearted endorsement of the Germans certainly added credibility to the new organisations in Russia. Both Mennonite Brethren and Russian Baptists held conferences on the German model.

St Petersburg

In August 1874, Kargel finished his studies in Hamburg and returned to his ministry in Poland as pastor of the Soroczin Baptist church and itinerant evangelist and church planter. He was thoroughly convinced of what he had learned in Hamburg. After working in rural western Poland for several months, his colleagues in Hamburg asked him to temporarily fill the position of pastor in the small German Baptist church in St Petersburg, which had been founded in 1855. He ministered among the Germans in St

¹² Cited in "Mission in Germany", *Baptist Missionary Magazine* [American Baptist Missionary Union, Boston], vol. 49, no. 2 (July 1869), p. 278.

¹³ Another group tracing its roots to Oncken and German pietism are the communities we call "Stundists". As the Gospel message spread from the German colonists into the Russian population, the Russians formed house church groups, called "Stunda", from the German *Stunde*, meaning "hour". The Stundists have a history of their own, because for legal reasons, they could not have fellowship with the German communities. The Stundists suffered under harsh measures of persecution from the Russian Orthodox Church, and were considered the most dangerous sect in nineteenth-century Russia by the secret police. The Stundist groups would eventually become affiliated with either the Russian Baptist movement or the Evangelical Christian movement.

Petersburg for five years, building the congregation on the German model, and saw membership grow from thirty-four in 1876 to sixty in 1880.¹⁴ Kargel was the first person to register a religious body in Russia under a new law in 1879 allowing “corporation rights and state recognition” to foreign congregations.¹⁵ He continued to tie the St Petersburg congregation to the Hamburg conferences, where he was often the centre of attention as word spread of his success in Russia.¹⁶ Beginning in 1876, Kargel received financial support from the American Baptists through the German Baptist Union.

This also happened to be the period of the evangelical revival in St Petersburg among the Russian aristocracy, instigated by the preaching of the British evangelist Granville Waldegrave – Lord Radstock. In 1874, Lord Radstock had begun his preaching ministry in Russia, teaching the Victorian version of evangelicalism and revival in the salons of the Petersburg high society. Dr Frederick Baedeker, who also preached this form of Christianity, was in Russia at that time as well, travelling and teaching the Christian ideals and spreading the teachings of the Evangelical Alliance. Thus, while in St Petersburg, Kargel became acquainted with Victorian evangelicalism, which reflected a pietistic understanding of the church rather than a denominational approach.¹⁷

¹⁴ In April 1876, Kargel reported that after a baptism, the congregation had thirty-four members. (“Russia. St Petersburg”, *Quarterly Reporter of the German Baptist Mission* (April 1876), p. 8.) In July 1878, Kargel reported that he had forty-five attendees, but that he had rented a hall that seated 150. (“Mission to the Germans”, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, vol. 57, no. 7, (July 1877 [sic]), p. 274. [The date is misprinted on the cover of the journal; it is actually 1878, the sixty-fourth report of the American Baptist Missionary Union.]) In his fourth quarter report of 1879, Kargel reported that membership of the St Petersburg congregation was sixty. (“Recognition of the Church at St Petersburg, Russia”, *Baptist Missionary Magazine*, vol. 60 (May 1880), p. 125.) Presumably attendance was larger than membership, because in January 1880, Kargel reported that the meetinghouse was too small. (“St Petersburg”, *Quarterly Reporter of the German Baptist Mission* (January 1880), p. 9.)

¹⁵ For Kargel’s description of taking the oath of allegiance to the Tsar see “Erste Frucht der neuen Freiheit in Russland”, *Der Wahrheitszeuge: eine Zeitschrift für Gemeinde und Haus* (April 1880), p. 54.

¹⁶ “Russia, Further news from St Petersburg”, *Quarterly Reporter of the German Baptist Mission* (April 1877), p. 4.

¹⁷ When I refer to a “Pietistic understanding” of the church, I am describing a perspective that understands Christian fellowship to be based on the evidence of a personal relationship with Christ, which has transformed the individual. The visibly changed life is a clearer marker of true faith than membership in a denomination or the verbal assent to a doctrinal creed. When I refer to a “denominational approach”, I am describing a perspective that emphasises denominational differences to the point of being narrowly exclusive with their

Lord Radstock's particular stream of Pietism is flavoured by his background in the Open Brethren Church,¹⁸ his involvement in the Evangelical Alliance and the romanticism of the Victorian era in England. Beginning in 1880, Radstock regularly attended conferences of the Keswick Movement, which promoted the "Higher Life" ideal of holiness and pietism. He found the conferences inspirational and relationally beneficial.¹⁹ His activity in England among military officers and aristocracy focused on the pietistic teaching that believers are to be in constant fellowship with Christ, and the holiness teaching that believers are to move from the initial conversion experience to a second work of God, that of sanctification.

As Radstock brought these beliefs to St Petersburg, he became involved in the revival of the Christian faith. From his perspective, evangelism of the lost was necessary, but if the established church lacked true spiritual life, the effects of evangelism would be hampered. The established churches must therefore be revived for the Gospel to bear much fruit. Radstock did not oppose the leaders of the Orthodox Church, but wanted a revival to happen in their midst. His pietistic teaching emphasised that the true Church was entered through faith, rather than baptism, catechism or membership. Radstock never spoke against any denomination, but sought only revival. He did not try to understand the Orthodox Church's schisms, leaders or theology. As a layperson, he was not interested in the study of theology. His primary goal was to bring people to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Their church affiliation was of little concern.

Radstock's Victorian evangelicalism touched the souls of the Russian aristocracy, and soon his meetings were overflowing with the Russian elite. When Radstock permanently left Russia in 1878, the movement became known as Pashkovism, after Vasilii Aleksandrovich Pashkov, retired Colonel of the Guard and founder of the Society for the Encouragement of Spiritual and Moral Reading. This society printed and distributed Christian literature throughout the Russian Empire. Pashkov and his followers subsidised its periodicals, pamphlets, hymnals and books, and soon Pashkov became the driving force behind the revivalism. Pashkov endeavoured to continue

Christian fellowship. The two perspectives are not mutually exclusive, but in a mission setting, one seeks to "tend what is blooming" while the other tries to reproduce an exact copy of itself.

¹⁸ The Open Brethren were a non-partisan Brethren party which evolved as John Nelson Darby and B.W. Newton split the Plymouth Brethren in the late 1820s in England. Darby and the Brethren were the seedbed for Dispensational theology.

¹⁹ Mrs Edward Trotter, *Lord Radstock: an Interpretation and a Record* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1914), p. 80.

the vision of Radstock and soon formed connections with the Evangelical Alliance.²⁰ Pashkov and other likeminded Russian aristocrats made a deep impression on Kargel, who began attending Pashkovite prayer meetings regularly in 1875. Nonetheless, he remained a German Baptist pastor, working among the German population of St Petersburg and reporting to the German Baptist Union.

Bulgaria

Kargel's model of ministry changed slightly in 1880, when he married a friend of the Pashkov family and moved to Bulgaria. Kargel had been ill due to the climate of St Petersburg, when he heard A. Libikh [Liebig], president of the Russian-Romanian Association, suggest Bulgaria as a mission field at the 11th Union Conference of Baptists in Germany in July 1879. Kargel later read a letter from a group of Congregationalists in Kazanluk who no longer believed in infant baptism and asked for someone to come and rebaptise them²¹. Kargel's support from the American Baptists was cancelled soon after he moved to Bulgaria, and he began to receive funding from and report directly to Pashkov,²² who was beginning to replace Oncken as a spiritual mentor in his life. However, by the act of baptising Congregationalists, Kargel was still acting within a German Baptist model. Rather than being concerned solely with revival, he wished to start a Baptist community in Bulgaria.

His denominational loyalties were beginning to change, however. Kargel was a key player in Pashkov's attempt to create a Russian Evangelical Alliance. Baedeker had travelled to St Petersburg and shared the vision of the Evangelical Alliance with Pashkov, who had the financial resources to organise such an organisation. With the support of Baedeker, Kargel and Count Modest Korff [Korf],²³ Pashkov brought together leaders from

²⁰ The Evangelical Alliance was founded in London in 1846 for the purpose of launching, in their own words, "a new thing in church history, a definite organization for the expression of unity amongst Christian individuals belonging to different churches". Cited from "World Evangelical Alliance – History" (World Evangelical Alliance, 2001), <http://www.worldevangelicalalliance.com/textonly/3history.htm> (accessed 10 February 2006).

²¹ Theodor Angelov, "The Baptist Movement in Bulgaria", *Journal of European Baptist Studies*, vol. 1, No. 3 (May 2001), pp. 9-10.

²² Albert W. Wardin, "The Baptists in Bulgaria", *The Baptist Quarterly*, vol. 34, no. 4 (October 1991), pp. 148-159. Also see the Col. V.A. Pashkov Papers, (on microfiche at various libraries, including the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee, USA), Letters from the Kargels, 1880-1901, 2/13/1-109 (9 fiche).

²³ Count Modest Modestovich Korff [Korf], Lord Chamberlain at the Tsar's court, was

various revival centres in the Empire in 1884, including Baptists, Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, Molokans, Dukhobors and Stundists.²⁴ Pashkov, Kargel, Korff and Baedeker hoped that the evangelicals of the Russian Empire could unite under an umbrella organisation similar to the European Evangelical Alliance. This attempt failed, however, due to disagreements among attendees and pressure from the Russian Orthodox Church.

The Last Inklings of Denominational Ideals

The last inklings of Kargel's denominational ideals were evident, however, in a different 1884 conference, one seminal for the emergence of the Russian Baptist Union. This conference was held in the Molokan village of Novovasil'evka in southern Russia in 1884, two months after Pashkov's attempt to begin an Evangelical Alliance in St Petersburg.²⁵ The purpose was to organise the mission work of like-minded Christians in the Russian world. There were thirty-six attendees from various groups, including Mennonite Brethren, Stundists and Baptists. Mennonite Brethren leader Johann Wieler [Ivan Willer] and Kargel, both Germans, were elected as president and vice-president, respectively. It appears that the Russians were looking to the Germans for help in organisation of the group. The name of the group is not clearly Baptist. They called themselves the "Union of Believers, baptised Christians, or as they are called, Baptists, of South Russia and the Caucasus". The meeting was a blend of German Mennonite and German Baptist contributions. They opened the Lord's Supper to those who had not been baptised by immersion, clearly outside both the boundaries of the Mennonite Brethren and the German Baptists. (It is noted that two brothers left soon after this decision, stating that Baptists do not share the Lord's Table with others.) This reveals some of the influence of Pashkov's

Pashkov's main aide in the revival work. In 1867 Count Korff attended the World Exhibition in Paris and carried three thousand copies of the Gospel of John back to Russia for distribution. In 1874 he converted to evangelical Christianity under Radstock's preaching.

²⁴ Molokans and Dukhobors were sects that had broken from the Old Believers, themselves a sect which had broken from the Russian Orthodox Church in 1654. Molokans had a deep reverence for Scripture and paid little attention to sacraments. Dukhobors rejected the priests, icons, and marriage ceremonies of the Russian Orthodox Church. Stundists were a free-church movement among the Russian peasants of southern Russia in the nineteenth century.

²⁵ See Lawrence Klippenstein, "Russian Evangelicalism Revisited: Ivan Kargel and the Founding of the Russian Baptist Union", *Baptist History and Heritage*, vol. 27, no. 2 (April 1992), pp. 42-48.

Pietism on both Wieler and Kargel.²⁶ A second important issue was the Anabaptist custom of foot washing. Wieler considered it an essential part of church life, while Kargel believed otherwise. They decided that the practice would be left to the discretion of each local community. It is apparent from this meeting that Kargel wanted the newly formed group to be inclusive. He was the elected vice-president of the group and, despite his personal convictions, did not seek to limit the inclusion of the participants in the newly formed conference. He did not want anyone excluded because they were not baptised by immersion, nor because they practised foot washing.²⁷ Clearly he was moving away from his German Baptist understanding of ministry toward a more open understanding of cross-denominational ministry, yet he returned to Bulgaria to build the Baptist denomination there and accepted the role of vice-president in the organisation that would yield a Russian Baptist Union.

Soon after this 1884 meeting, Kargel returned to St Petersburg. Pashkov

²⁶ Pashkov's influence is already evident in a meeting two years earlier in Rückenau [Riukenu], southern Russia. Johann Wieler had been an active leader in the Mennonite Brethren, with a vision of reaching Russians outside the German colonies. This disturbed many Mennonites, fearful of jeopardising their privileged standing in the Russian Empire by proselytising among Orthodox Russians. Chairman of the committee of Mennonite Brethren, Wieler independently invited some Baptist leaders to the Mennonite annual conference in Rückenau, seeking to unite the movements. (See Abe J. Dueck, *Moving beyond Secession: Defining Russian Mennonite Brethren Mission and Identity, 1872-1922* [Winnipeg: Kindred Productions, 1997], p. 51-52.) At that meeting, he brought forth two important issues, which reflect the Pietistic influences of Radstock and Pashkov. First, he suggested that churches should practice healing prayer with the anointing of oil, a view held strongly by Radstock. (See Trotter, *Lord Radstock*, p. 23.) After some discussion, it was determined to leave this to each local congregation and the sick person involved. His second proposal was that of the open Lord's Supper, mentioning that Pashkov had invited them to participate in a Holy Communion in St Petersburg, although some had been baptised as infants. Much heated discussions ensued as they worked through the issue of open communion. The question was raised as to why Pashkov would have separated from the Orthodox Church if he believed Orthodox baptism to be true. To the Mennonite Brethren, true Christianity could not exist apart from adult baptism by faith. They eventually decided to postpone the decision.

Wieler continued in his attempts to bring the two streams closer together. When he tried to invite Baptists again to the Mennonite Brethren annual conference in 1883, he faced strong opposition, despite his status as president. The following year, Wieler held the joint evangelical conference mentioned above, at which only six attendees were Mennonite Brethren. There is no record that the Mennonite Brethren held an annual meeting in 1884. The 1884 evangelical congress in the south took place on the heels of the St Petersburg attempt to form an Evangelical Alliance. Both Wieler and Kargel had close contact with Pashkov and Baedeker, who were eager to cooperate with the Baptists.

²⁷ John B. Toews, "Baptists and Mennonite Brethren in Russia (1790-1930)", p. 88.

and Korff were exiled from Russia in June of 1884. Financially supported by Pashkov, Kargel left Bulgaria to assist Princess Lieven and the St Petersburg group in Pashkov's absence. At this point, he broke with the German Baptist style of church structure, leadership and theology, and began to grow deeper in the Pietistic view of the church and British Holiness theology.

Church Polity

From the late 1860s to the early 1880s, all of Kargel's work with the church had been denominational, specifically German Baptist. In Poland he pastored a Baptist church; in St Petersburg, he pastored and registered a Baptist Church. In Bulgaria, he re-baptised Congregationalists into the new Baptist church and proceeded to organise several small groups into Baptist Churches. That changed in 1884. When Pashkov and Korff were banished from Russia, Kargel abandoned the fledgling Baptist movement in Bulgaria to assist the Pashkovite movement, then centred at the mansion of Princess Natalie Lieven. This palace became the meeting point for locals and foreigners involved in the European Evangelical Alliance and in the Holiness movement in general. It also became the venue for the larger meetings of the Pashkovites and Bible classes taught by Kargel.

While working in St Petersburg from 1884 until 1888, Kargel made no attempt to organise the cell groups into churches. He preached at various locations in the city and held Bible Studies in the Lieven home. He also became acquainted with the foreign guests who stayed at the Lieven home who practised a pietistic approach to Christian ministry. These guests included members of the Evangelical Alliance such as Friedrich Baedeker, teachers and preachers of the Holiness Movement such as Jessie Penn-Lewis, Otto Stockmayer and H. Grattan Guinness, interdenominational student leaders such as Baron Paul Nicolay and John Mott, and social workers such as George Mueller and Mildred Duff of the Salvation Army. These relationships influenced Kargel's view of the universal church, relationships between local congregation, and denominations in general. He began to sense a strength and unity in organic relationships, which he had not experienced in denominational structures. There is no record that he ever returned to his German Baptist congregation or re-established contact with the German Baptist Union. Nor did he re-establish his contacts with the proto-Baptist group he had helped found with Wieler. In 1885, one year after they had founded the group, Wieler was forced to flee to Romania to escape persecution, the result of his consistent evangelistic activity among

the Russian population.²⁸ Despite the fact that Kargel was vice-president of this organisation, there is no record that he attempted to continue its activity.²⁹

During the persecutions and political turmoil of the late 1880s and early 1890s in the Russian Empire, Kargel and his family took up residence in Finland. From there he continued his work as a translator with Baedeker, and helped organise the Russian Evangelical Free Churches in Finland. He also made several trips back to the Mennonite Brethren Communities in southern Russia to hold month-long Bible classes. During these years, many of his theological writings were published in *Zionsbote*, a journal of the Mennonite Brethren immigrant congregations in North America.³⁰

Kargel returned to St Petersburg in 1898 to resume leadership of the cell groups started by Radstock and Pashkov. Also returning to St Petersburg that same year was Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov,³¹ who had been studying theology for three years in Bristol, Berlin, Paris and Hamburg. It is at this point that the ideas of this emerging community are challenged. Prokhanov was a strong leader who sought to create order from the scattered cell groups of the Pashkovites and the Stundist Bible studies in southern

²⁸ Wieler was persecuted by government officials and the Russian Orthodox Church for his Baptist work among the Russian peasants, who were not legally permitted to convert from the Russian Orthodox Church. He lived in Romania until his accidental death in 1893. Dueck, *Moving Beyond Secession*, p. 41.

²⁹ By 1886, German-Russian tensions had come to a head among the Baptists. Without the consent of the German Baptists, the Russians elected Molokan businessman Dei Mazaev as their president, who remained the dominant Russian Baptist leader for the next thirty years. The Germans continued with a separate German Baptist Union within the German-speaking population of the Russian Empire. This survived until the anti-German sentiment of the mid 1940s forced them to curtail their activities. In the 1950s, what remained of the German Baptist Union was gradually absorbed fully into the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, ending this chapter in Baptist history.

³⁰ It is estimated that between 1874 and 1884 approximately 18,000 Mennonites (including Mennonite Brethren) emigrated from Russia to North America.

³¹ Ivan Prokhanov was born in 1869 to a Molokan family in the Caucasus. He was educated at the Baptist Stokes Croft College and the New Congregational College in Bristol. He graduated from the theological faculty of the University of Berlin and attended theological lectures at the University of Paris and in Hamburg. In 1898, he returned to Russia to become the publisher of several journals, a writer of many hymns and poems, and the founder of the All-Russian Evangelical Christian Union. Although Prokhanov made many efforts to cooperate with the other evangelicals (especially the Russian Baptists), he always insisted that they move closer to his views. Prokhanov had been influenced by the Evangelical Alliance and Pietistic ideals that had influenced Radstock, Pashkov and Kargel, but Prokhanov's ministry demonstrates his belief that the Russian groups needed to be organised and led into unity.

Russia. Over time, Pashkovite cell groups lost contact with the established churches and developed into independent house churches, distinct from other evangelical groups. They did not want to become Baptists because of the heavy Oncken-type leadership and restrictive doctrines. They preferred to maintain an open Communion table and to avoid restrictions concerning ordination, church polity and systematic theology. They could not join either of the Anabaptist communities (Mennonite or Mennonite Brethren) for reasons such as language, law and restrictive doctrines. They still reflected Pashkov's Pietism, influenced by various streams of Holiness theology, revivalism and the Evangelical Alliance. But they had, in many cases, lost their original reason to exist, as they had been forced out of the Orthodox Church and were no longer in a position to inspire revival in established congregations. Some of the Pashkovite and Stundist groups joined the emerging Russian Baptists, while others remained independent. Prokhanov knew that they needed a strong leader, and he had the skills to fulfil the role.

Kargel was still the recognised pastor of the central group in St Petersburg and was committed to the nondenominational house church approach. Despite having already registered one church in St Petersburg, he made no attempt to register the cell groups. Prokhanov remained within the fold of the Pashkovites and carried on ministry side by side with Kargel. The groups flourished, with Kargel as the primary pastor and teacher, while Prokhanov built relationships, wrote songs and preached. Prokhanov attempted cooperation with the other evangelicals, but they were clearly overwhelmed by his leadership ability and influence. Sophie Lieven, who was very close to the St Petersburg movement, sensed the tension between Kargel, who wished to continue with the original vision of Pashkov, and Prokhanov, who wanted to bring change. According to Lieven,

In the beginning, when the opinion of Colonel Pashkov, Count Korff and Bobrinski still carried weight, a wonderful spirit of freedom reigned among the St Petersburg believers. Some considered it right to be baptised only after conversion, following the words, "He who believes and is baptised shall be saved" (Mark 16:16); others held the opinion that those who have already been baptised were in need of faith and a spiritual rebirth, and these differences of views did not hinder fellowship among them. The main emphasis was that the postulant truly believed in Jesus Christ as his personal saviour

and had experienced new birth from above. In this case, then the brother or the sister would be accepted into the community [*Gemeinde*] and could take part in the breaking of bread. Preacher Kargel shared this view, and a lovely unity reigned among the children of God in these early years.

Little by little, differences became visible. Brother Kargel and those who came to the meetings in our [Lieven's] house held to the broader view, and the brethren who attended meetings in other places were more narrow-minded. Brother Prokhanov belonged to the latter.³²

By 1905 Prokhanov had organised the youth of Kargel's church into a separate organisation. In 1905, Prokhanov also registered the house group that Kargel was pastoring, but made himself pastor. Kargel was not willing to give Prokhanov full leadership, and soon registered another congregation. When the split between Kargel and Prokhanov happened, Sophie Lieven was surprised. She wrote, "I don't know how it happened, but one day we found out that Prokhanov's fellowship was to be called the first and Kargel's fellowship, the second. So they continued, living side by side."³³ Describing their differences, Lieven stated, "The group led by Kargel was a deeper fellowship and possessed a different character than the better organized, outwardly active fellowship of Ivan Stepanovich."³⁴ The two fellowships eventually came to terms and Kargel merged his congregation with that of Prokhanov.

Thus Kargel came full circle in his ideas of loyalty to one denomination. In the early years of his ministry he wholeheartedly held to the German Baptist ideals of orderliness, strict doctrine and unified structure. As a German, he exemplified them in his work in Poland, Russia and Bulgaria. His work among the Pashkovites constituted a new stage in his life, in which he defined the Christian community in terms of personal piety and a relational connection to Christ rather than a specific systematic theology or denominational structure. Kargel set aside doctrinal differences and political control in favour of personal piety, seeking to avoid heavy-handed leadership and to emphasise scriptural teaching and a Christian lifestyle. Even when he faced Prokhanov in the crisis of control over the remnant Pashkovites, he stayed true to his pietistic perspective and showed restraint

³² Sophie Lieven, *Eine Saat, die reiche Frucht brachte* (Basel: Brunnen-Verlag, 1952), p. 91.

³³ Lieven, *Eine Saat*, p. 93.

³⁴ Lieven, *Eine Saat*, p. 93.

in a time of conflict. Despite Kargel's understanding of the Russian language and culture, his German name, his mother tongue and his passport were all marks of a foreigner. Prokhanov's time had come; he was a well-travelled, educated, well-connected and gifted Russian who could unite the movement into a denomination. Kargel gave up Pashkov's original vision – of remaining unregistered and autonomous – and registered his group. Having served among the Mennonite Brethren, German Baptists, and British Evangelicals, Kargel eventually joined with Prokhanov to build the new Russian denomination of the Evangelical Christians.³⁵

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³⁵ The Pietistic ideals of Radstock, Pashkov and Kargel were echoed by some congregations and individuals who rejected Prokhanov's attempts to organize them into a denomination and remained independent.

The “Golden Age” of the Soviet Baptists in the 1920s

Konstantin Prokhorov

The great evangelical revival of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Russian Empire led to the rapid formation in this massive territory of thousands of evangelical churches.¹ The first Christian church in Jerusalem was started on the Day of Pentecost and following this, the Christian Gospel spread quickly to all Roman provinces and cities; the Russian evangelical revival was similar. The first Evangelical Christians and Baptists (as well as their forerunners, the Molokans, Stundists, Pashkovites and others) were committed to widespread evangelism. “Every Baptist is a missionary”, the motto of German Baptist leader Johann Oncken, was understood in Russia and was often taken literally. The results were remarkable: by the end of the 1920s the total number of the Evangelical Christians and Baptists in the USSR amounted to half a million (or even, according to some estimates, 800,000²), and if including children, perhaps several million believers.³ Russian Baptists in the twenty-first century are still striving to return to the level of evangelistic activity and the number of churches known eighty to eighty-five years ago.

However, it was not only the voluntary and devoted missionary work of the people that caused such significant successes. The period of growth

¹ In 1928, before Stalin’s campaign of terror against evangelicals, the USSR had about four thousand Baptist churches. V. Zavatski, *Evangelicheskoe dvizhenie v SSSR posle vtoroi mirovoi voyny* (Moscow: ITs-Garant, 1995), p. 42.

² S.N. Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel’skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii, chast’ 2 (1917–1967)*, (St Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2001), p. 12.

³ Zavatski, *Evangelicheskoe dvizhenie v SSSR*, p. 23.

was one in which there was also considerable opposition. Again there is a parallel with the early Church. When the first disciples were reluctant to leave Jerusalem, persecution against Christians left them scattered, and so they engaged in evangelism in new locations (Acts 8:1, 4). In much the same way, through exile or seeking to escape punishment, pioneers of Russian Baptist life spread into the outlying districts of the Russian Empire and penetrated into Small and White Russia (currently Ukraine and Belarus), Siberia, Central Asia, the Far East and the Caucasus. In those vast territories the evangelical movement developed in three main directions: founding of German Mennonite Brethren congregations, Russian Baptist churches, and German Baptist groups.

The main problem with the traditional local Baptist sources, as I see it, is their “legendary” and “heroic” nature. We must be careful working with such sources. The difficulties of life for Baptists in the USSR provoked believers to preserve the stories of past days which exhorted young Christians to be faithful. All other points, including exact details of the stories or any negative information about Christian activity in the past, were considered unimportant or even undesirable. Along with such local sources, fortunately, we have some scholarly books on general Baptist history in the Russian empire published in recent years.⁴

Russia experienced two revolutions in 1917. The February Revolution subverted the Russian monarchy, forcing the tsar to abdicate the throne. It was a time of great shock for the Russian Orthodox Church. The tsarist autocracy had always been, during the thousand-year history of the Russian State, the most important source of support for Russian Orthodoxy. For Russian Baptists (as well as other Russian Protestants, Old Believers, Moslems, and so on), the February Revolution brought equality of rights with other citizens of the Russian empire independent of their religious convictions. The famous amnesty announced by the Provisional Government released all religious prisoners and exiles from their sentences.⁵ When the Bolsheviks seized power in late 1917, they immediately began to perse-

⁴ S.N. Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii*, 2 vols. (St Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 1999, 2001); Iu. Reshetnikov and S. Sannikov, *Obzor istorii evangel'sko-baptistskogo bratstva v Ukraine* (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 2000); A.I. Savin, *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i evangel'skie tserkvi Sibiri v 1920–1941 gg.: dokumenty i materialy* (Novosibirsk: Posokh, 2004); N.N. Iarygin, *Evangel'skoe dvizhenie v Volgo-Viatskom regione* (Moscow: Akademicheskii proekt, 2004); K. Prokhorov, *Bozhie i kesarevo* (Omsk: Izdatel'skii dom “Nauka”, 2005); and others.

⁵ S.N. Savinskii, “Russko-Ukrainskii Baptizm v XX Veke”, in S.V. Sannikov (ed), *Istoriia Baptizma: Sbornik*, vyp. 1 (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 1996), pp. 375–376.

cute the Orthodox Church in Russia, which they considered a constitutive part of the tsarist regime. The new circumstances led to improved relationships of Orthodox believers with those Christians whom until recently they had scornfully referred to only as "sectarians". In the face of a strong common enemy, the majority of disagreements among different groups of Christians faded. But this unfortunately lasted only during times of struggle. The difficult current relationship between the Orthodox Church (again supported by the state) and Baptists in post-Soviet Russia demonstrates this clearly.

Preconditions of the "Golden age" of Russian Baptists

The general amnesty announced by the Russian Provisional Government in 1917 released also from their sentences many political prisoners such as Social Democrats and Bolsheviki. When the latter seized power in Russia, they were initially (until 1928) more or less favourably disposed towards the Evangelical Christians and Baptists.⁶ The new Communist authorities regarded them, at least partly, as the Bolsheviki's "companions-in-arms" in the struggle against tsarism and the Orthodox Church. Of course, it was a questionable advantage, but it seems the Bolsheviki did not immediately forget their shared imprisonment and exile together with Russian Protestants. Because of this and the political indifference of the Baptists, the first decade of Soviet power, in spite of the bloody World War I, Civil War, famine and economic dislocation, became one of unprecedented growth for the Russian evangelical movement.⁷

According to historian of Russian Orthodoxy Dmitry Pospelovskiy,

There is no doubt that the primary task of the regime was the destruction foremost of the national church, the spiritual basis of national life. To facilitate completion of this task, the authorities sought, among other methods, to secure a type of alliance with other confessions, or at the very least to guarantee their neutrality.⁸

⁶ Serge Bolshakoff, *Russian Nonconformity: the Story of "Unofficial" Religion in Russia* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), p. 119.

⁷ S.N. Savinskii, *Istoriia russko-ukrainskogo baptizma: uchebnoe posobie* (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 1995), pp. 84-87; Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov, chast' 2 (1917-1967)*, pp. 12, 85.

⁸ D.V. Pospelovskii, *Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' v XX veke* (Moscow: Respublika, 1995), p. 60.

The socialists viewed sectarianism as a manifestation of the decay of official Russian religion which began before the Bolshevik revolution. Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich, Lenin's famous assistant, published the newspaper *Rassvet* [Daybreak] especially for sectarians, "to instil the life-giving message of social democracy into the already awakened peasant masses, drawing into our party new groups from within the Russian population".⁹ The Bolsheviks sympathised also with the communal teachings and practices of Russian Protestants. The Communist newspaper *Izvestiia VTsIK* [News of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee] wrote in September 1921, "Peasant communist associations such as Dukhobors, Molokans, New Israel and others are completely painlessly internalising Soviet civil laws and rules."¹⁰

Mennonites were also favoured by the early Communists because of their "revolutionary" origins (i.e., radical German Anabaptism in the sixteenth century). The Bolsheviks liked to seek "communist precedents" in the remote past. However, not only ideological but also economic reasons caused the Communists in the 1920s to build relationships with Russian Protestants. In the early 1920s, Soviet authorities gave some Russian sectarians good land under the condition that they work it collectively.¹¹ It was imperative that the Communists have some successful agricultural experiments before the total collectivisation of 1929–1932.

At the same time, its antireligious policy remained one of the strongest pillars of the Bolshevik dictatorship. The conviction of the disutility of any religion for communist society was the mainstream idea of the Soviet government. The Bolshevik leader Vladimir Il'ich Ul'ianov (Lenin) was personally a strict atheist who blasphemed and described religion using terrible language.¹² Article twelve of Lenin's decree *On the Separation of Church from State and School from Church* (23 January 1918) stated, "No churches or religious communities have the right to own property. They do not have the rights of a juridical person."¹³ Because of this, Bolshevik toler-

⁹ V.D. Bonch-Bruevich, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Akademiia Nauk SSSR, 1959), p. 188.

¹⁰ 8 September 1921. *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Omskoi Oblasti* [State Archives of the Omsk Oblast] (GAOO), f. 32, op. 1, d. 275, l. 13. Cited in A.I. Savin, "Sovetskaia vlast' i khristianskie sekty: k istorii odnoi antireligioznoi kampanii v Sibiri v 1922–1923 gg.", in V.I. Shishkin (ed), *Bakhrushinskoe chteniia 1996 g.: Sotsiokul'turnoe razvitie Sibiri (XVII-XX veka)* (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1998), <http://www.gf.nsu.ru/bakhrushin/savin1996.shtml> (accessed 29 October 2005).

¹¹ A.I. Klivanov, *Religioznoe sektantsvo i sovremennost': sotsiologicheskie i istoricheskie ocherki* (Moscow: "Nauka", 1969), p. 237.

¹² See F.I. Fedorenko, *Sekty, ikh vera i dela* (Moscow: Politizdat, 1965), p. 217.

¹³ See text of the decree in F. Garkavenko (ed), *O religii i tserkvi: sbornik dokumentov* (Mos-

ance of the Russian Protestants could not gain serious and firm ground. According to Communist teaching, one day all religions in the USSR would be destroyed, including, of course, churches of the Russian Evangelical Christians and Baptists.

Causes of Baptist Church Expansion in the 1920s

The first ten years of Soviet power in the USSR are usually considered in both Russian and Western Baptist historiography a “golden” or relatively “trouble-free” period.¹⁴ The 1920s saw unprecedented growth in the Evangelical Christian and Baptist communities. It was a period of widespread missionary activity, reaching not only Molokans, but also Russian Orthodox Christians and even some pagan ethnic groups in the territory of the USSR. There were many Baptist congresses and conferences, many Sunday schools, and even the first theological schools had begun their work by the late 1920s. Most of the new communities were founded between 1924 and 1926.¹⁵ It was a time of liberalisation of the Soviet economic system, the so-called “New Economic Policy” (NEP). In addition to adult church members, there was the sizable Union of the Baptist youth, or *Bapsomol*. Some Soviet historians, beginning with Boris Tikhomirov, number the *Bapsomol* at approximately 400,000 teenagers!¹⁶ It is important to remember that Russian Baptists do not baptise children, and thus members of the *Bapsomol* were primarily unbaptised and officially were not considered Baptists at all.

Historian Boris Tikhomirov provides some information on the social classes represented in Baptist communities of the 1920s. According to Tikhomirov, poor and middle peasants comprised the core of Baptist communities in villages. In 1926-27, Evangelical Christians and the

cow: Politizdat, 1965), p. 96.

¹⁴ A. Rudenko, “Evangel’skie Khristiane-Baptisty i perestroika v SSSR”, in Abdulla Abdulgani et al., *Na puti k svobode sovesti* (Moscow: Progress, 1989), p. 345; Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel’skikh khristian-baptistov, chast’ 2 (1917–1967)*, p. 5; J.C. Pollock, *The Faith of The Russian Evangelicals* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 80; Zavatski, *Evangelicheskoe dvizhenie v SSSR*, p. 24.

¹⁵ Academician Lev Mitrokhin refers to official data indicating 6500 Baptist communities existing in 1927. L.M. Mitrokhin, “Baptisty v sovetskom obshchestve”, chapter 5 of Mitrokhin, *Baptizm: istoriia i sovremennost’ (filosofsko-logicheskie ocherki)* (St. Petersburg: Russkii Khristianskii Gumanitarnyi Institut, 1997), http://rchgi.spb.ru/christian/mitrokhin_2.htm (accessed 29 October 2005).

¹⁶ Mitrokhin, “Baptisty v sovetskom obshchestve”.

Baptists of the Voronezh region (considered representative of the entire country) consisted of 43-44% poor peasants, 55-56% middle peasants, and 1-2% well-to-do peasants. The majority of members of Baptist communities were women, consisting of 50-75% of church members in different regions of the USSR during this period. They were primarily widows and unmarried young women.¹⁷

However, I think this positive process had its dark sides. When (beginning in late 1917) the Bolshevik terror against the Russian Orthodox Church started, including destruction and desecration of Orthodox churches and arrests and executions of priests, this indirectly led to a rise in attendance at the legally-existing evangelical services; and almost all Evangelical Christians and Baptists remained silent as Orthodox sacred items were destroyed.¹⁸ Of course, Orthodox leaders had not always acted with kindness toward Baptists in the past, but it would have been a very Christian act for Baptists to have raised their voices in defence of their former oppressors. But the flirting of the Communists (the “godless men” and militant atheists) with the leaders of the Unions of the Evangelical Christians and Baptists created illusions among the latter that their churches would avoid persecution. They were wrong. The Soviet power first dealt cruelly with the Orthodox Church and then later dealt in the same way with the evangelical brotherhood. This was a bitter lesson for Baptists of that time period.

“Christian Communism”

During the period of the New Economic Policy (NEP) in the 1920s, many urban evangelical tradesman founded cooperative workshops; some dozens of evangelical churches in villages took up the call of the Soviet power to establish agricultural communes. The most famous of the latter were “Priluchè” [Occurrence] in the Novgorod region, “Sigor” [Zoar] in the Briansk region, and “Gefsimaniia” [Gethsemane] and “Vifaniia” [Bethany] in the Tver’ region.¹⁹ Some such communes (or voluntary collective farms) were started even in the regions of the USSR where Communist pressure was not so strong, such as a Baptist agricultural commune in the village

¹⁷ B. Tikhomirov, *Baptizm i ego politicheskaia rol'* (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe Izdatel'stvo, 1929), pp. 19, 52. See also Mitrokhin, “Baptisty v sovetskom obshchestve”.

¹⁸ I know only of Ivan Prokhanov's “Open Message” of 1922 to Russian Orthodox Church leaders with Christian words of consolation. A.E. Levitin and V. Shavrov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkovnoi smuty* (Moscow: Krutitskoe patriarshee podvor'e, 1996), pp. 165, 170.

¹⁹ See V. Popov, “Evangel'skie trudovye arteli”, *Bratskii vestnik*, no. 2 (1990), p. 27.

of Astrakhanka in northern Kazakhstan. The leader of that commune was brother Andrei Eropkin (probably a minister of the Omsk Baptist Church).²⁰ His grandson, long-time church member Nikolai Murchich of Kiialy, Kazakhstan, told me in December 2001 the following interesting story of that commune, which he learned from his mother, Praskov'ia Eropkina, who had been a member.

The Baptist commune in Astrakhanka existed for two years, from 1922 to 1924. The majority of the population of the village was Baptist, with several hundred brothers and sisters. They decided to establish what they called a "model Christian agricultural commune", following the example of the Apostolic Church in Jerusalem. As described in the Book of Acts (chapters 2 and 4), they "socialised" their property (lands, cattle, implements) and started with enthusiasm. They worked together, held frequent worship services, had good preachers and a choir, provided Sunday school for children, and evangelised in the neighbouring villages. There were both good and bad sides of that life. When sometimes the teenagers would fight in the street, as punishment, they were forced by the elders to dig graves in the rural cemetery "for their edification". The commune members were inspired by plans of the leader of the All-Russian Union of Evangelical Christians, Ivan Prokhanov, to build a Christian "City of the Sun" [*Gorod Solntsa*]. But soon they faced the normal problems of collective farms, including irresponsibility and laziness. Some people, for example, did not want to sew a button on their clothes, feeling that should be the work of a tailor. Finally, the bad harvest of 1924 intensified disagreements within the brotherhood, and the commune collapsed. "Probably this was not God's will", the Baptists decided, and they took their property back home.²¹

It appears that some of the similar Baptist communes in other places may have been somewhat more successful; some historians write about competitions (an unfavourable concept within Communist ideology) between the "non-drinking" Baptist agricultural communes and the usual "sinners" cooperatives, which the Baptists won, as being the primary cause of the former's forced liquidation.²² However, I do not agree with this analysis. I consider the first ten years of Communism – while a time of relative wellbeing for the Russian evangelical churches – sufficient to put

²⁰ *Istoriia Petropavlovskoi tserkvi EKHB* (Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan, 1998), p. 3; "Pomni ves' put': istoriia Omskoi tserkvi EKHB", *Slovo very* [Omsk], no. 1 (2001), p. 5.

²¹ Oral testimony to the author of Nikolai Murchich, church member in Kiialy, North Kazakhstan (December 2001).

²² Zavatski, *Evangelicheskoe dvizhenie v SSSR*, pp. 37-38.

such thoughts of Christian Socialism (illusions, as they later viewed them) out of the Baptist brothers' heads. The main causes of the collapse of the Baptist and Evangelical Christian agricultural communes in 1920s appear to be internal, not external. There have been many such experiments, both Christian and Socialist, throughout history. The majority failed because their participants "were not ready" to put the theory into practice. This was part of a wider trend in other times and nations,²³ and I do not see any serious reason to consider the early Communist period in Russia an exception. In general, "Christian communism" ended in the mid-1920s.

The Military Problem

However, the wellbeing of the Baptists in the early years of Soviet power should not be exaggerated. State security agents penetrated the churches, pressuring their leaders and pastors and demanding absolute loyalty to the Soviet authorities.²⁴ Itinerant evangelical preachers, freer than ordinary church ministers, were cruelly persecuted. Conscientious objectors were often prevented from making use of their alleged right to refuse military service as stated in the Soviet decree of 1919, "On release from military duty based on religious conviction".²⁵ Antiwar tendencies among Russian Evangelical Christians and Baptists increased during World War I and the Russian Civil War. In 1920, pacifism became the firm position of both Russian evangelical unions. The joint congress of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in 1920 proclaimed in part,

Considering the participation of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in the shedding of human blood under any state structure to be a crime against conscience as well as against the spirit of the Holy Scripture, and professing it unacceptable for Evangelical Christians-Baptists to bear arms, to manufacture arms for any types of military purposes, or to instruct others in military affairs, which is tantamount to direct participation in the shedding of blood,... each Evangelical Christian

²³ See A.M. Prokhorov (ed), *Sovetskii entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1982), p. 1386.

²⁴ I.P. Plett, *Istoriia bratstva evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov s 1905 po 1944 gody* (unpublished manuscript, Sovet tserkvei EKHB, 2001), pp. 108-109. The manuscript is preserved in the Archives of the Baptist Union of Kazakhstan.

²⁵ See Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov, chast' 2 (1917-1967)*, p. 28.

or Baptist is to consider it his sacred duty openly refuse to participate in any aspect of military service.²⁶

The more the Soviet state gained strength, the more it pressed the Russian evangelicals to reject their pacifist position. This was the most important method of proving believers' loyalty to the Communist authorities. In 1922, the leader of the Evangelical Christians, Ivan Prokhanov, published his call to all Christians around the world to not participate in any wars. In 1923 he was arrested. His assistant, A. Andreev, visited Prokhanov in prison and informed him that the leadership of the Evangelical Christians, discussing the problem, had agreed to recognise the right of the Soviet state to demand all citizens of the USSR serve in the Red Army, including believers.²⁷ Prokhanov was forced to approve this position in order to be freed from prison, signing the well-known declaration expressing his loyalty to the Soviet regime. The declaration was immediately published by the Communists, which stirred up a storm among the Evangelical Christians. Because of this, in October 1923, the next Congress of Evangelical Christians emphasised the right of each believer to choose the form of military service in which to serve, armed or unarmed, according to his convictions.

The same state pressure was applied to the Russian Baptist Union under leaders Pavel Vasil'evich Pavlov and Mikhail Danilovich Timoshenko. In addition, delegates of the Baptist World Alliance meeting in Stockholm in 1923 failed to affirm the Russian pacifism as an official Baptist doctrine, instead calling for it to be the individual's personal decision. In December 1923 the Congress of the Russian Baptists was forced to proclaim the following:

Considering any war to be a great evil and welcoming the peaceful policy of the Soviet state, which calls all nations around the world to global disarmament, our Congress allows each Baptist to settle the matter regarding common responsibility for military service according to his personal convictions.²⁸

The Soviet state pressure on both evangelical unions continued until

²⁶ Cited in Plett, *Istoriia bratstva*, p. 115.

²⁷ Plett, *Istoriia bratstva*, pp.115-116.

²⁸ Plett, *Istoriia bratstva*, p. 117.

1926 when their leaders were forced to abandon pacifism definitively. However, many church members maintained the ideas of non-resistance to the end of their lives. Some Baptists, for example, were shot as deserters by Red Army commanders when they refused to shoot the Germans during World War II.²⁹

Life of the Evangelical Communities in the 1920s

Some church chroniclers discuss the primary tasks and needs of the Baptists in the 1920s. These were many activities: evangelism, spiritual nurture of churches, construction of Houses of Prayer, and the unification of churches into a single Baptist Union. For instance, in 1917 the believers in Turkestan established the Central Asian division of the All-Russian Baptist Union, holding local congresses in the south each year from 1922 to 1927. Also in 1927, a local Baptist congress was held in Ural'sk (Western Kazakhstan).³⁰ Some Mennonite Brethren churches maintained contact with the Central Asian Baptist Union from the very first days of its existence.³¹

The Siberian division of the All-Russian Baptist Union in Omsk held the most congresses of any part of the Union. The twenty-fourth congress, the last before Stalin's terror, was held in 1927, with 208 delegates and 297 guests. At that final congress, the German Baptist Churches of Siberia expressed their desire to become a component part (a German section) of the Siberian division of the All-Russian Baptist Union.³² It was the general wish of the Baptists to join together. This took place before the great sufferings beginning in 1929, the year of the "Great Break" [*velikii perelom*]. Many people were baptised even in 1928. The magazine *Baptist*, before it was shut down, published "A letter from Omsk" about the baptism of twenty-eight people. This read:

On 19 February 1928 we had a festival day. Twenty-eight new "living stones" were placed into our church building. The baptisms took place in the baptistery, where Christ's Gospel

²⁹ Oral testimony to the author of P.A. Chumakin, South Kazakhstan Senior Presbyter of the Baptist Union of Kazakhstan (1993).

³⁰ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* (Moscow: Vsesoiuznyi soviet evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov, 1989), p. 200.

³¹ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, p. 186.

³² *Istoriia vozniknoveniia i rosta khristianskikh obshchin v Omskoi oblasti* (Omsk: Ob"edineniia tserkvei EkHb Omskoi oblasti, 1993), p. 8.

was confirmed before the congregation. On that day also, twelve souls repented.³³

According to one source, the Siberian Baptist Union on 1 January 1927 consisted of 14,546 members, 134 choirs with 2,326 singers, and thirty-seven teachers.³⁴

In the 1920s Baptist churches increased their focus on Christian education and the improvement of music ministry. The churches sent some of their members to study in the Bible courses held in Leningrad, Moscow, Omsk, and Nikolaevka (Ukraine). The leading brothers dreamt about establishing a Russian Baptist theological seminary, but it was impossible during those atheistic times. In 1925, Brother S. Zhuivanov from distant Kazakhstan studied at Bible courses of the Evangelical Christians in Leningrad.³⁵ Two brothers, Aleksandr and Ivan Tikhonov, studied in Omsk at the courses for choir directors in the mid 1920s, and later led church choirs in northern Kazakhstan (in Akmolinsk, Petropavlovsk, Frolovo, Kaldyman, and other places).³⁶ A church member described the choir ministry of that time:

The choir in the Frolovo division of the Petropavlovsk church, Akmolinsk gubernia, has existed for one year. It was organised in early 1925 by brother A.D. Tikhonov.... After we had learned about twenty-five hymns, we desired to visit neighbouring villages to serve God with our singing. Evangelists Petr V. Trushchelev and Ivan I. Gavrikov, who also wished to visit churches and groups in the district, invited us join them. Having joyfully agreed, we set out. The trip lasted for one month, beginning on 24 December 1925, and visited twelve villages. God was with us, and we saw His work in the repentance of ten souls.... In each place, as well as evangelistic services, we also had prayer services, where there was repentance and confession of faults. In the city of Petropavlovsk, we had an agape-feast. Though we had travelled about 430 kilometres, we were not tired and felt of good cheer ... knowing that our toil is not in vain in the Lord.³⁷

³³ "Pis'mo iz Omska", *Baptist*, no. 9 (1928), p. 9.

³⁴ *Istoriia vozniknoveniia i rosta*, p. 8.

³⁵ *Istoriia Kostanaiskoi tserkvi EKHB* (Kostanai, Kazakhstan, 1996), p. 3.

³⁶ *Istoriia Petropavlovskoi tserkvi EKHB*, p. 4.

³⁷ G. Murchich, "Rabota khora", *Baptist*, no. 5-6 (March 1926), p. 29.

In the 1920s, the Russian Evangelical Christians and Baptists attempted many times to unite into one alliance, but they were unsuccessful because of many ambitions of their leaders. It is ironic that only Iosif Stalin was able to reconcile the brethren in 1944, with the establishment of the official All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. Russian evangelicals welcomed the majority of changes introduced by the Communists to the former Russian empire, hoping to vivify them by the Gospel spirit. The early 1920s was characterised by the illusion of freedom for total evangelism of the population of the USSR. The seventh Congress of the Evangelical Christians in 1920 encouraged members of the Union to preach the Gospel to all Soviet citizens, and to send missionaries to China and India.³⁸ Ivan Prokhanov, the leader of the Evangelical Christians, maintained many contacts with other Christian denominations, especially with the “Living Church” [*Zhivaia Tserkov*] movement” of the Russian Orthodox Church.³⁹

In 1926-27, Prokhanov made plans to establish a new town, Evangel'sk (i.e., Gospel-town), somewhere in Siberia, where he hoped to realise his dream of Christian socialism, with the ideas of collective work and common property. It appears to be a combination of the old Anabaptist idea of the “holy city” New Jerusalem on Earth with the old communist utopia of the “City of the Sun” after the fashion of Sir Thomas More. However this project was already unrealisable in the atmosphere of Stalin's approaching terror. In early 1928 Prokhanov left the USSR and founded his Worldwide Union of Evangelical Christians in the West.

The End of the Period of Relative Liberty

The relative religious freedom for evangelicals in the USSR ended in 1928-29. Communist authorities were disturbed by the evident growth of the Soviet evangelical movement, especially among youth. The famous ideologist of the Communist Party Nikolai Bukharin said at the Eighth All-Union Congress of the Young Communists in May of 1928,

We have assumed that the *Komsomol* [Union of Communist Youth] is the only youth organisation in our country. It turns out, however, that there are a number of sectarian organisations which unite within their ranks approximately the same

³⁸ *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, p. 189.

³⁹ Levitin and Shavrov, *Ocherki po istorii russkoi tserkovnoi smuty*, pp. 164-172.

number of youth as in the *Komsomol*.⁴⁰

Trying to resist Communist pressure in the late 1920s, the Soviet Baptists created, to some degree, an apology of Russian Baptist beliefs with the following line of argumentation: we are also Soviet citizens; we love our country and work honestly on Soviet enterprises; the founder of our Christian faith was Jesus Christ, who in His life on Earth was from a poor carpenter family; His disciples were also common fishermen, and they were the first to proclaim the famous socialist slogan, "he who does not work, shall not eat"; our beliefs are similar to the Communist principles; Vladimir Lenin and the Soviet law provided freedom to all religions in our country; ... so we have the full right to live peacefully in the USSR.⁴¹ Such speeches, however, did not help at all in Stalin's USSR.

The goal of the Bolshevik revolution was to destroy the old life at its foundations. Many survivals of times past were considered to be "counterrevolutionary". In the context of the Communist struggle against any religion, innovations such as of the five-day week (with the days of Marx, Lenin, Red Star, Sickle, and Hammer) instead of the "old biblical" seven-day week, and the demand to exchange the old Christian (both Julian and Gregorian) calendars starting with the birth of Christ for a new calendar starting with the Bolshevik revolution, the closing and expropriation of evangelical prayer houses were the necessary actions. Soviet sectarianism was considered a dangerous alternative to socialist and communist society.

In April of 1929, the second Congress of Militant Atheists of the USSR proclaimed that "sectarian organisations, in the persons of their leaders, preachers and activists, are the political agents ... and espionage ring of the international bourgeoisie".⁴² Certain Baptist practices and beliefs were considered especially counterrevolutionary, including prayers for the "new Christian martyrs" and "believers in prison for the sake of God's Word"; disinclination to divide "God's children" into the Communist class labels of kulak, middle peasant and poor folk; reluctance to use the expropriated property in kolkhozes, referring to it as "stolen"; and preaching that "people

⁴⁰ N.I. Bukharin, "Tekushchie zadachi komsomola: doklad na VIII vsesoiuznom s'ezde VLKSM, 6 maia 1928 g.", in *Put' k sotsializmu: izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Novosibirsk: "Nauka", 1990), p. 302; cited in Savin, *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i evangel'skie tserkvi Sibiri v 1920-1941 gg.*, p. 49.

⁴¹ Mitrokhin, *Baptizm: istoriia i sovremennost'*, pp. 392-393.

⁴² *Materialy II Vsesoiuznogo s'ezda voinstvuiushchikh bezbozhnikov* (Moscow, 1929); cited in Savinskiĭ, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii, chast' 2 (1917-1967)*, p. 116.

without Christ do not have any bright future". Communist reporters and propagandists felt the influence of evangelical ideas in the USSR, drawing many parallels between Soviet and Baptist activities. These included the fiery Socialist and Baptist propaganda (or preaching), similar competitions among missionaries of the two ideologies, the "political housecleaning" of their folds, the mass youth organisations *Komsomol* and *Bapsomol*, active participation of women, similar intents to build new towns (socialist cities and the Christian city of Evangel'sk), and so on.⁴³

Evangelical expansion in the USSR after 1917 took place within a dramatic context, including the collapse of the great Russian Empire, the Russian Civil War, and the establishment of the "militant godless" Soviet power. Russian believers knew that the Holy Scripture never promised Christians an easy life on Earth: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him" (Philippians 1:29). Subsequent events such as the persecution of Baptists for their faith in Christ, total collectivisation of Soviet villages and the forced closure of Baptist prayer houses and their confiscation by the Communist state⁴⁴ led to the nearly complete destruction of the evangelical churches in the USSR. Sectarials were proclaimed an "alien element" both in the Soviet city and in the new Soviet village.⁴⁵ However, savage persecution was not able to divest the Soviet Christians of their beliefs. The 1937 census contained a question about religion. At that time of the widest terror, of 97.5 million who answered the question, more than 55 million Soviet citizens (about 57%) declared their faith in God.⁴⁶ While Baptists were a small minority among those Soviet believers, they were undoubtedly among the bravest martyrs for Christ from all confessions in the USSR.

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⁴³ Savin, *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i evangel'skie tserkvi Sibiri v 1920–1941 gg.*, pp. 63–64.

⁴⁴ The majority of Soviet evangelical congregations of those times were in the countryside, as the former Russian Empire was primarily agrarian.

⁴⁵ Savinskii, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukrainy, Rossii, Belorussii, chast' 2 (1917–1967)*, pp. 114–115.

⁴⁶ M.V. Shkarovskii, *Russkaia pravoslavnaia tserkov' pri Staline i Khrushcheve: Gosudarstvenno-tserkovnye otnosheniia v SSSR v 1939–1964 godakh* (Moscow: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor'e, 1999), p. 94.

Socialist Ideas among Latvian Baptists in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

Valdis Tēraudkalns

Introduction

Persecution, along with the greyness of Soviet everyday life, is still alive in the memories of many people in post-socialist countries, creating a large, seemingly irreconcilable mental gap between the terms *socialism* and *Christianity*. In addition to tragedies such as deportation and execution, which occurred in almost every family, people in Eastern Europe must also face such issues as collaboration with the previous regime.¹ Certain high-ranking members of the Orthodox and Lutheran clergy are better known for their attempts to “christianise” the communist ideology than are those from the free-church tradition. However, there were also instances in which Baptist pastors tried to glorify Marxism-Leninism. For example, in the files of the plenipotentiary of the Council for Religious Affairs in Soviet Latvia, a handwritten manuscript has been preserved entitled “Communism evaluated by God, the Bible and Christ’s Church”, written by Latvian Baptist pastor Augusts Krauze.² This document states

¹ Uncritical collaboration of Baptists with the ruling regime is not restricted to the Soviet period. During the authoritarian regime of Kārlis Ulmanis (1934–1940), some Latvian Baptists, following the state ideology, glorified Ulmanis. For example, a poem written by Alfreds Ludvigs begins: “Oh, glorious Ruler, you are as father to us. We are glad that we are your children”. A. Ludvigs, “Tautas Vadonim”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 22 (1939), p. 429.

² Augusts Krauze was assistant to the bishop from 1965 to 1972. Baptist historian Jānis Tervits writes in a diplomatic manner, “It was undeniable that he had the ability to find a positive compromise in relations of churches and clergy with Senior Presbyter Nikolay

that “true believers cannot be enemies of communism”,³ and claims that God had already inspired communist practices in ancient Israel.⁴ Similarly, in Russia in 1930, the Central Council of the Union of Evangelical Christians circulated among congregations a document proposing the exclusion of “counterrevolutionaries” from membership in local congregations. In the same manner, Russian Baptists prepared an appeal referring to Christ as the first great socialist and communist.⁵ While at the time it was meant to be an expression of good will towards the new regime, in the hopes of gaining respect of their basic human rights, this now appears to have been an unnecessary step, helping little in the long run, as the state was determined to abolish religion altogether.

Any attempt to deal with the relationships between Christians and socialists in a fresh way, even if done within a historical framework, may trigger negative feelings on the part of the church. However, without the courage to move beyond clear-cut answers, we will remain angry captives of the past. It is my hope that the historical facts presented in this paper enable us to start thinking beyond our political and psychological dualisms.

The Political Left and Christianity: the European and American Scenes

It is not the purpose of this paper to present an overview of the long and complex interaction between Christianity and various groups within the political left (many of which could not be described as socialist). Rather, I would like to explore certain aspects of this interaction, in particular, those with links to Latvia and/or free-church or Nonconformist involvement. In Great Britain, some early socialists had Nonconformist backgrounds, which influenced the types of activities they conducted.⁶ Socialists had their

Ļevindanto of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and Plenipotentiary of the Council for Religious Affairs in Latvia.” Jānis Tervits, *Latvijas baptistu vēsture: faktu mozaika* (Riga: LBDS, 1999), p. 157. It is likely that by “positive compromise”, Tervits meant the ability to find ways to relate to both local churches and the Senior Presbyter appointed by Moscow, in situations when many believers looked upon Ļevindanto with disapproval.

³ *Latvijas Valsts arhīvs* [State Archive of Latvia] (LVA) – 1419.f. – 2.a. – 12.l. – p. 123 (reverse side).

⁴ LVA – 1419.f. – 2.a. – 12.l. – p. 122.

⁵ L.N. Mitrokhin, *Baptizm: istoriia i sovremennost (filosofsko-sotsiologicheskie ocherki)* (St Petersburg: Izdatel'stvo Russkogo Khristianskogo gumanitarnogo instituta, 1997), p. 392.

⁶ To be fair to other traditions, we should also mention such facts as high church involvement in establishing the Guild of St Mathew in 1877 and Catholic Cardinal Manning's soli-

Sunday schools and cultivated conversion experiences. Christian Socialist Philip Snowden invited people to come forward to join the Independent Labour party. Labour Churches established in the late nineteenth century by Unitarian minister John Trevor combined Nonconformist religion with radical politics.⁷ Nonconformists transferred their Christian ethos from chapels to workers' unions, the meetings of which often started with a prayer and a hymn. Unitarian minister George Dawson, in his inaugural address at the opening of the Birmingham Free Library in 1866, expressed hope that private ownership of book collections was coming to an end through "a holy Communism, a wise Socialism".⁸ In the United States, in the late nineteenth century, following the Civil War, there emerged a "Social Gospel" movement hostile to *laissez faire* capitalism, rejecting unrestricted competition as contradicting the biblical Golden Rule, and advocating mutual stewardship by employers and employees.⁹ Baptist theologian Walter Rauschenbusch, a leading figure in that movement (and who, as shown below, was influential among certain Latvian Baptists), believed that socialists were "tools in the hands of the Almighty".¹⁰ His German origin and education and travels in continental Europe explain similarities between his version of Christian activism and European Christian Socialism.

In their search for their roots, socialists often look to Christian communes established by the radical wing of the Reformation since the sixteenth century. In the Baltic context, a fascinating figure from the modern period is Eberhard Arnold, who came out of the evangelical "religious-social" movement in Germany, founding a Christian commune in 1920. (It was dissolved by the Nazis in 1937.) In 1930, after visiting a Hutterite community in America, he joined the Hutterite Church.¹¹ His wife Emmy was born in Riga of a Dutch family whose ancestors received their noble rank from the Emperor Joseph II.¹² Arnold, like other Anabaptists, had no links with orthodox Marxism.

arity with workers during the Great Dock Strike of 1889 in London.

⁷ Edward Royle, *Radical Politics, 1790–1900: Religion and Unbelief* (Harlow: Longman, 1971), p. 84.

⁸ Alan Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism: Scott Holland to Tony Blair* (London: SCM, 1998), p. 26.

⁹ John Atherton (ed), *Social Christianity: A Reader* (London: SPCK, 1994), p. 25.

¹⁰ Walter Rauschenbusch, "Christianizing the Social Order", in Benson Young Landis (ed), *A Rauschenbusch Reader: the Kingdom of God and the Social Gospel* (New York: Harper, 1957), p. 61.

¹¹ John C. Cort, *Christian Socialism: an Informal History* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), p. 79.

¹² Gertrud Hüsey, *A Joyful Pilgrimage: Emmy Arnold, 1884–1980* (Rifton, New York: Plough

We cannot deny, however, that being in constant opposition to the political and religious *status quo* creates the potential for radical socio-political ferment. As written by Ernst Troeltsch, "Social reorganisations of any importance were only desired by the small Anabaptist groups. [...] The Protestantism of the great Confessions was on its part essentially conservative, and scarcely recognised the existence of social problems as such."¹³ By the end of eighteenth century and into the nineteenth, some Baptists responded to the revolutions in Europe with enthusiasm. Norwich [England] Baptist preacher Mark Wilks claimed in a sermon delivered on 14 July 1791, the second anniversary of the storming of the Bastille, that Jesus was a revolutionary and that the French Revolution was of God.¹⁴ In 1848, in a letter to Simon Wilkin in England, European Baptist leader Johann Gerhard Oncken referred to the revolutions of the time in terms of liberty "descending like an angel of peace from heaven".¹⁵ Later in the twentieth century, there were cases when radicalism was expressed in the form of "Christian Communism". We recall, for example, the Protestant communes established in the 1920s in Soviet Russia and favoured for some years by authorities. In 1924, the Thirteenth Congress of the Bolshevik Party passed a resolution recognising the positive role of "sectarians" in the development of a new society, and seeking to channel their work toward the building of the Soviet state.¹⁶ In other cases, the communitarian ideals of religious radicals were perceived by outsiders as communist, causing difficulties to the groups. Such was the case in the agrarian commune "Palma" [The Palm], established in Brazil in 1923 by Latvians who had emigrated in the early 1920s during the wave of apocalyptic emigration led by Baptist pastor Jānis Inķis. The commune experienced tension in its relationships with authorities, who viewed it as a group of communists.¹⁷

Publishing House, 1980), pp. 1-2.

¹³ Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress: a Historical Study of the Relation of Protestantism to the Modern World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 143.

¹⁴ Michael A.G. Haykin, "Eighteenth-Century Calvinistic Baptists and the Political Realm, with Particular Reference to the Thought of Andrew Fuller", in Philip E. Thompson and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Recycling the Past or Researching History? Studies in Baptist Historiography and Myths* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2005), p. 265.

¹⁵ Nicholas Railton, *No North Sea: the Anglo-German Evangelical Network in the Middle of the Nineteenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), p. 171.

¹⁶ V.A. Popov, I.S. Prokhanov: *Stranitsy zhizni* (St Petersburg: Bibliia dia vsekh, 1996), pp. 137-138.

¹⁷ The commune "Palma" stated in its bylaws that, following the ideals of the early church, it wished "to embody mutual moral and material support in a communal society". Vilberts Krasnais, *Latviešu kolonijas* (Melbourne: Kārļa Zariņa fonds, 1980), p. 484.

We must also keep in mind that the ideas of some early socialists were often far from the later destructive developments in socialist ideology. Oscar Wilde's essay "The Soul of Man under Socialism" (1891) is an interesting example of the creativity that developed among early socialists. The essay may be rightly accused of being naive and utopian, but it certainly was against the vulgarised, authoritarian version of socialism developed by Lenin and his co-workers. Wilde placed Christianity within socialist discourse by interpreting the words and deeds of Christ in a manner that portrayed Him as a promoter of individualism, which – according to Wilde, but contrary to many other socialists – formed the basis of socialist beliefs. According to Wilde, "The message of Christ to man was simply 'Be thyself.' That is the secret of Christ."¹⁸

The Origins of Socialist Ideas in Latvia and their Interaction with the Church

In the territory of Latvia, Socialist perspectives came out of the "New Current" [*Jaunā strāva*], a movement of democratically orientated Latvian intelligentsia which gathered around the *Dienas Lapa* [The Page of the Day] in the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁹ In 1899, partially inspired by the first congress of the Party of the Social Democratic Workers of Russia in Minsk (1898), and partially as a consequence of the increasing political action in the Baltic provinces, separate small groups of people in Riga with a Social Democratic orientation unified to form the Riga Social Democratic Organisation.²⁰ However, soon various branches of socialism started to emerge from within the unified organisation. In general, they were hostile towards religion, as evident in so-called "church demonstrations" that took place in many Lutheran churches (and in some cases, also in Orthodox parishes) during the 1905 Revolution, forcing pastors to leave the pulpit, to be replaced by a socialist agitator. The Riga Social Democratic Organisation viewed the Lutheran Church, controlled by the Baltic German nobility, as reactionary and oppressive.

Latvian clergy generally opposed socialism because of its negative view

¹⁸ Oscar Wilde, *De Profundis and Other Writings* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 27.

¹⁹ *Dienas Lapa* was published in Riga from 1886 until 1905. Among its editors were such known Latvian Leftists as poet Jānis Rainis, revolutionary Dāvids Bundža (who later emigrated to America), Pēteris Stučka (head of the Soviet government in Latvia from 1918–1920) and others.

²⁰ J. Krastiņš (ed), *Rīga: 1860–1917* (Riga: Zinātne, 1978), p. 144.

of religion. Only in rare cases did Lutheran and Orthodox pastors (for example Lutheran minister Juris Rozēns) support the political demands of the lower classes.²¹ Nor were Latvian Baptists actively involved in the revolution of 1905.²² While some Baptists were executed or exiled by tsarist forces, not all were revolutionaries. Many ordinary people who did not directly support the revolution were among those who suffered.²³

Established in 1918, the Social Democrats were among the strongest political groups in the Republic of Latvia. They maintained a negative attitude toward the church, opposing religious education in schools and combating especially Catholicism, which they viewed as relic from the middle ages, and therefore criticised more harshly than they did Protestants. Besides the Social Democrats, there were also smaller political groups associated with the socialist “camp”. But boundaries between political ideologies were not always strict. Parties borrowed rhetoric from each other to attract a wider proportion of citizens. For example, the newspaper *Latvis* [The Lett] published by rightwing politician Arvēds Bergs, used such phrases as “rightly understood interests of classes” and “healthy socialism” (in contrast with “unhealthy socialism”).²⁴

There were several political parties directly linked with the church. The Association of Christians, established in 1920 and originally called the Christian National Party, was led primarily by Lutheran pastors and combined nationalism with Christian values. In 1920, another party was established, the Union of Latgale Christian Peasants, which followed a pattern similar to the Catholic political force in Germany.²⁵ The political

²¹ As a sign of the times, we should also note that leftist tendencies existed among the Russian Orthodox clergy. Most of the thirteen members of various ranks of Orthodox clergy elected from different regions of the empire to the second State Duma belonged to the liberal or leftist parliamentary groups. In May 1907 the Holy Synod even pronounced disciplinary measures against clergy deputies who were part of “revolutionary parties”. S.L. Firsov, *Russkaia tserkov' nakanune peremen: konets 1890-x-1918 gg.* (Moscow: Dukhovnaia biblioteka, 2002), pp. 355, 357-358.

²² In response to church demonstrations and other revolutionary activities within Lutheran parishes during the revolution of 1905, representatives of Latvian Baptist churches sent a letter of support to the Lutheran Consistory in June 1905. “Latviešu baptistu misiones sadraudzibas vasaras saeima”, *Rīgas Avīze*, no. 126 (14 June 1905).

²³ For example, secretary of the Baptist Church in Aizpute Miķelis Purvičs was executed in 1906, found “guilty” of delivering a speech at one of the revolutionary mass meetings. However, even then he asked people to avoid burning the manors of the Baltic German nobility. Tervits, *Latvijas baptistu vēsture*, p. 91.

²⁴ Uldis Krēsliņš, *Aktīvais nacionālisms Latvijā, 1922–1934* (Riga: Latvijas Vēstures institūta apgāds, 2005), p. 58.

²⁵ I. Mednis, “Politiskās partijas Latvijas Republikā”, *Latvijas Arhīvi*, no. 3 (1995), p. 17.

organisation supported and led by Baptists, the Union of the Christian Working People, has a misleading name. According to Osvalds Freivalds, who has written the history of the political parties of the First Republic (1918–1940), it was actually middle-class in its ideological perspective.²⁶ The union opposed those who labelled it as representing only the lower classes and, as stated by secretary Voldemārs Freimanis, a Baptist minister, claimed that “in social life common to all of us we should not have a class-orientated stand.”²⁷ At the same time the party sought support among the poor. Party member Ēvalds Rimbenieks, a Baptist pastor later elected to the parliament, and who also served as Minister of Finance and mayor of Liepāja (one of largest cities in Latvia), stressed the role of Christianity in liberating the poor: “Christianity has created a new movement among the oppressed working people and showed them the way to the spiritual and social freedom.”²⁸ This is a sign of a new phase in the history of Latvian Baptists, when inward-looking spirituality is being gradually replaced by a socially cautious, “this-worldly” attitude. “One who thinks of Christianity as sweet lullaby to put humanity to sleep does not know Christianity at all”²⁹ claimed Rimbenieks. Discussions found in the official journal of the Baptist Union *Kristīgā Balss* [The Christian Voice] indicate that it was not a smooth transition.³⁰ We also should not interpret the political activities of some Baptists, however, as a turning away from theological and social conservatism. David Bebbington characterises the political activity of British Nonconformists in the nineteenth century in a similar way, stating that “the politics of chapels were primarily determined by the Evangelicalism that still gave them their reason for existence, their message, their energy.”³¹

²⁶ Osvalds Freivalds, *Latviešu politiskās partijas 60 gados* (Copenhagen: Imanta, 1961), pp. 125–126. However, we should not stress class orientation too much. As written by historian William Reddy, “Class’ is simply one additional less-than-adequate social term available to historians, with its own advantages and drawbacks.” William Reddy, *Money and Liberty in Modern Europe: a Critique of Historical Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 23.

²⁷ Voldemārs Freimanis, “Kāpēc mēs saucamies par Kristīgo darba ļaužu savienību”, *Kristīgo Darba Ļaužu Balss*, no. 3 (January 1928), p. 4. Freimanis was a Baptist minister since 1924. He also occupied the post of Secretary of the Central Board of the Union of Christian Working People.

²⁸ Ēvalds Rimbenieks, “Ko kristīgums var dot darba ļaudīm”, *Kristīgo Darba Ļaužu Balss*, no. 3 (December 1927), p. 3.

²⁹ Rimbenieks, “Ko kristīgums var dot darba ļaudīm”, p. 3.

³⁰ See for example an article written by Jānis Kronlīns, one of editors of the *Christian Voice*: Jānis Kronlīns, “Reformēt pasauli”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 6 (1931), pp. 120–121.

³¹ D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870–1914* (Lon-

In the early 1920s, a group of Christian Socialists in Riga began publishing *Kristīgais Sociālists* [Christian Socialist] as an appendix to the newspaper *Evāņģēlists* [The Evangelist]. *Kristīgais Sociālists* was edited by Mārtiņš Tiltiņš,³² who had worked as Christian publisher already before World War I, and its articles provide information on the main tendencies among members of the group. It criticised other socialists, and rather than promoting revolution as the means to bring about radical changes in society, its members promoted Christian values, claiming that “only through renewal of nations in the spirit of early Christianity can come true improvement”.³³ They viewed Christianity as strictly separate from secularised socialism, holding that “nobody can be simultaneously Christian and Social Democrat”.³⁴ At the same time, contributors to the publication, in the fashion of the Pietist and Holiness movements, spoke about the way of sanctification. The group did not have a unified view of how to bring about social change. While one article claims that it is enough to practice inner mission,³⁵ in another text, such attitude is viewed as unsatisfactory because, “through it is possible to smooth the consequences of individual and social sins, their causes remain untouched”.³⁶ The group did not have the intellectual and financial resources to expand its work, and its publication ceased after a few issues.

More leftist, at least in the beginning, was the National Workers Party, a political group established in 1925 by free-church minister Roberts Bāce.³⁷ Like the group of Christian Socialists described above, it opposed the Social Democrats. Bāce had a personal reason for hating Social Democrats: in 1922, because of conflict with them, he had been expelled from the trade union and established a separate trade organisation, the National Trade Union of

don: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), p. 14.

³² In last years of his life, Tiltiņš (d. 1926) attended the Matthew Baptist Church in Riga. H. Redins, “Mārtiņš Tiltiņš”, *Atmoda*, no. 1 (1926), p. 2.

³³ “Ap Satversmes sapulci”, *Kristīgais Sociālists*, no. 1 (6 March 1920).

³⁴ “Sociāldemokrātu pretkristīgais gars. Viltība un divkosība”, *Kristīgais Sociālists*, no. 5 (16 April 1920).

³⁵ “Ap Satversmes sapulci”.

³⁶ “Sociālais jautājums”, *Kristīgais Sociālists*, no. 8 (1920).

³⁷ Before World War I, Roberts Bāce was travelling secretary of the Latvian branch of the youth organisation “Christian Endeavour” and minister at the Alliance Church in Riga, a small free-church group. In 1917, he established and led the society “Christian Unity”, which continued the traditions of the Alliance Church. Later he joined the Baptists, and from 1945 to 1946 was assistant to the bishop. During the First Republic he was not yet associated with Baptists, and is therefore not named as a “Baptist politician” in accounts of Baptist history.

Book Industry Workers.³⁸ In order to gain wider support he did not stress his denominational background and status in the church in his pre-election campaigns. There is nothing about it in his short biography published in the newspaper of the party in 1925.³⁹ However Bāce stood strongly for a close state-church relationship. Uncommon to the free-church perspective, not to mention Social Democrats, was the promise of his party to organise state support for the churches.⁴⁰ For some members of his group, the term "Christian Socialist" was synonymous with "national worker".⁴¹ The party followed the nineteenth-century nationalist mythology of one nation with common interests. Thoughts expressed by Eduards Paplinskis, chairman of the Central Committee of the party, sound more innovative. He referred to his group as the next step in the genesis of socialist movements and called it "national state Socialism, where interests of the state and the whole nation occupy first place positions".⁴² However such ideas should be viewed in the given context; the Party of National Workers was not alone in its claims to reform Socialism. For example, the Workers Party of Latvian People (established in 1930) demanded modernisation of socialist ideology, claiming that socialism in Latvia had gone astray.⁴³

The Party of National Workers disassociated itself more and more from the very term "socialist", uniting with the nationalist-oriented Association of Christians at the parliamentary elections in 1928. In 1930 Bāce and his co-workers in Riga organised the first conference of non-socialist workers, thus placing themselves outside the socialist movement. Behind these changes stands a pragmatic reason: in the second parliamentary elections (1925), the party had received only 515 votes, which meant that it was too small to have any serious impact on political life.⁴⁴

³⁸ Roberts Bāce, "Kristīgie pilsoņi, neaizmirstiet savu pienākumu!", *Latvijas Strādnieks*, no. 21 (26 September 1925), p. 2.

³⁹ "Latvijas Nacionālo Strādnieku partijas Rīgas apgabala vēlēšanu saraksta Nr. 32 kandidātu biogrāfijas", *Latvijas Strādnieks*, no. 19 (5 September 1925), p. 2.

⁴⁰ "Latvijas Nacionālo Strādnieku Partijas vēlēšanu platforma", *Latvijas Strādnieks*, no. 20 (19 September 1925), p. 3.

⁴¹ See for example T. Vēdzelis, "Politiska krīze", *Latvijas Strādnieks*, no. 1-2 (January/February 1928), p. 6.

⁴² Eduards Paplinskis, "Darbi un vārdi", *Latvijas Strādnieks*, no. 2 (9 May 1925), p. 1.

⁴³ I. Mednis, "Sociālistisko partiju darbība pirmās Latvijas Republikas parlamentārajā periodā (1920–1934)", *Latvijas Arhīvi*, no. 2 (1997), p. 32.

⁴⁴ I. Mednis, "Labējā spārna politiskās partijas Latvijas Republikas parlamentārajā periodā (1920–1934)", *Latvijas Arhīvi*, no. 1 (1995), p. 24.

Socialist Trends among Latvian-American Baptists

As we saw in the previous section, Baptists in Latvia did not develop a clear or long-term socialist agenda. However, Latvian Baptist history in America, where Latvians began to arrive in the nineteenth century in search of a better life, provides us with a different picture. The number of Latvian Baptist churches in America was never in their history very large,⁴⁵ but they were well known because of dynamic activities. In the beginning, Latvian emigrant churches were against involvement of their members in socialist groups. In 1907, members of the Philadelphia Latvian Baptist Church (then under the leadership of Jānis Neibuks), the centre of Latvian Baptists in the United States, voted that members could not be Social Democrats. Two church members were given four weeks to leave the party, after which the church excluded them from the membership roll.⁴⁶ However, already in these early years there were other cases demonstrating a change in attitude. *Amerikas Latvietis* [American Latvian]⁴⁷ edited by pastor Fricis Hūns⁴⁸ in 1903 published a Latvian translation of the Rauschenbusch lecture, "Can a Christian be a Socialist?"⁴⁹ Pastors who succeeded Neibuks⁵⁰ did not react as strictly against those who challenged the taboos of Pietist-Holiness subculture. Some members of the church complained in their letters to Latvia that "the church practices drinking, smoking, playing cards, theatre and cinema attendance".⁵¹ Neibuks was characterised as a "man who loved the truth",⁵²

⁴⁵ In 1932 there were six Latvian Baptist churches in the USA, three of which had their own prayer houses. *Latvijas baptistu draudžu savienības un ārzemju latviešu baptistu draudžu 1932. gada pārskats* (Riga: LBDS, n.d.), p. 31.

⁴⁶ "Filadelfijas latviešu baptistu draudzes sanāksmju protokolu grāmata" (unpublished minutes from the Philadelphia Latvian Baptist Church, 1907), pp. 194-195. The author thanks Dr Jānis Plostnieks for providing a copy of these pages.

⁴⁷ The newspaper *Amerikas Latvietis* was published from 1901 to 1905. Data about the years of publication for this and other periodicals have been taken from the bibliographical index *Latvian Periodicals: Latviešu periodika, 1768-1919* (Riga: Fundamentālā bibliotēka, 1977), vol. 1; *Latviešu periodika, 1920-1940* (Riga: Zinātne, 1988), vol. 3, part 1; *Latviešu periodika, 1940-1945* (Riga: Latvijas Akadēmiskā bibliotēka, 1995), vol. 4.

⁴⁸ Fricis Hūns was the first pastor (1900-1903) of the Philadelphia Latvian Baptist Church.

⁴⁹ V. Raušenbušs, "Vai kristīgais var arī būt sociālists?", *Amerikas Latvietis*, no. 3 (1903), pp. 32-33; no. 4, pp. 40-43; no. 5, pp. 50-52; no. 6, pp. 62-64.

⁵⁰ J. Neibuks served the Philadelphia church until 1909, when Jānis Kvietīņš was elected in his place (Oļģerts Cakars (ed), *Teici to Kungu: Amerikas Latviešu Baptistu Apvienības 50. gadu jubilejas izdevums* ([USA]: ALBA, 2000), pp. 106-207). After Philadelphia, Neibuks served as pastor in Boston until 1913, when he retired. He died in 1914. J. Kvietīņš, "Jānis Neibuks", *Avots*, no. 11 (1914), p. 87.

⁵¹ "Vēstule no Amerikas", *Evanģēlists*, no. 1 (1910), p. 2.

⁵² "Vēstule no Amerikas", p. 1.

and the period following his ministry was painted in dark colours. Certainly more conservative members had reasons to complain, because church life developed in a direction to which they were not accustomed. For example, youth of the church discussed issues such as the direction of world history in the optimistic manner of the "Social Gospel".⁵³ In 1916, the American Latvian Baptist Literary Society (ALBLS) was established, led by pastor Jānis Blumbergs.⁵⁴ It published *Drauga Balss* [A Friend's Voice], which positioned itself as a progressive newspaper standing alongside workers.⁵⁵ The journal was governed by the conviction that "this age will not be led by political chauvinism or religious fanaticism. Education should come to the aid of politics and universal, liberal religion".⁵⁶ The leading figure in this publication was pastor Pēteris Bušmanis, but others served as editors as well, such as pastor Jānis Birznieks.⁵⁷

News about socialist influence among Latvians in America quickly reached Latvia. Secular newspapers wrote that even "part of the Baptists in America support the Bolsheviks".⁵⁸ The conference of Latvian Baptist churches that took place in Priekule in 1920 passed a resolution to ask their co-believers in the United States to use their influence on *Drauga Balss* to stop its political involvement.⁵⁹ Well-known Baptist pastor Jānis Inķis criticised the newspaper, claiming that "a Christian newspaper can preach only that which strengthens the faith and warms the heart in hope of the coming of the glorious Friend".⁶⁰ Here religion is understood as individualistic piety striving for personal salvation, rather than "worldly politics" focusing on eschatological fulfilment. The ALBLS responded to the criticism by stating that it did not support communists, but equally denounced any form of injustice, be it done by communists or the anti-Bolshevik [white] forces led

⁵³ A. Egle, "No Filadelfijas", *Drauga Balss*, no. 4 (1920), p. 59.

⁵⁴ "No Ņujorkas", *Jaunā Tēvija*, no. 1 (1916), p. 27.

⁵⁵ Pēteris Bušmanis, "Editoriels", *Drauga Balss*, no. 1 (1919), p. 3; *Drauga Balss* was published from 1918–1920. The author has not found in libraries any issues from 1917 mentioned in the bibliographical index.

⁵⁶ K. Freidenfelds, "Spēks, kas ir iekš mums", *Drauga Balss*, no. 1 (1919), p. 6.

⁵⁷ Jānis Birznieks arrived in the USA in 1915. Beginning in 1916 he was pastor of the Boston Latvian Baptist Church (ordained in 1917). However, he left this position after a couple of years. Later, after obtaining US citizenship, he changed his Latvian name to an American one – John Adam Brave. He received a Doctor of Divinity degree. "Jānis Birznieks", *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 12 (1952) pp. 146–147.

⁵⁸ "Latvieši Amerikā", *Latvijas Sargs*, no. 194 (28 August 1920).

⁵⁹ A. Freijs, "Latvijas baptistu draudžu konference", *Drauga Balss*, no. 17 (1920), pp. 261–262.

⁶⁰ Jānis Inķis, "Vēstule iz dzimtenes", *Drauga Balss*, no. 7 (1920), p. 110.

by Admiral Aleksandr Kolchak or Major General Anton Denikin.⁶¹ This was a reminder that Russian anti-Bolshevik armies could not be viewed as liberation movements alone. Yet *Drauga Balss* did not publish only positive views on socialism. For example, in 1919 and 1920, a lengthy article was published by New York Baptist pastor Isaac Haldeman, a prominent premillennialist preacher who opposed Rauschenbusch. In the article, translated by Jānis Blumbergs, Haldeman compared socialism to Cain, who “left God’s presence and went to build a city, society and civilisation which is not in accordance with the divine plan”.⁶² In *Drauga Balss* one can find side to side texts promoting social activism and pieces on revivalist thought. That should not be surprising. Rauschenbusch also is known as the translator of D.L. Moody/Ira Sankey gospel songs into German.

Some words should be said about two most distinguished persons among those American Latvian Baptists who were influenced by Socialism – Pēteris Bušmanis and Jānis Daugmanis. Pēteris Bušmanis, before immigrating to the United States, served as pastor in the Liepāja Zion Baptist Church (1905–1907).⁶³ He is characterised as one “who already in early youth was inclined toward progressive ideas”.⁶⁴ In the United States, he studied in Rochester, New York, and in addition, for one year at Harvard and Temple universities. From 1913 to 1914 he was minister at the Boston Latvian Baptist Church.⁶⁵ He then served as pastor in Latvian Baptist churches in Philadelphia and Bucks County until 1928, when, for personal reasons not clearly stated in available sources, he withdrew from ministry among Latvians.⁶⁶ In 1924 he visited Latvia, attending the Congress of the Union of Latvian Baptists and preaching in German and Latvian Baptist Churches of Liepāja, the town in which he had previously ministered.

⁶¹ V. Mūrnieks, “Latviešu Baptistu sabiedrības konference un ‘Drauga Balss’”, *Drauga Balss*, no. 18 (1920), p. 281.

⁶² J.M. Haldemanis, “Sociālisti”, *Drauga Balss*, no. 24 (15 December 1919), p. 374; Publication of that kind of negative material about socialists was probably the initiative of Jānis Blumbergs, who for a short time in 1919 worked as editor and opposed Bušmanis’ views. Some other of Haldeman’s works have been translated into Latvian. For example, his article opposing Pentecostals was published as part of a tract series of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Riga (J. M. Haldemans, *Svētā Gara kristība un runāšana valodām*, Semināra traktāts Nr. 5 [Riga: Baptistu seminārs, 1922]).

⁶³ Jānis Tervits, *Latvijas baptistu draudžu savienības draudzes pašreiz* (Riga: LBDS, 1995), p. 54.

⁶⁴ Osvalds Akmentiņš, *Amerikas latvieši, 1888–1948: fakti un apceres* ([Boston]: Vaidava, 1958), p. 82.

⁶⁵ Cakars (ed), *Teici to Kungu*, p. 185.

⁶⁶ A. Mēters, “Mācītājs Pēteris Bušmanis”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no 8 (1970), p.104.

From reports of these visits we can gather that he was well received and that his speeches were traditional in style.⁶⁷ Bušmanis became more and more interested in socialism, and like many Western intellectuals, romanticised the Soviet regime. In a letter written in 1940 to pastor Ādolfs Eglītis in Latvia, he glorified the USSR and referred to Stalin as a Christian brother.⁶⁸ Bušmanis thought that the church should not emphasise ethnicity and should not stand against progress, but should be “this-worldly” and socially involved.⁶⁹ He regretfully stated, “Christian churches in the name of Christ have become worshippers of Caesar [...] Contemporary politicians have taken control over churches, and they are doing everything that the government requires.”⁷⁰

Jānis Daugmanis, after graduation from the Baptist Seminary in Riga in 1925, became a minister in villages of Ugunciems and Mersrags. He arrived in America in 1929 to study theology, graduating in 1931 from Eastern Theological Seminary with a Masters Degree in Religious Education.⁷¹ Later he received a Doctorate in Theology from Eastern Theological Seminary (1932).⁷² During his studies, he led the Latvian Baptist Church in Philadelphia. (He had been elected already in 1928, before his arrival in the United States.) In 1937 he became pastor of the Boston Latvian Baptist Church, where he served until his retirement in 1952.⁷³ Along with pastoral work, he also taught for some years in two colleges. By that time the church in Philadelphia had gradually become more and more inclusive. As noted by a visitor from Latvia, “There is a rather large number of independently thinking spirits among members of the church in Philadelphia, and the attitude of the church toward them is very tolerant.”⁷⁴ Daugmanis himself before the war expressed interest in travelling to Russia in the spring of 1939 to attend lectures at Moscow University and collect materials for his book on pedagogical methods in the USSR.⁷⁵ Available sources contain no evidence that this trip was undertaken. We learn about Daugmanis’ views

⁶⁷ “No Liepājas”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 17 (1924), pp. 346-347.

⁶⁸ J. Daugmanis, “Latviešu bēgļa vēstule”, *Drauga Vēsts*, no. 39 (1945), pp. 12-13.

⁶⁹ Pēteris Bušmanis, “Ko strādnieki sagaida no kristīgām draudzēm”, *Ausma* (September 1942), p. 8.

⁷⁰ Pēteris Bušmanis, “Cēzars un Kristus”, *Drauga Balss*, no. 15 (1920), p. 214.

⁷¹ “No Filadelfijas”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 12 (1931), p. 256.

⁷² “No Filadelfijas”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 13 (1932), p. 197.

⁷³ Voldemārs Freimanis, “Jānis Daugmanis”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 12 (1952), p. 151.

⁷⁴ V. Mūrnieks, “Amerika. Ceļojuma piezīmes”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 21 (1925), p. 587.

⁷⁵ K. Grūbe, “Seminārista vasaras brīvlaiks Amerikā”, *Kristīgā Balss*, no. 22 (1938), p. 409.

primarily from *Ausma* [Dawn],⁷⁶ a periodical which he edited. Opposite views were presented by *Drauga Vēsts* [A Friend's Message], edited by Carlos Gruber, who then was pastor of the New York Latvian Baptist Church.⁷⁷ Gruber later wrote about that conflict:

Several of our Latvian Baptist seminary students, because of modernism, have drifted away from the basic Baptist beliefs. [...] Through our magazine, *Drauga Vēsts*, we fought for the great fundamental principles and conservative belief in the Bible [...] After I graduated from Southwestern Baptist Seminary, while pastoring the Latvian Baptist Church, I attended Union Theological Seminary for two years. I became well acquainted with liberalism in theology at that time. Fosdick was one of those professors, a wonderful person, but totally liberal in his theology.⁷⁸

The position taken by *Ausma* met with angry responses also from the secular side of the Latvian community. Alfrēds Bilmanis, Ambassador of Latvia in the USA,⁷⁹ circulated an open letter to Daugmanis. In response, Daugmanis wrote that he had sided neither with Latvian nationalists nor communists, because he wanted to promote cooperation between various political camps. Similarly, he stated that evaluation of the role of the USSR should be left open until the future showed what would happen.⁸⁰

Daugmanis' sermons reveal him as a critic of parliamentary democracies of their time. He reminds his readers that dictatorships in Germany and Italy grew out of democracy,⁸¹ and that "in the past almost all churches have made all kind of compromises with secular powers."⁸² War became for him not only a tragic event but also a sign of renewal, because he hoped

⁷⁶ *Ausma* was published from 1941 to 1944.

⁷⁷ Ādolfs Eglītis, who was elected pastor of the church in New York, did not arrive in the USA until the end of the war. The church was led by Gruber until 1947. After moving to the United States, he changed his surname from Purgailis to Gruber. Articles published in the 1930s in *Kristīgā Balss* were signed also as Grūbe.

⁷⁸ Carlos Gruber, e-mail to V. Tēraudkalns (3 May 2001).

⁷⁹ The USA never recognized the occupation of the Baltic states by Soviet forces. Therefore, embassies of these countries continued to operate.

⁸⁰ Jānis Daugmanis, "Atbilde uz Dr A. Bīlmaņa atklātu vēstuli 'Ausmas' redaktoram", *Ausma* (July 1941), pp. 29-33.

⁸¹ Jānis Daugmanis, "Draudzes uzdevums pasaulē šodien", *Ausma* (September 1942), p. 4.

⁸² Daugmanis, "Draudzes uzdevums pasaulē šodien", p. 5.

that leaving behind “narrow nationalism and isolated sovereignty” would renew nations.⁸³ He saw the embodiment of Christian values as an answer to the crisis which had emerged in old democracies, turning into fertile soil for fascist ideologies. He viewed repression of religion in Communist Russia as unacceptable, an expression of a very narrow understanding of the role of religion in the past. At the same time he was optimistic about the economic experiments of the Soviet government: “The Soviet Union in its social-economic reforms – collectivism, industrialisation, planning of production and consumption – has shown humanity a good path, placing the first cornerstones under the building of new civilization.”⁸⁴ He believed that the USSR and the USA would learn to cooperate more closely in order to promote peace and progress. As we know, soon the realities of the Cold War uncovered irreconcilable differences between the former allies against the Nazis. Daugmanis’ hope that after the war the USSR would grant independence to the Baltic states also turned out to be unrealistic. Such expectations were probably raised by rumours circulating during the war, and the conviction spread among emigrants as well those remaining in Latvia that the allies would not abandon the Baltic people. In 1943, in a speech made at the fifth anniversary of the United Forum of Latvians in Boston, he asserted that “Soviet Russia promised the Baltic states the right to choose their fate freely and without presence of military force in general voting.”⁸⁵

Daugmanis was involved in a number of public debates with communists. For example, in 1934 he had a dispute about the Bible in light of modern criticism. His arguments, as described by a reporter, were pragmatic. He stated that the Bible is the most read book and has been respected by famous people. His selection of philosophers for his argumentation is especially interesting: he pointed to Ralph Waldo Emerson and Immanuel Kant.⁸⁶ Osvalds Akmentiņš, in his account of the history of Latvian Americans, sees communist influence in Daugmanis’ attempts to organise forums in different cities at the end of thirties, in which Latvians of various persuasions could discuss hot issues.⁸⁷ From socialist publications of that time we can see that the American Latvian workers – the primary audience of the

⁸³ Jānis Daugmanis, “Nacionālisms un internacionālisms”, *Ausma* (April 1943), p. 11.

⁸⁴ Jānis Daugmanis, “Komunisms, nazi-faschisms un demokrātija savos ideālos un metodēs”, *Bostonas latviešu apvienotā foruma otrā darbības gada apskats un citu latviešu forumu ziņojumi* (January 1941), p. 17.

⁸⁵ “Forums”, *Ausma* (March 1944), pp. 15-16.

⁸⁶ “No Filadelfijas”, *Amerikas Čiņa*, no. 19 (March 1934), pp. 4, 7.

⁸⁷ Akmentiņš, *Amerikas latvieši, 1888–1948*, p. 129.

American Latvian Socialist movement – were very fragmented, and some groups lost their radicalism.⁸⁸ Probably among the latter we could find the most ready dialogue partners for Daugmanis' forums. Daugmanis' role in uniting Latvian emigrants should not be exaggerated, because he was not the first to be involved in creating bridges of communication among competing Latvian associations. For example, at the end of the 1920s, four Latvian secular organisations organised the Council of Progressive Organisations of Philadelphia, which for some years was very active, but stopped its work in 1932–1933. By that time, local Latvian Baptist and Lutheran congregations only occasionally participated, according to Roberts Līdums, in his book on the history of the Philadelphia Society of Free Letts.⁸⁹ However, it is undeniable that Daugmanis was a leading figure in the United Forum of Latvians in Boston organised at the end of 1930s.

As discussed above, two factors led to the emergence of socialist ideas among Latvian-American Baptists. The first was the influence of the “social gospel”. Several Latvian Baptists (including Pēteris Bušmanis and Fricis Hūns) studied in Rochester under Walter Rauschenbusch. In addition, we need to take into account the enormous popularity of Rauschenbusch's thought in America. The second factor was the socialist presence in the immigrant community. Socialists came to America in increasing numbers, especially after the revolution of 1905 when they were severely persecuted in tsarist Russia. Now socialist activities among American Latvians belong to the past. It is ironic that the Roxbury Club in Boston, for a long time one of the well-known centres of Latvian Socialists, became the property of the rightwing organisation *Daugavas Vanagi* [Eagles of Daugava] in 1956.⁹⁰ New emigrants coming to America after the Second World War changed the political climate of Baptist congregations, as Latvians who fled from Communism obviously had different political tastes. No Latvians from among the earlier waves of emigration were elected council members of the Association of American Latvian Baptists established in 1950.⁹¹

⁸⁸ The author of one article speaks of the “ideological degeneration” of Latvian workers and complains that they “have fellowship with purely reactionary middle-class elements”. J. Pallo, “Amerikas latviešu strādnieku idejiskā deģenerācija”, *Amerikas Cīņa*, no. 8 (1930), pp. 2-3.

⁸⁹ Roberts Līdums, *Latviešu brīvības meklētāji* ([Canada]: Greenwood Printers, 1973), pp. 75-77.

⁹⁰ Akmentiņš, *Amerikas latvieši, 1888–1948*, p. 132.

⁹¹ Čakars (ed), *Teici to Kungu*, p. 11; American Latvian Baptists for quite a long time debated the need to establish an association, but it was founded only after the Second World War.

Conclusion

The issues discussed in this paper reveal a rich variety of perspectives held by Latvian Baptists in response to socio-political realities of the time. The claim by Voldemārs Freimanis that “Latvian Baptists, the majority being people of low income, in rural and urban life never have been become entangled in the nets of leftist streams”;⁹² remains wishful thinking. Socialist ideas indeed had some influence on Baptists. Modernity challenges religious tradition with innovation and restructuring.

Nowadays in post-socialist countries socialism is still classified by many Christians as an enemy of Christianity,⁹³ failing to distinguish between totalitarian currents like Marxism-Leninism and Stalinism, which can be equated with Nazism because of their crimes against humanity, and other types of the political Left. This attitude uncritically places Christianity on the side of post-industrial consumer society and such political ideologies as U.S. president George W. Bush's politics of aggressive American messianism. But one does not need to be socialist to be a true witness to God's transforming work in the world. Likewise, rigid anti-Communism is not a Christian value *per se*. As stated by Karl Barth, “Anti means *against*. God is not against, but *for* men. The communists are men too. [...] To be for the communists does not mean to be for communism. I am not for communism. But one can only say what has to be said *against* communism if one is *for* the communists” (emphasis in the original).⁹⁴ The Church can and must be political without being politicised.

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⁹² Voldemārs Freimanis, “Baptisti tautas un valsts dzīvē”, in Fridrihs Čukurs, Rūdolfs Ekšteins and Augusts Mēters (eds), *Dzīvības ceļš: Veltījums latviešu baptistu 100 gadu jubilejai* ([Toronto]: ALBA, 1960), p. 209.

⁹³ See, for example, claims made by leadership of the independent Charismatic church New Generation [*Novoe Pokolenie*] in Riga (Pastor Aleksei Ledjajev [Lediaev] is a former Baptist.) that “Socialists, Muslims, Moonies and Buddhists are raising their teaching to the rank of national doctrine”. (Tserkov “Novoe Pokolenie”, <http://www.newgeneration.lv/ru/ideologija/pravitelstvo.htm> [accessed 7 March 2005].) Such dualistic claims give the impression that Christianity is under unavoidable attack by various enemies.

⁹⁴ Cited in Cort, *Christian Socialism*, p. 212. This paper is not the place to discuss in detail Barth's own inconsistencies regarding various secular ideologies. (He has been criticized for directing his criticism more toward Nazism than Communism.)

Religious Liberty in the Soviet Union: Baptists in the Early Days of Protest (1960–1966)¹

Michael Bourdeaux

The date is 16 May 1966, a day of glorious spring sunshine in Moscow. Crowds of visitors from all over the Soviet Union are strolling about its central streets, but those who are beginning to congregate on *Staraia Ploshchad'* [Old Square] outside the offices of the Central Committee of the Communist Party are different. Some five hundred people assemble in an orderly manner. Most do not know each other, as they are elected delegates from 130 towns and cities representing virtually every one of the fifteen Soviet republics, from Brest in Belorussia on the Polish border to Vladivostok in the Far East.

They have come to hand over a letter to Leonid Brezhnev, Chairman of the Central Committee, which is in the possession of the leaders. They are allowed to leave their document with a receptionist, but that is not enough for them: they demand to see someone in authority. There is no response. In an orderly fashion they wait overnight, their numbers being swollen by members of the local Baptist church in Moscow. Detachments of the KGB arrive to form a ring around the demonstrators, so that they cannot talk to casual passers-by. At noon on the second day, an official comes out to summon ten leaders inside, ordering the rest to disperse. No one moves, but they pray together. Empty buses draw up and suddenly an assault begins. The militia drives the demonstrators with truncheons into

¹ My original intention was to continue until 1985, but that would have made this contribution too long for the confines of the conference.

the buses, which move off as soon as they are full, with those inside still singing and praying.

The ten inside were arrested. Interrogations began. The KGB discovered that they now held in their custody some of the Baptist leaders who had long been on their wanted list. Three days later two more, Pastors Georgii Vins and Mikhail Khorev, walked into the building to demand to know what had happened to those inside. Vins would not be at liberty again for three years. Peaceful demonstrations outside the building continued for several days.²

The documents handed in at the Central Committee building contained, in essence, one simple request: the right of these people to self-determination, to appoint their own pastors without interference from state authorities, to educate their children in their own faith and to establish new churches where and when they wished. There had been many such appeals in the previous five years, but they had brought no result.

Baptists as Democrats

Were these unregistered Baptists the first Soviet democrats? They certainly would not have described themselves in this way, but their extraordinary courage in the face of totalitarianism in the 1960s paved the way for changes which were to follow in the 1980s. Some historians of international reputation who have described the collapse of the Soviet Union have failed to give the human rights movement its due as one of the fuses which detonated the bomb which finished off the Soviet Union.

The organisation of the demonstration contains features which one could describe as "proto-democratic". Every movement or group, whether local or covering a wider spectrum, was under the control of the Communist Party. Any idea of democratic input or election was alien to the system. The events we have described were remarkable not only because this was the best-organised independent demonstration in Soviet history, and possibly the largest, if one excepts occasional on-the-spot strikes at the work place. To gather people together from all over the vast expanses of the Soviet Union would have been a feat in any context. To have done so under the noses of the KGB, who were by this time aware of Baptist demands, was amazing; that each demonstrator was locally elected to participate surpasses belief.

The Evangelical Christians and Baptists came together from two main

² For a fuller account see Michael Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971), pp. 9-22.

Protestant streams in 1944 under an "All-Union Council" based in Moscow and, from the first, under the strict control of the Soviet authorities. It was an uneasy union, joined a year later by the Pentecostals, who had no other possibility of legal existence.³ Lutherans, who had been established on Russian soil since the eighteenth century, had lost their identity completely, except for some scattered and unrecognised groups in Siberia and their existence as the main denomination in Estonia and Latvia. It is difficult to identify any element of democracy in a conference which was under the tight control of the State authorities from beginning to end. Significantly, the Russian Orthodox Church established the Moscow Patriarchate at the same time, which was equally clearly under the control of the authorities.

During the first decade of this new union's existence, the USSR was primarily concerned with rebuilding the country after the devastation of war, and the next decade and a half saw a period of modest development in Christian life. Atheist indoctrination continued throughout the field of education, but the Russian Baptists (as we shall call the new united organisation for brevity's sake) were allowed some access to a public forum and to international contacts, provided that this came under the banner of supporting the peace campaign of the Soviet government.⁴

With the advent of Nikita Khrushchev to power there was a change in the Party's attitude to religion. From atheist indoctrination a more active anti-religious policy began to emerge, especially notable from 1959. Khrushchev, having denounced Stalin in 1956, found himself increasingly under pressure to "prove" to his critics that he was at heart a dedicated Marxist-Leninist. It seems that believers formed a defenceless sector of society who could be persecuted with relative ease. The new policy affected all believers of all religions and denominations, but it was the Baptists – soon to be followed by the Lithuanian Catholics, the Jews and to a lesser extent some figures in the Russian Orthodox Church – who put up the most organised resistance. Eventually, the later work of nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov, after he became a campaigner for civil rights, brought these strands of protest together. Fr Gleb Iakunin, the most prominent spokesman for reform in the Orthodox Church, also founded an ecumenical "Christian Committee for the Defence of Believers' Rights" in 1976.⁵

³ The authoritative account of this founding conference is Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981), pp. 78-104.

⁴ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, pp. 104-131.

⁵ Michael Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990), p. 9.

A clear line runs from the earliest days of coordinated Baptist protest in 1961 through to the emergence of what one might truly call a democratic movement, concertedly demanding civil rights, in the late 1980s. Events in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and in Poland in the 1970s and '80s, have some parallels: the demand for religious liberty played a role to a lesser or greater extent in each; together they contributed massively to the eventual collapse of communism. We should remember, though, that these all emerged from very different circumstances and, in its way, the evolution of a civic consciousness in the Soviet Union is the most remarkable of all; the Baptists were there first.

Self-destruction

Nikita Khrushchev's attack against religion (1959-64) was three-pronged. The physical side of it was a *pogrom*, with widespread violence against both people and buildings. The newspapers, radio and television led a ferocious ideological campaign, the focus of which was the new monthly periodical, *Nauka i religii* [Science and Religion]. The combination of the two was devastating for all believers, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist and Jewish.

Far worse, though, was the attempt to subvert religion from within. There were many notorious examples. One of the worst was the prominence given to defectors from the faith and the example of the former lecturer at the Leningrad Theological Academy, Aleksandr Osipov, who betrayed his students in 1959, with widespread publicity given to his press articles and lectures.⁶

In 1960 the government's Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults, which set out to control all aspects of religious life (except for that of the Orthodox Church, which at that time had its own separate body) imposed a new set of regulations on the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB) in Moscow. Their acceptance of these "New Statutes", supplemented by a "Letter of Instructions", under threat of increased persecution, caused grief to the whole Baptist community, and the effect persists to this day.

The AUCECB presented these new regulations as their own, but it was obvious from the outset that *force majeure* lay behind them. The texts were not officially published, but became known only through the efforts of

⁶ A full account is in Michael Bourdeaux, *Opium of the People: The Christian Religion in the USSR* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), pp. 109-122.

those who opposed them. They are set out in the appendix of my book on the origins of the Baptist protest.⁷

To summarise a complicated issue, the “New Statutes” were almost exclusively concerned with control over local church life and not at all with the provision of spiritual guidance. The AUCECB was assuming an authority which did not reside in any of its founding or subsequent documents. Senior presbyters were to be the main line of communication between the AUCECB and local congregations – but the communication appeared to be one-way, with no parallel channel back to the centre. Restrictions were placed on where and when services of worship were to be held, who should preach and even say prayers. A choir could now perform only in its own church, never on invitation from a neighbouring one. Musical instruments were to be banned from church, with the exception of organ or harmonium.

The most devastating provision was that only those congregations which had gained registration from the State were to be recognised by the AUCECB. This would disenfranchise the hundreds, possibly thousands, of congregations which had been refused registration or which, on principle, refused to apply for it. Registration also entailed the imposition of a pastor from above, as elections for such appointments were already banned.

The “Letter of Instructions” to senior presbyters went further. Paragraph five read: “Zealous proselytisation in our communities must definitely cease... and an effort must be made to reduce the baptism of young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty to a minimum.”⁸ The extent to which these regulations were state-imposed is illustrated by what happened a year later (1961), when an irregularly constituted “Synod of Bishops” did the same, *mutatis mutandi*, for the Orthodox Church.

Opposition rapidly emerged in the Baptist community, which was spread thinly but widely throughout the republics of the Soviet Union. Initially an “Action Group” emerged, which called for an all-union congress to review these regulations. As the “initiators” of this demand, they were dubbed *Initsiativniki*, a name which caught on, and as they came overwhelmingly from the unregistered congregations, the name became more or less synonymous with the illegal communities. Their eventual official title became the Council of Evangelical Christian and Baptist Churches.

The leaders of this movement were Aleksei Prokof’ev, Gennadii

⁷ Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia: Protestant Opposition to Soviet Religious Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 190-210.

⁸ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, p. 20.

Kriuchkov and Georgii Vins, of whom the last became best known not only because of his tireless activity, but also because of his ability to organise and communicate with the outside world even when under conditions of utmost duress on the part of the authorities. However, it was Prokof'ev who at first attracted the most attention in the atheist press, so much so that some sources called the movement the *Prokof'evtsy*.

Reaction to the Demands

The atheist press from time to time carried astonishingly detailed accounts of the movement.⁹ The leading atheist journal devoted a whole page to describing Prokof'ev's activities and gave an idea of the extent of his travel in his attempts to set up contacts with various like-minded Baptist groups:

Punishment did not deter this opium-peddler. Prokof'ev continued to develop his clandestine missionary activity, visiting various towns in the RSFSR, the Ukraine, Belorussia and Kazakhstan. He sent his sermons and letters containing evil aspersions against our system to all corners of the country, calling on Soviet citizens to renounce earthly blessings, to "repent of their sins" and to give up work for prayer.¹⁰

Such articles carried news of the Baptist protest far and wide, including into the prisons, where leaders of the movement were being increasingly confined. (Georgii Vins once told the present author that he had first come across his name in an article attacking Baptists in the prison library).

Meanwhile, the demands of the Reform Baptists (as they have often been called, though this is not a name they used of themselves) became more succinct. The Ukraine was the main stronghold of the Baptists, containing perhaps as many as half of the total in the whole USSR (counting registered and unregistered). A group of Baptists from Kiev under the leadership of Georgii Vins summed up the position of the *Initsiativniki* thus:

The religious centre called the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists has not been elected by the local Evangelical Christian and Baptist churches, has not been

⁹ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, pp. 22-26. Cf. pp. 125-53.

¹⁰ *Sovetskaia Moldavia* (27 January 1963), p. 4.

authorised by them and does not represent them. Its members have long since cut themselves off from the believing masses, followed the path of dictatorship and abolished the rights of local church to self-determination... [We] censure the All-Union Council for including in the Union only one-third of the communities (the registered ones), while two-thirds (the unregistered ones) have not been recognised by it.¹¹

In June 1962 the Reformers went further. They issued a document excommunicating twenty-seven of the leaders of the AUCECB, including Iakov Zhidkov and Aleksandr Karev, their top officials. The response of the authorities was to ratchet up the number of arrests, affecting Reform Baptist leaders from virtually all regions of the USSR. The list of prisoners compiled in the late 1960s contains twenty-eight names of men arrested in 1961, but a further sixty in 1962.¹² Most prominent of these was Aleksei Prokof'ev himself, arrested in August 1962, the first leading member of the group to be brought to trial, although other less prominent figures were already in gaol.

The Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults clearly did not know how to handle this emerging protest. Their blunt response of increasing the number of arrests backfired, as the Baptist reformers gathered information systematically and sent it abroad, where it began to attract the attention of such organisations as the recently-founded Amnesty International and, later, Keston Institute in its early days.

Their other tactic was to allow the convening of a congress, thus ostensibly responding to the demands of the reformers. It is clear that, from the outset, such a move was doomed to failure. The atmosphere was fraught, to put it mildly. The excommunications were still in place; nearly one hundred of the Reform Baptists were in prison; the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults was in control of the proceedings. From this time, too, the KGB began to designate the prisoners as criminals who had received their just sentences for illegal activities, not for their religious activities, as opposed to the majority of Baptists, who were law-abiding and lived comfortably in the Soviet state. Such a formulation was foisted on innumerable visitors to

¹¹ Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia*, p. 82. The most detailed study of this period yet published is in the central section of Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*, pp. 157-224, while many of the relevant documents are printed in Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, pp. 32-94.

¹² Printed as Appendix II of Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, pp. 211-229.

the USSR, some of whom appeared to believe this travesty and repeated it abroad.¹³

The congress convened in October 1963, the first since the formation of the AUCECB nearly twenty years earlier. Its leaders, under duress from the authorities, failed to consult with Vins and Kriuchkov, the two senior leaders remaining at liberty, who did not have even token representation on the platform. The unregistered congregations, the number of which appeared to be increasing as the State removed their legitimacy, had no representation whatsoever.

Nevertheless, the AUCECB appeared to make a genuine attempt at reform in some areas. For example, they passed a resolution to the effect that there would henceforth be regular congresses at three-year intervals. The guiding council – the AUCECB itself – would also be elected at these congresses. However, “alternative” names were not put forward, communist-style, and the old faces continued to appear on the platform. Most importantly, the “Letter of Instructions” was revoked.¹⁴

Despite these concessions, the AUCECB would continue to appoint senior presbyters to the regions, which was one of the main objections of the reformers. Georgii Vins continued to maintain that this was a “pseudo-congress”, as its convening was illegitimate in the first place.

The Reformers' Campaign Continues

Georgii Vins and Gennadii Kriuchkov continued their demands for genuine reform and increased the scope of their activities, despite the attempts of the KGB to hunt them down. Vins composed a theological justification for his position, forty-one close-packed pages of detailed reasoning, signed by six other leaders.¹⁵

Vins emerged at this time not only as a pastor, with deep care for his scattered people, but also as a poet. Among other works, he sent a long poem – a philippic rather than an irenic – to Aleksandr Karev, General Secretary of the AUCECB. With Kriuchkov as co-author, he initiated a remarkable series of *samizdat* publications, dozens of which are preserved in Oxford in the archive of Keston Institute. *Bratskii listok* [Fraternal Leaflet] was the main title, but there was a flood, too, of appeals, lists of prisoners and even

¹³ The origins of this accusation are set out in Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia*, p. 85.

¹⁴ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, pp. 66-94; Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, pp. 200-210.

¹⁵ Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia*, p. 89.

New Testaments and other scripture portions.

Bratskii listok demonstrated an intense pastoral concern for everyone who had in any way helped with the work of the Reform Baptists, but it was the defence of prisoners which attracted the most publicity and, after what they considered the failure of the 1963 congress, the main focus of the work became a battle with the authorities to grant Baptists their right to religious liberty according to the Soviet constitution. (The actual words of the Constitution at this time guaranteed the “right to religious worship”, as opposed to “religious liberty”, and the two were far from synonymous.) The Reformers were shocked at the murder of a recent convert, Nikolai Khmara, in January 1964, just after he had been sentenced to three years in prison.¹⁶

The first “All-Union Conference of Baptist Prisoners’ Relatives” which opened in conditions of secrecy six weeks later seems to have been a direct response to the murder of Khmara. This was a significant step in the development of civic consciousness, since never before had there been such an organisation defending prisoners anywhere in the communist bloc.¹⁷ At this point Lidiia Vins, Georgii’s mother, emerged as a character as formidable as her son, taking on the organisation of this group until her own arrest.

This first conference of 1964 gathered information on 155 prisoners, publicising as many personal details as they could and which seemed relevant, while listing also the articles of the penal code under which they had been arrested and the lengths of their sentences. By the second conference in July 1964 this number had increased to 197, excluding five who had died in prison or while under investigation. Their dependants were listed – the children could starve as far as the State was concerned, because it provided no social security for the relatives of prisoners. These documents provided a range of new information about the Soviet prison-camp system, including the precise location of many camps themselves.¹⁸ The initiators of this campaign soon found themselves in prison, because they publicised their own names, but others were always ready to step into their shoes and there was no interruption in the systematic gathering of news.

The legal expertise of Vins and Kriuchkov (whether aided in secret by qualified lawyers or not) was another step forward in the evolution of under-

¹⁶ Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia*, pp. 96-97.

¹⁷ Western journalists, in considerable numbers, later – but mistakenly – reported that the first such organisation emerged in Czechoslovakia during the Prague Spring of 1968.

¹⁸ Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia*, pp. 97-98.

standing of what a law-governed state should be. The document which they wrote on 14 April 1965 to Leonid Brezhnev in his capacity as president of the Commission on the Constitution was epoch-making. No such legal analysis of a Soviet law had ever before seen the light of day, and it remains a unique document to this day. The closest comparison is with the letters circulated by Frs Gleb Iakunin and Nikolai Eshliman in November of the same year.¹⁹ The Baptist initiative, however, is more detailed in its study of the law itself.²⁰ Here is a summary by the present author of the legal issues, as seen by those who petitioned the commission:

The laws affecting religious activity are both imprecise and ambiguous. Some may look all right on paper, but in practice they are an instrument of persecution. As they now stand, they deny Lenin's original ideal of the separation of Church and State and the right of people to propagate their faith, as well as to practise it themselves. The "freedom of conscience" guarantee in the constitution has twice been modified to make it deliberately ineffective, indeed to give protection to those very people who wish to deny the principle. The main instrument of oppression is the complicated religious law of 1929, which dates, pointedly enough, from the time when Stalin was preparing to initiate the greatest purge in history. This law must be repealed and the original sense of the constitution restored.²¹

The authors circulated this document widely. The channels were secret, but the text was designed to be read by as many as possible. It may have been a little above the heads of many believers of lesser education, but the influence spread upwards and indicated to officialdom that the Baptists were truly an element in Soviet society which they had to consider very seriously. However, their only response was silence, or an increased determination to root out the offenders.

Vins and Kriuchkov now turned their attention to something which every believer could understand: the organisation of the demonstration in Moscow in May 1966, the event with which this paper began. The leaders had broken cover and presented themselves in person to the authorities,

¹⁹ Bourdeaux, *Gorbachev, Glasnost and the Gospel*, pp. 7-8.

²⁰ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, pp. 105-113.

²¹ Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia*, p. 99.

who had been trying to locate them for some years. They were in prison under investigation over the whole summer, but meanwhile the AUCECB was preparing the congress for which they had made provision three years earlier.

Walter Sawatsky has a persuasive chapter detailing the achievements of this event.²² One delegate went as far as to call it “the perfect congress” because it was the most open and democratic of the three he had attended. It would be difficult to go this far, since KGB agents had already knocked on believers’ doors in order to “discuss” the suitability of certain candidates for election as representatives at the congress. 478 delegates with voting rights were elected. Aleksandr Karev, the General Secretary, was obviously determined to heal the breach with the Reform Baptists if he could. Two of their representatives who remained at liberty attended the congress and were permitted to read a formal statement, which was, as expected, extremely critical of the past record of the AUCECB.

With hindsight, the attempt of the Baptist officials to be conciliatory might just possibly have been successful, because it was genuine, but, as Sawatsky concludes, it was doomed to failure, because, “unfortunately, during all these painful exchanges at the congress, no one could afford to accuse the chief culprit, the state with its *administrirovanie*”.²³

Administrirovanie. The word means so much more than its straight translation of “administrative direction”. Colloquially it means the “heavy hand of the law”, and even this is an understatement for what was about to happen. The very men whose campaign had been principally responsible for these concessions, Vins and Kriuchkov, were about to be brought to trial. Their presence, had it been permitted at the 1966 congress, would almost certainly have laid the foundation for reconciliation: as it happened, just seven and a half weeks later they appeared together in one of the most notorious trials to have taken place in post-Stalin Russia. It was not reported in the Soviet press of the time, nor were foreign journalists permitted to attend (few of them at the time had caught up with the sensational events which had been occurring within the Baptist community). However, despite the fact that access to the trial was strictly controlled by the KGB, some supporters of the accused were present and made notes secretly, quickly writing them up into a partial transcript of the proceedings.²⁴

²² Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, pp. 211-227.

²³ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, p. 215.

²⁴ Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia*, pp. 111-130. The original transcript is in the archive at Keston Institute.

As expected, what occurred in the courtroom was a travesty. Worst of all was the way the prosecution virtually conducted the trial, making sure that the defence was unable to call its own witnesses. Hostile written testimony which had nothing whatsoever to do with the Reform Baptists was admitted as evidence and quoted. The transcript bears eloquent witness to the tactics of the court to render the defendants incapable of defending themselves through exhaustion. The trial lasted only two days, but during the first Vins did not come to speak from the dock until after nine hours of proceedings, and his interrogation continued until midnight. The second day was even longer, with the guilty verdicts being brought in at 1:00 a.m. Despite being at the end of their physical tether and being denied any recess to prepare their defence speeches, both Kriuchkov and Vins spoke up forthrightly. In his "final address" (the right of any accused under the Soviet practice current at the time) Georgii Vins used the dock as though it were a pulpit:

I want to say that I consider myself fortunate to be able to stand here and testify that I'm in the dock as a believer. I'm happy that for my faith in God I could come to know imprisonment, that I've been able to prove and strengthen myself. I do not stand here as a thief, a brigand or as someone who has infringed the rights of another person. I stand before you with a calm and clear conscience; I have honourably obeyed all the civil laws and faithfully respected the laws of God...²⁵

Both were sentenced to three years in prison.

Conclusion

It would be simplistic to state that, over the two decades between this trial and the advent of Mikhail Gorbachev, not much changed in the relationship between the Reform Baptists and the Soviet state on the one hand or the registered Baptists on the other. There were, on the contrary, tumultuous events affecting the lives of thousands of people, but the basic positions were by now entrenched. The Reform Baptists were not prepared to accept that the concessions offered by the AUCECB provided grounds for reconciliation; Soviet officialdom did not retract its position of treating the

²⁵ Bourdeaux, *Faith on Trial in Russia*, p.127.

Reform Baptists as criminals, and it was not until the days of *perestroika* that they were free of the daily threat of persecution.

The AUCECB congress of December 1969 made further gestures in favour of reconciliation, but apart from some individuals who returned to the union, these words fell on deaf ears. The AUCECB considered that from this time on the question of unity would be remitted for resolution to the local situation in each region.

The Soviet state made one significant concession after 1969: it gradually permitted the registration of autonomous congregations, groups of believers who had their reasons for not coming under the banner of the AUCECB, but who nevertheless did not wish to remain outside the law.²⁶ This did not greatly affect the life of Baptist congregations which were already registered, but it did have the effect of weakening the adopted hard line of the Reform Baptists, illustrating that from now on there was a middle way.

For the Reform Baptists there were still traumas ahead. Georgii Vins wrote two extended works in prison, *Vernost'* [Faithfulness] and *Semeinaia khronika* [Family Chronicle]. His family managed to send them out of the Soviet Union; Keston College (as it then was) received the manuscripts and the late Jane Ellis headed a team of translators who prepared them for publication in the United Kingdom. Some commentators have considered that this work should stand beside Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *Letters and Papers from Prison* as an outstanding example of prison literature in the twentieth century, but the impact of this work was somewhat dimmed. Although the family had given written permission for its publication and all royalties were kept for Vins himself, when he was free to do so he insisted on withdrawing the book from publication, saying he wished to prepare a new version and publish it himself, but this never happened.

Vins received a second sentence in 1974, this time of ten years. In a dramatic exchange of prisoners in April 1979, he was expelled from the Soviet Union to the USA, from where he did his best to re-establish contact with Kriuchkov, who continued the ministry and leadership inside the Soviet Union. This was a difficult undertaking, only partially successful, but his strength of character saw him through until his eventual death in exile.²⁷

From 1987 Gorbachev's new deal for believers led to the release of the remaining prisoners, who were then free to rejoin their congregations and to resume their ministry.

²⁶ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, pp. 273-96.

²⁷ See the present author's obituary of Georgii Vins: Michael Bourdeaux, "Georgi Vins: Pastor who Defied the KGB", *The Guardian* (22 January 1998), p. 16.

It is the contention of this paper that the resolute action of the Reform Baptists over the last three decades of the existence of the Soviet Union was one of the strong contributory factors to the evolution of the civic society which Russia may yet become.

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Baptists as a Symbol of Sectarianism in Soviet and Post-Soviet Russia

Aleksandr Negrov and Tat'iana Nikol'skaia

From the very outset, Russian state and society viewed the emerging evangelical Baptist movement not as a Protestant confession, but as a new sect or group of sectarians sharing similar doctrines (including Stundists, Pashkovites and Baptists). Sectarians in the Russian Empire endured state persecution and discrimination as well as negative attitudes within society, fuelled by official propaganda. While they were not insignificant in number – several districts in southern Russia and Transcaucasia were settled primarily by sectarians – they were treated as an alien and obscure minority. Oral tradition and literature disseminated rumours of sexual orgies, fanatical cruelty and human sacrifices practiced by some sects. Unsurprisingly, the common bitterness toward sectarianism was directly projected onto the evangelical Baptist movement.

Initially the evangelical currents were given the pejorative nickname “Stunda” (or “Stundist”), from the German *Stunde* [hour], as one strand of the movement originated among peasants in the employ of German Pietists holding regular Bible “hours”. On 4 July 1894, the tsar approved regulations of the Committee of Ministers identifying “the Stundist sects as most harmful”¹.

When being reputed a Stundist became dangerous, evangelical believers rushed to distance themselves from the so-called Stundism. For instance, “A Brief Account of the Origin, Development, and Present Status of the

¹ Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv [Russian State Historical Archives] (RGIA), f. 796, op. 442, d. 1581, l. 43.

Evangelical Movement in Russia and the Needs of the Russian Evangelical Christians (Known under Various Folk Nicknames such as Pashkovites, Baptists, neo-Molokans, etc.)”, submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in early 1905, contains such appendices as an explanatory note by Kiev bourgeois Ivan Kushnerev, who refused to accept a passport identifying his religious affiliation as Stundist,² and a petition to the Voronezh governor from Baptists of the Novokhopersk district claiming, “Three times already we have reported inequitable persecution of identification with a *harmful political ‘Stundist sect’* and have asked [the governor] to protect us from this discrimination” (emphasis added).³ The nicknames “Stunda” and “Stundist” given to the Russian Protestant movements remained into the Soviet period, but eventually died out, along with Stundism itself.

In twentieth-century public consciousness, identification of sectarianism with Baptists became stronger. Baptists, not Stundists, became a symbol of Russian sectarianism in general, a minority discriminated against before the 1917 Revolution and persecuted, alongside other confessions, under the antireligious slogans of Soviet times. Unlike the so-called foreign Protestant confessions (Lutherans, Reformed, etc.) which historically experienced patronage in Russia, Baptists were much less privileged. In 1879 they were legally recognised as a foreign confession. However, despite state prohibition against leading the Orthodox “astray”, the first Russian Baptists immediately began active missionary work, and within several decades had significantly expanded among the Russian people, especially in southern Russia and the areas of sectarian settlements.

By the early twentieth century, Russian society began talking about Baptists as a part of Russian sectarian life. Whereas liberal and democratic forces advocated the equality of all nations and confessions (including Russian Baptists), conservatives such as the Black Hundreds considered religious diversity a threat to the stability of the state. They viewed all Russian Protestants – including Baptists – as apostates from the traditional Orthodox faith, and hence betrayers of Russia. The fact that the Russian emperor granted permission to leave the Orthodox Church in his 17 April 1905 edict “On the Strengthening of the Principles of Religious Tolerance” did not reconcile conservatives to the relative liberty given to the Russian Protestants. In 1910 the Black Hundred newspaper *Moskovskie vedomosti* [Moscow Bulletin] furiously stated that in Rostov-on-Don, “literally entire Orthodox families were converting to the Baptist faith. It is inconceivable

² RGIA, f. 796, op. 445, d. 709, l. 76.

³ RGIA, f. 796, op. 445, d. 709, l. 94.

what is going on in the village! They say there are villages where churches are nailed up because the whole parish has turned Baptist.”⁴ “In recent times hundreds of Baptists have flooded one-horse villages in Karelia”, wrote the newspaper *Zemshchina* in a 1910 article entitled “A Baptist Crusade in Karelia”.⁵ Many such publications were sheer propaganda and contained numerous exaggerations and blunt lies. Remarkably, these anti-Baptist articles were often given blatantly anti-sectarian titles such as “Our Remote Areas and the Russian Sectarrians”⁶ or “The Jews and Russian Sectarianism”.⁷ Prior to the 1917 Revolution, attempts were made to create a negative image of Baptists as a well-organised sect with international connections similar to the Masonic order, a special hazard to the state and society.

During the first years of Soviet power anti-sectarian propaganda became less urgent, since the Bolsheviks were eager to crush the Orthodox Church first. Though persecution was soon extended to Russian Protestants, it had no ideological foundation until the late 1920s. In contrast, some Bolsheviks considered Russian sectarianism to be “a progressive phenomenon”, a belief reflected in their speeches as well as legislative documents (e.g. 4 January 1919 “Decree on Non-Liability for Military Service due to Religious Convictions”,⁸ 15 August 1921 “Resolution of the People’s Commissariat of Justice, Domestic Affairs, Agriculture, Workers’ and Peasants’ Inspection”⁹). In the 1920s, the Bolsheviks refuted some common accusations against sectarians (e.g., rumours of sexual orgies practiced by the sectarian *Khlysty*).¹⁰

During that period Baptists, along with Evangelical Christians and Teetotalers [*Trezvenniki*, followers of Ivan Churikov], were still consid-

⁴ A. Aparin, “Sektanty odoleli”, *Moskovskie vedomosti*, no. 234 (13 October 1910).

⁵ *Zemshchina*, no. 372 (28 July 1910).

⁶ *Kolokol* [The Bell], no. 1326 (1910).

⁷ *Russkoe znamia* [The Russian Banner], no. 210 (18 September 1910).

⁸ *Sobranie uzakonenii i rasporiazhenii rabocheho i krest’ianskogo pravitel’stva* [Collection of Statutes and Resolutions of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Government] (*SU*), no.17 (20 May 1919).

⁹ *SU*, no. 60 (12 October 1921).

¹⁰ For example, Fedor Putintsev, a leader of the Union of Militant Atheists [*Soiuz voinstvuiushchikh bezbozhnikov*] (UMA), reported at the UMA congress in June 1929, “Though trials were numerous before the Revolution, there was not a single case when priests were able to prove that the cult of promiscuity existed and orgies took place during worship services... There were no orgies during the worship services and we can prove it.” *Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv rossiiskoi federatsii* [State Archives of the Russian Federation] (GARF), f. R-5407, op. 1, d. 35, l. 47.

ered the most significant and rapidly growing confessions.¹¹ However, they continued to be referred to as sectarians. Thus when a full-scale attack on religion began in the late 1920s, Baptists became the preferred target of anti-sectarian accusations. For instance in 1930, the magazine *Bezbozhnik* [Atheist] published excerpts from an article allegedly printed in the British *Daily News*, accompanied by their own comments: “Nowadays Baptists are the most powerful religious organisation in the Soviet Union, estimating over fifteen million members.... Russian Baptists feel anger and hatred towards Karl Marx’s teaching, but circumstances make them speak publicly in support of it and turn it to good account.”¹² It is not known what the *Daily News* really said, but the reference to a British newspaper made these claims seem more reliable. The above-mentioned facts – from a highly exaggerated number of Soviet Baptists¹³ to the assessment of their political views – were supposed to demonstrate to the readers an unmistakable malignance and danger, whereas the majority of Baptists (as well as other believers) were loyal to the Soviet authorities.

On the whole, the ideology of the 1930s did not distinguish between the “clerics” (Orthodox) and “sectarians” (non-Orthodox Christians). Both were considered “alien” phenomena, though terms such as “sectarianism” and “sectarians” no longer bore a special derogative shade compared to the Orthodox. In post-war years the Evangelical Christians and Baptists, along with a fraction of the Pentecostals, united to become the largest Protestant confession in the USSR. Nevertheless, the full name of the confession has never become an everyday, familiar expression, neither in Soviet society nor among believers themselves. Despite a congregation’s adherence to either Evangelical Christian or Baptist traditions, people generally referred to them all as Baptists. The word was shorter, but there must have been another reason for doing so as well. Despite decades of anti-religious propaganda, “Evangelical Christian” as a definition did not become a nega-

¹¹ This was mentioned in the 1928 report on religious organisations and antireligious propaganda in the Leningrad area. *Tsentral’nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv istoriko-politicheskikh dokumentov Sankt-Peterburga* [The Central State Archives of Historical and Political Documents of St. Petersburg] (TsGAIPD Spb), f. 24, op. 8, d. 53, l. 27.

¹² “Mirovaia burzhuaizii o polozhenii tserkvei v SSSR”, [The World Bourgeoisie on the Status of Churches in the USSR], *Bezbozhnik*, no. 1 (1930), p. 17.

¹³ The IV World Baptist Congress in 1928 announced there were 200,000 church members, with 350,000 to 400,000 adult parishioners total. M.Iu. Krapivin, A.Ia. Leikin, and A.G. Dalgatov, *Sud’by khristianskogo sektantstva v Sovetskoi Rossii (1917 – konets 1930-kh godov)* [The Fate of Christian Sectarianism in Soviet Russia (1917 – late 1930s)] (St Petersburg: Izdatel’stvo S.-Peterburgskogo universiteta, 2003), p. 229; GA RF, f. R-5407, op. 1, d. 35, l. 45.

tive term, whereas the word “Baptist” clearly referred to foreign roots and was frightening for its oddity and incomprehensibility.

Escalation of public fear and distrust of sectarians – Baptists in particular – reached a climax during the antireligious campaigns of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Though directed against all religions and confessions, the ideology was specifically anti-sectarian. A significant number of antireligious publications in the central and local mass media, documentaries and feature films, lectures, exhibitions and fiction were aimed against sectarians. Brochures bore expressive titles such as “The Truth about Sectarians”, “In the Darkness of Obscurantism”, “Life on the Knees”, “Fishers of Men”, “In the Slough of Religious Sectarianism”, “Leaving the Darkness”, and “Monsters”. These fantasised and exaggerated publications described believers’ lives in dismal terms, including fanaticism resulting in physical and mental illness; asceticism and denial of worldly delights; the carefree lives of religious leaders at coreligionists’ expense; their allegedly collaborationist past; and sexual adventures among young “sisters in Christ”. Many such attacks targeted Baptists specifically or nameless “sectarians” easily identified as the Baptists. In 1962, Mosfilm produced “The Sinner” [*Greshnitsa*], a film about the Baptists directed by Fedor Filippov and starring the young and talented actress Iia Savvina.

Locally, unfounded accusations against whole confessions grew into specific attacks on communities and individuals. In 1958 a campaign was launched against a local Evangelical Christian-Baptist congregation in Borovichi (Novgorod oblast). The district newspaper *Krasnaia iskra* [The Red Spark] printed an article entitled “Preachers of Ignorance and Obscurantism in Borovichi”,¹⁴ and later published a series of furious responses under the rubric “Readers Judge the Sectarians”. Among them only two authors had attended the house of prayer for a prolonged period – Maria Duchko (“Sectarians Go Their Way”¹⁵) and I.P. Serkova (“Why I Have Left the Sect”¹⁶). The rest humiliated the Baptists, despite lacking even superficial knowledge about them. Sometimes the propaganda took believers of other confessions for Baptists. For instance in 1962, local authorities in Zelenyi Gorod (Dnepropetrovsk oblast) attempted to take children away from Seventh Day Adventist Dmitrii Zaloznoi, referred to as a Baptist by the local newspaper *Metallurgist*.¹⁷

¹⁴ L. Vladimirov, “Propovedniki nevezhestva i mrakobesiia v Borovichakh” [Preachers of Ignorance and Obscurantism in Borovichi], *Krasnaia iskra*, no. 149 (29 July 1958).

¹⁵ *Krasnaia iskra*, no. 151 (1 August 1958).

¹⁶ *Krasnaia iskra*, no. 154 (5 August 1958).

¹⁷ “Porvite s religiei!” [Break with Religion!], *Metallurg* (15 December 1961).

The accusations of fanatical cruelty and ritual sacrifice were the most serious and frightening of the anti-sectarian stereotypes persistently inculcated upon Soviet mass consciousness. Yet there were also cases of Orthodox believers accused of fanatical cruelty. For example, in 1959 the Borodin family in the Kalinin oblast was sentenced to death for alleged sacrifice of their son Lenia.¹⁸ However, the rumours and, moreover, published allegations of cruel rituals seemed more believable when lodged against unfamiliar confessions, and hence became grounded in the mass consciousness, as with Jews before the Revolution.

To strengthen these stereotypes, propaganda utilised unfounded accusations, provocations, and certain falsely interpreted actions of the mentally ill. Not surprisingly, the horror stories of infant and virgin sacrifices are still alive. Today Russian mass consciousness holds stronger prejudice against Baptists than against any other Christian confessions, although they are no longer officially identified as a fanatically cruel sect.

Soviet anti-Baptist propaganda bore fruit. In the early 1960s, the city of Leningrad gave Evangelical Christians-Baptists the former Orthodox Church of the Trinity at Poklonnaia Gora,¹⁹ rather than the nearby Evangelical Christian-Baptist "House of Prayer", which was instead slated for demolition. This fact evoked negative feedback from local residents. Editorial boards of various newspapers and magazines received letters of protest. "I am deeply offended. Who needs this church? Who gave [them] the right to clutter up our city?" wrote a reader named Torkhova to the magazine *Krokodil'* [Crocodile].²⁰ A doctor named Kharinskaia wrote to *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*:

On January 24, 1962, I went to a parents' meeting at school number 118, which my son attends. There I learned that a Baptist church would be opened in Ozerki. I was so shocked by the news that I can hardly express my indignation. All parents were furious. Is somebody mocking us? I think there should be a stadium, a cinema hall or a theatre built where

¹⁸ S. Krushinskii, "Glukhoi ston na kraiu sela Glazatova" [A Muffled Groaning on the Outskirts of the Village of Glazatov], *Nauka i religiia*, no. 1 (1959), pp. 56-58.

¹⁹ *Informatsionnyi otchet leningradskogo upolnomochennogo SDRK za 1961 g.* [Informational Report the Leningrad representative of the Council for Religious Affairs for 1961], *Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Sankt-Peterburga* [Central State Archives of St Petersburg] (TsGA Spb), f. 9620, op. 1, d. 55, l. 42.

²⁰ *Informatsionnyi otchet...za 1961 g.* TsGA Spb, f. 9620, op. 1, d. 55, l. 44.

one could relax, but they give us a Baptist church! Take it! How do you like it! Our indignation is not enough.... If this infection is incurable, it must be simply cut off. There is no other way.²¹

Nikolai Vasilev, a representative of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA), reported that Kharinskaia told him, "Read and listen to what these sectarians do; they must be wiped out and all the churches should be closed down."²² Some opponents of the Baptists moved from words to deeds. On 16 September 1962 the new prayer house in Leningrad was vandalised while several church members and nine British tourists looked on.²³

During that period, intolerance and antireligious zeal accompanied criminal and public trials of believers. On 25 January 1962, young Baptist Lidiia Semenova was taken to a comrades' court [*tovarishcheskii sud*] at the Leningrad experimental veneer factory. "Citizens told a group of young believers who were waiting for her near the factory building to get lost with their holy tales, or there would be short shrift made of them. The Evangelical Christians feel this intolerance themselves", continued CRA representative Nikolai Vasilev, supported by the sincere confession of pastor (presbyter) Anatolii Kiiukhantsev, who observed, "The newspapers write a lot about us. We are hated; we are aware of it and feel it."²⁴

After Khrushchev's dismissal in 1964, the antireligious campaign was brought to an end and attitudes toward religious believers became more cautious, yet fear and intolerance toward sectarians – and Baptists in particular – continued to prevail in Soviet society. Such prejudices were common among ordinary people as well as authorities. For instance, in the town of Borovichi, officials of the local and municipal trade union committees suggested that because of her religious affiliation, a junior nurse named Sosunova should not be allowed to live in the room given her by a hospital (her employer).²⁵ Whereas the Council for Religious Affairs, which was in

²¹ *Informatsionnyi otchet...za 1961 g.* TsGA Spb, f. 9620, op. 1, d. 55, l. 43.

²² *Informatsionnyi otchet...za 1961 g.* TsGA Spb, f. 9620, op. 1, d. 55, l. 44.

²³ *Informatsionnyi otchet leningradskogo upolnomochennogo SDRK za 1962 g.* [Informational Report the Leningrad Representative of the Council for Religious Affairs for 1962], TsGA Spb, f. 9620, op. 1, d. 61, l. 57.

²⁴ *Informatsionnyi otchet...za 1961 g.* TsGA Spb, f. 9620, op. 1, d. 55, l. 44.

²⁵ Information provided by Department of Culture instructor Aksenova of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions on 30 March 1966. "O nekotorykh faktakh religioznosti i antireligioznoi raboty v Novgorodskoi obl." [About certain facts of religiosity and antireligious work in the Novgorod oblast], *Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Novgorodskoi Oblasti* [State

charge of religious policy in the USSR, carried out a specific policy towards each confession (denomination) or even trend within the confessions, in the eyes of society, all sectarians were hostile. On 17 November 1976, *Literaturnaia gazeta* printed an article about Georgii Vins, leader of the unregistered Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists. As a result, Novgorod area authorities took action against local Baptists, who in fact belonged to the registered All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. In the village of Parfino, both registered and non-registered Baptists were targeted by the KGB. Representatives of the local authorities visited factories where they incited workers against the Baptists. "They represented us as people dangerous to society... People have begun to avoid us; they are even afraid to talk to us", wrote Raisa Nikolaeva, a Baptist church member who sought the protection of CRA chairman Vladimir Kuroiedov and Communist Party Secretary Leonid Brezhnev.²⁶ (Both letters were forwarded to a Novgorod representative of the CRA.)

Many Soviet citizens did not share the imposed hostility toward the Baptists. Believers recalled instances when unbelieving bosses, co-workers or acquaintances defended them. An alternate, positive image of the Baptist, also common within the Soviet consciousness (especially among intelligentsia), described the Baptist as an ordinary man, a "plodder" with little formal education, but honest, hardworking, faithful to his convictions, and a good worker and family man, although with certain oddities such as abstinence from alcohol. Nevertheless, in the people's minds, this positive image did not remove the negative stereotypes associated with sectarians.

Nowadays the Evangelical Christians-Baptists remain one of the largest Russian Protestant confessions. In post-Soviet Russia, there has been both a renaissance of traditional beliefs (those widespread before the atheist Revolution of 1917) and the beginning of a qualitatively new, post-atheist spirituality. There has been a massive shift from the great socialist project of the twentieth century to a capitalist, democratic system like those common in the West. Thus Baptists in the new Russia face the challenges of the constant change and upheaval of the historic transformation that their country and society are now experiencing. Within this unsettling context, stereotypes are frequently undergoing reinterpretation, and new meanings are sought within them.

By using a "post-Soviet" or "post-communist" paradigm, it is possible

Archives of the Novgorod Oblast] (GANO), f. R-4110, op. 5, d. 5, l. 69.

²⁶ GANO, f. R-4110, op. 5, d. 31, l. 29ob-31.

to conduct a comprehensive analysis of socio-political transition in Russia and evaluate ideological tendencies in the region. Among other areas this would require development of a multidimensional analytical framework sensitive to economic, political, institutional, religious, social and psychological issues. In addition, it would focus on the problems of state and society-formation in the countries of the Eastern bloc, as the newly independent states often claim legitimacy by referring to a pre-Communist and ethnically rooted national and religious symbolism, often giving rise to ethnic and religious conflict. The result of such comprehensive analysis would be the essence of post-communist transition. Further research is necessary to analyse patterns of current Baptist identity in Russia and the processes of Baptist self-identification.

Baptists in Russia today are viewed as sectarians in the context of general objection to the missionary activities of the western Baptist denominations in Russia. The Orthodox activist and writer Deacon Andrei Kuraev recently noted that Russian Baptists (and other evangelicals) lacked a developed, profound dogmatic teaching, and therefore “representatives of the primitive North American sects have come to enlighten Russia.”²⁷ Kuraev seems more tolerant of Lutheran and Anglican missionary activities (on a small scale), but warns his readers about the sectarian missionary activities of both Western and Russian Baptists.

Professor Lev Mitrokhin once admitted, “It is difficult for a Russian secular researcher to portray the Baptists accurately. In the past there was pressure from Communist ideologists; now we are pressed by a great anti-propaganda from Russian Orthodox ideologists.”²⁸ A recent study based on documents of the Russian Ministry of Justice shows that from 1999 to 2004, about two thousand cases were registered in which evangelical Christians (including, but not limited to, Baptists) appealed to the Ministry of Justice for protection against injustice and biases. Russian Baptists are often denied entry to prisons, hospitals, schools and other institutions on the basis of official federal directives. In a document entitled “Classification and General Distinctiveness of Some Destructive Religious Organisations”, Baptists are referred to, among other religious groups, as “unorthodox”, a “dangerous sect”, and an “aggressive sect.”²⁹ Even among the Federal Services of Russia

²⁷ Andrei Kuraev, *Protestantam o pravoslavii* [To Protestants about Orthodoxy] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskogo podvor'ia Sviato-troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 1997), p. 12.

²⁸ Personal communication of Lev Mitrokhin with Aleksandr Negrov (2 December 2003).

²⁹ See E. Mel'nikova, “O rassmotrenii zhalob i obrashchenii grazhdan i religioznykh ob'edinenii v apparate upolnomochennogo po pravam cheloveka v rossiiskoi federatsii”, in

[*Gosudarstvennyie Sluzhby RF*] there is no clear understanding of Baptists. Several recent publications of the Department of Religious Studies of the Russian Academy of State Service [*Rossiiskaia Akademiia Gosudarstvennoi Sluzhby*] contain numerous attempts to explain to the regional federal authorities that Baptists are not sectarians.³⁰

This paper deals with issues related to a specific understanding of the Baptists in Russia. A complete analysis of how and why Baptists were perceived by others as sectarians has to be related to a further topic – an analysis of the recent history of Russian Baptists, which demands further attention to the current transitions taking place in a modern Russian society. There is a need for critical reflection on how the Baptists are perceived by outsiders in Russia today. Yet, it is also important to ask questions about self-identification. For example, how do the new contexts accommodate Baptist self-understanding within the boundaries of the Orthodox Christian tradition in Russia? How do these changes affect the Russian Baptist doctrines and practices? It would be stimulating for Russian Baptists to analyse to what extent the modern concepts of religion and culture, ethnicity and race, and gender relations have to be reconsidered, so that the Russian Baptists fully understand their identity in the rapidly changing context of their country and world at large.

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Protestantizm i protestanty v Rossii: proshloe, nastoiashchee, budushchee (Zaoksk: Istochnik zhizni, 2004), pp. 165–180.

³⁰ See their scholarly journal, *Gosudarstvo, religiia, tserkov' v Rossii i za rubezhom* [State, Religion, Church in Russia and abroad] (1999–2004).

Towards a Revived Identity: Estonian Baptists, 1970–1985

Toivo Pilli

Estonian political scientist Rein Taagepera has suggested that the period of 1968–1980 in Estonia should, for its social and political atmosphere, be called the “years of suffocation”, because of “the almost painlessly slow but relentless squeeze on the national psyche”.¹ In the religious sphere, Soviet policy became one of “divide and conquer”. The state was “granting concessions to registered congregations and even whole denominations, while dealing harshly with unregistered and dissident groups”.² However, even while providing some opportunities for registered churches, the state never treated churches as equal partners; it was always a game of cat and mouse.

In the 1970s atheistic propaganda in Estonia became subtler: a psychological approach was used more widely to influence believers. Part of this approach included personal interviews of believers at schools and workplaces. Already in the 1960s sociological data was used for the purposes of atheistic propaganda,³ to show statistically the diminishing numbers of churches and church members. The power of the Council for Religious Affairs (CRA), a government structure designed to control religious

¹ Rein Taagepera, *Estonia: Return to Independence* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1993), pp. 97–98.

² Philip Walters, “A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy”, in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *Religious Policy in the Soviet Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 23.

³ Lembit Raid, *Vabamõtlejate ringidest massilise ateismini: marksistlik ateism Eestis aastail 1900–1965* [From the Circles of Freethinkers to Mass Atheism: Marxist Atheism in Estonia from 1900–1965] (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1978), p. 188.

communities, was strengthened during the 1970s, especially after 1975 when a revised version of the law regulating religious life in the Soviet Union was published.⁴ In the 1970s and 1980s, the Commissioner of the CRA in Estonia obtained valuable information about church activities from steering committees operating within all regional and city executive committees in the republic.⁵ The state observed church life carefully.

All this may give the impression that not much had changed in Estonian Evangelical Christian-Baptist (ECB) church life since the 1960s, which saw Khrushchev's atheistic campaign and its devastating effects on churches. However, a closer look at the situation shows light at the end of the tunnel for believers. In the 1970s an evangelistic thrust touched almost every Estonian Evangelical Christian-Baptist church. Local churches, acting semi-illegally, attempted to revive children's and youth ministries. The number of typewritten Christian publications and books increased. The 1985 Senior Presbyter's report⁶ stated that from 1978–1985, ECB churches in Estonia baptised 570 young people between eighteen and twenty-five years of age, including 220 "brothers". The report added, "Youth are active and the working capacity of our brotherhood has increased, though membership numbers have decreased."⁷ The "evangelistic situation", limited as it was, was partly due to the fact that a new generation of Estonian youth, disillusioned by the hollowness of Marxist propaganda, became increasingly interested in the religious message. This paper analyses the response of Estonian ECB churches to this situation.

Peaceful Resistance: Aid to "Underground Believers" and Self-study Efforts

In spite of the fact that by the 1960s, "the church had lost its traditional role of maintaining morale and balance in the everyday routine of Estonians",⁸

⁴ Philip Walters, "A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy", p. 24.

⁵ Jaanus Plaat, *Usuliikumised, kirikud ja vabakogudused Lääne- ja Hiiumaa: usuühenduste muutumisprotsessid 18. sajandi keskpaigast kuni 20. sajandi lõpuni* [Religious Movements, Churches and Free Churches in West Estonia and Hiiumaa Island: Transformational Processes of Religious Entities from the mid-18th Century to the End of the 20th Century] (Tartu: Eesti Rahva Muuseum, 2001), p. 215.

⁶ "Senior Presbyter" was a title introduced during Soviet years for the leaders of the ECB unions in the Soviet republics or for regional leaders in Russia or the Ukraine. Local church leaders were called "presbyters". Today Estonian Evangelical Christians-Baptists prefer the title "President" for the leader of their union and "pastor" for a local church leader.

⁷ *Logos* [Estonian *samizdat* publication], no. 2 (1985), p. 29.

⁸ Mati Laur et al., *History of Estonia* (Tallinn: Avita, 2000), p. 304.

it has been argued by some Estonian historians that the church, nonetheless, “remained practically the only public institution in the Estonian SSR [Soviet Socialist Republic] that was not entirely subjected to the control of the regime in power”.⁹ Research usually refers to the Lutheran Church, as the majority church in Estonia, but this statement is applicable also to ECB communities and some other free churches, such as Methodists.

Traditional Baptist theology and Soviet ideology were fundamentally irreconcilable. Even if church members did not publicly protest the atheistic Soviet system, their presence, their attempts to maintain their identity, and their lived-out convictions were themselves acts of peaceful resistance, prophetic criticism of a godless approach to life.

However, in some cases the resistance took more active forms. Some Estonian Evangelical Christians-Baptists were involved in “underground” activities in defiance of restrictive Soviet laws. During the Soviet years, ECB leadership tended to understate this fact, as they tried to distance themselves from the confusion created by the “split” of the 1960s among Soviet Baptists. “These questions do not concern us directly,” emphasised the Senior Presbyterian in 1974.¹⁰ Nevertheless, this does not mean that the “Baptist underground movement” did not reach Estonia. According to the Commissioner of the CRA, in addition to some small and non-organised groupings (130 persons) of “underground” evangelicals, there were five groups of Pentecostals (350 persons) and three groups of “Baptists-splitters”, i.e., Reform Baptists (230 persons) in Estonia in 1977.¹¹ These groups consisted primarily of Russian or German-speaking persons.

Some Estonian Baptist preachers were actively involved in aiding “underground brothers and sisters”. In the small village church in Puka in southern Estonia, the local ECB presbyter helped to organise a secret *Orgkomitet* [organisational committee] meeting of Reform Baptist representatives with hundreds of participants from all over the Soviet Union.¹² In the mid-1970s, another “brother” transported a vanload of paper to an underground printing press in Latvia.¹³ Bibles and New Testaments in Russian

⁹ Laur et al., *History of Estonia*, p. 304.

¹⁰ The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia (UECBE) Senior Presbyterian's report (12 December 1974). EKB vanempresbüteri aruanded [The UECBE Senior Presbyterian's reports] (VpAruanded), Eesti EKB Liidu arhiiv [Archive of the UECBE], Tallinn.

¹¹ Õiend Eesti NSV-s asuvate usukoondiste tegevusest ja üldisest olukorrast 1977. aastal [A report of the general situation and activities of the churches in the Estonian SSR in the year 1977] (29 March 1978). Aruanded ja ülevaated 1971–1990 [Reports and Surveys 1971–1990], Usuasjade Voliniku Arhiiv [Archive of the Commissioner of the CRA], Tallinn.

¹² Enno Tuulik, private correspondence (20 February 2005). T. Pilli personal archive.

¹³ Enno Tuulik, private correspondence (20 February 2005). T. Pilli personal archive.

and in German, often smuggled into the Soviet Union via Finland, were forwarded through Estonia to Siberia and other parts of the Soviet Union. Arpad Arder, ECB presbyter in Rakvere and later in Suure-Jaani, developed a large literature ministry. He received thousands of Bibles and other Christian literature in German from the German Democratic Republic, where he had correspondence with approximately seven hundred persons. As the German Democratic Republic was a socialist country, the literature arrived by mail and was not confiscated. Arder sent this literature to German speaking evangelicals in Siberia and Central Asia and developed many personal contacts with “underground believers”.¹⁴ Before he moved to Latvia in 1973, Gennadii Kriuchkov, one of the Russian Reform Baptist key leaders, lived secretly in Estonia for some time.¹⁵ This was probably unknown to the Estonian ECB union leaders. However, issues of “underground work” could not be entirely avoided even at presbyters’ council meetings. In April 1977 the Senior Presbyter informed the presbyters’ council that an underground printing press had been found in Ivangorod, the Russian twin city to Estonian Narva, just east of the Estonian border, and a search took place in the home of one Narva ECB church member.¹⁶ In 1982, the KGB organised searches in several church members’ homes in Narva, and found literature published by the Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB),¹⁷ the organisational body of the Reform Baptists.

The Estonian Evangelical Christians-Baptists who helped in the “underground work” in the 1970s were sympathetic to the commitment of underground believers and to the suffering endured by many non-registered churches in the Soviet Union. Supporting the “dissident” movement was a way of expressing their own criticism of the atheistic system. This was a radical means of reaffirming some important facets of traditional Estonian Baptist identity: that the Bible and other Christian literature must be available to those interested in Christian message; that the state should not interfere in matters of religious conscience; and that Christian education of children and youth is not an option but a responsibility of the church.

¹⁴ Arpad Arder, *Kus on Arpadi kuningas: elu eesmärgi otsingud* [Where is Arpad's King: Searching for a Goal in Life] (Tallinn: Logos, 1992), pp. 110, 118.

¹⁵ Pentti Heinilä, *Erittäin salainen* [Top Secret] (Helsinki: Uusi Tie, 1995), p. 477.

¹⁶ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 47 (5 April 1977). Presbüterite nõukogu protokollid 1969–1985 [Minutes of the presbyters’ council 1969–1985], PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

¹⁷ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 85 (17 March 1982). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

Nevertheless, in most cases, members of Estonian ECB churches chose less risky methods of resisting state pressure on their life and identity. For example, resistance to ideological pressure was expressed through attempts to offer informal theological training despite its prohibition, and to organise semi-illegal discussion groups in which the way of thinking clearly differed from the “unifying” Soviet mindset. Study sessions were held in various towns. For example, a group of young men from Tartu and the surrounding area gathered regularly from 1973–1978. According to lecture notes by Uudu Rips, a former presbyter in Võru in southern Estonia, themes ranged from exegesis to principles of personal evangelism, from homiletics to doctrine, from Baptist teachings to ecumenical work. Senior Presbyter Robert Vösu also shared information about Christian life outside Estonia during these sessions.¹⁸ This was a small window onto a wider and more free world.

From 1981–1987 Robert Vösu organised so-called “consultation days” for presbyters and active church members. The topics included evangelism, Christian ethics, homiletics, the work and gifts of the Holy Spirit, pastoral counselling and psychology, religious movements in Estonia, local church issues and difficult passages in the Bible.¹⁹ In addition, from 1983–1987, “Bible courses” took place. The method was well proven: occasional regional meetings and seminars in larger cities, such as in Tallinn, Tartu, Pärnu and Kuressaare, supported the self-education of younger preachers. The students’ basic theological knowledge was uneven. In 1983, approximately sixty to seventy students, including seventeen to eighteen presbyters, were involved in this type of supervised self-education.²⁰ Today this type of study would probably be called “continuing theological education”. One may wonder whether these training efforts would have better prepared the participants to reflect on their mission in Estonia if the studies had been more “problem-oriented” and less “subject-oriented”. However, these “courses” and “consultations” played an important role in consolidating Baptist central positions, supporting independent thinking and maintaining theological unity, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, when traditional Estonian Baptist approaches met challenges from the charismatic movement.

¹⁸ Lecture notes 1973–1978. Uudu Rips personal archive.

¹⁹ Konsultatsioonide lindistusi 1981–1987. Nimistu. [Recordings of the consultation days 1981–1987. A list of topics]. Kõrgema Usuteadusliku Seminari arhiiv [Archive of the Baptist Theological Seminary], Tartu.

²⁰ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting no. 100 (10 October 1983). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

Võsu's example in organising informal study groups was later followed by other younger leaders. In the late 1970s and 1980s, the younger generation began to gather in friendship circles. These "circles" met in Pärnu, Tartu and Tallinn.²¹ The atmosphere of these gatherings bears clear signs of protest against a materialist ideology, although direct political statements were seldom made. Group members discussed theological and philosophical issues as well as the relationship between the Christian faith and the wider culture. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin's use of the language of "evolution" in theological thinking inspired the participants, and Hans Küng's *Does God Exist?*²² helped them to find arguments for Christian faith in God in a godless society. In 1985, during a Pärnu "circle" retreat, several papers focused on criticism of atheism, which was described as "a worldview of a person encapsulated into oneself".²³ Typewritten semi-illegal and illegal literature circulated in these fellowships. In a society that often depicted believers as uneducated and unintelligent, these educational efforts had the character of non-violent protest against this distorted picture.²⁴

All these efforts peacefully challenged the restrictive atheistic system. Usually avoiding public criticism of the socialist atheistic system, Estonian ECB churches persistently, even stubbornly, worked at going around restrictive laws and attempted to maintain their identity, of which pastoral training was a part. Theological education, even if informal, had a hidden message: although ECB life was in many different ways restricted outwardly, compared to the pre-communist period, thinking and ideas were not as easily limited by the communist mindset.

Maintaining and Reviving Identity through Literature and Music

There is no documentary evidence that Estonia was used by the Soviet government as an experimental zone with a more relaxed approach to religion, as one former ECB presbyter suggested.²⁵ However, in reality, the

²¹ In Tallinn one of these groups was called "Club Areopagus" [*Areopaagi klubi*]; in Pärnu it was named "Haraka Institute" [*Haraka instituut*], after Haraka Street, where the group usually met.

²² See Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution* (London: Collins, 1971); Hans Küng, *Does God Exist? An Answer for Today* (New York: Vintage Books, 1981).

²³ Notes of Ermo Jürma, Metsaküla (7 February 1985). T. Pilli personal archive.

²⁴ For Baptist theological education in Estonia see T. Pilli, "Finding a Balance between Church and Academia: Baptist Theological Education in Estonia", *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 26, no. 3 (August 2006), pp. 29-37.

²⁵ This was suggested by Jüri Puusaag, oral communication (8 May 2003).

Commissioner of the CRA turned a blind eye to some aspects of Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Estonia (UECBE) activity. One area of traditional Baptist work revived during the 1970s was literature: translation of books and articles as well as original Estonian works, typed on mechanical typewriters, producing six to eight copies at a time. Church music also developed during these years.

On a wider front, so-called *samizdat*, or self-published, literature was not limited to religious themes alone. In the Soviet Union, during Khrushchev's years of relaxed censorship, some heterodox material relating to general cultural values began to appear in the press and in book form. When the Soviet approach to literature was made stricter again, attempts to achieve freedom in thinking and literary expression continued to live in the widespread efforts of *samizdat* literature. In 1966–1967 *samizdat*-type underground publications were published more freely than ever before.²⁶ This had its influence also on religious *samizdat* literature in Estonia. It is fair to estimate that the highest peak of typewritten publications in Estonian ECB circles was reached in the 1970s and early 1980s. However, as early as the 1950s and 1960s several sermon collections,²⁷ theological treatises,²⁸ and conference materials²⁹ were reproduced by *samizdat* methods.

In addition to sermon collections and translated devotional literature, some theological volumes and books by American evangelist Billy Graham were systematically translated into Estonian and reproduced on mechanical typewriters. Also several books published by the Finnish Free Church publishing house Päivä OY found their way from Finland to Estonia, including books by Tapio Nousiainen and Niilo Yli-Vainio,³⁰ the latter

²⁶ Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: A History of the World from the 1920s to the 1990s* (London: Orion Books, 1994), p. 679.

²⁷ For example, Robert Vösu, *Armastusest* [About Love] (1965), [O. Tärk], *Märkmeid O. Tärki jutlustest 1965. a.* [Notes from the sermons of O. Tärk] [1966]. Many sermons were written down by a few dedicated church members while the presbyter was preaching. These sermon notes were typewritten later.

²⁸ Many volumes of theological literature were “published” in 1956–1960 in connection with the semi-illegal theological training courses in Estonia. In the 1960s, Arpad Arder compiled a 2000-page typewritten (A4 format) concordance of the Bible in five volumes.

²⁹ For example, a collection of materials related to the celebration of Estonian Evangelical Christian Free Church movement's fiftieth anniversary, *Eesti Evangeeliumi Kristlaste 50. a. juubel 1955. a.* [The 50th Anniversary of Estonian Evangelical Christians in 1955] (1955), as well as two volumes with materials of the presbyters' conferences of 1968 and 1969.

³⁰ Riho Saard, “Uskonnollisen ja teologisen kirjallisuuden lähettäminen Suomesta Neuvosto-Viroon 1950–1980-luvuilla” [Sending Religious and Theological Literature from Finland to Soviet Estonia in the 1950s–1980s], *Teologinen Aikakauskirja*, no. 6 (2003), p. 544.

being influential within charismatic circles in the 1970s. Topics and themes of this “semi-illegal” literature conform to general trends of interest within the UECBE during these years: the work of the Holy Spirit, evangelism and sanctification. For those interested in popular apologetics, Paul E. Little’s *Miks ma usun* [Know Why You Believe] was a helpful tool. Many translated books like this one came from an Anglo-American background. There is no reliable research on how many titles or how many copies were “published” in the Estonian language by Baptist *samizdat* efforts, but it is possible to talk about hundreds of titles and probably tens of thousands of copies in total. This was not only an attempt to provide reading material to church members; it was an attempt to maintain one’s identity and freedom to be informed about Christian thought.

Besides original works and translated volumes, Estonian ECB leaders made systematic attempts to issue typewritten collections of articles or “publications” that resembled Christian journals. One of these, titled *Lectio*, was “published” in the second half of the 1970s by Joosep Tammo, who had become an outstanding young ECB preacher and youth leader in the 1970s. The goal of the collection was to “expand the readers’ horizons in every aspect of Christian teaching and life”.³¹ Though the volumes (thirteen altogether) covered many traditional evangelical themes, such as evangelism, Christian leadership, pneumatology and biblical topics, *Lectio*’s innovation was its courage to trust the critical minds of readers, to initiate discussion and to touch topics which were not traditional for Estonian Baptists: the relationship of Christianity to the wider culture, dialogue between Christianity and other religions, and the role of youth in churches. Readers found articles written by the widest variety of authors, ranging from American conservative charismatic preachers and Soviet Baptists to Swiss and German reformed theologians, including Oral Roberts and Jürgen Moltmann, Aleksei Bychkov and Derek Prince, Osvald Tärk and Emil Brunner. Though unofficial, this *samizdat* publication showed a certain ecumenical openness.

Also, a typewritten publication entitled *Logos* appeared – usually six times a year, with thirty to forty A4-format pages in each issue – from 1981 until 1988. Most articles were written by Estonian ECB presbyters, both from the older generation (Osvald Tärk, Robert Võsu, Kalju Raid, Arpad Arder) and the younger generation (Joosep Tammo, Peeter Roosimaa, Ants Rebane, Jüri Puusaag, Ingmar Kurg). Topics ranged from justifica-

³¹ *Lectio* [Estonian *samizdat* publication] VII (1978), p. 117.

tion, sanctification and evangelism to questions of church life and to homiletic-exegetical materials that proved helpful aids for preachers. Much space was given to *personalia* and aspects of Estonian ECB history. Three of the longest treatises were devoted to questions of sanctification,³² exegetical analysis of the book of Revelation,³³ and the principles of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.³⁴

Congregational singing and church music contributed alongside literature to maintaining and reviving the ECB identity. Earlier hymnals dating back to the pre-war times were scarce and outdated. It is no surprise that Estonian ECB leaders, beginning in 1947, persistently appealed to Soviet authorities for permission to publish a new hymnal. At last in 1975, after twenty-eight years of applications and waiting, a miracle happened. Official permission was granted to publish *Evangeelsed Laulud* [Evangelical Hymns], a songbook containing four hundred songs, but without accompanying music included in the book. In 1976 the songbooks were distributed to all ECB churches in Estonia.³⁵ By 1979, musical accompaniment for all the songs had been prepared by hand.³⁶ These were reproduced by simple methods such as photographing the notes. The hymnal had its limits: some words had been changed because of the censor, children's and youth songs were not allowed, and there were fewer songs than originally planned. Furthermore, because of the small number of printed copies, in some churches only half of the members were able to buy the hymnal.³⁷ In spite of this, the role of the hymnal as a contributor to identity should not be underestimated. Congregational singing deepened the worship experience of church members, and songs in contemporary Estonian brought this experience into the present-day world. In addition, the hymnal was a visible sign of the vitality of the UECBE: the book had been printed at last.

³² Ants Rebane, "Piibellik pühitus" [Biblical Sanctification], *Logos*, no. 1 (1981) – no. 5 (1982).

³³ Peeter Roosimaa, "Apokalüpsis – Ilmutusraamatu eksegetilisi probleeme" [Apocalypse – Exegetical Problems of the Book of Revelation], *Logos*, no. 2 (1982) – no. 5 (1983).

³⁴ Osvald Tärk, "Meie vendluse põhimõtted" [Principles of our Brotherhood], *Logos*, no. 1 (1981) – no. 2 (1983).

³⁵ Minutes of the presbyters' council meeting, no. 44 (12 September 1976). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

³⁶ Minutes of the presbyters' council meeting, no. 56 (16 February 1979). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

³⁷ Kaaskirjad koguduste 1976. a. aruandele [Explanatory letters attached to churches' 1976 reports], Archive of the UECBE.

Congregational singing was supported by choir activities. Approximately 50% of ECB churches in Estonia had at least one choir. The total number of choir members in the Union was approximately one thousand, and in all the churches together, there were approximately four hundred musicians³⁸ playing various musical instruments, including mandolins, violins and brass instruments. As the Union had a total membership of 7,963 in 1973,³⁹ these statistical estimations demonstrate a living tradition of choir music. Estonian ECB believers were “singing people”: they not only preached, but also sang their theology and convictions. Many Baptist parents suggested that their children study music, hoping that these skills would benefit the church later. It was also more difficult for state authorities to control the effect and impact of music and singing.⁴⁰ By the 1970s it had become clear that the authorities’ attempts in the early 1960s to forbid solo songs and instrumental music in churches, other than organ and piano, had failed. Some people felt that music was too dominant. Aita Dahl commented that in these times some younger people who did not sing felt useless and excluded,⁴¹ as choirs functioned often as fellowship groups where friendships developed.

Gradually, young people became more and more involved in music. For example, towards the end of 1967 a youth choir was secretly formed at Oleviste Church in Tallinn. The choir, a kind of Christian discipleship group, met under the fatherly supervision of pastors Oskar Olvik and Osvald Tärk.⁴² Music ministry in the Oleviste Church was rich and many-sided. In 1974 an ensemble called *Ihtys* came together, being active until 1979. Another ensemble called *Rebecca* (formed in the 1970s, later called *Sanctus*) and a youth choir, *Rändur* [Pilgrim] (since 1985), were also significant.⁴³ Young people’s music groups and choirs became an integral

³⁸ The UECBE Senior Presbyter’s report of 1970–1972. VpAruanded, Archive of the UECBE.

³⁹ The UECBE statistical report 1973. The UECBE statistical reports 1964–1990, Archive of the UECBE.

⁴⁰ Toivo Pilli, “Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia 1945–1989: Survival Techniques, Outreach Efforts, Search for Identity,” *Baptist History and Heritage*, vol. 36, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 2001), p. 123.

⁴¹ Aita Dahl, interview notes (15 January 2001). T. Pilli personal archive.

⁴² Peeter Roosimaa, oral communication (17 July 2002). Peeter Roosimaa was a member of the choir and moderator for its first years of existence.

⁴³ Veronika Arder, “Muusikatöö” [Music Ministry], in *Oleviste 50. Oleviste koguduse juubelikogumik* [Oleviste 50. The Anniversary Collection of Oleviste Church] (Tallinn: Oleviste kogudus, 2000), pp. 17-18.

part of ECB life in the 1970s and the 1980s. In addition, new music styles – gospel and Christian rock – arrived on the scene. The choir and ensemble *Effataa*⁴⁴ became the symbol of a new style of music used for the goal of evangelism.

On 23 February 1980 musicians from twenty-five ECB churches formed a “music council”⁴⁵, a workgroup to coordinate music ministry in ECB churches and offer advice and training to choir conductors and musicians. There was also a smaller workgroup at the ECB office that focused on recording and reproducing audiocassettes, though this had to take place in secret. In 1980, about one thousand copies of the first cassette of Christmas music were prepared. Recordings took place in the Oleviste Church, and the technical team included Raigo Tammo, Mati Särglepp and Allar Kaasik. Later Tammo recalled, “The tape was practically hand-made.... At the same time there was a fear that [the KGB] would come to search. Believers were not permitted to have professional recording and production equipment.”⁴⁶ The next year the tape *Kuldkeeled* [Golden Strings], including the music of Kaljo Raid,⁴⁷ was prepared with the help of the ECB recording choir *Gloria*. In 1984, the Nõmme ECB church youth choir and ensemble recorded a tape, *Laula rõõmsalt sa* [Sing Joyfully], with classic spirituals and some songs written by young Estonian Christian composer Piret Pormeister. The music in the Estonian ECB churches derived its energy from the grassroots level. It was based on enthusiasm and strengthened by the fact that music helped to combine important aspects of Christian spirituality: it brought together meditative and emotional dimensions with the language of evangelism. Perhaps music naturally balanced the Estonian Baptist preaching tradition, which was sometimes rather intellectually oriented. Certainly the role of literature and music shows the ways in which the churches negotiated their way through state restrictions and forged an identity that would carry them into the future.

⁴⁴ This name refers to the New Testament text where Jesus healed a deaf and mute man. “He [Jesus] looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, ‘Ephphatha!’ (which means, ‘Be opened!’). At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.” Mark 7:34-35 (NIV).

⁴⁵ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 65 (26 February 1980), no. 68 (13 May 1980), no. 69 (10 June 1980). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁴⁶ Raigo Tammo, oral communication (13 May 2002).

⁴⁷ Kaljo Raid was pastor of the Estonian Baptist Church in Toronto. He was also a professional musician and composer.

Evangelistic Efforts

In 1968, Osvald Tärk reminded his fellow presbyters that “the gospel is the power of God even if we have difficulties in our ministry of proclamation”. “Do not stop doing your work even in the hardest situations,” he encouraged.⁴⁸ Tärk’s advice was appropriate and timely. Only a few years later, new opportunities for evangelism emerged. The 1970s in Estonia saw both renewed motivation for evangelism in churches and a renewed interest in religion among the younger strata of society.

The centre for this renewed thrust for evangelism became the Tallinn Oleviste Church. The Oleviste Church youth ensemble and ministry team, *Effataa*, formed at the beginning of the 1970s, began an entirely new era in evangelistic services and prayer ministry. Effataa was more than a music group. Haljand Uuemõis, a member of the Oleviste Church elders’ board, called the evangelistic movement of the 1970s the “Effataa revival”.⁴⁹ Effataa became a keyword for an evangelistic and charismatic ministry. By the late 1970s, “Effataa evenings” included sermons, testimonies, invitation time and prayers for the sick. To a certain extent the “evenings” could be described along the same lines as the campaigns of American evangelists such as Oral Roberts or Kathryn Kuhlmann. Certain phenomena, such as people falling on the floor during prayers,⁵⁰ caused confusion among the ECB leadership, divided churches into supporters and opponents and provoked criticism from state authorities.

The ECB presbyters’ council, without condemning the phenomena, called for care: the most important criterion should be the “fruit” – the impact of prayer and spiritual experience on the person’s character and behaviour. However, some people, the ECB leadership accepted, had “received spiritual revival, blessing and joy, and help for their health”.⁵¹ According to one of the Effataa movement leaders, Rein Uuemõis, the phenomena manifested God’s power and attracted people to church.⁵² For

⁴⁸ Osvald Tärk, “Evangelium on Jumala vägi” [The Gospel is the Power of God], a speech at the presbyters’ conference in Tallinn (17 February 1968). VpAruanded, Archive of the UECBE; *Eesti EKB koguduste presbiiterite konverents Tallinnas, 15.-18. veebruaril 1968. a.* [The Estonian ECB Presbyters’ Conference in Tallinn, 15-18 February 1968], pp. 162-163. Personal library of Ülo Meriloo.

⁴⁹ Haljand Uuemõis, “Effataa-ärkamine” [Effataa Revival], in *Oleviste 50. Oleviste koguduse jubelikogumik*, p. 22.

⁵⁰ *Jumala teenistuses: Rein Uuemõis* (Tallinn: Oleviste kogudus, 2001), p. 37.

⁵¹ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 51 (7 March 1978), no. 52 (18 April 1978). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁵² *Jumala teenistuses: Rein Uuemõis*, p. 37.

the UECBE the “Effataa revival” was a mixed blessing. It created heated discussions, even controversies. Issues like baptism of the Holy Spirit, praying for the sick and laying on of hands, falling down in the power of Spirit and speaking in tongues – all these themes were debated both at churches and at the meetings of the presbyters’ council.⁵³ Nevertheless, the movement had an impact on Oleviste membership statistics. The decline in membership slowed down from 1970, stabilised and turned into a modest growth in the 1980s.⁵⁴ Against the background of the continuing decline in the Union membership, which dropped from 8,206 members in 1970 to 6,346 members in 1985,⁵⁵ there is no doubt that the evangelistic activity in Oleviste had measurable results. Moreover, according to Baptist historian Albert Wardin, the Oleviste Church “became a dynamic evangelical center known throughout the Soviet Union”.⁵⁶ The charismatic elements in the “Effataa revival” harmonised with Estonian Pentecostal and revivalist free-church Spirit-oriented and enthusiastic identity, which had been suppressed in the Union of Estonian ECB churches during the Soviet years. The revival brought new elements into Baptist congregational life.

The input of Finnish Pentecostals and the charismatically oriented Finnish Free Church in this “Effataa revival” is clearly evident. However, the leading figures preaching and praying for people were Estonians.⁵⁷ The Effataa “meetings” took place both in Estonian and in Russian, as many people travelled from throughout the Soviet Union to attend the services. Sometimes three hundred or more people came from other Soviet republics to attend these services. Many came from “underground churches”, arriving in Tallinn by train from as far away as Dushanbe, Tajikistan, and Vladivostok, in the Russian Far East.⁵⁸

⁵³ See the minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 30 (20 May 1974), no. 31 (17 September 1974), no. 51 (7 March 1978), no. 52 (18 April 1978), no. 53 (30 May 1978), no. 54 (11 September 1978). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁵⁴ In 1965 there were 1613 members; in 1970 there were 1385 members; in 1975 there were 1333; in 1980 there were 1309; in 1985 there were 1310; and in 1990 there were 1383 members. The UECBE statistical reports 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990. The UECBE statistical reports 1964–1990, Archive of the UECBE.

⁵⁵ The UECBE statistical reports 1970, 1985. The UECBE statistical reports 1964–1990, Archive of the UECBE.

⁵⁶ Albert Wardin (ed), *Baptists Around the World: a Comprehensive Handbook* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), p. 240.

⁵⁷ Today Rein Uuemõis and Ülo Niinemägi are pastors in the Oleviste Church. The late Udo Veevo was a longtime pastor in Palade on Hiiumaa Island.

⁵⁸ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 54 (11 September 1978). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE; Enno Tuulik, private correspondence (20 February 2005). T. Pilli personal archive.

The worship style at these evangelistic and prayer evenings was somewhat non-traditional. Music was rhythmic and joyful, and as Haljand Uuemõis pointed out, used “non-Christian instruments” (as they were perceived).⁵⁹ Uuemõis was referring to drums and electric musical instruments. This new music style had become widespread in other churches, too, such as the Estonian Methodist Church.

The flow of visitors from other Soviet republics to the Tallinn Oleviste Church, the extraordinary worship elements, young people attending the evangelistic evenings and the spread of similar evangelistic patterns to other ECB churches did not go unnoticed. State authorities felt uneasy about these tendencies. Under heavy pressure of government authorities, “Effataa evenings” in the Russian language were ended in 1981. Uuemõis commented, “This decision was hard and painful, and meant – as it soon was realised – a blow to the whole revival process.”⁶⁰ However, the evangelistic evenings in Estonian continued, and constantly troubled the Commissioner of the CRA. In January 1987 the Commissioner stated, concerning youth activities, that the Oleviste Church was balancing on “a critical line”. The Commissioner worried that young people were “under Pentecostal influence”.⁶¹

It is important to note that the Effataa revival, controversial and inspiring as it was, was not the only evidence of the UECBE’s efforts to develop its own evangelistic language in the changing cultural context. Witnessing and “winning souls” was a uniting force among the historically different Estonian free churches, even before the Second World War. It could only be expected that under Soviet rule this uniting feature of identity was searching for ways to be expressed.

Jüri Puusaag, presbyter of Tallinn “Kalju” Church, who had studied for a short period at McMaster Divinity College in Canada in 1980, encouraged every church member to live an “active spiritual lifestyle”.⁶² Puusaag’s vision included “friendship evangelism” by church members in their everyday life setting and well-planned discipleship training in church. He was critical of “Christian propaganda campaigns”,⁶³ such as traditional revival weeks,

⁵⁹ Haljand Uuemõis, “Effataa-ärkamine”, p. 24.

⁶⁰ Haljand Uuemõis, “Effataa-ärkamine”, p. 24.

⁶¹ Statistiline ülevaade usuasjade olukorrast Eesti NSV-s 1986. aastal [A statistical survey of the religious situation in the Estonian SSR in 1986]. Aruanded ja ülevaated 1971–1990, Archive of the Commissioner of the CRA.

⁶² Jüri Puusaag, “Sajandivanune Tallinna ‘Kalju’ kogudus” [One century old Tallinn ‘Kalju’ church], *Logos*, no. 3 (1984), p. 6.

⁶³ Jüri Puusaag, private correspondence (16 August 2002). T. Pilli personal archive.

and also to an extent of Effataa-style evangelism. Some younger intellectually oriented church members made efforts to provide reading material for culturally alert youth, creating the typewritten collections *Jäljed* [Footprints] (1979–1980) and *Lugemisvihik* [Reader] (1987–1988). These volumes included, for example, a short article about Federico Fellini's *Orchestra Rehearsal*,⁶⁴ comments about Samuel Beckett's play *Waiting for Godot*,⁶⁵ which had been staged in Estonia by a promising producer Lembit Peterson, as well as a "meditation" inspired by pianist Rein Rannap's 14 April 1979 concert at the Estonia Concert Hall in Tallinn.⁶⁶ *Lugemisvihik* included two choruses from T. S. Eliot's *The Rock*, translated into Estonian by young philologist Anne Lange.⁶⁷ The idea that music, film and literature that was not directly "evangelical" could play a role in the search for the relevance of the Christian message in a socialist setting was fairly uncommon among Estonian ECB believers, who as a rule tended to create their own "prayer house subculture" with few links to the wider context.

This period included another significant evangelistic episode: Billy Graham's visit to Tallinn. Though a "one-off event", Billy Graham's 1984 visit was "a gift from God" for the Estonian Baptists' centennial year, as Jüri Puusaag, Graham's interpreter in Estonia, has said.⁶⁸ Graham preached in the Lutheran Dome Cathedral as well as in the Oleviste Church. In Oleviste his sermon was entitled "Hope for the Future".⁶⁹ Though he was advised by state authorities not to make an invitation or altar call in Oleviste, and he left quickly after he had preached in the church (which was packed with approximately three thousand people), Graham's visit brought Baptists into the Estonian mass media. Perhaps for the first time in the Soviet period, Baptists were depicted by the press in a positive light.⁷⁰ For the everyday challenges in Estonian local churches, Graham's model for evangelism offered little help. However, his influence as a Christian example and writer was significant.

⁶⁴ "Filmikommentaar Moskvast" [Film Comments from Moscow], *Jäljed II* (1979), pp. 3–6.

⁶⁵ "Kui oodatu ei tule..." [When the Awaited One Does Not Come], *Jäljed II* (1979), pp. 27–40.

⁶⁶ "Üles, üles, järve uppunud kellad!" [Up, Up, You Bells That Are Drowned in the Lake], *Jäljed I* (1979), pp. 4–6.

⁶⁷ Anne Lange, "Ühest T. S. Elioti luuletajaisiksuse tahust" [About One Aspect of T. S. Eliot as a Poet], *Lugemisvihik* (1988), pp. 11–18.

⁶⁸ Jüri Puusaag, private correspondence (16 August 2002). T. Pilli personal archive.

⁶⁹ Mihail [Mikhail] Zhidkov and Jüri Puusaag, "Billy Graham taas Nõukogude Liidus" [Billy Graham again in the Soviet Union], *Logos*, no. 4 (1984), p. 29.

⁷⁰ Jüri Puusaag, private correspondence (16 August 2002). T. Pilli personal archive.

Christian Youth Work Revived

In the 1970s, despite the state's increased efforts to influence children and young people with atheistic ideology,⁷¹ Estonian ECB churches were able to attract a number of young people. Those who in the midst of political "stagnation" and "suffocation" were still seeking ethical values and philosophical ideals often found inspiration from religion. The following quotation, though referring more generally to the Soviet situation, pointedly describes the situation in Estonia as well:

From the mid-1970s the pace of proliferation of all kinds of unofficial religious activity had been accelerating, particularly in the major cities and amongst educated young people. Some of this activity was part of the continuing search for spiritual values amongst young people disenchanted with the dead official ideology, while an increasing proportion was related to the defence of religious rights and human rights in general, an area of activity which was given a specific boost by the Soviet Union's signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975.⁷²

In 1979, the ECB Senior Presbyterian stated that in mission and evangelism "the good soil" was no longer the countryside population, as it had been earlier, but "the educated youth living in cities". ECB churches should direct their attention, prayers and work towards this social group.⁷³ One gets the impression that this statement was five or six years late in being made.

At home, at school and in church, "serious battles took place about the length of hair and width of trouser legs" and "electric guitar ensembles were mushrooming"⁷⁴ – youth culture was gradually influencing ECB self-understanding. Young people who joined ECB churches often came from non-Christian families and faced opposition at home. Their presence, however, challenged traditional understandings in local churches regarding how a believer should appear or speak. "The language of Canaan", a "Baptist dialect" loaded with biblical expressions, was unknown to most of the new

⁷¹ Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981), p. 297.

⁷² Philip Walters, "A Survey of Soviet Religious Policy", p. 27.

⁷³ The UECBE Senior Presbyterian's report of 1978 (20 November 1979). VpAruanded, Archive of the UECBE.

⁷⁴ Lauri Vahtra, *Elu-olu viimasel vene ajal* [Living Conditions During the Last Russian Rule] (Kirjastuskeskus: Tallinn, 2002), p. 89.

converts. However, this new “wave”, when compared to “the children of believers”, was more effective in building relationships and witnessing to their friends. Duane Pederson’s *Jeesusrahvas* [Jesus People] was translated into Estonian and reproduced by *samizdat* methods.⁷⁵ The Jesus movement as a counterculture, though comparatively short-lived in the USA, had its impact on Estonian Christian youth.

From the mid-1970s, the presbyters’ council repeatedly discussed issues related to youth work. Though still semi-illegal, youth work had come “above ground”. A younger generation was there and this fact could not be denied. In 1976, the presbyters’ council stated that there was an urgent need to find youth leaders both for local churches and at the Union level. The council recognised tension between different generations in churches, which some church leaders interpreted as “a non-brotherly and disobedient mentality” spreading among the young people.⁷⁶ Such statements reflected traditional ECB thinking about authority. By the end of 1976 the council worked out some simple advice: in churches where young people are present, they should be given the opportunity to have separate youth work for “self-education and evangelism”; youth work should take place in consultation with the congregation in general and with the church board; youth leaders should be persons trusted both by the church board and by the youth; and every local church is free to organise its youth work independently, but in order to avoid misunderstanding, it is recommended that work should be coordinated.⁷⁷

However, only in May 1979 was a coordinating body for youth work established.⁷⁸ This “youth council” expanded to eighteen members in 1980, and led by Ingmar Kurg, was supposed to work directly under the supervision of the Senior Presbyter and with the close cooperation of local presbyters.⁷⁹ The members represented primarily the larger and stronger

⁷⁵ Duane Pederson, *Jeesus-rahvas* [Jesus People] (n. d.). Personal library of T. Pilli. The Estonian translation was probably made from the Swedish version of the book, published in 1972.

⁷⁶ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 44 (12 September 1976). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁷⁷ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 45 (7 December 1976). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁷⁸ Members of this initial “youth council” included Ingmar Kurg (Tallinn Oleviste), Jüri Puusaag (Tallinn “Kalju”), Aamo Rimmel (Tallinn Nõmme), Dimitri Lipping (Tapa), Avo Rosenvald (Tartu “Kolgata”), Jüri Nõlvak (Haapsalu), Eduard Kakko (Pärnu “Immanuel”). Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 57 (23 May 1979). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁷⁹ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 57 (23 May 1979), no. 68 (13 May 1980),

ECB churches. The “youth council” set a goal of preparing Bible study materials for youth and supporting evangelism.⁸⁰ By 1981 youth work had spread despite internal and external difficulties, and there were approximately six hundred young people actively involved in ECB youth ministry.⁸¹

The presbyters’ council was concerned with avoiding a separatist movement among young people and encouraged youth work to be integrated into the general life of the congregations. The old theme of “maintaining unity” emerged now from a new direction. In some cases the suggestions of older pastors did not reveal much awareness of the psychology of young people or their gifts and interests. For example, the advice of one member of the presbyters’ council, that “an important aspect of youth work should be visiting the sick and elderly and helping to carry out funeral services”,⁸² was probably not the best guideline for youth work in general, though youth certainly were involved in various areas of church life. However, more effective means of integrating youth into church life included attempts to give them more responsibility in evangelism and worship services and to offer them new Christian training opportunities.

Besides the strengthening of local youth groups, where much of the actual work among youth took place,⁸³ there were two other wider aspects, which not only showed the growing role of young people, but also served as a means for spiritual development, evangelism and helping youth to become better informed of the Evangelical Christian-Baptist tradition and spirituality. These developments made a crucial contribution to identity.

First, semi-illegal youth summer camps were held. These began to be organised regularly in the 1970s by more active churches. In Tallinn, a friendship group, “*Konsil*” (a shortened version of “*konsilium*” [council]), consisting of seven young men, organised several summer camps in Viki-palu, which brought together up to two hundred young people.⁸⁴ Organ-

no. 69 (10 June 1980). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁸⁰ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 74 (13 January 1981). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁸¹ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 57 (23 May 1979), no. 74 (13 January 1981). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁸² Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 72 (21 November 1980). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁸³ Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 117 (9 December 1985). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁸⁴ Einike Pilli and Daily Valk, “Eesti EKB Liidu haridustöö evangeliseerimise ja eluaegse õppimise dünaamikas” [The UECBE Educational Work in the Dynamics of Evangelism and Lifelong Learning], in T. Pilli (ed), *Teekond teisenevas ajas: Peatükke Eesti vabakoguduste ajalooost* [A Journey in Changing Time: Chapters from the History of Estonian Free Churches]

ising these camps was never officially allowed and this form of youth work always had a taste of civil disobedience. According to Jyrki Raitila, "Usually they were either organised in secret or with an unofficial 'silent agreement' with local officials."⁸⁵ In some cases organisers were fined, interviewed by the KGB or harassed in other ways. In other cases, however, the authorities preferred not to take severe measures. Heigo Ritsbek has pointed out that this ambiguity in the authorities' approach confused several Soviet church life experts.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, state officials were interested in obtaining information about this form of activity. Symbols like the camp flag and neckerchiefs were under special observation.⁸⁷ The authorities were nervous that these symbols might refer to Estonian pre-war independence. For youth, these camps were primarily events for Bible study, prayer, singing around the campfire and building new friendships – all of which strengthened Christian commitment. Still today, the youth camp tradition remains a part of Estonian Evangelical Christian-Baptist life.

Second, Youth Bible Days were initiated. With a growing number of youth in churches there emerged a need for an event bringing together all the active youth at least once a year. The so-called *Noorte Piiblipäevad* [Youth Bible Days], usually taking place in Tallinn at the end of April or the beginning of May, began to fulfil this role. International Workers' Day, a state holiday, was 1 May, allowing young people to travel to Tallinn and stay there two or three days. It is paradoxical that while the government made efforts to fill Christian holidays and traditions with atheistic meanings, the youth used socialist holidays to organise Christian events. The first of these Bible Days took place in 1979.⁸⁸ In 1980, there were 411 participants at this youth meeting.⁸⁹ The Senior Presbyter often took part in the event, giving it more "weight" and maintaining contact with the active youth from local churches. In 1983 the Senior Presbyter gave a Bible Day paper dealing with the role of family and home in evangelistic work.⁹⁰ In 1984 the motto

(Tartu: Kõrgem Usuteaduslik Seminar ja Sõnasepp Oü, 2005), p. 60.

⁸⁵ Jyrki Raitila, *History of Evangelicalism and the Present Spiritual Situation in Estonia* (MA Thesis, Providence Theological Seminary [USA], 1996), p. 45.

⁸⁶ Heigo Ritsbek, *The Mission of Methodism in Estonia* (DMin Thesis, Boston University [USA], 1996), p. 96.

⁸⁷ Milone Ugam, "Laste- ja noortetöö" [Youth and Children's Work], in *Oleviste* 50, p. 14.

⁸⁸ Minutes of the presbyters' council meeting, no. 57 (23 May 1979). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁸⁹ Minutes of the presbyters' council meeting, no. 68 (13 May 1980). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the presbyters' council meeting, no. 96 (16 May 1983). PNProt1969–1985, Archive of the UECBE.

for Bible Days was “Life in the Power of Faith”.⁹¹ Usually the programme included both classical and contemporary music, Bible studies and presentations, prayer time and sometimes an evening with a poetry recital or a Bible quiz. Attempts to dramatise some Biblical truths – such as “a trial over a weak brother” in 1986 – sometimes provoked severe criticism from the older generation, who worried that God’s holiness was being compromised. However, others emphasised the need for the contextualisation of the Christian message. If drama was understood as a parable, it could help young people to reflect upon their role as Christians, the advocates of the “unusual” methods argued.⁹² The tradition of Youth Bible Days is still alive in Estonia. These gatherings, which usually took place in a Baptist church in Tallinn, offered fellowship, spiritual guidance and encouragement. They helped Baptist youth to relate to their context of everyday life as Christians and understand themselves as part of an older but continuing Estonian Baptist community, which shaped their identity as believers.

Though in some churches attempts were made to organise children’s work, often under the guise of a birthday party or some other “legal” umbrella, an actual revival of children’s ministry began in the late 1980s. In the 1970s in Estonia, like in other parts of the Soviet Union, much of Christian education for children had to be done by Christian parents at home.⁹³ However, the state authorities “looked through their fingers”, as an Estonian saying goes, at some Baptist attempts to live out their convictions. In this situation, the growing youth work turned a new page for Estonian ECB understanding of church dynamics and evangelism. The youth work showed that the rigid atheistic system could not totally shape church life. There was an inner strength in historic Estonian Baptist identity, which was trying to resist, or bypass, atheistic restrictions and suppressive rules. Certainly the atheistic state had not lost its power, and often church leaders, first and foremost the Senior Presbyter, had to “pay for” the attempts of churches to revive their ministries and find the appropriate ways to express their identity.

In the process of Estonian ECB churches attempting to live out their convictions in the growing atmosphere of political “suffocation”, Senior Presbyter Robert Võsu’s role was significant. He “softened” the first attacks

⁹¹ *Logos*, no. 3 (1984), pp. 30-31.

⁹² Minutes of the presbyters’ council meeting, no. 122 (12 May 1986). Archive of the UECBE.

⁹³ Samuel Nesdoly, *Among the Soviet Evangelicals: a Goodly Heritage* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1986), p. 43.

of the authorities and tried to present information in a way that enabled churches to operate as smoothly as possible in an officially atheistic state.⁹⁴ An introvert by temperament, Võsu buried much of his emotions within himself. In 1984 Võsu suggested to his co-workers, "Take everything peacefully, one needs to force oneself to be calm."⁹⁵ In his relationships with the government authorities he followed a simple Estonian rule: better a sparrow in the hand than a dove on the roof. For this diplomatic approach, he has sometimes been accused of having too close of a relationship with the Commissioner of the CRA, a modest echo of accusations which "underground" Baptists in Russia addressed to the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB) leadership. However, materials in the Commissioner's archive show that the state authorities considered Võsu to be "an experienced Baptist" committed to the cause of the churches. The Commissioner described Võsu as a person with whom it would be possible "to solve problems" in a way that was necessary for the Soviet authorities, but who would take actions "beneficial first and foremost only for the church" as soon as "an opportunity opens up". The Commissioner was specifically critical of Võsu's "missionary activities".⁹⁶ With his analytical mind and writing abilities, his focus on evangelism, and his persistent support for churches and for the training of young leaders, Robert Võsu helped to shape Estonian Baptist self-understanding for a new generation and to clarify their mission in the 1970s and 1980s. Standing between the state and the churches, he helped the ECB churches to interpret the state pressure and restrictions in ways that helped Estonian Evangelical Christians-Baptists to maintain their basic beliefs and revive, though semi-illegally, some of their ministries.

Conclusion

In the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, Estonian Baptists were gradually able to take advantage of the situation in society, which in political terms has been characterised as a period of "stagnation" or "suffocation", but in church life saw some new signs of evangelistic efforts and other activity. This was a period when a generation of young people began to express

⁹⁴ Toivo Pilli, "Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Estonia 1945–1989", p. 121.

⁹⁵ H. Veermets, *Albomi juurde. Haapsalu koguduse 100 aastapäev* (1984) [To the Album. The 100th Anniversary of the Haapsalu Church (1984)], p. 34. Archive of the UECBE.

⁹⁶ A report of the Commissioner of CRA of the year 1969. Eesti Riigiarhiiv [Estonian State Archive] (ERA), f. R-1989, n. 2, s. 93, pp. 83-84.

their dissatisfaction with superficial Marxist ideology. Some began to look for answers in religion. The UECBE churches, though limited in their ministry opportunities and in their vision for youth, were able to respond to this situation by reviving their worship: Christian youth organised bands (music groups), Bible study and prayer groups of young people came to life, and in the Tallinn Oleviste Church charismatic-evangelistic Effataa evenings began to attract people of all generations, both from Estonia and other Soviet republics. These signs of life were like blades of grass sprouting through asphalt. Baptists in Estonia confirmed their identity as an evangelistically oriented ecclesial body, though there were discussions and debates about effective methods of evangelism.

Surprisingly, in some cases the state authorities did not take severe measures to suppress Estonian ECB activities, such as the efforts to reproduce typewritten literature, to revive and organise youth work in churches and on a Union level, to organise evangelistic services with youth participation, and to provide theological training through informal study groups. Senior Presbyterian Robert Võsu, with his diplomatic abilities, was able to organise semi-illegal training for presbyters, and a new hymnal was published. All these phenomena demonstrate that Estonian Baptists tried to revive some of their traditional ministries in the 1970s and 1980s, though the general membership numbers in the UECBE continued to decline. Although ECB believers restrained from public criticism of the atheistic socialist political system, their presence was a witness of a non-materialistic worldview. They represented an alternative way of life characterised by trust in God, not by human-bound atheistic optimism. This was one method of peaceful resistance in atheistic suppression. However, in some cases, Estonian Baptists actively supported the “underground Baptist movement”, which openly defied the restrictive religious laws. All this helped to develop and form the UECBE identity in Estonia. During the period of “Brezhnevian stagnation”, Estonian ECB churches, searching for their way in the socialist atheistic labyrinth, saw some rays of light which directed their path: renewed evangelism in several churches, emerging youth groups, and attempts to keep their minds and thinking free.

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Changing Worship in a Changing Society: Baptists in Poland in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Zbigniew Wierzchowski

*"In words we see only desire; in work, greatness.
To survive the day is more difficult than to write a book."*¹

Polish society has been known throughout the ages for its thinking reformers. Poland has consistently raised up people who sought reform, desiring to change the difficult situation in which the nation found itself. Poland was generally one of the most tolerant nations in Europe. During the period of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the Gentry (1569–1795), the Confederation of Warsaw was established on 28 January 1573 to guarantee religious freedom. The only one of its kind at that time, this document exhibited great religious tolerance,² creating in the sixteenth century the roots of the Polish tradition of friendship among various confessions in one country.³ This Polish act of tolerance was the collective work of the Polish state.

Already in the sixteenth century, Polish Brethren were preparing the way for Baptist churches in the land of Poland, their presence well marked in Polish history and culture. Both Polish Brethren and Anabaptists appealed

¹ Author unknown. Saying from the period of the founding of the Baptist Church in Poland.

² Adam Piekarski, *The Church in Poland: Facts, Figures, Information* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1978), p. 38.

³ Janusz Tazbir, *Reformacja, Kontrreformacja, Tolerancja* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Dolnośląskie, 1996), p. 59.

for reforms and abolition of serfdom, and the ideologies of these radical reformers exerted direct and indirect influences on the Baptist Church in Poland, the roots of which can be found among the German people. Therefore, a study of worship in the Polish Baptist Church best begins with examination of the worship of these foreign congregations, which brought the "Good News" to the land of the Poles. However, the German-speaking movement failed to significantly influence the non-German people, especially in the regions of Poland in which the Roman Catholic Church predominated.

German colonist Gotfryd Fryderic [Gottfried Friedrich] Alf (1831–1898) began Baptist work in the Russian part of Poland, near Warsaw, in the 1850s, while the Baptist mission in the Baltic region of Poland is associated primarily with the name of Johann Gerhard Oncken. The founder of the Baptist church in Germany, Oncken shared his faith not only through preaching and inspiration, but also by distribution of Bibles and tracts. The Baptist movement began in Poland in 1858 with the baptism of nine people by Gotfryd Alf. No one suspected that this small group of people, after just a few years, would grow to a group of a thousand members.⁴ Baptist churches were founded from Rawa Ruska to Żółkiew, Lwów and Tarnopol, deeply influencing the local communities.

State and Orthodox Church authorities hindered the spread of the Baptist faith, yet persecuted pastors did all they could, serving as missionaries, teaching Sunday Schools and directing church choirs and orchestras.⁵ At the first church in Adamów (established in 1858), for example, believers taught the fundamentals of the faith, as well as reading, writing and music. Gotfryd Alf organised and directed a choir.⁶ The controversial Baptist doctrine expressed through a new style of worship became prevalent in this area, causing problems for the Evangelical-Augsburg (Lutheran) Church and the state government. The Secretary of State wrote that the new group was growing and had become very dangerous to the community. Nonetheless, the leaders of this "sect" did not give up, and their influence on local residents was positive as they shared the doctrines and principles of their faith. But the early Baptist movement in the Polish lands continued to face persecution from both the state church and the government. Local clergy

⁴ "Historia się powtórzyła", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 1 (January 1983), p. 3.

⁵ Krzysztof Bednarczyk, "Prezbiter W. Peretiatko", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 2 (February 1959), pp. 15-17.

⁶ Henryk R. Tomaszewski, "Baptystyci w Polsce w latach 1858–1918", *Słowo i Życie*, no. 1 (1993), p. 39.

were hostile, afraid of the spread of a “Baptist faith”.

Without question, music was one of the most widespread forms of worship in Baptist churches in Poland. A choir served as a kind of preacher, so it was important that the text of a song be clear, understood by the congregation and in agreement with Scripture. Baptist church choirs in Poland sang in the Polish language, so the people could understand them. Congregations often sang songs translated from German songbooks, accompanied by organ or piano.⁷ Members of the congregations often played musical instruments, composed songs or directed a choir.⁸ At this time, most Baptist worship services in the land of Poland, known as “Bible hours”, were conducted in the homes of believers. At these meetings, people sang religious songs, prayed, confessed their sins and read the Bible.⁹

POLISH INDEPENDENCE (1918–1939)

Many generations of Polish society had been waiting for the end of World War I. For many people, it was hard to believe that Poland had again become a free country. There was also sadness in Christian hearts because of the lost. About two thousand members of the Baptist Church had perished in the Great War.¹⁰ Polish evangelicals dreamt not only of national freedom, but especially of a spiritual awakening. The Baptist focus on mission inspired other denominations, such as the Free Christian Church [*Kościół Wolnych Chrześcijan*], the Pentecostal Church [*Kościół Zielonoświątkowy*], and the Polish Church of Christ [*Kościół Chrystusowy*].

In the new, free country of the Second Polish Republic, the position of the Roman Catholic Church had changed, as it was now the most powerful church in the land. Two constitutions (March 1921 and April 1935) guaranteed that “the Roman Catholic religion, which is the religion of the majority of people in the nation, [held] the primary position among religions, which share equal rights”.¹¹

However, the Baptists churches had something unique that people could not find in other religions. Thousands were drawn to the churches

⁷ In many village churches, the congregation sang a cappella or accompanied by the harmonium [fisharmonia]. One church in eastern Poland near the border still uses the harmonium today.

⁸ Dr V. Jelinek, “Świadectwo Jana Pospieszyl”, *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 5 (1965), p. 11.

⁹ Tomaszewski, “Baptysci w Polsce w Latach 1858–1918”, p. 20.

¹⁰ William L. Wagner, *New Move Forward in Europe: Growth Patterns of German Speaking Baptists in Europe* (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 1978), p. 113.

¹¹ Jarosław Gowin, *Kościół po komunizmie* (Kraków: Znak, 1995), p. 18.

like magnets. If we look at the earliest documents, just after Poland gained its independence, we can see that the Baptist Church's united spirit and emphasis on the worship of Christ helped the church to influence society. This period of Polish history (1918–1939) was characterised by the rapid growth of the Slavic Baptist movement, which separated from the German Baptist Church. This separation was justified because of the multiculturalism of the Polish nation. Serious differences existed between Poles, Russians, Germans and other Slavic minorities living on Polish lands.

To the Baptists, Christianity was not a matter of cultural heritage or ideology, but took a personal form. Each person had to believe in Christ. One's life had to be changed. Three elements were emphasised when people became Baptists: personal witness, personal relationship with Christ, and personal discipleship. The Gospel became more than a story about Jesus and the apostles, but included a divine question to which each person needed to respond with faith. Many times this was a question about a believer's lifestyle and actions. Baptist worship was inseparable from their missionary zeal. Also, the Bible had a central role. People called the Baptists "people of the Bible".¹² The Word of God changed their lives and through them, it affected others.¹³

Another important characteristic of this growing church was a deep fellowship among believers. The churches fully practised the priesthood of all believers. All members were responsible for missions. All were allowed actively to participate in worship, and to pray aloud during services. People sang together, and the songs were deeply meaningful to them. Believers used their talents during the services in various ways. It was not a priest who conducted their services. It was not a priest who read the Bible, but all of them read and interpreted it. From this brotherhood, the Baptists gained strength to resist persecution and grow in the new independent land. The Baptist Church at that time can be characterised by a single word – "movement".¹⁴

¹² Krzysztof Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborów Baptystów w Polsce do 1939 roku* (Warsaw: Misyjodruk, 1997), p. 147.

¹³ Bednarczyk, *Historia Zborów Baptystów*, p. 147.

¹⁴ Interview with Konstanty Wiazowski, *Wyższe Seminarium Baptystyczne*, Warsaw, 20 March 2002.

Separation and Unity in Worship: the German and Slavic Baptist Unions

When the Great War ended, people returned to their native lands and began to rebuild their lives. Many had become Baptists during the deportation or while held captive. The war's repercussions made people sensitive to the Gospel and their sins. The Gospel had a revolutionary impact, particularly in eastern Poland. New converts joined small Bible groups that met in homes.

The idea soon arose for these groups to join the recently founded Association of Slavic Baptists. This gave the new groups of Slavic believers unity and security about what they were doing in Poland. As they established churches, Slavic people no longer needed to attend German churches. Small groups of believers sprung up in cities such as Białystok, Grodno, Wilno and Równo, as well as in villages. In Galicia, the new churches were usually the result of people returning from deportation to Russia, where they had come to know the Baptist movement.

Polish people nonetheless visited German congregations regularly. Many became believers during worship services in which the Gospel was preached. This was how the first Polish Baptist Church in Warsaw was established. After Poles converted in the German Baptist Church, they asked the German pastors to hold services in Polish. The Polish service began after the German service ended. It was in the same building and the method of worship was similar to that of the Germans. Worship in the early services was characterised by the use of songs translated from German. Once each month, the service was led by the youth. During these services there were solos, duets or quartets accompanied by the piano, as well as recitation of poetry.¹⁵

Printed word helped to create a sense of unity. Because of the variety of nationalities, the task of the Baptist publishing house *Kompas* was large, as it sought to publish books, journals and tracts in various languages.¹⁶ To have an impact throughout Polish society, the publishers strove not to miss any of these groups. The purpose of *Kompas* was to share the Gospel with every person in Poland – Pole, Jew, Ukrainian or German. Everyone needed to know Christ. This was possible using literature in different languages.

¹⁵ Alicja Leibbrandt, "Burzliwe dzieje zboru warszawskiego", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 9 (2001), pp. 21-22.

¹⁶ Waldemar Gutsche, "Początek pracy w Polsce", translated by Siegmund Karczewski; cited in Robert L. Kluttig, *Geschichte der deutschen Baptisten in Polen von 1858-1945* ([Edmonton]: self-published, [1973]), pp. 17-18.

The Baptists did not face the difficult times in silence, but by speaking out the truth about hope.¹⁷ *Słowo Prawdy* was established as a monthly journal not only about the Baptist Church and ministry, but especially about true worship. Bible seminars and courses for choir directors were held in the city of Brześć. Youth activities helped the church to become known around the community. The church in Łódź, on Nawrot Street, had an active youth association, with young people from Łódź often publishing their poems, articles and stories in *Słowo Prawdy*. This encouraged others to do so as well.¹⁸ Youth associations in Katowice and Warsaw held activities during the week. A popular form of worship and ministry was the founding of new orchestras. Also, youth organised Bible hours at different people's homes, while they listened to lectures, sang in quartets and recited poems.¹⁹

These youth meetings were special occasions using different tools to worship God. We notice the order and variety of means used to make the celebration spiritually attractive, including orchestra, men's choir, soloists, duets and congregational singing. People of different ages, languages and cultures worshipped God together. The foreign names of the participants demonstrate the variety of nationalities in this Polish church in Łódź: Lesik, Petreniow, Burchartówna and Kowalski.

Choir music experienced a second revival in 1930–1940. A Christian Singing Club sang in four voices, rehearsing once or twice a week. It also organised and delivered materials for others to sing in churches. Choirs, playing an important role in Baptist worship services, supported and sometimes even led mission work in eastern Poland.²⁰ Choirs accepted the task of proclaiming the Gospel, which tended to draw people to the church. In addition, according to *Słowo Prawdy*, “quiet work and a clean life brought all people to the Lord”.²¹ In small villages everybody knew each other, and “life-witness” was valued as much as preaching. The sincere witness of the believers drew others to Christ. For example, in 1924, eighty-nine people were baptised in the small village of Rudka. The Rudka church became a place of rest for the poor and homeless, and the believers helped the needy with all they had.²²

¹⁷ Waldemar Gutsche, “Początek pracy w Polsce”; cited in Kluttig, *Geschichte der deutschen Baptisten*, pp. 17–18.

¹⁸ “Sprawozdania”, *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 2 (March 1925), p. 16.

¹⁹ Letter from youth in Baptist churches in Katowice and Warsaw, printed in *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 4 (May 1925), p. 32.

²⁰ “Czterdziestolecie chóru białostockiego”, *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 3 (March 1963), p. 9.

²¹ Aleksander Huryn, “Dzieje zboru i budowy w Rudce”, *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 11 (November 1990), p. 15.

²² Huryn, “Dzieje zboru i budowy w Rudce”, p. 16.

Because many church members lived in surrounding villages, rather than cities, sometimes even several kilometres away, work was needed in these locations as well. Preachers tried to hold regular services in the villages (usually in one of the members' homes) and led Sunday Schools for children.²³ For special events like baptism and ordination, people came on foot even twenty to forty kilometres.²⁴ It became necessary to appoint missionaries and preachers to travel from village to village visiting the churches. They preached and ensured there was no heresy in the church.²⁵

Baptism as Testimony

For outsiders, a conspicuous element in Baptist worship and identity was baptism by immersion. The ordinance of baptism took different forms. Baptism provided an opportunity to give testimony of one's faith in Christ. However, the Baptists focused upon honest conversion, required before a person could be baptised, rather than on the act of baptism itself. Children were blessed, not baptised.²⁶ Most baptisms took place in lakes and rivers. Sometimes, as a contemporary recalled, "we had to go without shoes two kilometres to reach the river, through swamps and with mud reaching our knees".²⁷ At times, baptisms could not take place as planned due to interference by local Catholics, making it necessary for the Baptists to find other places. Baptism was once performed in a pond belonging to a church member.²⁸

Few baptisms were performed free of persecution. Believers in the village of Świecice met regularly in a barn, which they decorated and prepared for the celebration. During the baptismal service some men served by preaching God's Word. Leaders organised a choir, which included secular singers from the community. In notes from the church about this event, we read that more people gathered in this barn than normally attended

²³ Krzysztof Kossarzewski, "Dzieje Baptistów Ostródzkich", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 12 (December 1998), pp. 32-34.

²⁴ "Ordynacja brata A. Kircuna w Zelwie", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 3 (March 1926), p. 5. Some people came that kind of distance just to attend a regular service. See "Kwiatki z podróży misyjnej", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 5 (March 1926), p. 5, and many other reports.

²⁵ "Z podróży misyjnej na Kresach", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 5 (May 1927), p. 5.

²⁶ "Chrzt podług Pisma Sw.", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 3 (March 1928), pp. 2-6.

²⁷ Jan Petrasz, "Z pracy misyjnej w Małopolsce: Radosne żniwo", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 11 (November 1926), p. 4.

²⁸ "Uroczystość chrztu we wsi Pniówko pow. Chełmskiego", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 11 (November 1926), p. 4.

the local Roman Catholic or Orthodox churches.²⁹ The number of people being baptised by immersion varied each time.³⁰ Baptist church member Waldemar Gutsche described,

After the services, the whole congregation went to the water where six people were baptised. It was raining but nothing could stop those people from giving testimony of their new lives in Jesus. But not all people were there to listen and gladly receive God's word. Even the police were told to keep the peace during the public baptisms.³¹

Sometimes people came to disturb what was happening. Baptists could not openly and totally rejoice in this celebration, as many Jews came to speak out against them.³²

Often the government limited the work of the church. State approval was secured only following persecution and discrimination. The congregation in Białystok, in eastern Poland, was not officially approved until 1923. Prior to that date, the church had no buildings, no administrative structure, and no choir. The church was forced to meet on the side of the river, in meadows and pastures or at the homes of believers.³³

THE BAPTIST CHURCH DURING AND AFTER WORLD WAR II

Life and ministry changed in the Polish Baptist Church during World War II and in the years following it, from 1945 to 1979, when Poland was under a Marxist regime. At the beginning of the war, much Polish territory was annexed by Germany. Baptist churches in the annexed lands were forced to join the *Bund Evangelisch-Freikirchlicher Gemeinden (Baptisten)*, centred in Berlin. They were assigned German preachers, or were placed under the authority of German-speaking churches. Their members were forbidden to hold services in the Polish language. In September 1939, Poland was divided into two occupied territories: that of the Nazis and that of the Soviets.

²⁹ "Błogosławieni, ci którzy są prześladowani", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 9 (September 1927), p. 5.

³⁰ Interview with Włodzimierz Jówko (b. 1909), Białystok nursing home, 6 February 2002.

³¹ Waldemar Gutsche, "Początek pracy w Polsce"; cited in Kluttig, *Geschichte der deutschen Baptisten*, p. 25.

³² "Błogosławieni, ci którzy są prześladowani", p. 5.

³³ "Czterdziestolecie chóru białostockiego", pp. 8-9; Adam Gutsche, "Powojenny Baptyzm Polski", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 3 (March 1997), pp. 25-26.

The Germans sought to quench Polish religious organisations, both Catholic and Protestant. The most tragic situation was in the district of Poznań, where almost 97% of the places of worship were closed. About ninety ministers were arrested and taken abroad. But the Nazis did not close churches and seminaries everywhere. Hitler decided, rather, that the evangelical religion could remain, maintaining association with Germany, rather than centred in Poland itself.³⁴

In those tragic years for the Polish nation, the Roman Catholic Church served as a place of security for many people. The image of the suffering servant became vivid through the many lost and murdered Catholic clergymen. During the war, the Roman Catholic Church cooperated with the underground military organisation, which created a deeper connection with the Polish people.³⁵ Fascism became – as Communism did later – a serious threat to Polish churches of the twentieth century. Both Fascism and Communism aimed to destroy the church and subjected all church structures to the authority of their political systems.

Poland had the greatest per capita loss of all countries involved in World War II. More than six million men, women and children were tortured and killed by the Nazis. In addition, many people were shot in mass executions on the streets of cities and towns. Cultural, material and moral losses were innumerable. The large losses in lives and property were felt by all the churches and faiths in Poland – Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Muslim and Jewish. Victims included Catholic bishops, priests, monks and nuns; Protestant pastors; and Orthodox priests.³⁶

The destruction of the clergy in Poland was the result of Hitler's decision to exterminate the Polish intelligentsia.³⁷ In Poland, the war affected the entire social life of the country, including its economy, religion and political system. Between 1939 and 1945, about 836 religious ministers died in prisons and concentration camps. Nazis issued orders obstructing religious practice by the Polish population. Hymnbooks, prayer books, Bibles and other books were removed.³⁸

Many Christians of all denominations took a patriotic stand. Catholic Archbishop Adam Sapieha, Metropolitan of Kraków, consistently protested

³⁴ Daniel Olszewski, *Dziesięć Wydarzeń, które Wstrząsnęły Kościołem XX Wieku* (Poznań: Księgarnia Świętego Wojciecha, 2002), p. 63.

³⁵ Olszewski, *Dziesięć Wydarzeń*, p. 65.

³⁶ Olszewski, *Dziesięć Wydarzeń*, p. 62.

³⁷ Piekarski, *The Church in Poland*, p. 73.

³⁸ Piekarski, *The Church in Poland*, p. 78.

against the persecution of Poles. The head of the Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession in Poland, Bishop Juliusz Bursche, refused to comply when commanded to leave Poland, and died in a concentration camp. The Roman Catholic Churches drew closer to the Catholic masses, leading to an increase in authority³⁹ similar to the situation during the later fall of the Communist government. At this critical time, a spirit of patriotism led people toward the Roman Catholic Church.

Continued Worship and Christian Unity during the War

The outbreak of World War II limited, but did not stop, the activities of Baptist churches in Poland. In May 1940, German authorities issued a decree forbidding meetings of unregistered religious groups, including Baptists. Yet believers remained active in church life. Services were still held in church buildings and private homes. Children attended Sunday schools. Social work for needy people continued, and literature and food were sent to the concentration camps. Because of the desperate situation, the churches did not grow; many members were arrested or sent to German labour camps. Aleksander Kircun, President of the Polish Baptist Union, summarized that period as follows:

For example, from over one hundred members in a church in Warsaw, only fourteen were left in 1945. Many people were shot and many died in the Warsaw Revolt and in concentration camps. Many of the members died in other situations, like Aleksy Horny, who was killed by a mine. We also had many material things lost. A chapel and a house at 46 Wolska Street in Warsaw were burnt. Many of the church archives were destroyed... But still we held services, and even through it was forbidden, we organized short courses for preachers and youth conferences. The ministry of the church took on a different character than before the war. Christians had one main goal: to help the hurting to survive the difficult time by offering physical and spiritual assistance.⁴⁰

Members of Baptist churches still tried to help others. Those in the villages

³⁹ Piekarski, *The Church in Poland*, p. 80.

⁴⁰ "Zanim doszło do budowy...", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 9 (1961), p. 9.

delivered food to those in the cities, and took their children for vacations in the summers. Others visited the sick in homes and hospitals. Worship was understood as serving God inside as well as outside church walls.

Polish Baptists assisted Poles and Jews who were running away from the Germans. They also helped Jews in the ghetto. It was recorded that in Radość, the Baptists hid the mother of Marian Spychalski, a marshal of Poland and a minister of defence, at a Baptist home. Adam Gutsze, a Baptist, helped Henry Świątkowski, who later became a minister of justice, to escape from the concentration camp in Oświęcim-Brzezinka [Auschwitz-Birkenau].⁴¹ Many people were hidden in church buildings and in church members' homes. Two women from the Warsaw church helped in passing conspiratorial messages.⁴² Among Baptists were many converted Jews, who went through the most difficult time, fighting not only for their faith, but for their lives. Many believers died of hunger, while others were martyred. Nonetheless, there were even happenstance baptisms in the ghetto.⁴³

Changes after World War II

After World War II, negotiations at Potsdam and Yalta left Poland in the Communist bloc under the influence of the Soviet Union. Polish land east of the Bug River was given to the Soviet Union, resulting in mass migrations. From 1945 to 1950, about three million Germans; one-half million Ukrainians, Belarusians and Lithuanians; and about one-half million Poles emigrated from the Soviet Union to the new Poland. Many believers from what had been eastern Poland started new churches in the western and northern parts of Poland.⁴⁴

After World War II, many Catholics from central and eastern Poland relocated to the regained territory in western Poland. The Catholics did not tolerate Protestants, viewing all Protestant denominations as part of a "German faith". The view that every Pole should be Catholic became even more powerful,⁴⁵ leading to problems among denominations. The Roman

⁴¹ Stanisław Markiewicz, "Polski Kościół Chrześcijan Baptystów", *Problemy Wyznań i Lai-cyzacji*, vol. 30, no. 12 (1988), p. 5.

⁴² Aleksander Kircun, "O zborze warszawskim w czasie okupacji", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 3 (March 1974), p. 28.

⁴³ Rachmiel Frydland, "Uszedłem z rąk oprawców", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 7-8 (July-August 1976), pp. 9-12.

⁴⁴ Waclaw Hryniewicz (ed), *Ku Chrześcijaństwu jutra: wprowadzenie do ekumenizmu* (Lublin: KUL, 1997), p. 193.

⁴⁵ Andrzej Sakson, "Działalność Kościołów i wyznań ...", *Euhemer: Przegląd Religioznawczy*,

Catholic Church took over most Protestant church buildings. Roman Catholic priests accused Baptists and other Protestants of cooperation with the Germans. The Catholic Church used the *ex post* principle, first occupying buildings, and then legalising their possession of them by false accusations against the previous owners.⁴⁶ Until the 1960s, many Catholics viewed Baptists as non-Christian and non-Polish. Catholics held the German heritage of the Baptists against them, and Baptists were considered heretics and sectarians.

Despite persecution by the Roman Catholics, about thirty churches and religious associations were approved after the war by the new Communist government of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL). While about 90% of the Polish people declared themselves members of the Roman Catholic Church,⁴⁷ the legal situation of Baptist Church changed dramatically.

It was a long process for the Baptist Church to gain legal recognition and receive full rights as a denomination. One reason for the delay was the accusation that Baptists would not serve in the army or take oaths. Baptist leaders sent several letters to state ministries explaining that this was not true, listing many Baptist men who fought in World War II.

Both the Communist government and Catholic society were unwilling to recognise Baptists as equal in rights and free to practice what they believed. Roman Catholicism dominated almost the entire denominational structure of the nation. Some nationwide newspapers recognised the problems that came out of stereotypical thinking such as "to be a Pole is to be Catholic". Such a slogan was described in a 1966 newspaper as "deeply hurting other Christians and non-Christians and placing other legally recognised denominations ... outside Polish descent".⁴⁸

Seeking New Methods of Worship

Work in the Baptist churches after the war began with the preparation of lay people who had completed only a few months of Bible courses. The next step was to fill the need for new leaders in many churches. A few people directed everything. One of those was Aleksander Kircun, who led

vol. 31, no. 1 (1987), pp. 105-106.

⁴⁶ An example is a letter written by a priest and chaplain from the Olsztyn area, in which he wrote, "I ask that a church building in Szczytno, which we already possess, be allocated to the Catholic Church..." Cited in H. Ryszard Tomaszewski, "Polski Kościół Ewangelicznych Chrześcijań Baptystów w Latach 1945-1947", *Słowo Prawdy*, no 4 (April 1991), pp. 15-16.

⁴⁷ Olszewski, *Dziesięć Wydarzeń*, p. 98.

⁴⁸ Andrzej Tokarczyk, "Rzeczywisty probierz polskosci", *Sztandar Ludu*, no. 304 (1966), p. 3.

the entire Baptist church in Poland for a few years as one body. All decisions were made in the capital, Warsaw. Local churches were too small and weak to exist by themselves, about which the government was happy. There were probably no more than one thousand Baptists in Poland after World War II, the result of deaths, border changes and “ethnic cleansing”. Many churches simply disappeared. In western and northern Poland, only a few churches existed, founded by repatriates from the east.

After World War II, the Baptist Church in Poland, as well as elsewhere in Europe, focused on the construction of church buildings in order to attract new church members and provide places for worship. This approach to missions had advantages and disadvantages. Surely it was a time of crystallisation of the church and its worship patterns, but it weakened the spirit of the movement, as it had been revealed before World War II. The Baptist Church was no longer a fervent Christian movement. But still, for Baptists in Poland, the post-war years were a time of new possibilities and new methods, which can be divided into four periods.

The first period (1944–1949) can be called the enthusiastic period because of its eager character. After World War II, Polish Baptists enthusiastically started missions and offered mutual help. Enthusiasm was evident in services and meetings.⁴⁹ This fervency was shared by the ecumenical movement, in which young people sought partnership among all Protestant churches. In 1945, the small remnant of evangelical churches decided to work together as the “Polish Evangelical and Baptist Christian Church”, uniting the Free Evangelical and Christian churches with Baptist churches. This union only lasted till 1947.⁵⁰

Because many church buildings had been destroyed during the Second World War, while the Communist government or the Catholic Church occupied others, not all Baptist churches had a place to meet. Many Baptist believers had to change their place of worship many times. They often met in private houses, each Sunday at the home of a different family.⁵¹ When a church grew in membership, it became necessary to build a separate place of worship. In some cases, private people donated land for a new building.⁵² The same thing happened with other Protestant denominations. In some cities, two different denominations met in the same building.

⁴⁹ For example, a youth conference in Gdansk and youth meetings in Radosc-Warszawa. “Zaduma nad ćwierćwieczem”, *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 7-8 (July-August 1969), p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 7-8 (June-August 1984), p. 2.

⁵¹ Michał Huryn, “Historia zboru w Jamnie-Koszalinie (1947–1977)”, *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 11 (November 1978), p. 26.

⁵² Jan Mackiewicz, “50 lat zboru w Hajnówce”, *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 3 (March 1978), p. 28.

The initial enthusiasm faded in 1947 when problems arose and the unity of the churches cracked. When the Evangelical and Free Christians separated from the Baptists, the Baptists became known as the "Polish Christian Baptist Church," which was accepted by the state Minister of Public Administration in August of 1948.⁵³ Even when Baptists tried to regain unity with other evangelical churches, results were poor, and the separation made the entire radical protestant church much weaker in the years ahead.

The second period (1950–1956) can be called a period of lethargy in the Baptist Church. Baptist churches were not growing. *Słowo Prawdy* produced almost no publications. The Communist government turned against churches. Meetings in many churches were forbidden, and secret police visited services to check what was being taught and instil fear in the congregation. After the 1950s, the government forbade youth meetings. The youth met only in homes, celebrating birthdays at each meeting, since that was not prohibited. Children's meetings, however, remained legal.⁵⁴

The third period began in 1956 and ended in approximately 1968. The lethargy of the previous period was followed by a time of new enthusiasm and achievements in the church. Beginning in 1957, *Słowo Prawdy* was again published regularly, and the publishing house began to print books. Unfortunately, this enthusiasm did not last for long. Soon problems arose inside the church. Michał Stankiewicz, a member of the Baptist Council, commented: "We had to change our work, change our thinking, and look for other solutions to the same matters. Mission work still existed but the enthusiasm had subsided."⁵⁵ New members of the churches in the western part of Poland were mostly repatriates or young people raised in the church. Local churches experienced no growth in numbers. Although there were baptisms and regular worship services, many members left the country in search of better lives.

The fourth period (1969–1979) was a period of developing a Polish Baptist subculture. Society changed dramatically between 1969 and 1979.

⁵³ See *Dziennik Urzędowy Ministerstwa Administracji Publicznej*, Nr. 17, 1947; Tomasz Langer, *Państwo a nierzymskokatolickie związki wyznaniowe w Polsce Ludowej* (Poznan: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie, 1967), p. 173; Andrzej Tokarczyk, "Mniejszości wyznaniowe w PRL", *Euhermer: Przegląd Religioznawczy*, vol. 12 (1968), p. 140.

⁵⁴ Ruth Kowalczyk, "50 lat w Zborze interview" (Interview by Ryszard Tysnicki), *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 3 (March 1997), p. 7.

⁵⁵ Michał Stankiewicz, "Mieszkamy we własnym domu", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 7-8 (July-August 1974), p. 6.

⁵⁶ Michał Stankiewicz, "Ćwierć Wieku", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 7-8 (July-August 1969), p. 5.

New forms of communication, culture and technology were revolutionising the thinking of the people, and the church could not keep up with the new ideas.⁵⁶ Congregations became a bastion of a strange culture, language and music. Even the great accomplishment of constructing new buildings could not replace the lack of dynamic mission.

Baptists continued to stress the authority of the Bible in their lives and worship. Choirs and musical groups continued to develop and to enrich the Baptist worship experience. In 1971 a Christian music festival was organised. The response from churches was overwhelmingly good, so it was decided to hold the festival annually, devoting it one year to choirs and the next year to orchestras and bands. In the 1970s, youth from churches in central and western Poland realised that, to unchurched young people, traditional church music sounded unreal and artificial.⁵⁷ For that reason a few musical groups began to sing choral and a cappella music in services, using more modern music, often translated from English and German.⁵⁸ The groups' leaders were concerned with both the modern music form and the words communicated to listeners.

Unfortunately, at the same time, the lack of dedicated ministry during that period led to sad consequences. Statistics show a decline in Baptist church membership. Although there were some baptisms, the church lost more people than it gained.⁵⁹ According to Michał Stankiewicz, "from 1918–1939 we grew from 700 to 7000 members, but in the years after the war, the Baptist Church greatly declined".⁶⁰ Analysing the church's work in that timeframe, we see several reasons for the decline of churches. A few of the reasons were discussed at the headquarters of the Polish Baptist Union and outlined in their 1971 report at the Baptist Church's twenty-second conference.

First of all, the report claimed, local churches had lost their attractiveness. They were no longer the only places where people could learn to read and write or sing and read music.⁶¹ As the world around the churches changed, each local church needed to find new forms of serving God and fellow people. Another problem noted was that people stopped being

⁵⁷ Adam Gutsche, "Powojenny Baptyzm Polski", p. 25.

⁵⁸ "Przedstawiamy zespoły", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 1 (January 1978), p. 17.

⁵⁹ In 1970, the Baptist Church in Poland had 2301 members in fifty local churches and 102 daughter churches. Michał Stankiewicz, "Kościół Baptystów w Polsce" in *Słowo i Praca: Kalendarz "Słowa Prawdy"* 1974, pp. 52-60.

⁶⁰ Stankiewicz, *Kalendarz "Słowa Prawdy"*, p. 92.

⁶¹ Stankiewicz, *Kalendarz "Słowa Prawdy"*, p. 90.

involved and dedicated to church work. Many members just watched others working. This was discouraging to those who wanted to work for Christ and to involve others in that mission. In worship the church members became increasingly passive as a select group of pastors and preachers usually led the worship and held active roles.

Much attention was paid to personal spiritual life. "Spiritual" discipline was practiced in all Baptist churches, which helped keep the church pure in the society. To become a member of a Baptist congregation, it was necessary to give up bad habits, such as alcohol and cigarettes. If these behaviours returned later in a member's life, he or she was immediately excluded from the congregation. This was not only theory in Polish Baptist churches, but reality. The church during this time appeared almost comical in some areas. Baptist churches in Poland experienced a huge wave of emigration abroad, as believers took advantage of opportunities to escape the difficult economic situation. Many of those who emigrated had been key people in the churches. At the same time, during the period of Communism, believers often declared poverty to be positive example to follow, based on the Marxist ideology transposed into the thinking of the church. *Słowo Prawdy* sympathised with some slogans of the Communist party. For example, the monthly paper printed poems praising labour.⁶² Some of the articles indicate a spirit of collectivism and socialism.⁶³

IDENTITY AND WORSHIP AFTER 1980

After 1980, extraordinary things took place throughout Eastern Europe. Poland was the first domino that started the fall of Communism. It took about nine years for the Communists to realise their defeat.

After World War II, the Baptist Church in Poland had achieved its goal of recognition as a *church*, but still seemed too loose to be a *movement* that changed the world around it. The Baptist Church in Poland has never achieved even near the size and influence on Polish society that it had between the two world wars. However just after World War II the Baptist Church became recognised as a young free church, together with the Methodist Church, United Evangelical Church, and Seventh-Day Adventists.⁶⁴ In 1987, a newspaper noted that without the Baptists, life in Poland would

⁶² Maria Konopnicka, "Pieśń Pracy", *Słowo Prawdy*, no 5 (May 1949), p. 1.

⁶³ Alfred W. Kurzawa, "Błogosławieństwo Pracy", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 5 (May 1949), p. 2.

⁶⁴ Michał Stankiewicz, "Szósty przegląd pieśni kościelnej", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 7-8 (July-August 1976), p. 37.

have become morally impoverished. The principles of abstinence from alcohol and cigarettes seem to have been the Baptists' best-known traits.⁶⁵

The local worship service is the part of the testimony viewed by others as the Baptist Church. Outsiders judge the entire denomination based on a one-hour church service, including who the Baptists are and how they pray, read the Bible, sing songs, and interact with one another. All of these elements serve as indications to others of how the believers worship God. Despite the revolutionary political and economic changes taking place around them, the Baptist Church did not experience significant change in their services. Many local churches maintained the same methods and liturgy of worship since World War II.

The old style of worship closed the door to new forms, which could bring life and prepare the church to address the needs of a new generation. One journalist observed – not incorrectly – that the pastor of the Baptist church functioned as a priest. The role of a pastor-leader had been very much influenced by the system in which the Baptist church existed during the Polish People's Republic.⁶⁶ The words of Polish writer Krzysztof Kraszewski, that “any change, even for the good, is a bad change”, describe perfectly the attitude of many congregations even now in Poland. An approach to worship that has not changed since World War II gives churches a feeling of stability, but deprives the Baptist church of many creative and inventive people in a period of change. The final decade of the last millennium saw a crisis in choral music in Baptist churches. The development of new types of music and the new generation's lack of interest in traditional choirs caused many churches to end their choir ministries altogether. Church member Licyna Jakubowicz described the developments in the 1980s:

In our churches there is a lack of enthusiasm for ministry both inside the church and outside. More and more people in our churches work fulltime, and they no longer have a pastor who has a regular job and was chosen from the congregation. In our churches there exists a division into spiritual preachers, presbyters, deacons, board members, presbyters of divisions, etc. More and more ordained ministers have privileges inac-

⁶⁵ Szymon Burma, “Wyznania – Baptyści”, *Panorama Polska*, no. 2 (1987), p. 28.

⁶⁶ The journalist did not see any difference between role of the pastor and a Roman Catholic priest during a Baptist service. She assumed the ministry of the pastor to be the same as the liturgical duty of the priest. Danuta Dabrowska, “Baptyści czyli chrzciciele”, *Razem*, no. 31 (1984), p. 15.

cessible to other members. Weakening discipline in churches has been visible lately. Transgressions which once were inadmissible, today are acceptable and tolerated.

Pastors no longer serve, but administrate the church. The decision to become a pastor requires seminary, and some members cannot imagine having a pastor without a diploma. More often only pastors preach sermons in the Sunday service. There is a second stage of believers – lay people. This group is now seen as less important in church ministry. It is more and more difficult to find someone who is not ordained to be a leader of a home Bible group, director of a choir or teacher at a children's camp. As believers, we have become passive consumers. We give a very high and responsible task to full-time ministers, and place ourselves among the pious.⁶⁷

In the rest of the article, the author claimed that Baptist churches were becoming very much like many Western churches, weak and ineffectual, and placing responsibility and decisions in the hands of professional leaders. In part, she was right, especially when arguing for the priesthood of all believers. However, constant and rapid changes in the world press churches to unwillingly make some alterations within congregations, including music, leadership methods and mission strategies. What is a worship service to many members of today's congregations causes cultural shock to others.

Changes after 1989 and the New Millennium

The Communist era in Poland ended in 1991.⁶⁸ As noted by historian Norman Davies, the whole Communist world was challenged by the Solidarity movement, which resulted in the establishment of a non-communist government led by Tadeusz Mazowiecki in 1989.⁶⁹ The Catholic Church, though playing a key role in national and political changes, gradually became weaker and more inconsistent in the 1990s.⁷⁰ The authority of the

⁶⁷ Lucyna Jakubowicz, *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 9 (1983), pp. 15-17.

⁶⁸ Norman Davies, *Serce Europy: krótka historia Polski* (London: Aneks, 1995), pp. 7-11. [Polish translation of Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: a Short History of Poland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)].

⁶⁹ Davies, *Serce Europy*, p. 7.

⁷⁰ Jarosław Gowin, *Kościół w czasach wolności: 1989–1999* (Kraków: "Znak", 1999), pp. 5-6.

Catholic Church in Poland reached its zenith in 1989, when public surveys showed that 90% of citizens felt the church exerted a positive influence on social life. But only six years later, the results were different. Only 50% of the people viewed the church's activities as profitable.⁷¹ However, Baptists still endured the stigma of being viewed as a sect or cult. It was very difficult for Baptists in Poland to be seen as a healthy, acceptable church.

The new era of social, economic and political changes prompted changes in the Baptist Church as well. The new economic situation forced people to work more hours than had previously been necessary. Before 1991, a typical Polish man or woman worked for eight hours a day and had time in the evenings for church work. Now the hours spent at work are much longer, and jobs require more energy and dedication. It is no surprise that people do not have as much time to spend on church activities and ministry. At the same time, Baptists in Poland sometimes act as if nothing has changed since the 1980s. This puts much pressure on those who have many responsibilities at their workplace. An alternative method would be to view everyday work as part of worship, and to address the needs of whole families, avoiding separation of "spiritual things" from "earthly things". Baptist worship would gain much if it would learn to integrate different groups: families, youth, children, and elderly.

One means of practical evangelism has been to provide a quality education attractive to outsiders. This happened before World War II, when Baptist churches became the first centres of education in the Polish language and music for many residents. Such educational methods are well recognised and welcome in a society that continues to seek the best possible education. The language, however, has changed. This time the English language, rather than Polish, has become a tool. Society is now influenced by politicians who speak English, rather than Russian, as well as English-speaking firms and corporations.

The Baptist Church in Poland progressively grew in number after 1980 (especially starting in 1989, when about 320 people were baptised in one year, about 10% of all church members at that time). In 1995, the Baptist Church in Poland had about 3,680 members, most between the ages of nineteen and forty. Nevertheless, local churches averaged fewer than sixty members.⁷² I concur with the harsh words of American missionary Harry L. Moore, written in 1996:

⁷¹ Gowin, *Kościół w czasach wolności: 1989–1999*, p. 6.

⁷² Ryszard Gutkowski, "Informacje Statystyczne", *Bóg powołał nas do ewangelizowania Polski*, (Warsaw, 1995), pp. 10-11.

Long and historic antagonisms still flourish between Baptists and established Orthodox and dominant Catholic groups! With freedom, the influx of an estimated more than 1,000 religious and quasi-religious groups into eastern Europe brings some judgement upon Baptists as being a part of this phenomena. The invasive presence of a myriad of para-church groups with their independent programs and financial resources brought many temptations to pastors and churches after decades-long lack of sufficient skilled leadership as well as financial and other resource support.... And, thus in the present confused climate, "the struggle for the soul of Baptist identity" continues unabated.⁷³

A period of an open door always brings new ideas and renewal to the church. Many churches began at this time to establish ministries alongside the church. Small ministries adopted the name "club" to be more attractive for outsiders, reaching into society in ways that traditional methods could not. In the city of Tarnów, a children's programme was established in 1990 called the Good News Club.⁷⁴ In Gorzów Wielkopolski the church answered the needs of the community by serving food to children from the street. At the first meeting, when they did not expect anyone to show up, about forty children came with their parents. Besides feeding the children, church members organised Bible lessons. Clubs still serve the surrounding communities, providing entertainment and building relationships with those around them.⁷⁵ Through such organisations, church members connect with society on a non-church level. The success of this kind of ministry is enormous and the club has become a testimony for the whole church.

An article published in 2000 about the changes and new identity in the Baptist Church in Poland noted that:

⁷³ Harry L. Moore, "Reflections on Ministry and Mission among Baptists after the Fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe", *American Baptist Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 2 (June 1996), p. 163. One of the best-known groups in Poland is Youth for Christ, International. While their work is essential, the group is not affiliated with any church. Wrocław Baptist pastor Adam Otremba became head of this organisation in Poland. For further information, see an interview with Adam Otremba in *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 2 (2000), p. 5.

⁷⁴ "Jubileusz 60-lecia Zboru Chrześcijan Baptystów w Tarnowie", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 7-8 (1992), pp. 14-18.

⁷⁵ Interview with Krystyna Terefenko, founder and leader (1995-2000) of the Good News Club in Gorzów Wielkopolski, 15 January 2003.

The situation of Baptist churches in Poland in the context of processing cultural changes is intricate. On the one hand, we experience the openness of church members to new ideas for the church, but on the other hand, many congregations cultivate theological and methodological fundamentalism. We cannot say that only those churches that promote new ways of worship are growing. Sometimes the opposite happens: the results are worse, because to many members, the new experiences seem too innovative, which causes the unbalancing of church structures. And at that point people tend to drop out of the congregation.⁷⁶

During the period of change, the Baptist Church employed new methods and means of worship and ministry. Local churches started to use the media, the internet, and computers. Baptists started to use radio in the 1980s much more often than ever before. Yet many people in the present-day church are afraid of cultural and technological changes such as new songs, classes, modern music, different clothing, new habits, individual or plastic Communion cups, and the use of the internet to proclaim the Gospel.

Before the 1980s it was incomprehensible to do missions outside of Poland. The new political situation changed that completely. Polish Baptists could not only receive help but also started helping others. A Bible Seminary in Wrocław and the Warsaw Baptist Seminary began sending students to eastern countries for a practicum. Many decided to stay there and continue their ministries abroad.⁷⁷ Those returning have enriched Polish Baptist worship and missions with new insights.

The cultural environment will always put its stamp on the style of the worship in the congregations. The surrounding political system will cause either greater openness or reticence toward church outreach. At the same time, the church influences the society in which it exists. It seems that this effect is in proportion to the effort that congregations put into meeting the needs of the surrounding society. The history of the Baptist Church in Poland shows that church life and worship have always existed within and have been influenced by the context of the cultural, political, economic and social environment.

⁷⁶ Mirosław Patalon, "Kościół wobec zmieniającego się świata", *Słowo Prawdy*, no.4 (2000), p. 8.

⁷⁷ Interview with Andrzej Horyza, "Zobaczyć, czym jest misja i służba w innej kulturze", *Słowo Prawdy*, no. 7-8 (2000), pp. 18–19.

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The Re-Positioning of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and Sister Church Unions between 1980 and 2005

Walter Sawatsky

Was There a Vision and an Ecclesiology?

Between 1980 and the present, the Slavic¹ evangelical church community experienced a major transformation, in many ways more foundational than their own restructuring during the initial golden years of the Soviet Union. With the USSR breaking down into Commonwealth of Independent States, the Baltic countries quickly seeking membership in the European Union, others also working toward such goals, and Central Asian countries allying with the USA against terrorism, the range of societal attitudes within which evangelical Christians needed to find their way became very complex. The evangelical church unions have re-positioned themselves both in response to these changes and because of their own ecclesiology and visions. It is tempting to concentrate solely on what elements were most discussed, painting a map of present realities as if the Soviet era were now in blessed oblivion in the dustbin of history.

Historians know that the past is always prologue; the past is never fully past. Indeed, the primary way to think carefully about the future is to keep

¹ The label "Soviet evangelical" was inclusive and precise, but lost meaning after the end of the Soviet Union in 1991. I use "Slavic evangelical" as a replacement, although it does not refer in this paper to Slavic evangelicals outside the region of the former Soviet Union. The word "Slavic" is intended to underline the contextualised nature of the evangelical communities under discussion, as distinct from American or even Western counterparts, so it at times includes believers technically not Slavic but culturally adapted.

on returning to the past – both recent and older past – with new questions and with new perspectives on its data. In the officially remembered history of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists (ECB), the congresses of the union that started meeting regularly after 1963 were numbered to include the earliest gatherings of organised unions.² It is worth asking again the question of why the union of churches was formed in 1867, as theological answers have seldom been addressed. A proto-Baptist Union was formed in 1884, which only became explicitly Baptist after 1886, and some have marked the organisation of an Evangelical Christian Union in 1909 as an important beginning. Yet we know that many in the Baltic states, the Caucasus, Siberia or Ukraine remember other beginnings. Nonetheless, we need to ask, what was the purpose of forming a union of churches?

Since I have other goals in mind here, the answer to “why form a union” is not one I wish to restate from the founding documents. Rather, it could be helpful to set free-church unions in a comparative context. Church historians now comment on the fact that throughout the history of the development of Christian doctrine, ecclesiology – the doctrine of the church – was never a major source of debate until the twentieth century. Now we recall the twentieth century as the era when ecclesiological issues became central.³ The missionary century preceding it forced the question of church unity upon us in innumerable places around the globe. How can we speak about the church as body of Christ, the most common biblical image for ecclesiology; and how can we claim that “our church” authentically reveals the marks of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church; and that the relations among the members point to the unity of the trinity, when most people in the world see the church as severely fragmented? Too often what the world notices is how we appeal to our version of Christianity as genuine at the expense of other essentially apostate expressions of Christianity.

² Most readily accessible in the *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* [History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR] (Moscow: Vsesoiuznyi soviet evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov, 1989), this understanding had been passed on in the short historical introductions presented by the union's general secretaries at the congresses.

³ In the final chapter of his classic *The Christian Tradition*, Jaroslav Pelikan noted how many theologians began to speak of the twentieth century as the “age of the church”. As he put it, “each of the major churches of a divided Christendom was obliged, for reasons of its own, to address anew the doctrine of the church” such as its message, nature, identity, marks of continuity, its authority and structure and “above all its authentic unity despite and beyond the historic divisions”. Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: a History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 5, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (since 1700)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 282.

So what motivated Slavic evangelicals toward unity? Suffice it here to highlight a few primary elements. To be a follower of Christ necessitated membership in the body of Christ, usually by baptism, followed by conscious subordination to an organised church, including its confession of faith and constitution. In the Western tradition, the Roman Catholic Church had developed a hierarchical structure with the bishop in Rome claiming supremacy over all other bishops and demanding subordination of all rulers. That was around 1300, and by the time the Reformation of the sixteenth century ended its first phase, independent states were claiming sovereignty, including over the various Christian confessions the ruler would tolerate. After 1870, the Pope no longer ruled over Papal States, there were no Prince-Bishops in German principalities, and papal claims were limited to spiritual supremacy over not only the Roman Church, but over all who wished to be recognised as belonging to the true church. As we know, the Orthodox story is rather different. The Ecumenical Patriarch attempted to exert leadership when meeting with other patriarchs, but that became rare after 1453 when that office in Constantinople was reconfigured into the Ethnarchos of the Orthodox Millet. By 1589 the Russian Orthodox Church had its own acknowledged Patriarch. It was fully autocephalous. Nevertheless, after 1666 an important wing of Orthodox Christianity challenged the patriarchal church as being subordinated to the Russian Emperor, so Old Belief has now existed for more than four hundred years as a *de facto* free church in its theology of church and state, or as a persecuted sect in most history books.

When the evangelical movement took root in the Russian Empire in the nineteenth century, after numerous other reformist movements had tried and failed, it too viewed the structure and practice of Orthodoxy as an undesirable norm over against which the leaders sought to establish a more authentic church. What were its central elements? When writing their confessions of faith, most free churches, including Baptists, have tended to stress the sole authority of the Bible.

But how did the appeal to the authority of Scripture actually work? The classic Christian consensus was that there must be a close correspondence between the authority of the living tradition of the Church and the authority of Scripture. The initial ecumenical councils of leaders from much of the Christian world, which met in the fourth century, recognised a New Testament canon, treating some books as more local and less authoritative.⁴ The

⁴ For a recent restatement of the development, see Jaroslav Pelikan, *Whose Bible Is It? A History of the Scriptures Through the Ages* (New York: Viking Press, 2005), pp. 99-117.

healthy tension between appeals to the authority of Bible and Tradition broke down at the time of the Protestant Reformation due to the exaggerated claims about *sola scriptura* on the one side, and Catholic exaggeration about a deposit of truth, the teaching magisterium of tradition. One subsequent corrective was the heightened appeal to the authority of Reason as a helpful hermeneutical guide to Scripture.⁵ The free churches, especially those influenced by the British or Baconian common sense tradition of philosophy, relied heavily on reason for constructing coherent doctrines, over which subsequent disagreements produced new Protestant denominations. A fourth appeal to authority was Experience – that is, Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience. The experience of the guidance of the Holy Spirit was a necessary source for justifying new emphases and understandings. In modern culture, the appeal to experience has grown, and now usually refers to the authority of the personal or individual experience of faith, most notably the experience of being filled or baptised with the Holy Spirit.

In his highly regarded systematic theology of the church, Miroslav Volf points out how much literature on ecclesiology presupposes an episcopal or presbyterian form of ecclesiology as norm.⁶ When we take stock of the way Christianity has expanded around the globe, we find the more participatory form of church polity referred to as the free-church congregational model to be the wave of the future. In most developed or modern societies there are also strong pressures from within the culture for a more democratic church. The Slavic evangelical movements were peoples' movements. Some, such as the Evangelical Christians, took the priesthood of all believers so seriously that ordination of presbyters and bishops was avoided.⁷ Baptists, on the other hand, who looked to the Puritan or Reformed tradition, held a

⁵ See the careful analysis of comparative historical development in Jaroslav Pelikan, *Credo: Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003). Most relevant here is his discussion of polity in chapter 4, "Faith and Order".

⁶ Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: the Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 20.

⁷ Wilhelm Kahle's *Evangelische Christen in Russland und der Sowjetunion* merits careful reading still on this point. See *Wilhelm Kahle, Evangelische Christen in Russland und der Sowjetunion: Ivan Stepanovic Prochanov (1869–1935) und der Weg der Evangeliumschristen und Baptisten* (Wuppertal: Oncken, 1978). More recent attention to the nondenominational emphasis on fellowship across classic confessional divisions evident in Lord Radstock and the Pashkovites through the influence of the Keswick holiness movement underlines its activist lay character.

high vision of ministry and church order, yet tended to permit a few charismatic leaders to function in near dictatorial fashion. We should acknowledge, too, that as the Stalinist version of centralised leadership transformed Soviet political culture from its initial intensely democratic forms, so too the early All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB) adapted itself to dictating from the centre.

Although Volf viewed the persistent growth of a free-church ecclesiology positively, he also directed rather trenchant criticism toward the lack of discipline in churches of the free-church model. Their capacity for accountability to Scripture, Tradition and Reason was weak, since the temptation toward an excessively individualised appeal to the authority of experience was also the overriding pressure of the global culture of modernity. Describing this in statistical terms, a mere decade ago, David Barrett reported the astounding fact that there were 20,000 distinctly organised denominational bodies in the world. That number increased to 37,000 as of January 2005, a proliferation of denominations due primarily to the free-church impulse.⁸

The Slavic evangelical free-church ecclesiology was a reaction against the failure of a hierarchical Orthodox church and its inefficient functioning as an organisation, quite subservient to tsarist and later Soviet control. The evangelicals manifested a vision for a church free of hostile state controls. Positively, it was a vision of numerous people who had discovered the personal promise of salvation in Jesus, seeking to be faithful to the radical ethic of Jesus their Lord, seriously preaching love of enemy, peace and reconciliation, and less able to resonate with nationalist claims. The evangelicals were seen as a consciously international church, above racial, social and nationalist divisions, just as the Marxists had claimed to be.

The great transformation between 1988 and 1991 tested these traditions. After the policy of perestroika was applied to religion in 1987 – believers claimed increasing freedoms with the millennium of Christianity in Russia in 1988 – and the breakdown of the Soviet Union, social hostility to religion ended. Thus the quest for what kind of free church they were now called to be forced the ecclesiological question in ways that had been avoided during the years of persecution. There was, after all, something unnatural about Evangelical Christians, Baptists, Mennonites and Pentecostals working together in the AUCECB, as if their historically distinct

⁸ David D. Barrett, Todd M. Johnson, and Peter F. Crossing, "Missiometrics 2005: a Global Survey of World Mission", *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* (IBMR), vol. 29, no. 1 (January 2005), p. 29.

politics and emphases were secondary. In the past, it had not mattered much that Adventists often shared a building with an ECB church. Now, in post-Soviet freedom, the overwhelming pressure apparently was to revert to separate denominations: Pentecostal, Evangelical Christian and Baptist.⁹ One wonders also whether the retention of the ECB label by the Baptists was a means to distinguish themselves contextually from western Baptists, possibly also a way of aligning themselves with theological streams from sixteenth-century Anabaptism or the Hussite tradition, in particular on the issue of a more Arminian view of human will.

Across the former Soviet Union, autonomous national unions were formed, where sometimes the official language was the national one rather than Russian. Others began to imagine a new free church, unencumbered by the stodgy character of the ECB survivors, a church less suspicious of social involvement and mingling with the intellectuals, very different from the increasingly separatist churches of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB). To a major extent the *Avtonomnye* [Autonomous] (or Independents as they are now known) churches sought to free themselves from Gennadii Kriuchkov's dictatorship, and also overreacted to control by a central council by keeping aloof from denomination building.¹⁰

This brings us finally to a recognition of the intensely pragmatic approach to organisation and structure of free churches in general, and the Slavic free churches in particular. An early motivation for forming unions was mostly two-fold: for one, they organised in order to provide mutual support in the face of persecution, and eventually ensure common statements of faith and organisational constitutions in order to obtain legal recognition. Secondly, the Gospel called them to ministries that they could not do alone, so congregations joined together in supporting fulltime evangelists. They organised

⁹ Pentecostals withdrew first from the AUCECB under late perestroika conditions, hoping to form a broad union of formerly legal and non-legal Pentecostal unions. Between 1987-1993, about 100,000 persons of Mennonite origin, including the majority of those in the AUCECB, emigrated to Germany, and their positions on council and staff disappeared. There were several attempts to form Evangelical Christian unions, one led by Sergei Nikolaev in the northwest region, and another in central Russia. The remaining Baptists and formerly Evangelical Christians retained the name ECB.

¹⁰ On the initial stages of separation from CCECB, conversations with AUCECB leaders, and issuing of a statement of intent to cooperate as autonomous churches, recognising both unions, see Walter Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR", in Sabrina Petra Ramet (ed), *Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia: the Communist and Postcommunist Eras* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 270-271.

to share the tasks of charitable work, to prepare books and teaching materials and to found schools. Then they saw opportunities – both to receive aid and to expand their ministry – by joining the Baptist World Alliance (BWA), the Union of Evangelical Christians, and later, after World War II, the World Council of Churches (WCC), European Baptist Federation (EBF), Pentecostal World Conference, Mennonite World Conference and Conference of European Churches (CEC). These associations were negotiated more from a pragmatic stance than a deliberate theological commitment to unity.

Nevertheless, the concern for Christian unity grew. What had emerged in Soviet culture was the popular question: “*Veruiushchii ili neveruiushchii?*” [Believer or unbeliever?], a recognition that a common Christian faith was more important than denominational tradition. Yet given the pervasive nature of Orthodoxy, a free church could only be taken seriously if this alternative to Orthodoxy was truly united. A striking feature in the documents of the AUCECB and also of the CCECB is the persistent concern for unity and the deep pain when unity broke down. The capacity of the leaders for negotiating separate church structures was limited by the presupposition that evangelical unity should be obvious to all.

Church Life and Limits during “Normalised Socialism” – Passé Today?

For the outside observer, it was striking how quickly the memory of Soviet evangelical church life became stereotyped negatively after 1990. Suddenly both intellectuals and church people were describing the past as totalitarian. The word “totalitarian” as it emerged in America in the late 1950s was highly charged ideologically, and served to describe Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union (and often its satellite states).¹¹ This reduced life in those regions to caricature, so that many observers failed to notice how the total power of the rulers was being undercut and disobeyed. By adopting totalitarian labels for thinking about the Soviet past, the new evangelical leaders blinded themselves to the alternative and sophisticated ways in which the churches had adapted to the context without total submission.

¹¹ The classic book by Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 2nd edn (New York: Meridian Books, 1958) retains its value because of its broad philosophical substance. For good analysis of the initial application of “totalitarian” by dissidents to their own East European cultures, see Jeffrey C. Goldfarb, *Beyond Glasnost: the Post-Totalitarian Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

I discuss elsewhere how a new generation of leaders who knew nothing but a culture of state atheism gained the grudging respect of state officials and of Soviet society as a whole.¹² Here I limit myself to a few key points of comparison. Orthodoxy was weak in structure traditionally, never developing a strong parish structure, and it was weakened even further by its leaders' loyalty declaration in 1927. Its theory of working with state power was based on a doctrine of *Simfonia*, according to which a believing ruler worked in partnership with the bishops for the good of church and society. That reality ended for Byzantium in 1453 and for Russia by 1721, but Orthodoxy had been unable to develop a doctrine of resistance to unjust rule. Instead, when the church as institution was in its darkest hour in 1927, acting Patriarch Aleksii I issued a declaration of comprehensive submission to Soviet power.¹³ This remained the Orthodox position until at least 1990. Roman Catholics, notably in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary resisted Marxist power as illegitimate. In hindsight, the mythology is widespread that the Roman Catholics were right – that by definition, Catholic Christians cannot work constructively in a society hostile to Christianity. Many Protestant groups, most notably the Czech Brethren, whose theology influenced leaders such as Ivan Prokhanov, Aleksandr Karev and Aleksei Bychkov, adopted the view that a believer is called to live in any social order, to “seek the welfare of the city” even when in exile.¹⁴ Hence their social doctrine was more flexible, even if systematic statements of social doctrine remained rare (and contested). Nevertheless, a careful review of statements about witness to society may be more instructive for present challenges than a dismissal of the Soviet past allows.¹⁵

As early as 1991 Miroslav Volf applied a vivid remark by Jesus to the dangerous future for Evangelicals in Eastern Europe.¹⁶ We might assert,

¹² Mostly extensively in the final third of Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981) (in Russian 1995).

¹³ Still a thorough and sensitive treatment of what was at stake is William C. Fletcher, *A Study in Survival: the Church in Russia, 1927–1943* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

¹⁴ Karev and Bychkov were personally acquainted with Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren theologians Josef Hromadka and Jan M. Lochman who were publishing in this vein.

¹⁵ I have in mind Aleksandr Karev's much disputed article of 1969/70, “Khristianin i Rodina”, (*Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 3 (1970), pp. 48–54, discussed in more detail in Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, pp. 113–115) because of its uncritical support of the state, but containing specific affirmations of the Christian's role in society, stated in general secretary Aleksei Bychkov's reports to the congresses in the 1980s more extensively, including pushing for greater legality in society as guarantee of individual freedoms.

¹⁶ Miroslav Volf, “When the Unclean Spirit Leaves: The Tasks of Eastern European Churches After the 1989 Revolution”, *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 11, no. 1

certainly with thankfulness, that the evil spirit of state atheism in its Marxist version had been cast out. But woe to us if the vacated space be taken by seven other evil spirits. (See Luke 11:24-26) The most obvious ones to appear were nationalism and religious xenophobia, especially so in the former Yugoslavia, but also to a considerable degree in most regions of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. One way to utilise the Soviet legacy is to compare the series of changes to the constitution of the AUCECB, which by 1979 was still much too focused on restraints, but nevertheless, was again pointing to ministry tasks such as youth work, women's ministry and theological education, and then to ask in what way the national unions after 1990 entailed a more visionary programme of ministry.¹⁷ One element of the legacy has been a reluctance to wrestle with the social and political dimensions of the Gospel for fear of evoking opposition from the new rulers after 1990.

Soon after the split of the Reform Baptists around 1962, they organised an alternative union, the Council of Churches of ECB (1965). In spite of interference with their work by the authorities, who arrested key leaders, an extensive list of ministries developed, each of which was placed under the responsibility of one person reporting to the CCECB. There were divisions for youth work, evangelism, relief to prisoners' families and children's work. A separate division, which established the printing press *Khristianin*, became widely known – yet seldom discovered – for its production of a *Bulletin* of information, a journal of devotional materials, and even Bibles and songbooks. But the union became weakened in the mid-seventies as key leaders broke ranks, mostly in opposition to the leadership style, control and growing suspicion of his colleagues by president Gennadii Kriuchkov, who remained underground. Most of those who broke off led their congregations into a rather loose association of like-minded churches. They kept clear of both unions, but managed sufficiently frequent personal meetings with other leaders in order to be the best suited for the early cooperative evangelism, mission and relief projects that began at the end of perestroika. The CCECB, in contrast, turned out to be the least open to cooperative evangelism in 1988-90, and in effect surrendered the moral leadership

(February 1991), pp. 11-24.

¹⁷ This is more readily done using the English translations of the 1960 ACUECB *Polozhenie* in Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia: Protestant Opposition to Soviet Religious Policy* (London: Macmillan, 1968), pp. 190-210; and of the revisions in 1963, 1966, 1969 and 1974 as appendix in Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*, pp. 475-487. The Russian translation of the latter lacks the appendices.

they had gained during the Khrushchev persecutions for Baptists being a missionary church.

The Euro-Asian Challenge and Temptation

In 1990 the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists was reorganised into the Euro-Asiatic Federation of ECB Unions. This in part preceded the break-up of the Soviet Union, yet there were further adjustments to a Euro-Asiatic Federation structure during the era of "Katastroika" (1992–1996). For a time it seemed possible that such a federation would actually disappear, executive secretary Val'ter Mitskevich relying for a few months in 1996 on foreign donations to pay the salary of the remaining staff.

There are at least three larger questions to ask of this process. Was this a housecleaning process? Was it primarily a contextual adaptation to changing management notions? And if so, what was behind the administrative fusion of headquarters staff and federation leaders? Since this was the era of the re-formation of the Soviet Union into independent Baltic states and the CIS, how do we tell the rise of nationalism story for evangelical churches in the FSU?

It was widely assumed that among the church leaders were individuals who had compromised the church before the authorities; hence, for a new beginning, such persons needed to be replaced. Secondly, a younger generation of leaders soon took the view that the leadership that had emerged during "normalised socialism" lacked the courage, vision and moral capacity to be good leaders in an era of freedom for evangelism and mission. Part of the story of the recovery of the AUCECB between 1963 and 1979 had been the gradual elimination of distrusted leaders – those seen as too conformist or as betrayers – through a process of election from below, often forcing local authorities to accept a leader they saw as problematic. One under-explored issue is the growing suspicion concerning how funds were received and dispersed. One initiative had been to bring Nikolai Kolesnikov, widely admired senior presbyter of Kazakhstan, to Moscow as treasurer, hardly because of his financial skills. Even then, the disbursement of funds by the International Department of the AUCECB was not fully under his control.

During the first round of changes after 1990, most striking was the creation of a federation headed by a president and three vice presidents with full executive authority, replacing the positions of general secretary, associate

general secretary and treasurer. For the first time, a Ukrainian, Grigori Komendant, was elected president. His prestige initially was less than that of Iakov Dukhonchenko who remained the head (now called president¹⁸) of the Ukrainian ECB Union. Vasili E. Logvinenko continued as president of the Russian ECB Union, retiring in 1992 when his successor Petr Konovalchik physically moved to a new office building of the Russian ECB Union. Long-time general secretary Aleksei Bychkov became a vice president of the Euro-Asiatic Federation with primary responsibility for international affairs and education, Belorussian Aleksei Firisiuk took over financial and other administrative affairs, and Nikolai Kolesnikov started a new initiative in evangelism. Once Komendant decided to move back to Kiev, due in large part to health reasons and the death of Dukhonchenko (1992), a shift in understanding of the Euro-Asiatic Federation proceeded. Bychkov also retired, becoming involved in the formation of several seminaries of an interdenominational type. Firisiuk moved to Belarus to head the national union. It was increasingly clear that primary loyalties had moved to the national unions and each of those began developing a funding resource base of its own, often relying heavily on foreign support. Soon, too, there was a kind of rotation in the presidency of the Euro-Asiatic Federation between Ukraine, Russia and Central Asia. Thus what remained by 2001 was a new journal, *Khristianskoe slovo* [Christian word] and its editor, Iurii Apatov, as executive staff person for the Euro-Asian Federation.

To make it simpler, we can speak of the repositioning of the ECB union into national bodies, quite independent of the Euro-Asiatic Federation, in terms of four geographic categories. First are the Baltic states which returned to pre-1941 independence, all of them having had national Baptist Unions that had been unevenly integrated into the AUCECB. In Estonia, the process of leadership transition took place relatively smoothly over a number of years. In Latvia, on the other hand, a reformist group moved into leadership, resulting in several years of tension before achievement of a more cooperative united spirit.¹⁹ In Lithuania, the era of transitions became the occasion for competition among evangelical denominations appealing for membership. The second category includes the Slavic coun-

¹⁸ This adoption of "president" to replace "senior presbyter" [*starshii presviter*] was patterned on the way the title of president by Gorbachev had become the most authoritative, and seemingly a more westernised style. Soon in Latvia and Georgia, then also in a few instances in Russia, ECB leaders were named bishop [*episkop*].

¹⁹ Valdis Tērauldkaļns, "Conventionalization of Baptism in Latvian [sic] after World War II" *Humanities and Social Sciences: Latvia*, vol. 4, no. 29 (2000), pp. 53-75.

tries of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, as well as a certain reorganising in Moldova. Their primary focus was on establishing a more active church union, absorbing new programmes and new churches, while at the same time seeing the emergence of competing evangelical denominations, some indigenous, others imported through the mission influence of Methodists or the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA). Contrasts here were related to the considerable statistical strength of Baptists and Pentecostals in Ukraine compared to the widely scattered and minority status of the same in Russia. A third category consists of the Trans-Caucasian unions (Georgia and Armenia in particular), which became more mono-cultural and gradually lost ground as religious freedom for non-Orthodox churches became more problematic.²⁰ Fourth were the Central Asian unions, including Kazakhstan. The ECB Unions of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan restructured themselves, emphasising an active and systematic mission programme²¹ and regularly holding joint mission conferences. In both countries, sub-structures for non-Russian linguistic congregations were fostered, and their new theological schools emphasised cross-cultural mission. The union of the former Central Asian ECB churches (Tadjik, Uzbek, Turkmen, Azeri) became a shell of its former strength, and the rising challenge of Islam to Christianity, evident across Central Asia, has resulted in a steady rise of persecution of Christians – indeed of radical Islamic believers also – in those countries.

What were the central challenges and temptations of this period of transition? The explosion of Christian ministries in 1989 required a period of frenzied activity before efforts at more careful leadership were even possible. By that time, the economic collapse, in Russia and Ukraine in particular, accounts for the quite fragmented way in which such programmes continued, dependent on the “accident” of foreign support of specific projects. Foreign support, especially from Britain, for the Brotherhood of Compassion charity programme managed by Mikhail Zhidkov next door to the former central Baptist Church in Moscow and through the Baptist network, continued for about a decade. The Ukrainian union incor-

²⁰ In Georgia, the birthplace of a multilingual Baptist movement in 1867, Bishop Dr Mal-kaz Songulashvili, an expert in Biblical and Semitic languages, now introduced rituals and robes not unlike the Orthodox to demonstrate a distinctly Georgian evangelical culture. The positive cooperation in earthquake relief efforts for Armenia between Evangelical and Orthodox Armenian congregations in America influenced local relationships for a time.

²¹ In both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, mission societies that had sprung up were incorporated into the structure of the ECB union, the mission leaders also leading the unions.

porated immigrant churches in Canada, Australia and the USA, ensuring a stronger outside economic support. The Euro-Asiatic evangelism department, though soon becoming a division of the Russian Union, was able to shape some of the national evangelistic ministries by means of regular conferences on mission, but aside from initial financial and personnel support from a Southern Baptist mission office located in the new Russian Baptist Union office throughout the 1990s,²² the ability of the central union, now a mere Euro-Asiatic Federation, to shape local or regional ministries through financial support was now very limited. At the least, leaders still tried to retain a common Euro-Asiatic vision.

Much more prominent during the 1990s were the variety of new ideas imported by two major streams of Western missionaries. On the one hand were individual Baptist or Pentecostal mission initiatives conducted together with the new national unions. As a result, for example, Pentecostal ministries in the Vladivostok region grew dramatically. In Ukraine, the John MacArthur ministries and those of Josh McDowell established numerous church planting initiatives and popular Bible institutes, enabling a few senior presbyters (regional superintendents) to link their own outreach programmes with such missionaries. The other major initiative came to be known as CoMission. Although it involved well established faith missions known for responsible mission work around the world, in the CoMission project in Russia and Ukraine, its army of short term workers very seldom worked with evangelical churches, and the sophisticated missiology learned elsewhere was rarely applied. Some of the new converts through CoMission became active in the formation of several new evangelical missionary associations in Krasnodar and eastern Ukraine. Elsewhere, little of the evangelism effort and expense resulted in organised congregations linked to one of the unions.²³ So far I am not aware of studies reviewing the history of the

²² The Southern Baptist Convention had long related to the AUCECB through a mission board worker, usually based in Rüschnikon, Switzerland, at the European Baptist Seminary. As the fundamentalist takeover of the SBC proceeded, that seminary, having moved to Prague to become the International Baptist Theological Seminary, came under the ownership of the European Baptist Federation. The SBC sent new workers to support the Russian Baptist Union, financing the purchase and remodelling of a new office on Varshavskoe Shosse in Moscow. A further change to SBC mission policy resulted in placement of missionaries in Central Asia to plant SBC churches.

²³ This story is best caught in Perry L. Glanzer, *The Quest for Russia's Soul: Evangelicals and Moral Education in Post-Communist Russia* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2002), together with some extensive assessment and critique in Donald Fairbairn, review of *The Quest for Russia's Soul*, by Perry L. Glanzer, *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 23, no. 5 (October 2003), pp. 51-58.

many independent churches established as church plants from America with American church models. To what extent did they attract primarily those believers whose profound disenchantment with the Soviet experiment led them to copy the West as uncritically as possible?

Theological Leadership

The twenty-five-year period from 1980–2005 involved a transition to a new generation of leadership, but also a new approach to leadership. After 1945 the central officers of the church unions and the primary teachers of the small correspondence courses had been the leaders. During the era 1963–1985, the powers and influence of the senior presbyters and presbyter councils in the regions and republics had grown, overseeing local leadership elections, funding, and establishment of regional policies and emphases. Yet especially in the area of theological leadership, a process of decentralisation was evident after 1980. Participation in the correspondence school remained steady, with the majority of senior presbyters completing its limited programme, allowing them to lead more substantive in-service training seminars in their regions. In the final years of the AUCECB, the theological department sought means to foster theological reflection, including sponsoring students studying abroad and organising theme-based theology conferences. A commission worked through a new confession of faith.²⁴ There was much talk of finally getting permission to establish the seminary for which a fund had been established in 1905. By 1990 it had still not happened. Some blamed this on the authorities, still unwilling to make available suitable property near Moscow, and others, including several impatient leaders within the Baptist World Alliance, felt that leaders in Moscow were too concerned with maintaining control.

In the end, the able Sergei Sannikov, already holding a doctorate in pedagogy but lacking theological training, initiated a two-year programme in Odessa, also at the instigation of Baptist leaders from abroad. Soon facilities near Kiev were built as an effort to open a seminary for Ukrainians (Odessa started as a Euro-Asiatic school). Gradually also the younger leader of the Moscow Correspondence programme, Aleksandr Kozyenko, who had studied for two years at the Baptist seminary in Buckow (GDR), was able to open the Moscow Baptist Theological Seminary, renting a floor in

²⁴ The key leaders were Aleksei Bychkov, Iakov Dukhonchenko and Mikhail Zhidkov, working with younger men who soon played leadership roles in the emerging seminaries in Kiev, Odessa and Moscow.

the new building of the Russian ECB Union. Both Sannikov and Kozyenko, while in effect competing for students and for support, were personally committed to a pastoral training programme accountable to the church unions. How were they to sustain that vision in the face of an economic collapse which had led to the drying up of funds from the churches, to say nothing of students themselves? The answer lay in securing major financial support from the West. Slavic Gospel Association and the Northern and American Baptist denominations, respectively, supported the Odessa and Moscow programmes, and seminaries linked with those organisations lent their faculty and accreditation.

The indigenous *Svet Evangeliiia* [Light of the Gospel] mission established a missionary training school in Donetsk, Ukraine, in 1991, then added a three-year theology programme, renaming itself Donetsk Christian University (DCU) to signal its vision and intent.²⁵ DCU initially sought to attract students from the CCECB, AUCECB and *Avtonomnyi* church bodies, though its central leadership had its roots in the *Avtonomnyi* churches.²⁶ As part of the shift to a three-year programme for pastoral training, DCU negotiated official understandings with the Ukrainian ECB Union and with the recently organised Association of *Avtonomnyi* ECB Churches in Ukraine headed by Nikolai Velichko, also naming their representatives to its board.²⁷ *Logos* mission, formed in the mid-1980s by Soviet German emigrants in Germany, had been pursuing a vision for more systematic theological education by extension, then shifted to establishing a Bible college in St Petersburg, soon re-organising and registering as St Petersburg Christian University (SPCU). At first hoping to offer quality seminary education for youth who would then find their place in ministry, it quickly became obvious that good pastors are not trained in schools alone (prima-

²⁵ Much of the extensive literature in English assessing the theological education initiatives is listed in my paper "Educators for Mission and the Western Missionaries", in Peter F. Penner (ed), *Theological Education as Mission* (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld Verlag, 2005), pp. 215-246.

²⁶ I have chosen to use "*avtonomnyi*" (Russian cognate of the English autonomous) because during most of the period under discussion, the label served as shorthand for the former CCECB member churches, which had quickly grown larger in membership than the CCECB. In 2004 the major association of *avtonomnyi* churches (Ukraine and southeast Russia) renamed themselves "*nezavisimy*" (independent), a slight de-Sovietisation in meaning.

²⁷ By 2003 there was a crisis, a conflict in leadership style and philosophy. Following a shake-up, the new DCU board became more representative of supporting churches than an advisory group to the president, as earlier.

rily by foreign professors), but need the practical supervision of respected pastors in the church community. SPCU turned to the Russian ECB Union for assistance, and its president Petr Konovalchik soon became chair of the board, which also included representatives from supporting missions from abroad.²⁸

As Mark Elliott noted in 1994,²⁹ at least forty schools had sprung up within the evangelical community of the former Soviet Union, of uneven quality, structure and financial foundation. But the concern for serious Bible study, for quality theological training for pastors was stronger than among the numerous Orthodox schools that were also springing up, also often with inadequate support. The swirl of ideas from what was essentially a younger emergent generation of church leaders, and from the professors from abroad, I once described as “visions in conflict”,³⁰ suggesting that the evangelical community was now looking to the schools to provide responsible leadership, as the old union structures hovered on the verge of collapse. A further visionary initiative was the formation of what is now called the Euro-Asiatic Accrediting Association (EAAA), which allowed schools to break away from dependency on accreditation abroad and fostered standards attuned to the Euro-Asiatic context, including formation of a separate association, instead of becoming satellites of the existing evangelical European/Middle East accrediting association. In surprisingly short order, the EAAA began hosting biannual conferences, at which theology was discussed, and carefully planned publication of necessary scholarly books – in translation or through indigenous writing – was negotiated. Pentecostals and ECB (autonomous and registered traditions) were meeting with each other; soon other denominations sought links as well.³¹

Foreign influence has turned out to be a crucial element of success, as

²⁸ Here too, tensions between foreign supporting groups and the self-understandings of SPCU leaders helped account for changes in school leadership. Currently the board chair is a Canadian.

²⁹ Mark Elliott, “Protestant Theological Education in the Former Soviet Union”, *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, vol. 18, no. 1 (January 1994), pp. 14-22.

³⁰ Walter Sawatsky, “Visions in Conflict: Starting Anew Through the Prism of Leadership Training”, in Niels C. Nielsen, Jr (ed), *Christianity after Communism: Social, Political, and Cultural Struggle in Russia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), p. 125.

³¹ Walter Sawatsky, “Evangelical Theological Schools in FSU Now Accrediting”, *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 20, no. 2 (April 2000), pp. 11-13. See also the EAAA website, <http://www.e-aaa.org>, for recent reports and details on its documentary publication series on CD-ROM of the history of the Evangelical movement in Euro-Asia, four CDs published as of 2005.

well as a great danger to the contextualisation of theological education. There was a relatively rapid shift from imported lectures in translation to an increasing number of graduates of western Masters of Divinity (MDiv) programmes returning to teach in local languages. School administrators obtained graduate theological degrees through part-time study leaves. The review of curriculum from a more specifically contextual point of view is beginning. Along the way, favourite theological debates were imported from the West, some of them turning out to be less relevant in the new context. Some schools began to compete with each other, each claiming to be more theologically faithful, leading to alignment along a conservative-liberal spectrum within clearly evangelical limits, but so far there have not been the theological wars that shook up American Protestant seminaries during the first half of the twentieth century. Coinciding with the birth of the schools was the launching of a project to collect oral histories of persons from the Slavic evangelical world, in which students and administrators from the schools in Donetsk, Petersburg, Moscow and Odessa were active, a number of the interviewees now working as teachers and scholars. This was intended as a resource to guide the work of contextualising theology and rooting future leaders in the church's rich legacy of suffering and witness.

Mission and Missionary Associations

When Ivan Gnida of Moscow preached to the presbyter's conference of Kazakhstan in February of 1988, he urged them to claim the emerging opportunities to witness to the Gospel, then in private told me that Baptists had forgotten their early missionary zeal and now needed to be prodded to get off their backsides. Indeed, their missionary character was a feature that caused Soviet authorities to regularly attack the evangelicals, and the 1929 Law on Religion forbade missionary work outright.

Nevertheless, one feature of the explosion of mission and evangelism after 1988 for a half-dozen years was the path-breaking work of indigenous missions. One of the earliest initiatives was an inter-denominational Latvian mission, in which the *Avtonomnyi* churches were primary leaders. Soon *Svet Evangeliiia* emerged out of Rovno in Ukraine, with mission projects in northern Siberia and the Far East. *Svet Evangeliiia* formed a school of mission studies by 1991, then formed links with Denver Baptist Seminary, a decade later organising Donetsk Christian University with three-year and one-year degree and certificate programmes. In regions of eastern Russia

and western Siberia, groups of churches had developed into a *de facto* denomination of *Svet Evangeliia* churches.³²

Within the ECB unions, true also for Pentecostal unions in Russia and Ukraine, the primary missions pattern that emerged since 1990 is a series of projects specific to national unions, often linked with foreign funds. Within the Russian Federation, some of the church planting activity sponsored by the Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries (Association for Spiritual Renewal) programme in the Caucasus and southeast Russian regions were eventually absorbed into regional ECB councils.³³ *Licht im Osten* mission (Germany) worked closely with certain senior presbyters in Ukraine and Central Asia (especially Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) to sponsor local evangelistic activities.³⁴ These two western organisations, as well as the re-organised Slavic Gospel Association, tended to assist with publication of literature, underwrite radio work, and subsidise the salaries of translators, teachers and pastors/evangelists.³⁵ Yet another pattern was the strong ties between German immigrants from the Soviet Union who organised mission societies in Germany specialising in cooperative work in the FSU.³⁶ They included *Logos* mission that emphasised theological education by extension (TEE) and the founding of schools, especially SPCU. Another mission formed by Soviet German immigrants, named *Hilfskomitee Aquila* emphasised sending material aid, enabling workers in the Karaganda oblast of Kazakhstan to maintain an extensive programme of tent evangelism in

³² The mission divided into regional bodies, Donetsk Christian University becoming a separate organisation and the original mission in Rovno [Rivno] dividing into two programmes. One, Hope to People, became part of the Association of Missionary Evangelical Churches of Ukraine (<http://www.hopetopeople.org>).

³³ Peter and Anita Deyneka with key colleagues in 1991 left Slavic Gospel Association (founded by Peter's father in 1920) in order to establish *Assotsiatsiia "Dukhovnoe Vozrozhdenie"* [Association for Spiritual Renewal] (ASR), intended to functions not as a mission, but as a facilitating organisation to foster support of the indigenous unions. Headed for a time by George Law, it soon became a mission engaged in major church planting work in southeast Russia.

³⁴ *Svet na Vostoke* [Light in the East] was registered as an independent mission in Ukraine, purchased a building in which other local ministries could rent space (also a pattern for ASR in Moscow) and the home office in Korntal, Germany, raised support and offered coordination.

³⁵ Slavic Gospel Association also became the major financial supporter for Odessa Baptist Theological Seminary.

³⁶ The earliest missions, founded in 1975 and 1995, were *Friedensstimme* and *Friedensbote*, the latter forming following a split within the CCECB supporting churches, whose focus was on sending literature and relief to the CCECB.

summer, and to systematically visit all villages and towns in Kazakhstan, done as a programme of the Kazakhstan ECB Union with financial assistance from *Aquila*, *Licht im Osten* and other missions.³⁷ In other cases, local congregations in Germany sent workers back for shorter and longer-term ministry in those localities where they had formerly lived.

One recent attempt at repositioning the means for leadership of the evangelical churches emerged from the formation of new evangelical churches seeking ways to assist each other. In 2001 an essentially new denomination of evangelicals, strongly influenced by the Christian and Missionary Alliance, invited other mission societies to meet for the purpose of forming an interdenominational missionary association. Several meetings have been held since then, and the association has helped to coordinate work between communities of churches in south Russia and east and west Ukraine – all linked to the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA). Churches near Krasnodar, in Kiev and Rovno oblasts may well develop like the CMA in America a century ago, from a mission into a denomination.³⁸ ECB representatives at such interdenominational meetings played a modest role, but their attendance served to keep communication lines open. The desired cooperation has so far not really materialised.

In 2003 there was an attempt to organise a Russian Evangelical Alliance, which affected mostly the Moscow region and, more recently, the Novosibirsk region. In this case, the initiative came largely from abroad.³⁹ Since the Evangelical Alliance has traditionally been based on individual membership rather than membership as church unions, it remains to be seen what role current leaders of the alliance will achieve in shaping evangelical denominations in general.

Slavic Evangelical Future in a World of Orthodox Predominance and Overwhelming Secularism

When the great transformation of 1989 came, some evangelical leaders

³⁷ Both *Logos* and *Aquila* tried to avoid the partisanship of earlier missions toward either registered or unregistered churches. Baptist Unions and Mennonite bodies such as Mennonite Central Committee and Mennonite Brethren Mission Services International were frequently part of the supporting base for these projects.

³⁸ The present designation is Association of Missionary Evangelical Churches.

³⁹ Founding chairperson of the Russian Evangelical Alliance is Dr Vladimir Riaguzov, principal of the Baptist Moscow Theological Institute, the re-organised correspondence school. The German *Evangelische Allianz* has provided support.

imagined that now Prokhanov's grand vision of winning Russia for Christ might truly come to pass. Both Orthodox and evangelical leaders were pressed to near exhaustion by a spiritually seeking public asking the way to God. It seemed, too, that whatever need there was for mission, fellow believers in Western Europe and America stood ready to assist financially. By 1996, a profound pessimism had set in among the general public, and church leaders concentrated on realistic programmes and policies. None of the theological schools could survive without some continued foreign support, but support from the local churches has been building. Many of the mission initiatives are also making do with limited funds. Expensive radio programming, for example, receives less emphasis, nor are large evangelistic rallies popular. By 2005 it has become clear, as we attempt to assess the extent of Orthodox believers who actually practice their faith, that this dominant church has a very low active membership, closer to 4% than 80% of the Russian population; and that in Ukraine, there is a religious pluralism of Orthodox, Uniates, Evangelicals and Catholics, each significant enough to shape the culture.⁴⁰ Russia has remained above all an overwhelmingly secular society, with social problems of overwhelming proportions and few broadly supported social-economic strategies for recovery. This is the world in which to ponder a Slavic evangelical future.

When thinking about church unions and the authenticity of a Christian witness that depends on Christian unity, as opposed to the current fragmentation, there is more "repositioning" to do. In contrast to most East European countries, in which a council of churches functioned during the socialist years, the closest device for inter-church relations in the Soviet Union was the common requirement to seek approval and recognition from a state Council for Religious Affairs. Even though earlier, Evangelical Christians, Baptists and Orthodox had all sought ties to fellow confessional bodies abroad and to the emerging ecumenical movement, this ended in 1947-48 with the beginning of the Cold War. When the Orthodox churches, the AUCECB and various churches in the Baltic and Caucasus joined the World Conference of Churches (WCC) in Delhi in 1961, this new relationship caused problems at home. The Soviet government used it to polish its international image as tolerant to religion, while it fact it

⁴⁰ For a handy review of statistical studies, see Alexey D. Krindatch, "Patterns of Religious Change in Postsoviet Russia: Major Trends from 1998-2003", *Religion, State & Society*, vol. 32, no. 2 (June 2004), pp. 115-136; and Alexei D. Krindatch, "Religion in Postsoviet Ukraine as a Factor in Regional, Ethno-Cultural and Political Diversity", *Religion, State & Society*, vol. 31, no. 1 (March 2003), pp. 37-73.

was launching a new initiative to crush the churches. And the churches found the international travel of their leaders suspect, and the limited news about Christianity outside the USSR did not encourage a desire for more serious inter-church relations. The AUCECB announced an International Department in 1963 that oversaw the exchanges of church delegations and the arrangements for acceptable leaders to attend WCC and Christian Peace Conference events. Throughout his years as head of the International Department, Aleksei Stoian never gained the trust of other leaders. Nor did his successor evoke much support, though the office and staff was retained by the post-1990 Russian ECB Union. At the same time, the pattern of visiting church delegations also declined in the West, particularly within American denominations, who become more inwardly focused with drastically reduced budgets. Central Asian ECB unions almost immediately withdrew from the WCC, and within a few years, the national ECB unions participated in only the European Baptist Federation (EBF) and to a modest extent the BWA.⁴¹ Pentecostal links shifted more to western mission societies than to the Assemblies of God or other Pentecostal denominational bodies.

In 1994, due to the large number of clashes between the confessions in the former Soviet Union, representatives of the major churches – Orthodox, ECB, Catholic, Old Believer, Lutheran and Adventist – met in Moscow for a weeklong forum on Christian Faith and Human Enmity. This was an opportunity to share stories of disrespect, missionary proselytism and outright discrimination, and to assure the others that the Gospel they taught in no way encouraged enmity, especially among Christians. There were a few short gatherings over the next decade, usually when a representative from Geneva came to call, but no new council of churches for negotiating relations and problems seemed possible. After rather violent clashes over property between Orthodox and Uniates in Ukraine, and the refusal of the Russian Patriarch to meet with Pope John Paul II following the Catholic creation of episcopal regions in the former Soviet Union, one observer spoke of an “ecumenical meltdown”.⁴² Not only are relations between Catholics and Orthodox quite precarious still, but evangelical

⁴¹ Economic stringencies also help to explain the ending of regular church delegations travelling to fellow East European Baptist unions, and the AUCECB no longer was able to assist with travel funds for those unions.

⁴² Joseph Loya, “Interchurch Relations in Post-Perestroika Eastern Europe: A Short History of an Ecumenical Meltdown”, *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 14, no. 1 (February 1994), pp. 1-17.

church relations with the Orthodox scarcely exist in a formal sense, and the role of Slavic evangelicals in the wider evangelical world is rather minimal. A recent book on the evangelical movement in mission in the twentieth century contains no article on the Slavic evangelicals, nor do the authors of background articles so much as mention their existence.⁴³ This may well be due in part to the minimal presence of Slavic evangelicals at the usual international gatherings of evangelicals. Since Slavic evangelicals produced one of the longer lists of martyrs for the faith, their modest or nearly absent witness in such circles is doubly tragic.

Conclusion: the Historians' Task

Rather than emphasising historical facts, this paper has instead drawn attention to some apparent patterns in the history of evangelicalism in the Soviet Union and its successor states. This sketch of the ways in which evangelical unions (primarily ECB unions) repositioned themselves between 1980 and the present seeks to tell an important story. Tracking the origins and function of church leadership enables the historian to determine where to find the resources for grasping a fuller story. We are beginning to see new scholarship that cites archival data, a rather different approach than what Michael Bourdeaux and I did in the Soviet period, relying on samizdat, official publications and private conversations to construct a picture of church life from 1945 to 1980. But archival sources in union offices are limited. Much was not saved, and present resources are inadequately stored and inventoried. Sorting out what is preserved in state archives has begun, the survey of state archives in each oblast of Ukraine headed by Sergei Sannikov and Iurii Reshetnikov remains outstanding, but there is much more to be found.⁴⁴

The oral history project (1994-ca2002) was more a failure than success, but much of its intended vision can still be pursued.⁴⁵ As a movement of

⁴³ Donald M. Lewis (ed), *Christianity Reborn: The Global Expansion of Evangelicalism in the Twentieth Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

⁴⁴ S.I. Golovashchenko (compiler), *Istoriia evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizheniia v Ukraine: Materialy i dokumenty* (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 1998). A fuller source collection, also in digital format, is maintained by the EAAA.

⁴⁵ A collaborative project between four theological schools (Moscow, Odessa, St Petersburg Christian University, Donetsk Christian University), the Baptist and Anabaptist Studies Centre at IBTS, and the Mennonite Central Committee, with this author, Walter Sawatsky, as coordinator, it involved students, many of whom became teachers, interviewing a sampling of leaders and average church members for the period 1945–1990. Selections were published on CD by the EAAA when it assumed oversight. Some interviewing continues.

the people, the evangelical movement had many women leaders, yet only a few are so far included in the oral interview collection, and fewer still are known sufficiently to serve as models today. Many of the incidents of lived faith and witness that occurred – without the cover of organisation and funding – during the years of difficulty still need to be discovered and told. So many experiences and theological discoveries about real people finding forgiveness, lives of alcoholism transformed to the service of the Lord, and visitation of the old, the sick and the imprisoned in the name of Christ remain to be collected and told.

It would be a happy conclusion were I able to promise that Western Christians would help historians and the churches. Such possibilities remain truly modest, and it is not guaranteed that Christians in the West will truly see and understand when the stories get told. Historians must all the more see themselves as a small community linked globally, following the model of Luke, the early historian of the Church, to preserve for the future the marvellous deeds of the Lord and the Lord's unobtrusive servants.

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Visible and Invisible: Observations on Social Service Ministries among Evangelicals in Ukraine since Independence

Mary Raber

At a year-end meeting at First Baptist Church in Odessa (Ukraine), held after Sunday morning worship on 18 December 2004, members reported on a variety of activities in which the church had been involved. The reporting was prefaced with a few remarks by the senior pastor (presbyter), Vladimir Parfenenko, who identified two kinds of ministry, “visible” and “invisible.” The first, he explained, involves that which is related to congregational worship, such as sermons and music. “Invisible” ministry is all the rest, including Sunday school, youth activities and social service ministries.¹

The pastor did not go into detail about what he meant by “visible” and “invisible” ministry, beyond emphasising that *all* Christian service – within or outside the walls of a church, whether or not evident or even familiar to others – is valued by God. Still, I found it curious that he assigned social service ministries to the realm of the “invisible”, when precisely in this sphere, evangelicals in Ukraine are becoming very visible indeed. At that same meeting, members reported on free lunches for the elderly, free medical assistance provided by Christian professionals, a church-supported mission to drug addicts and alcoholics, and free legal advice. In addition, First Baptist Church is active in ministries to the hearing impaired, the

¹ I regularly attended this church and was present at the meeting.

blind and people with other disabilities. To be sure, not all of these ministries are open to the general public. Medical assistance and legal aid are intended primarily for church members. Nevertheless, the list is extensive enough to attract some notice.

While this particular church has about twelve hundred members and better resources than many smaller congregations, it is not unique. A Baptist church in Pryazov's'ke, a small community in the Zaporizhzhia oblast of south-eastern Ukraine, with about forty members, primarily elderly, opened its own fully-registered children's home in 2001, including a four-grade school. As of spring 2005 they were caring for thirty-two children and hoped to expand to forty by the end of the year.

While no statistics are available on all the ways and places in which evangelicals (especially, but not exclusively, Baptists) address the social needs of their communities, one of the most striking visible phenomena of the post-Soviet period is the growth of charitable or social service ministries. In this paper, the terms "charity" and "social service ministry" refer to what Pastor Parfenenko assigned to the category of "invisible" service – organised, intentional efforts by Christians to relieve human suffering and respond to human need without getting anything in return.

It is well known that in the Soviet Union, church life was legally restricted to worship in designated places by registered congregations. In reality, of course, much more was going on that is little documented. Nevertheless, until recently it was unthinkable for churches to engage publicly in the kinds of activities they now do. The distinction between their limited Soviet past and the opportunities of the present is still quite clear. A refrain I hear frequently is this: "We are living in a special time in history when, thank God, we have the freedom to do this or that", i.e. minister to the sick, care for orphans, visit prisoners and so on. In fact, since the 1990s, charity has become an increasingly significant part of evangelical Christian activity and identity.

This paper provides a preliminary sketch of current social service ministry among Ukrainian evangelicals, based largely on personal observation and reflection – my own, those of my Mennonite Central Committee co-workers² and those of local Christians. I focus on local ministry initiatives, rather than projects and institutions established by foreign organisations or individuals, although all of the ministries I discuss depend heavily on Western financing. As well as commenting on charity in the Russian

² A group that includes citizens of the US, Canada and Ukraine.

empire, the Soviet Union, and present-day Ukraine, I note some possible trends for the future.

Historical Background

Historians of the development of charitable organisations in Russia tend to end their outlines with the period 1861–1917.³ The 1861 abolition of serfdom contributed to major social upheaval in Russia, as millions of peasants headed for the cities in search of work. Rapid urbanisation led to poverty, overcrowding, hunger, poor sanitation, lack of education and disease, crying out for a response from the government and private citizens. During this period, many private charitable institutions were established to meet the needs of the poor. The 1900 directory *Blagotvoritel'nye uchrezhdeniia Rossiiskoi imperii* [Charitable institutions of the Russian empire] states: "In general, the beginning of significant growth in [the number of] charitable institutions dates back to 1861; from that year until 1899, 95% of all societies and 82% of all institutions functioning today were founded."⁴ Although the figure may be based on inexact information – the lack of systematic record keeping was a frequent complaint from delegates at congresses of charitable institutions held in 1910 and 1914 – a count made in 1900 claimed 13,918 charities in the empire.⁵ Further research is needed to determine the manner and extent of evangelical Christian involvement, particularly in Ukraine.

However, the official existence of non-government charity ended in 1917. After the Bolshevik revolution, social welfare became the exclusive prerogative of the state, and even the definition of charity (sometimes called philanthropy) changed. The 2001 monograph *Zarubezhnyi opyt sotsial'noi raboty v ramkakh rossiiskoi blagotvoritel'nosti* [Foreign social work experience in the framework of Russian charity] cites several definitions of charity from reference books of different periods to illustrate

³ For example, V. Gorokhovyi, "Organizatsiia trudovoi pomoshchi v zapadnoi Evrope, Severnoi Amerike i Rossii po novym issledovaniiam", *Trudovaiia pomoshch'*, no. 4 (1915), p. 389; quoted in E.V. Ivanova and Zh.E. Ivanova, *Zarubezhnyi opyt sotsial'noi raboty v ramkakh rossiiskoi blagotvoritel'nosti* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnaia akademiia informatizatsii, 2001), p. 15; and the more detailed schema of M.V. Firsov, "Sotsial'naia rabota v Rossii: Teoriia, istoriia, obshchestvennaia praktika" (PhD dissertation, 1997), quoted in Ivanova and Ivanova, *Zarubezhnyi opyt*, p. 15.

⁴ *Blagotvoritel'nye uchrezhdeniia Rossiiskoi imperii*, vol.-1 (St. Petersburg: E. Evdokimov, 1900), p. 10; quoted in Ivanova and Ivanova, *Zarubezhnyi opyt*, p. 43.

⁵ Ivanova and Ivanova, *Zarubezhnyi opyt*, p. 44.

the transformation.⁶ The 1890 Brokgauz-Efron *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'* [Encyclopaedic Dictionary] defined charity as "the showing of compassion to one's neighbour and the moral obligation of one who possesses something to hasten to the aid of the one who does not", adding that "charity in the true meaning of the word occurs together with Christianity".⁷

In the Soviet period, the definition of charity changed dramatically. In 1927 the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* [*Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*] stated that "charity is a phenomenon characteristic only of a class society".⁸ The 1950 edition of the same encyclopaedia called charity "assistance that is hypocritically given by representatives of the ruling classes.... By means of so-called charity ... the bourgeoisie attempt to extinguish hatred of capitalism among the masses and hold them back from revolutionary struggle."⁹ The 1970 edition of the *Great Soviet Encyclopaedia* had no entry for "charity" at all. After a period of high visibility in the second half of the nineteenth century, it could be said that charity became invisible. The state took over responsibility for righting social ills.

To be sure, at times intervention by fellow citizens on behalf of the poor was still accepted. In the 1930s the wives of Communist officials began the "Wives' Movement" to ease such problems as child neglect and housing for the poor. According to historian Sheila Fitzpatrick, "a good deal of what the wives did was reminiscent of the charitable activities of upper-class women under the old regime". Bolshevik Nadezhda Krupskaja (Lenin's widow), however, denied the similarity, referring to such assistance instead as "social activism".¹⁰

However, despite its unflattering official definition (or lack of same) the Christian practice of charity survived, although it was focused on the needy among church members. Outreach to the wider society officially took the form of such things as church contributions to the Soviet Peace Fund.¹¹

⁶ Ivanova and Ivanova, *Zarubezhnyi opyt*, p. 14.

⁷ F.A. Brokgauz and I.A. Efron (eds), *Entsiklopedicheskii slovar'*, vol. 7 (St. Petersburg: I.A. Efron, 1890), p. 55.

⁸ *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 6 (Moscow: Sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1927), p. 466.

⁹ *Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia, 1950), p. 278.

¹⁰ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 158.

¹¹ At the eightieth anniversary celebration of the Baptist church in Kherson (Ukraine) on 9 October 1988, according to a report by Aleksei Bychkov, V.F. Goncharov, Senior Presbyter of the Nikolaevsk and Kherson oblasts, noted in his anniversary address that "the church

Still, the spirit of charity must have remained latent. In a November 1991 interview, acting chairman of the Council for Religious Affairs Mikhail Ivolgin, referring to efforts of Orthodox and Protestants alike, stated, "It seems to me that during the years of administrative prohibition and persecution, a huge supply of kindness and mercy accumulated in the Church, which it is bringing forth into the life of society today."¹²

A specifically Christian response to human need – apparently the first to be recognised as such by the Soviet government – came in 1986, when the Orthodox Church responded to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.¹³ Two years later, on 29 April 1988, Russian Orthodox Patriarch Pimen and five metropolitans met with Communist party secretary Mikhail Gorbachev at the Kremlin. Among other requests, these church leaders sought permission to do charitable work, including care for the sick and elderly. According to historian Nathaniel Davis, government attitudes toward Church-sponsored charity "shifted markedly" after this meeting.¹⁴

Evangelicals began to consider the implications of social service ministry at about the same time. One of the first recorded references to charitable outreach was made by Aleksei Bychkov, General Secretary of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), at a plenary meeting of the AUCECB in Moscow on 15-16 April 1988, just days before the patriarch's meeting with Gorbachev.¹⁵ Thereafter, encouraged by eased restrictions, individual churches began to address themselves to the needs of society in a variety of ways. For example, in 1988, the Central Baptist

continually prays for peace, takes part in the material [aid] work of the Peace Fund and provides aid to those who have suffered in natural disasters both in our country and abroad." A.M. Bychkov, "Poseshchenie tserkvi goroda Khersona", *Bratskii vestnik*, no. 6 (1988), p. 68. This and other articles from *Bratskii Vestnik*, 1945-1993, are also available on the CD-ROM: *Istoriia Evangel'skogo dvizheniia v Evrazii: Materialy i dokumenty* [History of Euro-Asian Evangelical Movement: Primary Sources], 2.0 (Odessa: Euro-Asian Accrediting Association, 2002).

¹² Mikhail Ivolgin, "Poslednee interv'iu", *Nauka i religii*, no. 1 (January 1992), p. 6.

¹³ Dmitry V. Pospelovskiy, "Religious Themes in the Soviet Press in 1989", *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol. 18, no. 4 (Winter 1990), p. 319; quoted in Nathaniel Davis, *A Long Walk to Church: A Contemporary History of Russian Orthodoxy* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), p. 60.

¹⁴ Davis, *A Long Walk to Church*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁵ Interestingly, Bychkov discussed charitable activity not so much as a recovered part of Christian identity, but rather as a way to promote unity among evangelicals inside and outside of the AUCECB, long a matter of contention. According to Bychkov, "Social service – care of the sick, homes for the elderly, shelters – can become a good platform for cooperation." "Soobshchenie o plenumе VSEKhB", *Bratskii vestnik*, no. 3 (1988), p. 70.

Church in Moscow regularly sent volunteers to assist staff in the geriatric wards of Moscow's Kashchenko Psychiatric Hospital No. 1.¹⁶ On 22-23 January 1989, the Baptist church in Syktyvkar (Komi ASSR) held concerts of classical and contemporary Christian music to benefit victims of the 1988 Armenian earthquake.¹⁷ Also in 1989, Baptists in Zaporizhzhia provided materials and labour to repair and redecorate the *dom maliutki* (home for children up to the age of three) in their city. At a celebration held in August commemorating the two-hundred-year anniversary of Mennonite settlement in that area, an offering of 7,260 roubles was collected to benefit the home.¹⁸

In the process of seeking opportunities for service, positive new relationships were formed with secular structures. At an evening worship service on 24 September 1988 dedicated to the theme of mercy, V.N. Kozyrev, head doctor of the Kashchenko Psychiatric Hospital in Moscow, stated, "If someone had told me a few years ago that this kind of symbiosis between a church and a hospital was possible, I wouldn't have believed it.... Out of the cobwebs of oblivion, words full of human warmth have surfaced: love, mercy, kindness – and we have begun to measure our lives accordingly."¹⁹

Many of the first encounters between evangelicals and secular social service organisations were enthusiastic. However, pastor Mikhail Zhidkov, co-ordinator of the Moscow Baptist volunteers, told me in 1989, "They put us in the geriatric ward because they figured we couldn't do much damage there", a remark that suggests it was not always easy for evangelicals to gain the trust of the leaders of the institutions they wished to serve. Nor did the evangelicals particularly trust the leaders of these institutions. Also in 1989, Iakov Dukhonchenko, Senior Presbyter of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of Ukraine, warned me not to get involved directly with secular organisations. "If you're going to send humanitarian aid, do it through us", he said.

By 1991, of course, Christian ministries of all descriptions proliferated across what was soon to be the former Soviet Union. Western mission agencies raced into the newly independent countries, and local organisations split and multiplied to accommodate them. Baptist churches were a natural channel for humanitarian efforts, with a reputation for good organ-

¹⁶ Vera Kadaeva, "Seminar molodykh sluzhitelei rossiiskoi federatsii", *Bratskii vestnik*, no. 6 (1988), p. 58.

¹⁷ S.I. Nikolaev, "Po dorogam severnogo kraia", *Bratskii vestnik*, no. 3 (1989), p. 77.

¹⁸ "Iz zhizni pomestnykh tserkvei", *Bratskii vestnik*, no. 6 (1989), p. 86.

¹⁹ Viktoriia Mazharova, "Byl bolen, i vy posetili Menia", *Bratskii vestnik*, no. 6 (1988), p. 70.

isation and honesty. Their large number of foreign contacts also drew them quickly into charitable activity. Nathaniel Davis notes that during this early period, the Orthodox response was comparatively slow in "its effort to step into the breach, and some Protestant Christians moved more quickly than the Orthodox and on a larger scale".²⁰ In the November 1991 interview cited above, Mikhail Ivolgin stated that in the Russian Federation alone, Evangelical Christians-Baptists already sponsored or served as patrons of 120 hospitals, 145 children's homes and boarding schools, 95 facilities for the disabled, and over 130 correctional labour facilities (reformatories).²¹

Types of Charitable Outreach

By the early twenty-first century, of course, the ministry frenzy of the early 1990s had died down, as activities and relationships stabilised. I have observed three basic types of formal social service ministry carried on by evangelicals in post-Soviet Ukraine: 1) humanitarian (or material) aid; 2) social service ministries directed to specific needs; and 3) the establishment of social service institutions.

The receipt and distribution of humanitarian aid may take several forms. A church or association of churches, a Christian charitable fund, a mission society, or an institution such as a theological school may have the necessary juridical status and resources (such as transportation and storage facilities) to receive humanitarian aid from abroad. The key element here is the relationship with foreign partners capable of collecting and shipping aid. Such aid is often used for the church or institution's own needs, but also may be put to use in a number of other ways. Churches or missions may have relationships with children's homes, hospitals or secular charitable organisations dedicated to specific groups. Regular visitation may be established. This often begins with a special event, such as a holiday celebration, for which the church or mission prepares a programme – a skit or puppet show, music and a sermon – and brings gifts of humanitarian aid as well, such as groceries, literature or school supplies.

Government-run agencies frequently contact Christian missions or churches for assistance with supplies. I am aware of several occasions in which area prisons have turned to Pavel Metlenko, Senior Presbyterian of the Association of Baptist Churches of the Zaporizhzhia oblast, for supplies

²⁰ Davis, *A Long Walk to Church*, p. 91.

²¹ Mikhail Ivolgin, "Poslednee interv'iu", p. 6.

such as soap, for example. Sergei Kopchuk, former director of Light of the Resurrection Charitable Fund in Makiivka (Donetsk oblast) told me that the head doctor of a hospital came to him for paint. "Anything but black!", the doctor responded, when asked what kind. Required by law to make repairs on his buildings, he was desperate for supplies. One of the biggest needs in Ukraine has been for hospital equipment and supplies, as the lists of humanitarian aid shipments being considered for approval by the Cabinet of Ministers demonstrate. Months before a shipment of hospital beds, for example, arrives for the Zaporizhzhia oblast Association of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Churches, a destination has been determined for every single one.

As the social service system in Ukraine continues to unravel, small as they are, Christians have begun to fill the gap. While not required by law, Christian organisations receiving humanitarian aid are nevertheless "strongly encouraged" to contribute 10% of their shipments to the needs of secular social service agencies. Usually they can make their own choices concerning what and with whom they will share. In addition, using humanitarian aid, some Christian organisations act as supply stations for individual requests. Some city authorities have arranged with evangelical charities to supply clothing and household items to citizens who appeal to the city council for aid.

The second category of charitable work is social service ministry directed toward specific segments of the population. This includes the work of organisations such as the Christian Medical Association of Ukraine, which, resources permitting, operates free clinics and organises doctors' visits to areas where medical care is especially limited. Also in this category are individual church members or missions that address the needs of a particular category of people. Among other activities, they may pay regular visits to children in institutions, provide wheelchairs to those in need, or organise picnics and social events for the homebound.

The third category is the establishment of actual institutions, such as children's homes and shelters, homes for the elderly, community centres and drug and alcohol rehabilitation facilities. According to Vladimir Tsupko, director of the Good Shepherd Charitable Fund in Makiivka, Baptist, Pentecostal and Charismatic groups now operate at least ten Christian children's homes in Ukraine. Some church associations have opened homes for their own elderly, yet accept other seniors in need as well. All of these institutions have moving stories of their founding, and all struggle to stay afloat financially. Furthermore, I suspect that they are unique, at

least in number and variety, in the history of the evangelical movement in Ukraine. Moreover, they occupy a particular place in post-Soviet Ukraine because they model a holistic approach to human need, ministering to spiritual as well as physical needs.

Features and Future Trends of New Evangelical Charitable Institutions

I would like to summarise a few general characteristics of evangelical charitable ministries and institutions in Ukraine in the 1990s, and note a few directions for the future that they suggest.²²

1. The primary stated motive for social service ministry among Ukrainian evangelicals is evangelism. There is no doubt, in addition to all the other motives they may state, that the most significant work that evangelicals do, in their own understanding, whether distributing humanitarian aid or caring for orphans, is serving as bearers of the Gospel to lost humanity. In a recent conversation, the coordinator of a local chapter of the Ukrainian Christian Medical Association told me that unless the gospel is proclaimed to patients in their modest clinic, or in the under-served villages visited by their travelling medical brigades, their work – useful as it is, and as carefully and responsibly as they do it – is in vain.
2. Social service ministries among evangelicals are explained biblically. No matter what the ministry, Ukrainian evangelicals readily recite a list of Bible verses to explain why they are engaged in charitable work. References to God's commands to care for widows, orphans, and strangers, and especially Matthew 25, are repeatedly made. Ukrainian evangelicals do social service ministry out of obedience to God and a desire to fulfil the will of God as revealed in Scripture.
3. A kind of corollary to the emphasis on biblical motivation is a willingness on the part of Ukrainian evangelical believers to plunge into new endeavours or expand outreach in ways that at times appear more rash than faithful, especially to a Western observer. Instead of conducting feasibility studies or lining up adequate financial resources ahead of time, Ukrainian evangelicals are generally prepared to move ahead with the conviction that God will provide for all their needs.

²² These are in no particular order, other than the first one.

Ivan Demianenko, the founding director of Hope Children's Home [*internat*] in Pryazov's'ke, explained:

The Lord has taught us not to wait until everything is ready before we accept children in the *internat*. We take a few children even when we don't yet have the means to keep them. But we believe that God has the means. We hope in Him. The one who believes in Him will never be put to shame. Of course, the Lord tests us. At the moment we are undergoing serious testing because the building won't hold any more children and we cannot take in new ones. Therefore we are praying and asking all believers to join in our prayers so that the Lord would solve the problem. Maybe He will see to it that we build another building for a school. Then the [existing] classroom could be made into living space. It's possible that the Lord is doing something else. Everything is in His hands.²³

4. Does this mean, however, that charitable ministries are unrealistic in what they seek to do? I find the evangelicals' willingness to obey in faith, even when it seems risky, to be one of their most attractive and convincing traits. Often they receive surprising answers to their prayers. Hope Children's Home was down to their last day's supply of coal just a few winters ago, so the adults confided the problem to the children and asked them to pray. Their prayer was very simple: "Dear God! We have no coal! Amen!" The next day a truck arrived – unsummoned, unlooked for – with a donation of a ton of coal.

I have found the evangelicals' mysticism to be neither flippant nor careless. In fact, they show great practicality and resourcefulness as well. Planning does take place, although perhaps more informally than Westerners are accustomed to. Usually it is enriched with much discussion and prayer. In addition, to keep up with changing demands from the wider society, many evangelicals have mastered such skills as accounting, public relations, and information systems, all of which require systematic approaches.

5. Social service ministries have had the interesting effect of making evangelicals figures of consequence in their communities. Prejudice against

²³ Quoted by Mary Raber, in *Mennonite Central Committee Global Family Program Report*, April 2004, pp. 4-5.

Baptists is still significant in post-Soviet society, but their generous use of material aid, and the work of the institutions they have founded, convinces many of their sincerity and seriousness of purpose. "These people don't just talk – they do things", is a common assessment, especially when comparing evangelicals' efforts with those of the government.

In some places, evangelical institutions have actually replaced government structures. All cities, for example, must operate a children's shelter. In Makiivka the function of the city shelter is carried out by the Good Shepherd Children's Shelter. There is no other. In 2004 the shelter received third prize in a competition among shelters sponsored by the oblast. It was understood among the Good Shepherd staff that as a private Christian shelter (for which there is no category under the law) they could not have won first or second place, but the quality of their work had to be acknowledged by the authorities.

According to Vladimir Tsupko, director of the Good Shepherd Charitable Fund, of which the shelter is a part, the problem of homeless and neglected children in Ukraine cannot be solved without massive government intervention. Oksana Volkova, the shelter director, expected restructuring of the government system of children's institutions to begin in the fall of 2005. Will small, private institutions like Good Shepherd be swept away in the process, or will they be recognised officially with a larger role?

6. Evangelicals in charitable institutions have had to make their peace with the social sciences, especially psychology. For example, when they began work in 1997, the staff of Good Shepherd Children's Shelter believed that the Bible contained all they needed to know to care for neglected children. A few years later they concluded that they needed other tools as well to deal with the serious psychological needs of some of the children they encountered. Likewise, the director of a rehabilitation centre for released prisoners in Makiivka, sponsored by Light of the Resurrection Charitable Fund, recently noted that his greatest needs included contact with similar institutions, further education, and general systematisation of knowledge for work with former prisoners. More and more staff members of new evangelical institutions see the need for formal study, especially in the areas of pedagogy, social work, psychology, economics and law. Theological schools such as Donetsk Christian University are seeking to incorporate at least components of some of these subjects into their degree programmes. Will specialised

- education eventually challenge the strong faith motivation of Ukrainian evangelicals?
7. Through engagement in social service ministries, Ukrainian evangelicals have developed new relationships with state authorities. Complex, numerous and often conflicting government demands can create hostility, an “us” against “them” mentality. However, in many cases attitudes have also improved. In some places, authorities have recognised their need of the services Christians provide and evangelicals have acknowledged the government’s good intentions. Meanwhile, Christians have to answer many questions. What is the best way to deal with government structures? Specifically, how much should one report to the authorities (health and fire departments, etc.)? One irony of social service work, particularly with children, is that no one cares about the children on the street, but once under a roof, they officially have to be accounted for to numerous government structures – a time-consuming, nerve-wracking process that Christians may be tempted to short-circuit with bribes. Some evangelical organisations choose to work as quietly as possible to avoid entanglement in government regulations.
 8. While doing charitable work and forming new organisations, Christians have had to develop new ways to work together, including conflict management, appeals procedures, and methods of communication. They have dealt with questions that never arose in the Soviet Union. How does one handle hiring and firing? Wages? Promotion? Should a Baptist group hire a Pentecostal? Should Christians hire an unbeliever?
 9. The most vexing question of all is sustainability. How can social service work – particularly the resource-consuming institutions – be kept functioning? Support from the West has eroded as Westerners have begun to prioritise aid to other parts of the world. How can churches and organisations finance their own ministries? Some charitable organisations seek to develop a sense of responsibility for their ongoing existence among local churches. They have had some success, but cash-poor Christians have money worries of their own. What is the most effective, faithful way to develop the ministry of giving, or encourage income-generating initiatives? How does a Christian institution combine faith in God’s provision with people’s actual potential to give?
 10. Social problems are interrelated, and evangelical institutions are finding that addressing one issue compels them to address others as

well. For example, some children who lived in Christian shelters or orphanages in the 1990s have now grown up and had children of their own, often repeating their parents' mistakes. Does the institution have continued responsibility for them? What can be done to help keep families together before they abandon their children, or to restore families whose children are now in institutions? Moreover, new social challenges are appearing all the time. For example, will the evangelical churches have anything to say about the AIDS epidemic, or will they pass over that issue in silence?

11. Many leaders of Christian charitable organisations are women. Will that eventually affect the position of women in evangelical churches?
12. Where might social service ministries lead in the future? A quiet invitation was made to church leaders by the Ukrainian government in 2005 to recommend honest, educated people for government service. Will some of the people now managing charities go into politics?

This list is far from comprehensive, and clearly, all these issues are intertwined. Nevertheless, involvement in social service ministries has the potential to change the way society regards Ukrainian evangelicals, bring them into the mainstream, and compel thinking outside of their theological tradition. Whether or not those are necessarily good things remains to be seen.

Conclusion

Charitable activity changed from visible to invisible after the Bolshevik revolution. During the Soviet period, church activity was strictly limited and private charity as it was practised in the second half of the nineteenth century officially disappeared. Evangelical Christians cared for their own poor, but could not minister openly to the wider society. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, social service ministries have become a significant part of evangelical activity and identity in Ukraine. What was a despised subculture in the Soviet period now creatively responds to the needs of a demoralised and confused society. The change is striking, yet it is not surprising that the people who pick up the pieces are those whose worldview does not change when earthly kingdoms fall. In general, evangelicals are capable of self-organisation; they are dedicated; and they can trust one another – essential components for maintaining complex ministries. Whether they will be able to sustain their efforts over the years is a question for the future.

Vladimir Parfenenko called the social service work of First Baptist Church in Odessa “invisible”, a curious word to choose for activity that sends church members into the world to serve. To me they seem as visible as a city on a hill (Matthew 5:14). On the other hand, perhaps social service ministries have, in fact, become invisible in post-Soviet Ukraine in the sense that they are no longer concentrated within the walls of a church building, but diffused throughout society like salt and light (Matthew 5:13-14). But whether visible or invisible, their calling is the same – that people may praise our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

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How I Researched my Grandmother and what I Found: Challenges and Avenues in Researching Baptist History in Eastern Europe

Davorin Peterlin

Introduction, Background, Rationale, Aims and Other Appropriate Preliminary Considerations

My grandmother, Aleksandra Černozubova [Russian Chernozubova], died in 1961. Her husband Nikola Filipović, my grandfather, had died five years earlier. I was only two when Grandmother died and do not remember her at all. Occasionally I would have a flash of alleged recollection of her, but have long ago realised that all these were just creative extensions of the only five photographs which captured the both of us, and have thus discarded this precarious line of historical insight.

A renewed interest in family roots overwhelmed me several years ago. Rummaging through the untidy pile of haphazardly stored information about Grandmother produced a brief outline of her life. It is worth pointing out that this outline was built up from incidental information which I had collected from my mother and my aunt, two of Aleksandra's three children, one in her seventies and the other in her eighties. This source I will henceforth refer to as *family tradition*.

According to family tradition, Aleksandra was born in Omsk, Siberia, at the turn of the century. Her father, whose name I did not know at that point, was a rich capitalist who owned a mill. During World War I he employed

Austro-Hungarian prisoners of war from a camp near Omsk, and one of them was a young Croatian named Nikola. Nikola and Aleksandra got married in a Baptist church which Aleksandra's father had helped build and of which both Aleksandra and her father were members. The couple returned to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS), which was renamed Yugoslavia in the late 1920s. When the Communists came to power in Russia, they confiscated the mill that belonged to Aleksandra's father. The extended family with a large number of children became very poor, and Aleksandra's father eventually died in poverty (at an unknown location and at an uncertain date after World War II).

Leaving aside elements of the story of interest only to the immediate family, several anecdotes gathered from family tradition deserve mention. One of them starts with the fact that Nikola was a Roman Catholic, as one would expect Croatians to be, then as now. However, his religious convictions apparently were not particularly strong, so the ecumenical couple did not baptise their first two children in a Catholic church in Croatia. The problem arose later as school authorities refused to enrol the eldest child in the elementary school, as the parents could not produce a certificate of Roman Catholic baptism. The problem of baptism could be remedied easily, and it was, by having both children baptised, but then the authorities realised that the marriage was also invalid: the SHS did not at that time recognise as valid a marriage conducted by an obscure sect such as Baptists, and in distant Siberia at that. So the couple with two children, according to family tradition, married in a Roman Catholic church somewhere in the SHS some ten years after their Baptist wedding.

The second anecdote relevant for this story and my subsequent investigation was the fact that Aleksandra continued to search for a Baptist congregation in her husband's country. Fifteen years elapsed and she could not find Baptists in what was then Yugoslavia, but she did not give up. According to family tradition, one day in 1934 Nikola – who by then held a high position in the Croatian government – heard unusual singing from a house opposite the Croatian parliament. Somehow he realised that he heard “Baptist songs”, and upon returning home said: “Shura, I think I have found those people of yours!” Aleksandra immediately put their third child, my mother, into the pram and went straight there, where she met Baptist leaders. This gem of my family history will later prove apocryphal (as will elements from the first anecdote) and will have to be modified, given that it happened about three years before my mother was actually born. The rest, however, is probably true.

Aleksandra soon became active in the Baptist church in Zagreb. She helped lead women's meetings in the church, during which she, also according to family tradition, read from Russian Christian literature and translated it into Croatian. In time, especially after World War II, Aleksandra developed and maintained contacts with Russian émigrés in Zagreb, both non-Christian and Christian, who would often come to their house. She also corresponded with a large number of Russian Christian émigrés in Yugoslavia and abroad.

The reference to correspondence is a peg on which I wish to hang the next and final section of this introduction. As a general background it must be kept in mind that Aleksandra, after coming to the SHS, never ever returned to Russia or the USSR, although she wanted to. Political and economic circumstances prevented it for her and her relatives. Consequently, she had never ever seen any of her relatives – father, stepmother, brother, numerous stepbrothers and stepsisters or others – since 1922. But significantly, family tradition asserted strongly that Aleksandra corresponded with them all her life.

This extended introduction has been necessary to describe the nature and contents of the body of evidence gathered from family tradition, setting the stage for the report and discussion which follow. I intend to briefly outline some paths of the inductive investigative process which ensued and which was originally anchored in family tradition. As I meander down the rivulets, waterfalls and dead ends of this investigation, I want to point that I am not interested here in laying down the full story. This is impossible, as I am still on the prowl, and the comprehensive story will be hopefully told eventually in several cross-referencing articles anyway. What I do want to communicate is more of a reflection – if it succeeds it might be termed a methodological reflection – on the process of conducting this research. One might conclude that some of the lines of my historical investigation were doomed to fail and that I should have known better than to go that way, but I embarked on this quest armed with little specialist knowledge, replaced instead by huge personal motivation and academic experience in another field of study. Precisely this is the perspective I want to keep throughout this paper. Some scholars doing Baptist history in Eastern Europe will be trained historians, but there will be more who have wandered into this land of historical research and sociological imagination from neighbouring fields ranging from theology to linguistics, from economy to law. Thus I hope that the depiction of my meanderings will entertain fellow researchers of a non-expert kind and provide an insight or

two which might carry analogical weight. And finally, I will welcome any hints and ideas about any particular line of investigation in which I seem to have hit a brick wall.

One of the primary lines of investigation was the study of family tradition. This three-pronged approach concentrated on objects of material history, oral tradition and photographs. Material objects were few and not particularly helpful except for cultural reasons. Oral tradition proved most useful when provoked by questions of a specific kind and when accompanied by material objects which served as convenient pegs and memory-jerkers. My mother and aunt much more easily remembered things from the past when I asked them specific questions than when I asked general and open-ended questions such as "What do you remember about X?" In the first case, however, oral tradition provided a basic informational framework for the life of Aleksandra.

Among several dozen photographs, two are particularly significant. The first, from the Omsk period before 1922, is a photo on thick cardboard with many creases and cracks, of a size larger than modern A4, and shows a group of people in front of a wooden building during the Siberian winter. Family tradition interprets it as the Baptist congregation in Omsk around 1904, including a five-year-old Aleksandra and her parents. The story which accompanies the photo claims that a few years later Aleksandra's father (helped) built the Baptist church in Omsk with his own funds. The second photograph depicts about twenty women sporting a sign which (in Croatian) says: "Zagreb Baptist Church. Women's Association 'Tabitha' 1937". Aleksandra sits in the front row in the middle. Two other women sitting in the first row are also identified as Russian.

These two photographs signify two major geographical and temporal directions of further research. Thus I will present subsequent investigation under these two main headings. However, it must be noted that the actual research could not be compartmentalised, that traces often crossed, and that they forked off into manifold leads, sometimes dozens of them, which I schizophrenically followed at the same time without knowing in advance when and if I would eventually be able to integrate them into a comprehensible story.

The Croatian Baptist Front

An attempt to glean from the earliest history of the Baptist church in Zagreb started with a search for minutes of church business meetings from

the founding of the church in 1921 to 1939. The minutes were not in the church archive; they were located with an older member of the church and retrieved from him, all with great conspiracy, as he did not want others to know he had them. I suspect that many such invaluable written documents throughout Eastern Europe are not in the archives of a local church or denominational headquarters, but in the possession of individuals who keep them safe at their homes. The minutes, among many other useful pieces of information, supplied the date in 1934 when Aleksandra was received into membership of the Zagreb church, and the year 1914 as the year when she was baptised in Omsk. It also recorded that Aleksandra prayed twice at business meetings in 1937 and 1938.

Almost a year and a half after I started my research, the newly appointed secretary of the Zagreb church discovered quite accidentally the subsequent book of minutes covering the period from 1939 to 1960. As a result of personal acquaintance, the key to much inductive historical research in Central and Eastern Europe, I made a complete copy of the whole book of these minutes, as I had done with the first book. These minutes contain more references to Aleksandra, who in this period is portrayed as an active member of the Zagreb Baptist Church board.

By this time I had already learned a lot more. I had combed *Glas Evandjelja* [The Voice of the Gospel], the only official Baptist journal in Yugoslavia, which started in the SHS 1922 and was published until 1941, when publication was interrupted by the Second World War. It did not mention Aleksandra, but supplied a rich picture of life in Baptist churches of the period, with reports on regional conferences, youth conferences, Zagreb Baptist Church Mothers' Day celebrations, New Year vigils and similar events. There I also found a published translation of a letter written to Aleksandra by her father; it was unaccredited, but as I was already in possession of an independently translated text (more below on Russian letters), there was no doubt about the author. The interesting fact is that this letter was published in 1933; according to family tradition Aleksandra had not yet known about the Baptist church in Zagreb in that year. So family tradition had to be corrected.

The journal further reported on the process of the gradual inception of the national Baptist Women's Association in 1939, founded by a certain Lidija Kalmikova [Lidiia Kalmykova], a Russian Baptist émigré living in Belgrade, by which time several local chapters were already in existence. This story, backed by the earlier-mentioned photograph, prompted me to go back to my primary sources of family tradition and ask pointed questions.

Thus I learned that Aleksandra communicated with Lidija Kalmikova, that Lidija visited Zagreb several times between 1935 and 1941, and that she stayed in Aleksandra's home more than once.

An elderly lady from the Baptist church in Zagreb then informed me that her relative, the daughter of Lidija Kalmikova, lived (and still lives) in the Czech Republic. So I first wrote and asked a number of questions, and eventually visited her. Although in her eighties, she proved an exceptionally detailed and accurate source of information. She prepared and eventually lent me for scanning many photographs related to her mother and her work, and supplied me with abundant information about the Russian Baptist and Evangelical Christian émigré network in Yugoslavia between 1920 and 1945. She took the effort to write to her friends of several decades in several countries and gave me their replies. She also opened the door for me to Russian Baptist and Evangelical Christian literature published after the Russian Civil War in Russian émigré centres in Europe and North America.

One illustration of the kind of information I obtained from this source will be of interest to our Russian colleagues: In the 1930s, Lidija and her husband, a Molokan, had contact with several Russians in Belgrade. One of them was a Pastor Urban who visited them often from Paris where he published the journal *Prizyv* [The Call]. (Let me mention in passing that my family tradition informed me that Urban visited Aleksandra in her home on at least one occasion in Zagreb.) Another was Safronij Tverdovski [Safronii Tverdovskii] who, like Urban, with whom he was associated, belonged to the Evangelical Christians. Tverdovski served for a period as a pastor of the Brethren church in Belgrade, but he also taught children's Sunday School in the Baptist church in Belgrade. Finally, from 1935 to 1937, another Russian Evangelical Christian became a member of the Baptist church in Belgrade. That was Vasil S. Prohanov [Vasilii S. Prokhanov], the youngest brother of Ivan S. Prokhanov. According to the minutes of the Belgrade church, Prohanov left for San Francisco in 1937.

Taking my cue from the 1937 photograph from the Baptist church in Zagreb and armed with insights about Lidija Kalmikova, I decided to find out more about Baptist women's ministry in what was then Yugoslavia. After considerable efforts the former president of the Baptist Women's Association in Yugoslavia (which was dissolved fifteen years ago when Yugoslavia was dissolved) suggested I contacted the current president of the Baptist Women's Association in Serbia, to check if there were any early records. I called a friend of mine in Belgrade, and within two weeks he sent

me about four hundred pages of minutes of the women's association in the Baptist church in Belgrade under the leadership of Lidija Kalmikova, as well as miscellaneous documents, reports, and private letters from leaders of Baptist women's ministry from all over Yugoslavia ranging from 1931 to 1970. A considerable number of documents are written in Serbian Cyrillic, and there are several letters to Lidija in Russian, written by Russian women in Serbia. There is one letter from Aleksandra to Lidija as well.

This corpus of evidence threw more light on the role Aleksandra played in the Women's Association in the Zagreb Baptist church. She was elected treasurer of "Tabitha" in 1937, the duty she performed for the next couple of years. In the 1930s she attended several youth conferences, sang in the choir, organised Bible study and translation of Russian devotional literature at women's meetings, and visited the sick. Her house served as the gathering point for several other Russian Baptist women who during this period attended the Baptist church.

The return to family tradition for the purpose of double-checking again proved useful. I learned that the leading sister in "Tabitha" was the wife of the presbyter [elder] of the Baptist church in Zagreb, himself a former prisoner of war from World War I who had also been imprisoned in Siberia, although not in Omsk. During that time he learned Russian, developed an affinity with Russia, and became a Baptist there. As a result this couple became close friends of Aleksandra, and on several occasions made financial contributions to the money Aleksandra sent to her relatives in Siberia. (More about them in the second section.) The presbyter continued to read Russian Christian literature and translated quite a few articles from Russian for publication in *Glas Evandĕlja*.

In 1939 this couple moved from Zagreb to a village two hundred kilometres away and for all practical purposes disappeared from the Zagreb Baptist church, although the wife remained the leading sister in the local village Baptist church. They died several decades later. However, they made one more significant contribution to my research. Several months ago, a colleague of mine who has researched Baptist history suddenly remembered that two or three years earlier, a leader of a Baptist church in a faraway village mentioned to him that in his church archive (or rather a wooden box), there were a number of books and journals in Russian which nobody could read. As it turned out, these were books and journals belonging to the former Zagreb presbyter and his wife, some with signatures and dates. All these documents were then scanned and sent to me for inspection.

I added these documents to the collection of Russian literature I had

already amassed, which by now contained Bibles published from the 1880s to the 1960 in the Russian Empire/USSR and abroad, devotional literature, hymnbooks, tracts and journals. All these will need to be further studied, but they already create a fairly good picture of the literature used by Russian Baptists in the early period of the Yugoslavian Baptist movement. A good many of them came from Aleksandra, and some of the books from this collection contain signatures and dated inscriptions related to the other two Russian women in the Baptist church in Zagreb. One dedication reads: "To sister Solovjeva [Solov'eva] in remembrance of perfect cooperation in the Lord's work. In Paris 1935". Other documents from the accumulated collection came from Lidija Kalmikova via her daughter, still others from another Baptist church (although it cannot be inferred how these documents ended up there) and several from the attic of the first pastor of the Zagreb Baptist church, Vinko Vacek (1923–1939), which he evidently inherited from others, as he did not read Russian.

My inspection of Vacek's belongings in the attic produced several other primary sources of the highest significance which some suspected existed but nobody had seen. There I found Vacek's diary from 1926, providing details from weather to health; a notebook listing all baptisms Vacek performed between 1925 and 1935, with places, dates and names; and a ledger of members of other Croatian Baptist churches from the previous period (i.e. the earliest period), including the names of persons who performed baptism. This ledger does not say anything about Aleksandra, but mentions the name of the person who baptised the earlier-mentioned presbyter of the Zagreb Baptist church in Russia, Bukrejev [Bukreev].

The Russian Baptist Front

I have already mentioned the photograph, allegedly from 1904, and the family tradition related to it. The "Russian" claims which formed the foundation of my investigation, and which I have always taken as axiomatic, have proved to be extremely difficult to confirm or otherwise, and have posed difficulties rather different from those posed by the Croatian line of investigation.

One of these is the simple fact that I have never studied Russian and cannot claim much knowledge of it. On the positive side is the fact that Yugoslavia was a bi-alphabetic country and that the Serbian and Russian Cyrillic alphabets, the former of which were taught throughout Yugoslavia, are substantially the same with the exception of a few characters.

In addition, Russian and Croatian both belong to the Slavonic group of languages, allowing a degree of informed guesswork and linguistic transference. Several years of interaction with Russian-speaking students has also helped.

While these factors enabled me to read short emails in Russian from people responding to my emails in English, reading, though undertaken with shameless boldness, proved much more difficult. Whenever I concluded that I had stumbled across a reference in a Russian journal or book that was potentially significant, I had to double-check with someone with proficient Russian. Luckily enough I have been able to rely on such people at the Keston Institute.

Handwritten letters in Russian proved too much, however. The large body of such letters, retrieved after decades of neglect, from the basement of the house which remained in the family after Aleksandra died, had to be given to a Russian native speaker to translate. These personal letters provide much material of interest to family history. For instance, they reveal that Aleksandra's father fled to Tashkent after 1929, that he was arrested in 1937 (although the charge is not stated), sentenced to ten years, and died in a camp in 1942 (or 1943 according to another source). Furthermore, these passages in the letters are interspersed with allusions to political events, references to economic developments in the Communist USSR, and insights into the religious situation. (In places mirror-reading allows for further inferences about the life of the addressees, e.g., that some members of the Zagreb Baptist church joined Aleksandra in sending money to impoverished Siberian relatives.) Thus one learns of Baptist and Mennonite settlements in the Omsk region, separate and joint services, German-singing choirs, the figure of two million Baptists estimated to exist in USSR in the 1930s, tensions related to pacifism, an almost millenarian outlook on the future, and many other things. Yet there is very little of a specific nature about the Omsk Baptist church in which Aleksandra grew up, information which I thought necessary to provide a fuller picture of her life and construct her spiritual profile.

In order to supplement meagre information about the church in Omsk and the Chernozubovs' role in it, I resorted to two devices: reading early issues of the Russian journal *Baptist*, and trying to obtain information about the Baptist church in Omsk from various sources in Russian and English. Reading through several classic works in English on the history of Russian Baptists in this period gave me a wide background, which I filled in with information from dissertations, journal articles, and the internet. Yet this

gave me little direct information on Omsk. Sources were unified in the assertion that the first baptism in Omsk took place in 1897, that the baptiser and subsequent leader of the congregation was a certain Ievstratenko, and that the church building, with seating for two thousand people, was built in 1907. (Today it is referred to as the Omsk Central Baptist Church.) All secondary sources agree that the person who single-handedly financed this undertaking was Gavriil Mazaev. In light of this unified testimony, how was I to interpret my family tradition and its insistence that Aleksandra's father had helped build the church?

A possible explanation was found in an issue of the journal *Baptist* from 1907. The Keston Institute library has several early issues of the journal on microfilm, so I spent days skimming them for references to Omsk. The report about the construction of the church mentions a board of five members of the Omsk Baptist church in charge of the actual construction of the building. One is Gavriil Mazaev. Another is Iakov M. Chernozubov. This enabled me to reinterpret information from family tradition and incorporate it into a tentative new hypothesis based on the not unlikely assumption that the people elected to this building board were also those who could actually contribute financially towards the cost of construction. It may not be insignificant that at this time, as Russian letters disclose, Aleksandra's father owned a mill and several bakery shops and had a house in Omsk and one in the nearby village of Marianovka, and that Aleksandra attended a rather posh elementary school and later a gymnasium in Omsk.

Reading the journal *Baptist* yielded a few additional pieces of information as well. In the second decade of the twentieth century several Baptist leaders attending a Baptist council in Omsk visited the house of brother Iakov Chernozubov before proceeding to another congregation. Finally, a 1950s article refers to Ia. M. Chernozubov as a faithful worker in the Baptist church in Omsk. The same article mentions another Chernozubov, also in the Baptist church in Omsk, but I been unable to find out anything about him.

Putting the snapshots from *Baptist* together with snapshots from the Russian letters and against the general background produced a degree of clarity, but I wanted to know more. For that purpose, and after considerable searching, I obtained two books which sounded promising. One was a short booklet produced in Omsk recounting the history of Baptists in western Siberia, especially Omsk.¹ This regrettably contained no refer-

¹ *Istoriia voznikoveniia i rosta khristianskikh obshchin v Omskoi oblasti 1896–1993* (Omsk:

ence to Iakov and was too general for my purposes. The second book is an excellent compilation of documents, from secular sources, dealing with non-Orthodox Christians in Siberia.² It has an excellent extensive historical survey and fills in the history of the Omsk Baptist church and various Baptist congregations in and around Omsk. The book throws light on the split in the Baptist church in Omsk in the 1920s, which I have not found referred to elsewhere in literature. I mention this split in order to illustrate how information from literature can confirm or complement information from family tradition and vice versa. At one time I talked to my aunt and made a remark about a split in the Baptist church in Zagreb in 1946, about which I learned much in the course of the study of the above-mentioned minutes. She suddenly remembered how her mother Aleksandra, who lived through the 1946 split, years later, said: "Yes, exactly the same thing happened in the church in Omsk."

Intrigued by the history of the church in Omsk, and desiring to learn more, I launched a five-pronged Siberian initiative. First I wrote a deluge of emails to a number of scholars – Baptist, Mennonite and non-Christian – and solicited their help. Some of these are professors at universities, some at seminaries, others directors of historical research centres. I am sad to report that this initiative yielded very little fruit. The majority ignored both my broad and my specific questions and failed to respond at all. Second, I established contact with the library and archive of the All-Russian Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUECB) in Moscow. After some time the kind archivist was able to supply me with a small quantity of relevant information, a scan of the memoirs of Gavriil Mazaev, and some articles from sources to which I have not had recourse, but no specific information on Iakov Chernozubov. Third, I contacted the pastor of the Baptist church in Omsk, but he explained that most documentation about the early period I was interested in had perished, destroyed by the Soviet authorities, and that there was nothing in the church archive. Fourth, I contacted several individuals from secular institutions in Omsk, from the faculty of history of the local university to the city archive to individual authors whose names I found in academic journals. Only one of these responded, and he has given me much local information about villages, hamlets and settlements, Baptist and Mennonite congregations, and streets and shops.

Fifth, my work took me to Moscow a year ago [2004], and I made a

Ob'edineniia tserkvei EKHB Omskoi oblasti, 1993).

² A.I. Savin, *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i evangel'skie tserkvi Sibiri v 1920–1941 gg.: dokumenty i materialy* (Novosibirsk: Posokh, 2004).

further trip to Omsk. Before that I had contacted a Russian relative whose name and address I had retained from a decade ago. I asked Aleksandra's niece if I might come and visit. This was the first time the two branches of the family had physically met since 1921 when Aleksandra left Omsk. I learned a lot about numerous family members, but as she has no Baptist affiliation, she could not supply me with further information in this regard.

Conclusions

In the course of my ongoing search for roots I have made several practical observations.

First, oral history is still extremely important for Baptist history in Central and Eastern Europe. It is critical to continue to tap existing resources by conducting interviews with older people who still can remember events and people from the distant past and make appropriate historical records.

Second, oral tradition has its limitations and is often of precarious value. Because of that it must be checked against other sources.

Third, written sources are not numerous and are often inaccessible or barely accessible. Some Christian sources are kept by individuals, and their existence is not widely known. Some sources, such as tapes, photographs, even local Baptist church minutes, are rare and difficult to access. Other documents are kept in secular archives – local, regional or national – and may be difficult to consult for other reasons.

Fourth, research in Baptist history in some countries in the region is still underdeveloped. Priority must thus be given to the basic collection of primary sources, which in due course will be followed by their investigation and supplemented by further inductive research and result in analytical studies.

Fifth, it would be greatly beneficial for church historians and researchers in related areas to improve their cooperation. On a very basic level, adherence to elementary conventions of academic courtesy would provide a good start. At a higher level, however, what is needed is better communication – more efficient exchange of information and research results – among researchers working in a field as specific and specialised as Baptist histories in Central/Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

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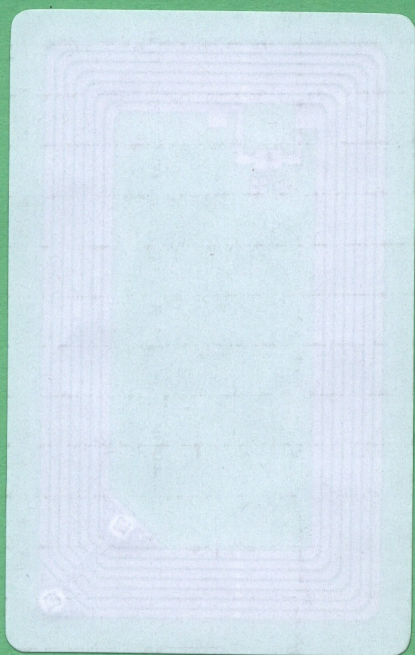
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