

# [Post]-Reformation Influences and the Coming of Age of the Baptist Movement in the Russian Empire (1858–1911)

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The issue of Baptist origins in the Russian Empire is the subject of hot debates even after more than a century of research. Russian Orthodox polemists at the end of the nineteenth century laid responsibility for the emergence and spread of the movement predominantly on foreign missionary propaganda.<sup>[1]</sup> But even at the time of the total dominance of the Russian Orthodox Church, this could not convince serious students who, nonetheless, admitted the presence of a foreign factor in the formation of the movement.<sup>[2]</sup> On the other hand, attempts to explain Baptist origins predominantly by providential factors look rather naive and deserve a critique.<sup>[3]</sup> It seems that at the end of the

<sup>[1]</sup> A.D. Ushynskii, *O prichinakh poiavlenia ratsionalisticheskikh uchenii shtundy i nekotorykh drugikh podobnykh sect v sel'skom pravoslavnom naselenii i o merakh protiv rasprostranenia uchenii etikh sect* [On the reasons for the origin of rationalist teachings of the Stunda and some other similar sects among the rural Orthodox population and on the measures against the spread of the teaching of these sects], (Kiev, 1884); Aleksii (Dorodnitsyn), *Iuzhno-Russkii neobaptizm izvestnyi pod imenem shtundy: po ofitsialnym dokumentam* [South-Russian neo-Baptism known by the name of Stunda: according to official documents], (Stavropol-Kavkazskii: Tipoligrafia Timofeeva, 1903).

<sup>[2]</sup> A. Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhno-russkii shtundizm* [South-Russian Stundism], (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Departamenta Udelov, 1889).

<sup>[3]</sup> I.A. Kmeta-Efimovich, “Zhyvye kamni. Ocherki istorii baptisma na yuge Ukrainy” [Living stones. Outline of the history of Baptists in the south of Ukraine], *Baptist Ukrainy* 10 (1927): 12-15; N. Domashovets', *Narys istorii ukra'ins'ko'i 'evangel's'ko-baptysts'ko'i tserkvy* [An outline of the history of the Ukrainian Evangelical-Baptist Church], (Irvington-Toronto, 1967); *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* [History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR], (Moscow: AUCECB, 1989); S.N. Savinskii, *Istoriia russko-ukrainskogo baptisma* [A history of Russian-Ukrainian Baptism], (Odessa: Bogomyслиe, 1995); *Istoriia evangel'skikh khris-*

twentieth—beginning of the twenty-first century, scholars reached a consensus that the Baptist movement in the Russian Empire was of neither purely “Western” nor exclusively “indigenous,” but a “hybrid,” comprising both components.<sup>[4]</sup> Indeed, what became known as Russian Baptism resulted from the complex interaction of social and economic changes, examples of Western devotional practices, polity and influences, and ambitious and creative indigenous leadership. The history of Baptist origins in Ukraine and the Russian Empire assures us that attempts to label this religious movement either exclusively “indigenous” or “foreign” tend to oversimplify the process of its formation.

## Baptist Origins in the Russian Empire

The evangelical movement in the Russian Empire originated independently and almost simultaneously in three different regions—the southern provinces of Ukraine, Trans-Caucasia, and St Petersburg. The process touched different social groups in these areas. For some time these streams developed independently, absorbing and crystallizing various foreign and local influences, but then began “gradually finding one another, acknowledging their spiritual kinship, and, by the early 1880s, seeking paths to joint activity.”<sup>[5]</sup>

In St Petersburg conversions originally occurred among high-ranking society and the nobility and only later reached the lower classes. The St Petersburg revival drew on British evangelicalism represented by such personalities as Granville A. W. Waldgrave Lord Radstock (1833–1913), Reginald Radcliffe (1825–1895), Dr. Frederick Baedeker (1823–1906), and George Müller (1805–1898). Radstock’s arrival in St Petersburg in 1873 sparked a so-called “drawing-room revival” among the Russian nobility.<sup>[6]</sup> He converted Colonel Vasilii Pashkov, Count Modest Korf,

*tian-baptistov v Ukraine, Rossii i Belarusi: 1867–1917* [A History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus: 1867–1917], (St. Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 1999); *Istoriia evangelskikh khristian-baptistov v Ukraine, Rossii i Belarusi: 1917–1967* [A History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus: 1917–1967], (St. Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 2001); a moderate version: Reshetnikov and Sannikov, *Obzor istorii evangel'sko-baptistskogo bratstva na Ukraine* [A survey of the history of the Evangelical-Baptist brotherhood in Ukraine], (Odessa: Bogomyсли, 2000); on modifications of the self-identifying story: Andrey P. Puzynin, *The Tradition of the Gospel Christians: A Study of Their Identity and Theology during the Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Periods* (Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick, 2011), 121, 149–169, 196–212.

<sup>[4]</sup> Albert W. Wardin, “How Indigenous was the Baptist Movement in the Russian Empire?” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 9.2 (2009),

29–37; for a different emphasis see P.D. Steeves, *The Russian Baptist Union, 1917–1935 Evangelical Awakening in Russia*, PhD diss. (University of Kansas, 1976); O.V. Beznosova, *Pozdnee protestantskoe sektantstvo iuga Ukrainy, 1850–1905* [Late Protestant sectarianism in the south of Ukraine, 1850–1905], PhD diss. (Dnepropetrovsk State University, 1997); Heather Jean Coleman, *The Most Dangerous Sect: Baptists in Tsarist and Soviet Russia, 1905–1929*, PhD diss. (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1998).

<sup>[5]</sup> Heather Jean Coleman, “Baptist beginnings in Russia and Ukraine,” *Baptist History & Heritage* (2007), 24.

<sup>[6]</sup> On Radstock’s ministry: N.S. Leskov and James Y. Muckle, *Schism in High Society: Lord Radstock and His Followers* (Nottingham: Bramcote Press, 1995); Mrs. Edward Trotter, *Lord Radstock: An Interpretation and a Record* (London, New York: Hodder & Stoughton, 1914); Edmund Heier, *Religious Schism in the Russian Aristocracy 1860–1900: Radstockism and Pash-*

and Count Aleksei Bobrinskii, who became key leaders of the movement later labelled Pashkovism.<sup>[7]</sup> Lord Radstock was a typical representative of nineteenth-century British evangelicalism. He belonged to the “low church” wing of the Church of England. At the same time, not being a member of a particular local church, he joined the Evangelical Alliance in 1865. He also associated for some time with the Open Brethren, but severed these relations before his trip to Russia.<sup>[8]</sup> Radstock seems to be instrumental in acquainting the converted Russian nobility with the Evangelical Alliance model, a tradition that characterised the Pashkovite movement and distinguished it from the Stundo-Baptist and Baptist fellow believers in the South of Russia. On the other hand Dr. Baedeker, a traveling evangelist of distinctly Open Brethren heritage,<sup>[9]</sup> and George Muller, one of the founders of the Open Brethren church, could be instrumental in introducing St Petersburg believers to the practice of open communion characteristic of the Open Brethren movement. Baedeker also had close ties with the Evangelical Alliance<sup>[10]</sup> and was actively involved in the preparation of the first congress of all evangelical believers in St Petersburg in 1884.<sup>[11]</sup> These well-known evangelical leaders contributed to the distinctly ecumenical stance and weak ecclesiology of the St Petersburg stream of the evangelical movement in the Russian Empire.<sup>[12]</sup> The representatives of this tradition sought unity in the personal experience of conversion and did not require believer’s baptism as a condition for fellowship. The key expression of this ecumenical spirit of the Evangelical Alliance was the practice of open communion.

In Trans-Caucasia, revival predominantly touched the Molokans,<sup>[13]</sup> especially those of affluent merchant families. The first convert was Nikita Isaievich Voronin (1840–1905). On 20 August 1867 he was baptised by Martin Kalweit (1833–1918) a Lithuanian-born German Lutheran converted to Baptism.<sup>[14]</sup> In 1871 Voronin bap-

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*kovism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970); David Fountain, *Lord Radstock and the Russian awakening* (Southampton, UK: Mayflower Christian, 1988); Mark Myers McCarthy, *Religious Conflict and Social Order in Nineteenth-Century Russia: Orthodoxy and the Protestant Challenge, 1812–1905*, PhD diss. (University of Notre Dame, 2004).

<sup>[7]</sup> On Paskovism: Heier, *Religious Schism*; on Pashkov: Jan M. Surer, “Colonel V.A. Pashkov and the Late Nineteenth-Century Protestant Movement in Russia,” MPhil thesis (University of Oxford, 1999); Sharyl Corrado, “The Philosophy of Ministry of Colonel Vasiliy Pashkov,” MA thesis (Wheaton College, 2000).

<sup>[8]</sup> Analysis of Radstock’s theological trajectory: Puzynin, *The Tradition of the Gospel Christians*, 1-52; contrary to Puzynin’s emphasis on Radstock’s general evangelical heritage, Kuznetsova points specifically to his Open Brethren views. See, Miriam R. Kuznetsova, *Early Russian Evangelicals (1874–1929): Historical Background & Hermeneutical Tendencies Based*

*on I.V. Kargel’s Written Heritage*, PhD diss. (University of Pretoria, 2009).

<sup>[9]</sup> See Kuznetsova, “Early Russian Evangelicals,” 119-125.

<sup>[10]</sup> Robert Sloan Latimer, *Dr. Baedeker and His Apostolic Work in Russia* (London: Morgan & Scott: 1907), 209.

<sup>[11]</sup> *Istoriia evangel’skikh khristian-baptistov*, 99-100.

<sup>[12]</sup> Heier, *Radstockism and Pashkovism*, 145. In this sense Pashkovism resembled the Pietistic revival in the German colonies which was dependent on charismatic persons and was not ecclesologically sustainable.

<sup>[13]</sup> The Molokans (milk-drinkers) are a Russian non-conformist group. On their origin, beliefs and practices see I. Iuzov, *Starovery i dukhovnye khristiane* [Old-Believers and Spiritual Christians], (St Petersburg: Tipografiia A.M. Kotomina, 1881), 144-171; S. Bolshakoff, *Russian Non-conformity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1950), 105-109.

<sup>[14]</sup> Vasiliy V. Ivanov points out that the first

tized Vasilii G. Pavlov (1854–1924) and Vasilii V. Ivanov (1846–1919) who became key Baptist leaders. In 1875 Pavlov went to Hamburg to study in what later became Hamburg Missionary School and was ordained by Gerhard Oncken as a missionary. Being a very capable person Pavlov mastered English, German, Hebrew, Azerbaijani and other languages. Pavlov's knowledge of German Baptist doctrines and polity equipped him to order communities in Trans-Caucasia and the North Caucasus according to German tradition<sup>[15]</sup> Russian Baptists in the Caucasus strongly held to believer's baptism and opposed the practice of open communion with those who had been baptised in infancy<sup>[16]</sup> The tradition of the German Baptist Union, especially its polity and organisational model, became dominant in the North Caucasus and Trans-Caucasia.<sup>[17]</sup> At the same time there were tensions between the proponents of the German model and those who sympathised with traditional Molokan approaches to community life that persisted well into the 1910s.<sup>[18]</sup>

After a series of wars Russia absorbed significant territories between the Dnieper and Bug rivers, the whole Sea of Azov, and, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the territory of Bessarabia down to the mouth of the Danube River. The south of Ukraine comprised vast territories with excellent geographical conditions: fertile black-soil steppes, navigable rivers flowing into the Black and Azov seas, rich reserves of coal, iron ore, and other minerals.

Catherine II initiated the process of foreign colonisation of Ukraine in the second half of the eighteenth century, trying to attract different religious non-conformist groups from Europe. In the middle of the nineteenth century diverse ethnic and religious groups populated these territories. Foreign colonists of different religious traditions (Lutherans, Reformed, Moravians, and Mennonites) were granted broad privileges, the right of self-government inside of the colonies and the freedom to worship according to their custom with only one reservation—attempts to convert native Orthodox people were illegal.

Social and economic reforms in the middle of the nineteenth century triggered rapid economic growth in the region. The high economic attractiveness of the region,

evangelicals in Trans-Caucasia were converted through personal Bible study and that German influence, which only came later through Vasilii G. Pavlov and Johann Wieler, was not significant; see Vasilii V. Ivanov, "Kniga episkopa Aleksiiia," [Bishop Aleksii's Book] *Baptist* 1908 (September 9), 24–35.

<sup>[15]</sup> He translated the Hamburg Confession of Faith, which became the basis of Russian Baptists' beliefs, and later in 1907 prepared a draft of statutes for Baptist Union.

<sup>[16]</sup> The conflict occurred in 1884 during a meeting in St. Petersburg, see *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov*, 99–10; protocols of 1885 and 1889 meetings witness this strict position, see Aleksii, *Materialy dlia istorii religiozno-ratsionalisticheskogo dvizheniia na iuge Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX stoletiiia* [Materials

for the history of the religious-rationalistic movement in South Russia in the second half of the XIX century], (Kazan: Tsentral'naia Tipografiia, 1908), 590–591, 608.

<sup>[17]</sup> See protocols of Tiflis Baptist Church in Aleksii, *Materialy*, 601–677; a summary and comparison of Tiflis Baptist Church organizational model and polity in Val'kevich, *Zapiska o propagande protestantskikh sekt v Rossii i v osobennosti na Kavkaze*. [A memorandum on the propaganda of Protestant sects in Russia and in particular in the Caucasus] (Tiflis: Tip. Kantseliarii glavnonachalstvuiushchago grazhdanskogo chastiiu na Kavkazie, 1900), 57, 59–61.

<sup>[18]</sup> See Coleman, *The Most Dangerous Sect*, 50–53; N. O[dintsov], "S"ezd baptistov v S.-Peterburge," [Baptist congress in St Petersburg] *Baptist* 38 (1910) 304.

relatively higher wages, and the lower price of land provoked significant migration processes to the south of Ukraine. Some authors compared this territory to that of the Klondike in the United States.<sup>[19]</sup> The reforms laid the foundation for subsequent evangelical revival among the Orthodox population. The most significant one was the abolition of serfdom (1861). A population of over 52 million peasants previously bound to the land received freedom. These new circumstances pushed them into independent entrepreneurship and resulted in freedom of thought. An Orthodox priest and a student of the evangelical movement, Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii, commented that the liberation of serfs “elevated the spirit of the people.” He quotes an Orthodox professor Voronov: “A peasant became a master and a judge unto himself in family, property and social affairs. He has a self-awareness of his person, a spirit of criticism,” and concludes, “the peasant realized his mental poverty and was eager to free himself from it.”<sup>[20]</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of the freedom, the new law did not fully comply with the expectations of the peasants as to land distribution and in reality created social inequality and discontent.

Prior to the emancipation of the serfs neither German colonists nor Ukrainian peasants expressed interest in each other. Ukrainian historian Olga Beznosova explains this by the fact that before the middle of the nineteenth century the colonists tended to isolate themselves and could only hire free peasants while the majority of the population was still in serfdom. Only in 1860–1870 “the rapid development of capitalist relations and the emergence of a market of hired agricultural labour in the south begin the process of the mass infiltration of Orthodox labourers into German and Mennonite colonies.”<sup>[21]</sup>

Evangelical revival and the subsequent spread of Baptism first touched the German population in Poland and Volhynia, the Baltic provinces, and Ukraine in the late 1850s–early 1860s<sup>[22]</sup> Only later it spread among the Slavic population of Ukraine, particularly in Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, Tavrida, and Kyiv *guberniia* (province) in the villages adjacent to German colonies.

## Pietistic Revival and First Conversions

In the middle of nineteenth century German colonies experienced a pietistic revival. The characteristic practice of this revival was devotional meetings (*Stunden*

<sup>[19]</sup> Ia.Y. Hrytsak, *Narys istorii Ukrainy. Formuvann'a modernovoi Ukrain's'koi natsii v XIX-XX st.* [An outline of the history of Ukraine: The formation of the modern Ukrainian nation in XIX–XX cents.], (Kyiv: Heneza, 1996), p. 35. The economic attractiveness of the region found reflection even in the belles-letters of the time. Honore de Balzac, in his novella *Pere Goriot* depicts the main hero dreaming on his deathbed about making a profit trading wheat, selling starch, vermicelli, or Italian pasta in Odessa.

<sup>[20]</sup> Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhnorusskii stundizm*, 36.

<sup>[21]</sup> O.V. Beznosova, “Rol” nemetskih kolo-

nistov i mennonitov v rasprostraneniі protestantizma sredi pravoslavnogo naseleni'a Ukrainy vo vtoroi polovine XIX v.” [The role of German colonists and Mennonites in the expansion of Protestantism among the Orthodox population of Ukraine in the second half of the XIX century] in *Voprosy germanskoi istorii: Mezhdvuzovskii sbornik nauchnyh trudov* [Issues of German history: An inter-school compendium of scholarly works], (Dnepropetrovsk: DGU, 1996), 77.

<sup>[22]</sup> Albert W. Wardin, “Penetration of the Baptists into the Russian Empire in the Nineteenth Century,” *Journal of European Baptist Studies* 7.3 (2007), 34–47.

*Andachts*) in private houses beyond regular Sunday worship. In 1824 Johannes Bonekemper (1795–1857) arrived in the Reformed parish in Rohrbach and Worms, northeast of Odessa. He initiated new Pietistic groups aimed at the spiritual quickening of the believers. These groups called themselves “brotherhoods of God’s friends,” and sometimes local pastors even presided. Later in the second half of the century, Johannes’ son Karl Bonekemper (1817–1893) continued this ministry and, at the same time, encouraged some Ukrainian seasonal and day labourers to read God’s word, sharing with them copies of the New Testament in Russian.<sup>[23]</sup> Nevertheless, these groups operated inside of the traditional Protestant parish system and never separated from the existing churches.

Another significant form of Pietistic revival was initiated by Eduard Wust (1818–1859), a separatist Lutheran minister educated in Tubingen. Wust was an adherent of the so-called New Pietism, a movement seeking personal renewal and mystical experience.<sup>[24]</sup> In 1845 he arrived in the colony Neu-Hoffnung, Tavrida *guberniia* and immediately started preaching repentance and personal salvation through faith in Christ. Being an ardent preacher and a good leader, Wust tried to intensify spiritual life through weekly Bible gatherings, “love feasts,” and fraternal conferences. The Bible gatherings were a time for the study of God’s word; love feasts served to resolve misunderstandings between the members of the congregations; and during the conferences members of the Wust communities discussed current affairs and the needs of the brotherhood. He also organized annual mission gatherings that attracted many Lutherans and Mennonites, members of Wust brotherhoods.<sup>[25]</sup> The purpose of these festivals was to support missions across confessional lines and stress unity in Christ.<sup>[26]</sup> Wust’s concept of the religious community somewhat differed from Bonekemper’s model. He advocated creating communities that consisted of “true believers,” who repented and were born from above, although he did not teach the necessity of believer’s baptism.<sup>[27]</sup> This may to some degree explain the irritation, envy, and strong opposition from the General Lutheran Synod in St Petersburg. The Superintendent forbade Wust to preach outside of his congregations but these attempts were futile—Wust continued participating in unofficial meetings, answering questions but refraining from preaching.<sup>[28]</sup> Wust also had significant influence on some Mennonite colonists.

The first conversions of Ukrainians, the formation of Stundist communities and their numerical and geographical growth occurred at the end of the 1850s-beginning

<sup>[23]</sup> A.D. Ushynskii, *O prichinakh*, 11.

<sup>[24]</sup> S.D. Bondar, *Sekta menninitov v Rossii* [The sect of Mennonites in Russia], 107-108.

<sup>[25]</sup> On Wüst’s influence on Mennonites see Victor G. Doerksen, “Eduard Wuüst and Jerusalem,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 56.2 (1982), 169-178 and “A Second Menno? Eduard Wuüst and Mennonite Brethren Beginnings” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 74.2 (2000), 311-325; Harold Jantz, “A Pietist Pastor and the Russian Mennonites: The Legacy of Eduard Wust,”

*Direction* 36.2 (2007), 232-246.

<sup>[26]</sup> Albert W. Wardin, Jr., *On the Edge: Baptists and other Free Church Evangelicals in Tsarist Russia, 1855-1917* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2013), 58.

<sup>[27]</sup> *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* [History of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR] (Moscow: AUCECB, 1989), 41-42.

<sup>[28]</sup> Albert W. Wardin, Jr. *On the Edge*, 59

of the 1860s. Slowly, tensions with the Orthodox Church and local authorities intensified (first half of 1860s) and these tensions, coupled with the influence of Mennonite Brethren, led to the first believers' baptisms, breaking with the Orthodox Church and transforming the Stundist communities into Baptist churches (from the end of 1860s to the end of the 1870s).<sup>[29]</sup>

An early centre of Ukrainian Stundism was situated in the villages of Osnova, Riasnopol' and Ignatovka in Odessa *uezd*, Kherson *guberniia*, not far from the colonies of Rohrbach and Worms. These processes could not have left the Ukrainian population untouched. Early documents clearly delineate the origins of Ukrainian Stundist groups with the influence, whether direct or indirect, of German colonists.<sup>[30]</sup> Even the local Orthodox peasants labelled the adherents of the movement "Stundists," hinting that their practice of Bible study and hymn singing in private houses resembled the gatherings of German colonists. Thus, Bishop Aleksii cites a dispatch sent by a local official in 1866 reporting to the governor:

The village of Osnova is situated nearby the German colony of Rohrbach, and the peasants, who were constantly in touch with the local colonists and some of them worked for colonists for several years, being simple and uneducated, got used to the colonists' customs and practically learned the German language and, probably because of the German Reformed Stundists, turned to their teaching. This opinion is based on that fact that the Reformed colonists are also gathering at night in one house to sing hymns and read books of sacred content.<sup>[31]</sup>

This movement was not homogeneous.<sup>[32]</sup> For instance, in the same document Aleksii refers to another dispatch sent in 1867 saying that in Ignatovka and Riasnopol' the local Stundists did not go to the Orthodox parish church, nor did they venerate icons or perform Orthodox rites.<sup>[33]</sup> This change could be explained to some degree by worsening relations between the local priests and the Stundists and, at the same time, the growing awareness of the distinctive character of their faith and practice.

One of the first Ukrainian converts was the peasant Onishchenko, a seasonal labourer. He became a frequent participant at Stundist gatherings organized by Johannes Bonekemper in Rohrbach. Onishchenko was converted around 1858. In 1860 he converted his fellow villager Mykhailo T. Ratushny (1830-c.1915) who later became one of the leaders of the Russian Baptists. In a year Ratushny established a little community of believers in Osnova, gathering for reading and interpreting God's word.

Another centre of the nascent movement was in the villages of Karlovka and Liubomyrka in Elisavetgrad *uezd*, Kherson *guberniia* close to the Lutheran colony of Alt-Danzig where local Lutheran Pietists often invited Ukrainian labourers to their

<sup>[29]</sup> Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhnorusskii stundism*, 55-56.

<sup>[30]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 60-64.

<sup>[31]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 47.

<sup>[32]</sup> On the heterogeneity of the movement, consisting of indigenous groups and the groups stimulated by foreigners, see Beznosova,

"Pozdnee protestantskoe sektantstvo," 67-74; Aleksii calls the latter *neo-baptist*, see Aleksii, *Iuzhno-russkii neobaptizm*; Klibanov calls the former *Stundists* and the latter *Stundo-Baptists*, see Klibanov, *Istoriia religioznogo sektantstva*, 188.

<sup>[33]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 47-48, 52-53.

gatherings. In 1862 Tryfon Klystun was converted. But more important was the conversion of Efym Tsymbal (c. 1833–1880) who became a Stundist in 1866 and later, after his baptism in 1869, was known as the first Ukrainian Baptist. In Karlovka Stundists continued their fellowship with German colonists for several years before they established their own community. In Liubomyrka the first convert was a miller, Ivan Riaboshapka (1831–1900), who managed a mill owned by Martin Huebner, a German colonist from Alt-Danzig. His conversion took place between 1861 and 1866, when Johann Wieler recorded that Riaboshapka purchased two New Testaments. Riaboshapka began preaching and established a group of about twenty people.<sup>[34]</sup>

Originally Stundists remained faithful to the Orthodox Church, visiting local churches, following Orthodox fasts and feasts, asking priests to baptize their children, perform weddings and funerals. They continued to do so up to 1869. In 1868 a regional police officer (*ispravnik*) reported to the Odessa governor

...stundists, strictly speaking, are not a religious sect; they rather resemble an exclusive society that formed the conviction that it is better to read the Gospel at home than listen to it in the Church where it is read in such a way that it seems incomprehensible to them and, therefore, under the influence of this conviction they gather in a chosen house and, reading the Gospel, interpret it as they understand it; and there assembled a significant amount of such interested people. In spite of this, such persons, as the local priest explains, confess and take communion every year.<sup>[35]</sup>

Another document reports that all of them continued visiting the church, confessing their sins and participating in Holy Communion.<sup>[36]</sup> Nevertheless, the observers point out that the converts try to imitate German colonists not only in the way they conduct the meetings, but also in their intonation and even the clothes they wear.<sup>[37]</sup> At the same time they were trying to combine new religious practice with their Orthodox inheritance.<sup>[38]</sup>

It is notable that Karl Bonekemper, being blamed for the dissemination of Stundist beliefs among the Ukrainian population replied, “I... did not want at all to make Russian followers of our fraternity apostates from the Orthodox Church and create a sect of them... I always refrained from this great evil.”<sup>[39]</sup> Moreover, Bonekemper was deeply grieved having learnt that some of his Ukrainian followers had parted ways with the Orthodox Church.<sup>[40]</sup> Earlier he published an article in the local newspaper *Odesskii vestnik* (Odessa herald) trying to explain that “The Stundist brotherhood that exists in the colonies of Rohrbach and Worms of Kherson *guberniia* is neither a sect nor a schism, but only a community of parishioners who love the religious mood in everyday life. Stundists were always sincere worshippers in common service.”<sup>[41]</sup>

<sup>[34]</sup> Rozhdestvenskii, *Iuzhno-russkii stundizm*, 72, ft. 6, 73–74.

<sup>[35]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 64.

<sup>[36]</sup> *Ibid*, 65

<sup>[37]</sup> *Ibid*, 68–69.

<sup>[38]</sup> *Ibid*, 69.

<sup>[39]</sup> Ushynskii, *O prichinakh*, 10.

<sup>[40]</sup> Dorodnitsyn, *Iuzhno-russkii neobaptizm*, 123.

<sup>[41]</sup> *Ibid*, 11.



This traditional Pietistic model of *ecclesiola in ecclesia*, encouraged by Bonekemper, worked well in the Lutheran and Reformed parish church system, but it could not sustain a revival in the Orthodox Church for the obvious reason that the practice of *Stunden* was alien to the Orthodox community. Neither Orthodox priests nor the majority of the population were ready to accept this practice as part of their everyday piety. The pressure from the Orthodox priests and the administrative measures of local authorities, contacts with German colonists converted to Baptism, and growing self-awareness gradually transformed this revival movement into late Protestant churches. In this process some Mennonite Brethren played a key role.

A revival, influenced by ideas of Ludwig Hofaker (1798–1828), a Wurttemberg Pietist, spread in the Mennonite district of Khortitsa. The followers of this teaching gathered for Bible study and prayers, separating themselves from the rest of the colonists. Their gatherings were characterized by a highly emotional style of worship, joyful exclamations, the singing of hymns accompanied by rhythmic clapping and jumping. As the result they became known as *Frohliche Richtung*—“the exuberant movement.” At the beginning this movement was warmly welcomed in the Mennonite colonies but later it fell into extremes and drew criticism for its antinomianism.<sup>[42]</sup> The group’s desire to hold a separate communion service was contrary to traditional Mennonite practice. They invited Elder August Lentzmann of Gnadenfeld for this purpose but he declined the invitation seeing it as disruptive to Mennonite tradition. Nevertheless, they had a separate communion service with the help of Abraham Cornelsen, a member of the Rudnerweide church. The church disciplined some members associated with the group; among them were Johann Claassen (1820–1876) and Jacob Reimer (1817–1891). In January 1860 eighteen brothers signed a document of secession that laid the foundation of the Mennonite Brethren in Molochna.<sup>[43]</sup>

In Einlage a movement of prayer and missionary meetings emerged among Mennonites under the leadership of Abraham Unger (1820–1880). Around 1859 Unger began corresponding with the German Baptist leader Gerhard Oncken on the matter of baptism and withdrawal from the Old Church. He asked to send two or three ministers. In 1861 the news that Mennonites in Molochna baptize by immersion reached them, and in 1861 Gerhard Wieler (1833–1911) was baptized. On March 4 1861 Wieler baptized Unger and two other brothers in the Dnieper River. Soon the traditional Baptist mode of backwards submersion of a candidate became normative in the Mennonite Brethren churches.

These transformations among Mennonites preceded the gradual intensification and expansion of Baptist work in the Russian Empire. The emergence of the first German Baptist churches in Volyn’ *guberniia* in 1859 soon opened the door for cooperation between Mennonites and German Baptists in the south of Ukraine and enhanced the spread of the movement among German colonists and Ukrainians. This cooperation was especially fruitful at the end of the 1860s. In 1866 August Liebig

<sup>[42]</sup> Beznosova, “Pozdnee protestantskoe sektantstvo,” 58-60.

<sup>[43]</sup> *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, 229-230.

(1836–1914) arrived from Romania to help organize the community in Einlage according to Baptist polity and to resolve tensions with some extremist brothers. Eventually his visit was cut short by the government and he was expelled from the country. In 1868 Karl Benzien arrived in Einlage and on 10 July 1868 members of the community, with Benzien presiding, defined new organizational principles of the community according to Baptist polity.<sup>[44]</sup>

Thus, Mennonite Brethren trod the way from an ethno-confessional group to a mission-minded one due to the formative influence of the Wust brotherhoods and the German Baptists<sup>[45]</sup> German Baptists particularly influenced Mennonite Brethren in such aspects as believer's baptism,<sup>[46]</sup> organisational model, and church polity.<sup>[47]</sup> Bishop Aleksii published a very interesting document—a Mennonite Brethren memorandum addressed to the government.<sup>[48]</sup> Among other things, the document shows the differences and similarities between Mennonite Brethren and Baptists<sup>[49]</sup> on the one hand, and Mennonite Brethren and the Old Mennonite Brotherhood on the other.<sup>[50]</sup> Thus, Mennonite Brethren differ from the Baptists in their negative attitude towards military service, refusal of oaths, and the practice of foot washing. At the same time, they acknowledge affinity with the Baptists in the doctrinal content of faith, the practice of believer's baptism by immersion, church discipline, and church polity. Probably it is for this reason that Bishop Aleksii labelled the Mennonite Brethren “neo-Baptists.”

The key role in the initial stage of the transformation of Ukrainian Stundist communities into Baptist was played by Johann Wieler. In his letter to potential German donors, Johann Wieler (1839–1889) admitted that he helped Ukrainian believers to understand the importance of believer's baptism and the necessity of withdrawing from the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>[51]</sup> By doing so, he convinced Ukrainian believers to follow the Mennonite Brethren who separated from an existing religious group

<sup>[44]</sup> *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, 459–461. Compare with the organization of a local church in the German Baptist Union in Val'kevich. 57, 114; see also App. I: 45–47.

<sup>[45]</sup> J.A. Toews admits affinity with Baptists in closed communion, backwards immersion baptism, and evangelism among German colonists and Ukrainians, but points to dissimilarities in non-resistance, foot washing, abstinence from alcohol and tobacco, and church polity, i.e., Mennonite village democracy vs. Baptist emphasis on the authority of the presbyter; see J.A. Toews, “Baptists and Mennonite Brethren in Russia (1790–1930)” in *Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation*, ed. Paul Toews (Winnipeg, Canada; Hillsboro, Kans., USA, 1993), 92–93.

<sup>[46]</sup> Albert W. Wardin, “Baptist influences on Mennonite Brethren with an Emphasis on the Practice of Immersion,” *Direction* 8.4 (1979), 33–38; Toews, “Baptists and Mennonite Brethren,” 85.

<sup>[47]</sup> In 1866 August Liebig arrived from Romania to organize the community in Einlage according to Baptist practices and to resolve inner tensions. A two-week visit proved to be successful. Later a Baptist minister, Karl Benzien, introduced new organizational principles of the community, ordained elders, and established missionary stations according to the fashion of German Baptist Union; see *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR*, 459–461; compare with the organization of a local church in Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, 57, 114; see also App. I: 45–47.

<sup>[48]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 58–60.

<sup>[49]</sup> *Ibid*, 55–56.

<sup>[50]</sup> *Ibid*, 57.

<sup>[51]</sup> Lawrence Klippenstein, “Johann Wieler (1839–1889) among Russian Evangelicals: A New Source of Mennonites and Evangelicalism in Imperial Russia,” *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 5 (1987), 49.

and established their own church, and to form their own congregations.<sup>[52]</sup> Besides that, he assisted Ukrainian believers in writing a confession of faith that agreed with the statement of the German Baptists.<sup>[53]</sup>

## Mennonite Brethren and Early Consolidation Efforts

Between 1880 and 1904 different Baptist churches, and later other evangelical groups, began the process of consolidation into one union. Originally the primary focus of these processes was to unite the energy of these dispersed communities of faith for the sake of missionary work; however, at the same time, their unity was a matter of survival. Having begun with just a few localities in the south of Ukraine and the Caucasus, this process soon encompassed the whole south of the Russian Empire, including Ukraine, the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasia, the lower course of the Volga River, and even St Petersburg. Other kindred churches, especially Pashkovites, whose leadership was expelled from the country by 1884,<sup>[54]</sup> soon began seeking to join the union.

These centripetal processes evolved around annual conferences<sup>[55]</sup> that laid the foundation for the organizational and confessional unity of the Baptist churches. The meetings led to the establishment of the Union of Believers, Baptized Christians, or so-called Baptists of Southern Russia and the Caucasus (1884) which later transformed into the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (1903).<sup>[56]</sup> The years following the establishment of the Union saw the geographical expansion of its work northward and eastward, covering vast territories of the empire, and the gradual transition of leadership from German to Russian believers. The Union grew from a regional body comprising local churches in the south of Ukraine, the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasia to a national organisation spread all over the Russian Empire in 1904. These developments in the Union coincided with severe persecutions from the Russian government and the Russian Orthodox Church from 1882–1896 that also influenced the expansion and organisational growth of the Union.

The first attempts to organize Baptists in Russia date back to 1879 when Trans-Caucasian Baptist churches held their first conference in Tiflis.<sup>[57]</sup> This conference

<sup>[52]</sup> Ibid, 50.

<sup>[53]</sup> Ibid, see the text of confession in Aleksii, *Materialy*, 477-482. Compare Bishop Aleksii's analysis of the principal points of the Mennonite Brethren confession of faith and the Hamburg confession of faith in Aleksii, *Iuzhno-Russkii neobaptizm*, 107-116.

<sup>[54]</sup> Heier, *Religious Schism*, 145.

<sup>[55]</sup> Data on the 1888, 1892-1894, 1896, 1898, 1899-1900 conferences are unavailable. Heather J. Coleman refers to minutes of 1897, 1902, 1903, and 1904 meetings, but they are not yet available to scholars in the former Soviet Union (See Coleman, "The Most Dangerous Sect," 140, no. 10).

<sup>[56]</sup> This compromise name was formally

approved only at the 1905 Congress in response to the request of the Gospel Christians.

<sup>[57]</sup> Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, App. I, 35, 37-38; Johannes Dyck mentions the participation of Mennonites and Russian Baptists in a Southwest Russian and Bulgarian [Baptist] Association meeting in 1874 with reference to Pritzkau, *Geschichte*, 80-82 and Beznosova, "Germanskii vopros," 412. Minutes of the Tiflis Baptist church point to attempts to establish a missionary union in 1878, but there is no data on this development; see Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, App. I, 33-34; I. P. Plett mentions a meeting in 1880 in Novo-Vasil'evka; compare V.G. Pavlov, "Pravda o baptistakh," [The truth about Baptists] *Baptist* 44 (1911), 345.

was unsuccessful. Moreover, even its legitimacy was doubted due to poor representation (just two churches) and preoccupation with such issues as the acceptability of riding draft animals on Sundays, usury and unsupported promissory notes, introduction into the communities of anointing and foot-washing, the burial and marriages of excommunicated and non-believers, kissing members of the opposite sex, head-coverings, and on the use of luxury food and drink items that caused others to stumble. Two decisions are of particular interest for understanding these initial efforts to establish the Union. First was a resolution to establish a missions committee and appoint a missionary. The committee included Nikita I. Voronin, Martin Kalweit, and Vasilii G. Pavlov, who was overseeing the work of the missionary. The initial impulse of creating a Union was a missionary one. The second resolution was the election of a presbyter and the organization of one community in the Caucasus and Trans-Caucasia. This decision was only accomplished a year later.<sup>[58]</sup> The way it is expressed in the minutes betrays a close resemblance of the church structure to the concept of the Union of German Baptists.<sup>[59]</sup> Thus, Baptist churches in the Caucasus embodied the German Baptist Union's model and set an example of proper Baptist doctrine and polity to other churches in the south of the Russian Empire.<sup>[60]</sup>

Though these early efforts were not successful, Christians in the southern Russian Empire did not abandon the idea. Further initiative came from Johann Wieler. The local Mennonite Brethren church in Ruckenuau delegated Wieler and Peter M. Friesen to visit Colonel Vasilii Pashkov in St Petersburg and acquire his support.<sup>[61]</sup> During the visit they were to propose projects for establishing a missionary training school in Bulgaria and a mission among the Armenians, and also to discuss theological issues, particularly open communion.<sup>[62]</sup> For Wieler, open communion was not a problem since he already had experience of it in Wust's brotherhoods.<sup>[63]</sup> This initial contact brought Pashkov to Ukraine in 1882 where he met with Wieler and other evangelicals, including Baptists and Evangelical Molokans (Novo-Vasil'evka).<sup>[64]</sup>

<sup>[58]</sup> On August 17 1880 August Liebig and Johannes Kargel properly established the Tiflis community and offered it an opportunity to join the German Baptist Union; see Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, 57; App. I, 45-47; Bishop Aleksii *contra* Val'kevich believes it never joined the German Baptist Union but maintained close relations; compare Aleksii, *Materialy...*, 689; Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, 62.

<sup>[59]</sup> According to Val'kevich the smallest unit in the organisational structure of the German Baptist Union is a properly established community (*Gemeinde*) and dependent groups (*Stationen*) in a given geographical area. The communities unite into a brotherhood (*Vereinigung*) and they comprise the Union (*Bund*); see Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, 45.

<sup>[60]</sup> The Tiflis Baptist Church developed materials for Baptist communities: a translation of the Hamburg Confession of Faith, rules for business meetings, short notes on the order of Lord's

Supper, baptism, weddings, and advice to the preachers (Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, App. III, 8-12).

<sup>[61]</sup> On Wieler's role see Klippenstein, "Johann Wieler," 44-60 and Johannes Dyck, "Moulding the Brotherhood: Johann Wieler (1839-1889) and the Communities of the Early Evangelicals in Russia," ThM thesis (University of Wales, 2007).

<sup>[62]</sup> Dyck, "Moulding the Brotherhood," 76.

<sup>[63]</sup> This issue was related to the different views on believer's baptism among Pashkovites and Baptists. The former did not require rebaptism, while the latter were firm on it. The issue was raised unsuccessfully at the conferences in Rückenau (1882), St Petersburg (1884) and in Novo-Vasil'evka (1884). Only in 1907 did Baptist and Gospel Christians (Pashkovites) officially have a common table.

<sup>[64]</sup> "Deiatel'nost' Pashkova v sele Astrakhanke Tavricheskoi gubernii," in *Istoriia evangel'skogo dvizheniia v Evrazii* ["Pashkov's

Pashkov proposed to Wieler the position of evangelist with the purpose of establishing the union of churches. Wieler accepted the offer. He was well prepared for such a ministry because in 1872 he was elected by the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church to chair the missions committee and serve as one of the itinerant preachers.<sup>[65]</sup>

Wieler had a clear idea of what the Union should be, how it was to operate, and for what purpose. He summarised his views in his letter written in 1884 to potential donors with an appeal to support the missionary efforts of the newly-established Union.<sup>[66]</sup> He saw the primary task of the Union in “the carrying out of the missionary mandate in a systematic way.”<sup>[67]</sup> On the personal side his programme included such aspects as: a) visiting the widely scattered churches and mission stations; b) fostering a sense of mission among the believers; c) promoting unity and love among the congregations; d) evangelizing the lost.<sup>[68]</sup> His tireless work in the Union for five years was directed towards the accomplishment of this goal. Wieler managed to build on the long established Mennonite tradition of active involvement of non-ordained church members in faith community affairs, shared leadership, and community-delegated authority. At the same time, this tradition was somewhat enhanced by the German Baptist approach to inter-church relations. The crucial role in this process was played by August Liebig, who in 1872 introduced Mennonites to the idea of annual conferences of church deputies, a group of elected itinerant preachers served to homogenize the doctrines and practices of the churches, and a committee overseeing their ministry.<sup>[69]</sup> Besides that, Mennonites adopted the scrupulous German Baptist way of setting an agenda, taking minutes, and restricting the time schedule during business meetings of the conference.<sup>[70]</sup> This model proved to be successful at the initial stage of Union’s development, drawing different churches and personalities together and uniting them not around a strong leader, but instead creating a feeling of brotherly relations among them. Having become the first chair of both the Conference and Missions Committee of the new-born Russian Brotherhood, Wieler served in this capacity until 1887 when he had to leave the country.

The series of conferences occurred between 1882 and 1904 in the southern provinces of the Russian Empire. The first was a joint conference of German, Ukrainian, and Russian believers in the colony of Rückenau, Tavrida *guberniia* (20-23 May 1882).<sup>[71]</sup> Slavic believers comprised less than one-third of the total number of the participants (18 to 59). The deputies represented Tavrida *guberniia*, Kherson *guberniia*, Ekaterinoslav *guberniia*, Elisavetgrad *uezd*, Bessarabia *guberniia*, the North Caucasus and Trans-Caucasia. The participants held both common sessions on mission issues and separate sections on the evangelization of their respective ethnic

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activity in the village of Astrakhanka, Tavrida province,” History of the evangelical movement in Eurasia] 1.1 (Odessa: EAAA, 2004). Wardin claims Pashkov visited Ukraine as early as 1879 and Count Korf even earlier in 1874, see Wardin, *On the Edge*, 192.

<sup>[65]</sup> Dyck, “Moulding the Brotherhood,” 46, 60.

<sup>[66]</sup> Klippenstein, “Johann Wieler.”

<sup>[67]</sup> Ibid, 52.

<sup>[68]</sup> Ibid, 55.

<sup>[69]</sup> Dyck, “Moulding the Brotherhood,” 78.

<sup>[70]</sup> Ibid, 49-50.

<sup>[71]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 557-569. Unfortunately, this was the first and the last joint meeting. In 1883 the Mennonite Brethren held a separate conference. Dyck assumes they were afraid of charges of proselytizing; see Dyck, “Moulding the Brotherhood,” 80.

groups. Delegates discussed missionary, theological, and practical issues. The conference resolved to send pairs of missionaries into areas designated by the Mission Committee in order to avoid unnecessary duplication.<sup>[72]</sup> The appointed missionaries received financial support according to the term of their ministry<sup>[73]</sup> and were responsible not only for evangelising but also for visiting other churches for fellowship and to unify practices.<sup>[74]</sup> The conference elected Johann Wieler the chair of the Missions Committee. There were also elected nine members of the Missions Committee from among the Russian brothers.<sup>[75]</sup> Besides mission issues, the conference discussed the issue of open communion proposed by Colonel Pashkov in his letter. The delegates did not resolve the issue due to the opposition of the Tiflis delegates and decided to suspend it. In general, the conference operated according to Wieler's understanding of the purpose and major tasks of the Union. It was based on the principles of brotherhood and shared responsibility of the churches for mission and mutual encouragement.

The next conference was convened by Johann Wieler in Novo-Vasil'evka (30 April – 1 May 1884). It gave official birth to the Russian Baptist Union. The event was less representative than the meeting in Ruckenuau, but this time all the participants were from Russian and Ukrainian churches. There were thirty-three delegates representing Tavrida *guberniia*, Ekaterinoslav *guberniia*, Kherson *guberniia*, and St Petersburg. The Tiflis church could not send deputies but instead sent a letter with proposals on mission issues. There were also six guests representing the evangelical Molokans (Zakharevtsy). Johann Wieler was re-elected as chair of the conference and the head of the Missions Committee. Johann Kargel was elected vice-chair, and twelve members of the Missions Committee were chosen. Among the most significant resolutions in relation to missionary work were the following:

- Agreement to collect money for the mission fund every three months because every church member promised to support “this good cause” upon admission to the local church;<sup>[76]</sup>
- Missionaries receiving support from the fund should obey the Missions Committee and report to the conference about their activities;
- In response to the North Caucasus deputies, permission was granted to have a separate mission fund and appoint missionaries locally with the only condition being to maintain unity with the entire brotherhood.<sup>[77]</sup>

<sup>[72]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 561–562.

<sup>[73]</sup> *Ibid*, 564–565.

<sup>[74]</sup> *Ibid*, 560, 564, 565.

<sup>[75]</sup> *Ibid*, 566.

<sup>[76]</sup> *Ibid*, 574, 603, 608. This could refer to the pledge, similar to this one: “In the name of the Lord God, Amen. We the undersigned, spiritual sons of Christ's faith, undertook for the glory of the Most High and for the benefit of Christ's faith, in the honour and glory of Christ's name, a journey to Eastern Siberia with the purpose of preaching Christ's faith there according to the dogmas and teaching of Christians of the

Anabaptist confession and promise in front of each other in the glory of the Lord's name, united in brotherly community of God's friends, at no price to separate and leave the community and pledge to serve the interest of our brotherhood till death. In authentication of this we give our brotherly word and vow before the Lord. Amen.” See “Snariazhenie stundistskikh missionerov,” *Istoriia evangel'skogo dvizheniia v Evrazii* [“Equipping Stundist Missionaries” in *History of the Evangelical Movement in Eurasia*] 1.1 (Odessa: EAAA, 2004)

The conference designated new areas for ministry, appointed missionaries, and approved remuneration according to the standards operating among the German brothers.<sup>[78]</sup> Missionary activity now covered all the south of Russia except Bessarabia.

Johann Wieler raised the question of open communion with those baptised in infancy. He clearly connected it to the problem unity:

Since 1) all the believers all over the earth comprise one Body of Christ; 2) Christ pleads in his farewell High-Priestly prayer: “And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one” (John 17, 11),—sincere desire and longing for unity in Christ should be the holy task of all believers. If it is not possible in the rite of baptism, one should seek to make it possible in the breaking of bread, i.e., in the Lord’s Table.<sup>[79]</sup>

The majority of deputies were ready for a compromise—to have a common table with those who after examination proved to be true believers—but after a long discussion the participants decided to leave the problem unresolved and pray to the Lord to give them clear understanding of the unity of Christ’s Body. At that time this had no consequences, but in the long run the inability to approve open communion with fellow believers led Pashkov to withdraw his financial support of the Union in 1890.<sup>[80]</sup>

Several organisational decisions of this meeting are important for understanding the nature of the newly established Union. First, Johann Wieler proposed to arrange all resolutions according to the level of their significance: issues related to mission, issues related to dogmatic and confessional rules, and general issues not covered in the confessional rules. The conference came to the conclusion that decisions on mission issues are mandatory for all churches for “they represent the main purpose of our union.”<sup>[81]</sup> The dogmatic and confessional decisions are not mandatory, but it was deemed desirable that “all communities were unanimous in the dogmatic aspect.”<sup>[82]</sup> The third category was left for the churches’ approval or disapproval. However, the deputies resolved that all decisions of that particular conference should be mandatory for all the churches, although they left to churches the right in the last resort in some doubtful points to act independently according to local circumstances.<sup>[83]</sup> Second, the conference decided that the churches that wanted to be in union with other churches must send their deputies to the conference.<sup>[84]</sup> This laid the pattern of interaction. The Union presupposed fellowship and constant involvement in the brotherhood’s affairs. Third, the conference resolved that a presbyter could not make decisions related to local church affairs without the knowledge of the church and securing its approval.<sup>[85]</sup> This last decision clearly set boundaries on the unrestricted authority of local presbyters who might usurp power and reflects the Mennonite

<sup>[77]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 575-576.

<sup>[78]</sup> Ibid., 571.

<sup>[79]</sup> Ibid., 580.

<sup>[80]</sup> Dyck, “Moulding the Brotherhood,” 91.

<sup>[81]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 581.

<sup>[82]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[83]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[84]</sup> Ibid., 582-583.

<sup>[85]</sup> Ibid., 583.

Brethren model where the community delegates authority and controls the power of leaders. Authority comes from a local community, not the position of a minister.<sup>[86]</sup>

One situation illustrates the democratic way the Union interacted with churches. At one session Wieler read a letter containing a misunderstanding about the conference's authority. The writer expressed a grievance that his church was not invited to the conference, expressed a concern that the conference would appoint a presbyter whom they did not want, and pointed out that any "decision or affirmation of our Russian conference cannot have the power of the laws set by the Russian government."<sup>[87]</sup> The participants clearly replied, "the conference does not interfere in the inner affairs of a church; therefore it does not need to appoint a presbyter to another church, especially against that church's desire."<sup>[88]</sup> They also explained that their resolutions never engage civil law and need not to be approved by it. They commissioned the Missions Committee to elect a group of brothers together with the representatives of the local church to explore this issue and also to plead with the local brothers "to maintain the unity of peace with the brothers of all other churches."<sup>[89]</sup> It is obvious that here the conference encountered personal opposition which was dealt with through the local church and the appointed deputies. This demonstrates that the Union did not exercise power over the local church; the deputies pointed out that the Union is created for the sake of mission which requires obedience to the collegial decisions of the Union from the member churches. Nevertheless, this obedience is not blind; any local church could disapprove the resolutions and act independently.

For the conference gathered in Vladikavkaz on 3-6 April 1885, twenty deputies arrived from Ukraine, Trans-Caucasia, the North Caucasus, and the south of Russia. A new deputy from Saratov *guberniia* and the evangelist Iakov Deliakov were guests of the conference. Johann Wieler chaired the first session when the delegates appointed seventeen missionaries, expanded the existing Missions Committee by adding seven new members, and ascribed localities of ministry to the missionaries. Wieler and Riaboshapka had to leave Vladikavkaz late that night probably due to police surveillance. The next sessions were led by Vasili G. Pavlov and Egor Bogdanov was vice-chair. This changed the mode of discussion.<sup>[90]</sup> The conference focused on the issues of doctrine and those church practices that were of interest to former Molokans.<sup>[91]</sup> The delegates of the Tiflis church raised the questions of homo-

<sup>[86]</sup> This issue occurs later in the confessional magazine *Baptist*: "O presviterakh," [On presbyters] *Baptist* 5 (1907): 12-15; V. Pavlov, "Kto starshe presviter ili tserkov'," [Who has seniority, the presbyter or the church?] *Baptist* 6 (1908): 21-23; S. Akimochkin, "Po povodu stat'i 'Kto starshe presviter ili tserkov'," [On the article "Who has seniority, the presbyter or the church?"] *Baptist* 18 (1909): 19-20.

<sup>[87]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 581.

<sup>[88]</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>[89]</sup> *Ibid.*, 582. This became the standard practice of conflict resolution in the Union. See

also *Ibid.*, 588, 604.

<sup>[90]</sup> Later Wieler did not support decisions made after his departure. See his message to Tiflis on sending minutes to member churches, Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, App. I, 63.

<sup>[91]</sup> Traveling by steamer, parents' authority over children, riding horses on Sundays, etc. were, probably, signs of social inequality that was a key concern to Molokans. Compare the minutes of the Tiflis church, Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, App. I, 37 and V.V. Ivanov's proposal on the reform of Baptist churches in Trans-Caucasia in Aleksii, *Materialy*, 687-688.



geneity of doctrine and practice among the Union's missionaries, complaining that some missionaries teach open communion with those baptised in infancy, and foot washing.<sup>[92]</sup> The conference discouraged these practices on the grounds that they contradict the confession of faith based on God's word.<sup>[93]</sup> The conference also rejected a suggestion to hold a joint conference with evangelical Molokans; because of "differences in doctrine there can be no chance of joint missionary activity."<sup>[94]</sup> This shift towards a stricter dogmatic position and separation from other kindred groups was orchestrated by a Caucasus group. In the long run this move solidified the dogmatic teaching of the churches and transformed the original brotherhood structure into a more centralised one.

The 1886 meeting (26-30 December) was held in the Kuban' region. Only two of sixteen delegates represented Ukraine; others were from the south of Russia and the Caucasus. This meeting marks the beginning of changes in Russian Baptist Union. First of all, it marks the further transition of leadership to Russian believers. This was conditioned by severe government measures against the well-known Ukrainian and German leaders of the movement.<sup>[95]</sup> The majority of Ukrainian converts were from Orthodox background; therefore, the government considered it illegal for them to change their faith. Consequently, they were persecuted or under strict police surveillance. Secondly, Russia's relations with Germany were strained and this led to the growth of Germanophobia<sup>[96]</sup> and subsequent stricter government measures applied to German colonists involved in spreading the gospel among Ukrainians. This brought to the fore Baptists of Molokan origin, especially those who lived in Trans-Caucasia. They enjoyed relative freedom and even managed to attain legal status in 1879 which they retained until 1886.<sup>[97]</sup> The government considered them to be sectarians and did not apply strict measures against them, even when they changed their religious affiliation.

Wieler was formally re-elected chair of Missions Committee although he had already left the country in 1885, escaping arrest.<sup>[98]</sup> Therefore the conference elected Dei Mazaev,<sup>[99]</sup> a son of well-known Molokan sheep-rancher, to be Wieler's assistant. Mazaev was a very capable person and a strong leader. For the next thirty years, with a short interruption in 1909–1911, he served as the president of the Baptist Union and used his finances and organisational and leadership skills for the sake of its further development, flourishing, and structuring. Under his leadership the Union became more centralised as an organisation. Perhaps, he was the leader for such times

<sup>[92]</sup> This obviously assumed Mennonite practices. The protocol leaves an impression of tensions between the Tiflis group and the Herson and Tavrida groups.

<sup>[93]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 590-591.

<sup>[94]</sup> *Ibid*, 591.

<sup>[95]</sup> Riaboshapka, Ratushny, and Khlystun were under strict police surveillance, see *Ibid*, 600.

<sup>[96]</sup> Wardin, *On the Edge*, 208.

<sup>[97]</sup> Pavlov, "Pravda o baptistakh," 345.

<sup>[98]</sup> Dyck, "Moulding the Brotherhood," 91;

Klippenstein says Wieler had to leave the country in 1885, travelling to Romania and to Hamburg; upon his return to Molochna in February 1886 he had immediately to flee to Germany, see Klippenstein, "Johann Wieler," 57.

<sup>[99]</sup> On Dei Mazaev see Steeves, *The Russian Baptist Union*, 30-33; N.A. Levindanto, "Pam'iaty Deia Ivanovicha Mazaeva," [In memory of Dei Ivanovich Mazaev] *Bratskii vestnik* 2-3 (1953): 95-98; Alexandr Nagirniak, "Dei Ivanovich Mazaev," *Bratskii vestnik* 1 (2008): 31-42.

as those. The deputies considered the fact of persecutions, and this determined other decisions of the Union. The deputies resolved to keep a missionary's remuneration in case of arrest, supported the idea of hiring lawyers for brothers under arrest, and established a fund for prisoners and the persecuted.<sup>[100]</sup> The inability of well-known and experienced missionaries to serve pushed the conference to appoint new personalities, who were granted authority only to evangelise, not baptise.<sup>[101]</sup> The conference granted to local churches the right to elect members of the Missions Committee and, at the same time, reduced the committee to nine members instead of nineteen and enlarged the regions they represented. The members of the committee represented the Caucasus, Trans-Caucasia, Tavrida *guberniia*, Kuban', Kherson *guberniia*, Kiev *guberniia*, and Ekaterinoslav *guberniia*. Both the chair and treasurer were restricted in their independent use of funds up to 300 roubles.<sup>[102]</sup> In spite of persecution, the Union decided to expand ministry to the Far East and for this purpose initiated the collection of funds to send missionaries to Amur.<sup>[103]</sup> The next meetings would demonstrate further the departure from the original brotherhood model set by Johann Wieler.

Under Wieler's leadership the organizational structure of the Union was simple and straightforward: annual conferences of the delegates, a group of missionaries, and the missions committee that oversaw their work in between the conferences. The primary building blocks of the brotherhood were the local communities of faith that delegated their representatives to annual meetings. At annual meetings the delegates made decisions on different mission and church issues on behalf of their churches, appointed missionaries, and elected the chair and members of the missions committee. This was a horizontal, egalitarian structure. A local church could basically approve or disapprove any of these decisions. The function of the missionaries was not only to disseminate the gospel among non-believers but also to homogenize the practice of and strengthen fellowship among the existing communities of faith.<sup>[104]</sup> The overall purpose of the brotherhood was to assemble existing human and financial resources for the promotion and support of missionary work. It is obvious that in this model without strong local churches and good relations among them the mission task could not be accomplished.

At the same time, there was another approach to the Union at this early stage of consolidation. Thus in 1891 the November-December issue of *Beseda* published a short article, "On the brotherly union," in which the author explains "the meaning of the annual meeting and the union in general."<sup>[105]</sup> This was the first publication on the matter of union of churches. The author points out that the readers should take heed that "our brotherly institutions correspond to God's Word and the needs of the time and the country."<sup>[106]</sup> He also makes clear that the article is a summary of the practice of Baptists in England and Germany reflected in their church manuals.<sup>[107]</sup>

<sup>[100]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 601, 603.

<sup>[101]</sup> See *Ibid*, 601. Compare Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, 77.

<sup>[102]</sup> Aleksii, *Materialy*, 603.

<sup>[103]</sup> *Ibid*, 604.

<sup>[104]</sup> *Ibid*, 559, 560, 564, 565.

<sup>[105]</sup> Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, App. III, 2-4.

<sup>[106]</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>[107]</sup> The sources have not yet been identified.

First of all, the author postulates the tendency of Baptist churches to unite, which results in the establishment of the union that comprises the majority of German Baptist churches on the basis of their free will.<sup>[108]</sup> Thus, he seems to support the idea that all the unions beyond the local church are more or less pragmatic institutions that may serve for the benefit of the churches. At the same time, the nature of these relations presupposes not only a formal connection but also something deeper, reflected in mutual respect.<sup>[109]</sup> The reasons for establishing such a union are two-fold. The first is mission both inside and outside of the motherland. This is the chief task of the Union.<sup>[110]</sup> Second is the task of consolidating scattered brotherhoods and their ministers, and this is especially important during the initial stages of their existence.<sup>[111]</sup> The Union holds annual conferences that gather the preachers and deputies elected by the churches. These conferences cannot dictate to the local churches but only recommend. The local church has the final authority and should do everything to prevent the intrusion of the Union into local church affairs.<sup>[112]</sup> Nevertheless, the churches can delegate their authority to certain brothers who, upon election, should work according to strictly determined boundaries. The churches can withdraw this authority during the next annual meeting; thus, the decisive power is in the hands of the local church. These inter-church relations are especially valuable in cases when a local community is unable to resolve a matter of argument. But even in such a situation, an advisory meeting can only recommend; the final decision belongs to the local church.<sup>[113]</sup> Thus, this document points to other sources from which the younger Baptist movement could draw ideas for the better development of the Union.

## Coming of Age: The Institutional Development of the Baptist Union

The Edict of Toleration, declared on 17 April 1905, opened a new page in the history of the Baptist Union. For the next six years, Baptists enjoyed freedom and used this time for missionary work and the development of the Union. Beginning in 1911 the government started to restrict religious freedom, and the beginning of the First World War further slowed its development. After the February Revolution in 1917, Baptists received freedom again and enjoyed it for the most part until the late 1920s when the Soviet government began repressing the evangelicals together with other religious groups. The period between 1917 and 1921 was also complicated by the collapse of normal communication between the centre of the country and its periphery, the armed opposition of the White Movement to the Bolsheviks in the south of Russia and Siberia, and the war the Bolsheviks waged against the newly established Ukraine People's Republic.

This time is characterised by quantitative growth, the continuing geographic expansion of the Baptists, the further organisational development of the Union, and

<sup>[108]</sup> Val'kevich, *Zapiska*, App. III, 2.

<sup>[109]</sup> If the decision of a local church concerns the brotherhood, it should communicate this decision to the nearby churches, see *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>[110]</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>[111]</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>[112]</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>[113]</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

an increase in dialogue with the Gospel Christians on the merger of the two unions. The changed context and freedom of conscience immediately following the Edict of Toleration and the February Revolution stimulated theological thinking on crucial issues and their publication in the confessional magazine *Baptist*. This publication was established in 1907 and since then served as a platform for sharing ideas and as a tool for the homogenisation of Baptist thought and practice. Its purpose was to “spread and protect our [Baptist] views and serve for the exhortation and edification of our members.”<sup>[114]</sup> All the significant publications on different ecclesiological issues were published in this magazine. Besides local authors, the editors also tried to introduce their audience to Western theological thought.<sup>[115]</sup>

The Baptist Congresses in Rostov-on-Don (May 1905, May 1906, May 25-30 1907) soon after the Edict of Toleration were significant for the restoration of the Union, consolidation of its work, and further development. In particular, the 1907 congress in Rostov-on-Don decided to differentiate the work of the Union by establishing the Missionary Society of the Russian Evangelical Christians-Baptists.<sup>[116]</sup> The reason behind such a move was the desire “to secure more funds from every member of the churches for the spread of the gospel”.<sup>[117]</sup> It is highly probable that this step was motivated by the idea that missionary work may better stimulate Baptists in the local churches to support the cause than the requests to send their funds for the support of the Union. This also harmonises with the original missionary impulse behind the establishment of the Brotherhood back in the 1880s. This society should be a separate and independent organisation that was merely in “a moral connection” with the Union.<sup>[118]</sup> The Union delegated all missionary activity to the society.<sup>[119]</sup> During the first regular meeting of the society the members very clearly defined the sphere of their responsibility:

“Missionaries of the society according to their duty should be only involved in the business of evangelism; they can baptise, perform Lord’s Supper and marriages only with the concession of the local presbyter or, in the case that there is no presbyter, with the concession of the local church; for the sake of the protection of unity and peace, they should refrain from critique of any existing local regulations and order and not interfere with the internal affairs of the community.”<sup>[120]</sup>

The Union also retained responsibility for 1) the unity, organisation and development of our communities; 2) theological education of preachers; 3) the publica-

<sup>[114]</sup> V. Pavlov, “Nashy sobraniia i torzhestva,” [Our gatherings and celebrations] *Baptist* 2 (1907), 15; on the role of magazines in the process of homogenizing the movement, see Coleman, *The Most Dangerous Sect*, 143-144.

<sup>[115]</sup> A. Sinichkin, “Istoriia zhurnala ‘Baptist’,” [A history of *Baptist* magazine] Kovcheg Baptist Church website, accessed April 4 2015, [http://kovcheg-spasenia.ru/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=268%3A-qq&catid=69%3A2010-10-07-18-43-41&Itemid=95&lang=ru](http://kovcheg-spasenia.ru/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=268%3A-qq&catid=69%3A2010-10-07-18-43-41&Itemid=95&lang=ru).

<sup>[116]</sup> Pavlov, “Nashy sobraniia,” 15-16.

<sup>[117]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[118]</sup> Ibid.

<sup>[119]</sup> Ibid., 19. See also minutes of the Constitutive Meeting of the Missionary Society of the Russian Evangelical Christians-Baptists (5-7 May 1907, Rostov-on-Don), *Baptist* 2 (1907): 23 and the first regular meeting of the members of the society (30 June–2 July 1907, Balashov), *Baptist* 2 (1907): 23-24.

<sup>[120]</sup> Ibid., 24.

tion and distribution of spiritual and Baptist literature; 4) the establishment of funds for the support of disabled preachers, their widows and orphans, and for loans for the construction of prayer houses.<sup>[121]</sup>

The Kiev congress (30 April—6 May 1908) permitted the local communities to organize departments of the Union with only one prerequisite: “they should not contradict the general direction of business, and must maintain unity among themselves and be in agreement with all the churches of the Baptist Union.”<sup>[122]</sup> This move in general agrees with the further development of connections between the local churches and the promotion of local missions.<sup>[123]</sup> These groups built on the organizational strengths of the grass-roots level initiative, but at the same time strove to be in contact with the wider Baptist body.

The change of legal status of Baptists in the Russian Empire, the expansion of the movement, and the differentiation of its activities raised the issue of the proper organization of the Union and the regulation of authority and relations among the churches and the leadership of the Union. Thus, during the congress in Rostov-on-Don (1907) the delegates commissioned Vasilii G. Pavlov to study the existing statutes of the Baptist unions abroad and prepare a draft of the statutes for the congress in Kiev. The first draft of the statutes, known as “Proposal No.1,” was published in the May issue of *Baptist*.<sup>[124]</sup> It was based on the statutes of the German Baptist Union.<sup>[125]</sup> In 1910 *Baptist* published an alternative version of the statutes, known as “Proposal No. 2,” composed by “a small local council of presbyters and other persons gathered in Rostov-on-Don” in 1909.<sup>[126]</sup>

These two proposals represented different perspectives on the constituency, goals, and governance of the Union. The latter differed from the former by a very broad theological basis upon which churches might join the Union. It reads “communities of other ethnic groups and of other designations, but only those that admit the Holy Scriptures as the only source of knowing God and life, the necessity of regeneration and personal assurance of salvation and the acceptance of believer’s baptism.”<sup>[127]</sup> Vasilii G. Pavlov correctly criticised this project for an uncertain doctrinal basis, at

<sup>[121]</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>[122]</sup> “Protokol zasedanii s”ezda,” [The minutes of the congress sessions] *Baptist* 8 (1908): 16.

<sup>[123]</sup> Compare “Raionny s”ezd evangelskikh khristian-baptistov v’ Peskakh,” [Area congress of evangelical Christians-Baptists in Peski], *Baptist* 8 (1908): 19-20.

<sup>[124]</sup> V. Pavlov, “K reorganizatsii nashogo soyuza,” [On reorganization of our union] *Baptist* 5 (1908): 26-30.

<sup>[125]</sup> V. Pavlov, “Besedy ‘Baptista’,” [Conversations of “The Baptist”] *Baptist* 35 (1910): 276.

<sup>[126]</sup> “Protokol,” [Minutes] *Baptist* 10 (1909): 18-19; Pavlov, “Besedy ‘Baptista’,” 276. It is not clear what meeting Pavlov assumes; see V. Pavlov, “Nam pishut. Pis’ma s puti,” [Our corre-

spondence. Letters from travels], *Baptist* 23 (1909): 21. The Rostov-on-Don Congress (27 September—7 October 1909) was very representative, although the minutes do not contain a resolution on statutes; see “Protokol s”ezda predstavitelei baptistskikh obschin,” [The minutes of the congress of the representatives of Baptist communities], *Baptist* 22 (1909): 15-18. However, a report on the St. Petersburg congress indicates that Proposal No. 2 was discussed during the congress in Rostov-on-Don: see N. O[dintsov], “S”ezd baptistov v S.-Peterburge,” 304.

<sup>[127]</sup> “Proekt ustava russkikh evangelskikh khristian baptistov No. 2,” [Project of statutes of Russian Evangelical Christians Baptists No. 2] *Baptist* 35 (1910): 281.

the same time pointing out that Proposal No. 1 was based on the Hamburg Confession of Faith, accepted by all Russian Baptists.<sup>[128]</sup>

The second significant difference is the goals of the Union. Proposal No. 2 sees them to be “a) propagation of the gospel truths through preaching, organising spiritual conferences, talks, or lectures, and through publications; b) the organisation of youth societies and Sunday schools; c) the establishment of enlightenment, charitable, and similar institutions.”<sup>[129]</sup> These goals are too limited and more specific than those presented in Proposal No. 1: “1) Propagation of gospel truths through printing and the administration of publishing houses belonging to the Union; 2) education of capable youths for the ministry of preaching; 3) preaching the gospel, or mission; 4) strengthening fellowship between communities; 5) administration and strengthening of the funds existing in the Union: a) the Union fund, b) loan fund for building prayer houses; c) fund for support of widows, orphans, and invalids, and other funds that may be arranged later; 6) statistics and appointment of the Union congresses.”<sup>[130]</sup>

The third difference was the view of the governance of the Union. According to the compilers of Proposal No. 2, there should be a Board and a Council. The Board consisted of the president, treasurer, their two assistants, and three candidates. The Council consisted of twelve members and four candidates. The functions of the Board included representation of the Union before the government, administration of all activities and institutions of the Union, and stewardship of all finances.<sup>[131]</sup> The Council was to oversee the correctness of the Board’s actions; invite, approve, and dismiss missionaries and assign the localities of their ministry; and prepare the congresses. The Council was to meet at least twice a year.<sup>[132]</sup> The congress appointed a Revision Committee that audited correct use of finances. Proposal No. 1 suggested administration of the Union’s activities around four committees that comprised all the goals of the Union: publishing, schools, missions, and finance. They were responsible for the faithful accomplishment of the Union’s goals and the resolutions of the triennial congress.<sup>[133]</sup> Every committee consisted of seven members and after three years, three or four of them rotated out of the committees. All committees comprised the United Board of the Union. It gathered annually for a general meeting. Besides the United Board, the general congress elected a Representation Committee consisting of three members of the United Board. This committee represented the Union in the courts of law and administrative institutions of the state.<sup>[134]</sup>

An observer of the St Petersburg congress (1910) noted the tensions between the “pro-Russian” group, represented by S. Stepanov, and the “pro-German” group, represented by V. Pavlov and V. Fetler. After some debates Proposal No. 2 was

[128] Pavlov, “Besedy ‘Baptista’, 275-276.

[129] “Proekt ustava No. 2,” 281.

[130] “Proekt ustava russkikh evangelskikh khristian baptistov No. 1,” [Project of statutes of Russian Evangelical Christians Baptists No. 1], *Baptist* 35 (1910): 278.

[131] “Protokol,” 19.

[132] “Protokol,” 19.

[133] “Proekt ustava No.1,” 278.

[134] *Ibid*, 278-279.

[135] “S”ezd baptistov’ v S.-Peterburge,” [Baptist congress in St Petersburg] *Baptist* 38 (1910): 303-304.

approved as the basis for the development of the statutes: “the pro-Russian group takes over again,” summarised the observer.<sup>[135]</sup> The congress voted for the revision of the doctrinal basis of Proposal No. 2 adding this line: “The general foundation of the Union is the Word of God. The Union recognises as a short statement of its confession of faith ‘The Confession of faith and the polity of the churches of baptized Christians, usually called Baptists’, which will be developed and accepted by the congress.”<sup>[136]</sup> It also included the goals of the Union listed in Proposal No. 1, adding a line on the establishment of enlightenment, charitable, and similar institutions.<sup>[137]</sup> A new version of the document does not specify how often the congress was to gather, leaving it open for the decisions of the Board.<sup>[138]</sup> The Board was the only governing body of the Union, consisting of a president, treasurer, secretary, their three assistants, and three candidates.<sup>[139]</sup> The Board was responsible for governing the Union and accomplishing its goals. Since the idea of the Council was not approved, its responsibilities towards the missionaries and congress were included in the job description of the Board.<sup>[140]</sup> Absolutely new to both documents is a proposal made by Vasilii Pavlov specifying that, “all business decisions of the Union are mandatory for all the communities of the Union. The spiritual issues not relating the general rules of doctrine have the essence of recommendations and suggestions.”<sup>[141]</sup> This proposal tries to support a balance of power between the Union and the local churches.

The next annual congress occurred in Moscow (25 September–1 October 1911). One of the major issues of its agenda was the approval of the Baptist Union statutes. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Justice did not affirm the statutes submitted after the St. Petersburg congress, explaining that existing legislation presupposed only “a union of individuals,” not the union of communities.<sup>[142]</sup> In spite of this, the statutes had moral significance for the Union and regulated relations between the Board and the local churches.<sup>[143]</sup>

## Conclusion

In its initial stage, the evangelical revival experienced several influences that formed both the understanding and practices of newly converted Ukrainian believers. In particular, the influence of Pietistic revival among German colonists introduced Ukrainian peasants to the traditional practice of pious house meetings that were quite

<sup>[136]</sup> “Proekt ustava soiuzu russkikh evangel'skikh khristian baptistov,” [Project of statutes of Russian Evangelical Christians Baptists], *Baptist* 44 (1910): 350; see also “IV Vserossiiskii s"ezd evangel'skikh khristian baptistov s' 1 po 9 sentyabrya 1910 g. v S.-Peterburge,” [IV All-Russian congress of evangelical Christians-Baptists 1-9 September 1910 St Petersburg] (St Petersburg, 1910), 25.

<sup>[137]</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>[138]</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>[139]</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>[140]</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>[141]</sup> “IV Vserossiiskii s"ezd evangel'skikh khristian baptistov,” 27; “Proekt ustava soiuzu russkikh evangel'skikh khristian baptistov,” 350.

<sup>[142]</sup> M. Timoshenko, “S"ezd baptistov v Moskve,” [Baptist congress in Moscow] *Baptist* 43 (1911): 343; and M. Timoshenko, “S"ezd baptistov v Moskve,” *Baptist* 45 (1911): 359.

<sup>[143]</sup> V. Pavlov, “O soiuzakh. (Ot perevodchika),” [On the unions. (From a translator)], *Baptist* 49-52 (1911): 399.

common both in Lutheran and Reformed circles. This practice gave a name to the movement—Stundism or Stundo-Baptism. A second formative influence was that of the Mennonite Brethren who helped Ukrainian believers to realize the importance of believer's baptism and encouraged them to separate from the Orthodox Church and establish their own churches. Besides that, the Mennonite Brethren helped in the early stages of the consolidation of the movement, introducing Ukrainian believers to the brotherhood model of inter-church relations. However, the transition of leadership to ex-Molokan believers and the steady growth of the movement at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries demonstrated that Baptists were coming of age. This maturation process led to the institutional development of the Baptist Union that, in its turn, intensified tensions between sympathizers of different organisational models of the Union—German and Russian. The Russian model won, but all subsequent history of Union building demonstrated that the leaders of the Union were familiar with wider Baptist tradition (American, British, Continental European) and tried to adjust it creatively to the local context. Historical analysis of the initial stage of movement's history helps both to identify the influences and practices engraved in its DNA and demonstrate the attempts of indigenous leadership to transform and adjust them to the local context. It is important to remember this to avoid the fallacy of isolationism in an age when a dialogue of traditions is a must for a healthy church and a source of vitality. At the same time, while appreciating other traditions we should not forget our own tradition that comprises different elements giving it a distinct and unique flavour.

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