Russian Protestantism at the Stage of Legalization: 1905-1917

Tatiana NIKOLSKAYA, *St. Petersburg, Russia*

Tatiana Nikolskaya graduated from the historical faculty of Leningrad State University in 1991 and in 2001 completed a Master's program in History at the European University, St. Petersburg. In 2003 she defended her dissertation on Russian Protestantism and State Power, 1905-1991, and was granted a Candidate of Sciences degree. She is the author of scholarly and popular articles based on her dissertation, and concerning other problems of religious and civil history of Russia (late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries). Currently she teaches Church History at St. Petersburg Christian University.

INTRODUCTION

By "Russian Protestantism" is understood those Christian confessions, movements, and religious groups that appeared in the West as a result of the development of the Protestant branch of Christianity and continued in Russia among those who were not necessarily Russian by nationality, but belonged to the Russian language and cultural tradition. They are the Evangelical Christians, the Baptists, the Pentecostals, and the Seventh Day Adventists. These Protestant confessions in particular are those that spread most widely in Russia among the native population and acquired Russian traits and character.

In this article the terms "sect," "sectarianism," and "sectarians" do not carry a negative connotation; they are mainly used in citations and references to documents that conceptually embrace the Russian Protestants.

1. On the Way to Legalization

Russia never experienced a European-type Reformation; only the seventeenth century church schism and the ecclesiastic reforms undertaken by Peter I had a somewhat similar nature. Still earlier, in the Middle Ages, Russian religious dissidence manifested itself in "heresies" such as the well-known *strigolniki* and the Judaizers. In connection with the seventeenth century schism, numerous sects began to flourish as a natural result and continuation. *Khlysty* emerged already by the seventeenth century; Molokans and Dukhobors came into being in the eighteenth century, presumably under the influence of the Bohemian

Brethren (a movement in mid-fifteenth century Bohemia that appealed for a return to the sources of early Christianity). The Dukhobors and Molokans did not mature into independent Russian Protestant confessions, although they made an especially great impact on its early developments. Evangelical historians, following the authors of "A Brief Account of the Origin, Development, and Present Status of the Evangelical Movement in Russia...," which will be discussed later, consider their precursors to be the Molokans of the Don group, or neo-Molokans, who emerged in the1840s and recognized the necessity of baptism and communion.[1] In the 1860s and 70s, Baptism began to spread in the south of Russia in areas where sectarians were densely settled, especially among the Molokans who faced a serious spiritual crisis in the middle of the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Molokans and the southern Baptists kept close personal, family, and religious ties despite their significant confessional disagreements. Simultaneously, Protestant ideas and spiritual quest found their place in Russian Orthodox circles and were manifested in an appeal to the Bible and a reexamination of the formal, ritualistic view of religion. This was embodied in the well-known movement among the St. Petersburg aristocracy inspired by Lord Radstock's preaching. Apparently at that stage, the evangelical movement included mixed trends, combining some elements of traditional Russian sectarianism and Western Protestant ideas. Despite the attempt by V. A. Pashkov and like-minded people to summon a joint congress in 1884,[2] at the early stage of its development the various streams of the evangelical movement failed to amalgamate and produce a unified doctrine. However, by the beginning of the twentieth century, among those similar trends (Stundists, Stundo-Baptists, Russian Baptists, Pashkovites, neo-Molokans, etc.) two movements — the Evangelical Christians and the Baptists — stood out. By 1905 these two groups were the most organized, structurally as well as doctrinally, which allowed them to be legalized swiftly as Russian Protestant confessions in the new situation.

The first Russian Adventist communities emerged in the 1880s, somewhat later than the Evangelical Christians and Baptists. Earlier, however, among Russian sectarians were *subbotniki* who revered Saturday instead of Sunday,

[1] The Russian State Historical Archives. (RSHA). F.796. In.445. File 709. L.220. See also, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* (The history of the Evangelical Christian-Baptists in the USSR) (Moscow, 1989), 42-43.

[2] V. E. Logvinenko, "Stoletie pervogo ob'edinennogo s'ezda predstaviteley evangel'skikh techeniy v Sankt-Peterburge" (One-hundredth anniversary of the first joint congress of the representatives of evangelical groups in St. Petersburg), *Bratskiy vestnik* #4 (1984): 51-57.

and then a few small groups of believers similar to Adventists appeared, such as the Society of Bible-Believing Brethren.[3]

Until 1905, the legal status of the Russian Protestants (except for the Baptists, who were legalized in 1879),[4] as well as that of other sectarians, was insecure. Their communities had no legal status, which meant they were deprived not only of free religious activity, but also of the right to exist at all. Their civil status was questioned; weddings and burials were problematic. The appearance of a group, or even a single family of Russian Protestants in any given area, was regarded by clerical and secular authorities as extremely undesirable. After being admonished by a local Orthodox priest, religious activists were subject to criminal and administrative penalties if they persisted. During the so-called Pobedonostsev epoch in the 1880s and 90s, religious dissidents were exiled to the outlying areas of Russia in large numbers. On July 4, 1894, a regulation with the highest confirmation of the Committee of Ministers declared "the Stundist sect" (in which various evangelical trends were arbitrarily included) "of utmost harm."[5] As the authors of the "Brief Account..." mentioned above complained, "Evangelical Christians are put in a worse position than the Jews, Mohammedans, and pagans who inhabit our empire."[6]

However, hardships produced cohesion and diligence among the Russian Protestants, while their sobriety and the material support they provided to poor fellow believers contributed to their prosperity. Nevertheless, perhaps on account of the insufficiently developed capitalist system and certain peculiarities of the Russian mentality, Russian Protestantism either failed to, or only weakly realized those features characteristic of Western Protestantism: its work ethic, the cult of enterprise, professional, and personal success, and its striving for social integration. The spiritual ideal of the Russian Protestants retained elements characteristic of the Orthodox ideal of holiness. Although most Christians cannot be freed from earthly responsibilities, the highest degree of holiness is separation from "the world," a focus on church ministry, the renunciation of a secular career and marriage, and the use of capital for the benefit of the church and for charitable works, rather than for amassing more wealth . It should be noted that this example was more evident among

[3] *Iz istorii tserkvi adventistov sed'mogo dnia v Rossii* (From the history of the church of the Seventh Day Adventists in Russia) (Kaliningrad: 1993), 10.

[4] *Istoriia evangel'skih khristian-baptistov*, 88-89.

[5] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 1581. L.43.

[6] RSHA. F.796. In.445. File 709. L.232.

educated city-dwellers. Peasants, for whom labor was a life necessity, and a big family was a condition for maintaining a household, were more practical. However, among simple people the Protestant ethic remained undeveloped, or was only poorly developed in comparison to the Old Believers or the Molokans. In Soviet times, insularity among believers and scorn for "worldly" values became important principles of Russian Protestantism, while the marked predominance of women in the congregations, coupled with limited outside contacts (or the direct prohibition against marrying an unbeliever) contributed to mass celibacy.

Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, at least three streams that later developed into the Russian Protestant confessions prevailed in Russia: the Evangelical Christians, the Baptists, and the Seventh Day Adventists. It should be noted that by that time in Russia dozens of different religious movements were conducting missionary activities; however, only a few of them took root among the Russian people. For example, in 1903 the President of the European mission of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormons) visited St. Petersburg to study opportunities for missionary work. However, his trip was unsuccessful[7] and the first Mormon communities appeared in Russia only at the beginning of the1990s. New teachings that took hold at that time in Russia contained elements already familiar to Russian sectarians. For instance, the Seventh Day Adventists were similar to the *subbotniki,* the Evangelical Christians were similar to the Molokans, and the Pentecostals resembled the *khlysty*. Other Protestant confessions common among national minorities (e.g. the Evangelical Lutherans, the Reformed, the Mennonites, etc.) hardly made any impact on the Slavic population during the period under examination.

[7] H.L. Biddulph, *The Morning Breaks* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1996), 57.

2. The Legalization of Russian Protestantism

At the end of the nineteenth century the number of petitions forwarded to the Synod requesting permission to leave Orthodoxy increased each year. The incidence of transfers to other confessions "without prior arrangement" cannot be counted. While the first Russian revolution germinated, political party demands for "freedom of

conscience" were among the popular slogans of the liberal and revolutionary movements (which, of course, were related not only to the "Protestant question"). At the beginning of 1905, representatives of the evangelical movement attempted to draw the government's attention to their problems; they submitted "A Brief Account of the Origin, Development, and Present Status of the Evangelical Movement in Russia and the Needs of the Russian Evangelical Christians (Known Under Various Folk Nicknames as Pashkovites, Baptists, Neo-Molokans, etc.)" to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, dated January 8, 1905, and supplemented it with documented cases of persecution of evangelical Christians.[8] The future Chairman of the Evangelical Christian Union, I. S. Prokhanov, recalled in his memoirs that he personally compiled that document on the basis of material collected by southern evangelical activists I. P. Kushnerov and V. N. Ivanov.[9] However, there are three signatures at the end of the document — the lawyer I. P. Kushnerov, V. I. Dolgopolov, and V. N. Ivanov, representing the Kiev, St. Petersburg, and Kharkov communities of Evangelical Christians, respectively. One must assume that either Prokhanov preferred to keep in the background, or mistakenly exaggerated his role in his memoirs written many years later. The Ministry of Internal Affairs printed a small quantity of "A Brief Account..." as part of the material collected concerning this religious problem. By this time the government finally realized the necessity and inevitability of changes in the realm of religious politics.

On February 26, 1903, an imperial proclamation signed by the tsar, "On Prescriptions Concerning the Improvement of State Order," declared that it was necessary "to strengthen a firm observance of the precepts of religious tolerance by the authorities... which in reverent consideration of the Orthodox Church as the primary and ruling one, grant all Our subjects of different faiths and confessions free exercise of their faith and public worship according to their rites."[10] On December 12, 1904, an imperial edict followed under the same title, signed by the tsar and addressed to the Senate. Paragraph 6 of the edict discussed impending reforms in the area of religious politics.[11]

These steps preceded an imperial edict signed by the tsar and with the highest confirmation of the Committee

[8] RSHA. F.796. In.445. File 709. L.220.

[9] I. S. Prokhanov, *In the Caldron of Russia* (USA: World Union of Evangelical Christians, 1992), 127-128.

[10] 3CCL. V. XXIII, № 22581, 26.02.1903.

[11] 3CCL. V. XXIV, № 25495, 12.12.1904.

of Ministers, "On the Strengthening of the Beginnings of Religious Tolerance," dated April 17, 1905, at the height of the revolutionary disturbances. These documents contained important points that radically changed the relationship of the state to Russian religious minorities. In part, it confirmed, "[recognition] that falling away from the Orthodox faith into another Christian confession or doctrine should not lead to persecution and should not result in inappropriate consequences in relation to personal or civil rights."[12]

[12] ЗССL. V. XXV, № 26125, 26126, 17.04.1905.

According to the new law, all confessions were divided into three groups: Old Believers, sects, and perverse teachings. The third group (which included, for example, the *skoptsy*) kept its former status. The rights of the first two groups were significantly broadened. These religious societies were named "communities" and were allowed to possess movable and real property. The Old Believers and the sectarians were granted permission to establish schools and their own cemeteries. A number of restrictive laws were abolished.

Moreover, the edict proclaimed innocent those who had been charged with religious activities. After February 1905 they were released from prison and exile in large numbers. Thus, in late February 1905, seventy-two sectarians who had rejected military service returned from exile in Siberia. On March 2, S. S. Manukhin appealed to the tsar for the release of 278 Dukhobors. On May 10, at a meeting of the Committee of Ministers, the Minister of Internal Affairs, A. G. Bulygin, reported on the release of another 672 persons charged with religious activities.[13] On June 25, 1905, the edict "On Relieving the Fate of Persons Convicted of Religious Crimes" was issued.[14] For their part, Russian Protestant leaders also defended their fellow believers. For example, I. S. Prokhanov, V. I. Dolgopolov, and other activists of the St. Petersburg community of Evangelical Christians submitted a petition to Prime Minister C. Yu. Witte, who received them and promised to cooperate in the release of religious dissidents.[15]

[13] Dorskaia, A.A. "Vopros o svobode sovesti v Rossiyskom zakonotvorchestve 1905-1917" (The problem of freedom of conscience in Russian lawmaking, 1905-1917) (Candidate of Science Dissertation: 07.00.02 / St. Petersburg History Institute of the Russian Academy of Science, 1997), 60.64.

[14] CS. 1905. № 117. Section 1. Art. 1035.

[15] Prokhanov, Ibid., 134.

The edict "On Strengthening the Beginnings of Religious Tolerance" declared a new status for Russian religious minorities; however, it did not specify the rules of their activity. This system was spelled out in detail in the imperial edict signed by the tsar on October 17, 1906 and addressed to the Senate, called "On the Order of

Establishment and Activity of Old Believer and Sectarian Communities and the Rights and Responsibilities of Those Belonging to the Old Believers' Consensus and the Sectarians Who Have Separated from Orthodoxy."[16] According to the new law, sectarians (to which category Russian Protestants belonged) were granted "free profession of their faith," and allowed to organize religious communities. However, prayer houses could only be built with the permission of a governor or a mayor. Sectarians wishing to establish a community had to submit a written application to the regional administration or governor's office signed by at least fifty people. The local administration was required to consider this application in a month's time. A sectarian community could cover several *guberniias* or *oblasts* (provinces or regions); in that case the governor or mayor of those areas had to personally grant permission. If the case had a positive response, the administration entered the community in the registry. Registered communities had the right to select their own teachers, build prayer houses and other related buildings, organize hospitals and schools, acquire or get rid of real estate, build up capital, make contracts, take legal responsibility, and press claims and testify in court. Acquisition of real estate worth more than five thousand rubles could only be permitted by imperial authority. Besides that, sectarians could keep records of the civil status of their congregational membership.[17]

[16] 3CCL. V.XXVI. №28424, 17.10.1906.

[17] 3CCL. V.XXVI. №28424, 17.10.1906.

The positive laws on legalization and the civil rights of Russian Protestants were contradicted by paragraph 90 of the Criminal Code of 1903, which stated that "anyone convicted of either the public reading or declamation of a sermon, speech, or essay, or of distributing or publicly exhibiting any essay or depiction that provokes the Orthodox to transfer to another confession, or to a schismatic teaching, or sect, these actions being committed with the intention of leading the Orthodox astray, will be punished by imprisonment for a period of not more than one year, or arrest."[18] Due to the contradiction in the law, the status of Russian Protestants remained ambiguous and permitted arbitrary actions on the part of the authorities. However, despite inconsistency and contradictions, the new laws legalized the status of Russian Protestants in Russia and opened up the way for unprecedented possibilities for their further development.

[18] 3CCL. V.XXIII. №22704, 22.03.1903.

3. Russian Protestants and Russian Society, 1905-1914

Russian Protestants were eager to take advantage of the opportunities created by the first Russian revolution, not only in order to assert their own rights, but above all to reinforce their religious activities: missions, education, charity, publishing, etc. They organized congresses and conferences, initiated theological courses for preachers, and founded periodicals. The first short-term courses for preachers were held in St. Petersburg from December 1, 1906 to January 15, 1907. Among the first lecturers were the leaders of the St. Petersburg congregation of Evangelical Christians, I. V. Kargel, Baron P. N. Nikolay, I. S. Prokhanov, and V. Offenberg. "Brothers" were admitted to these courses — active preachers not more than thirty-five years of age.[19]

Russian Protestants also began to publish periodicals. On October 23, 1905, engineer-technologist Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov submitted an appeal to the Printing Administrative Department asking the Minister of Internal Affairs for permission to publish in St. Petersburg a spiritual-educational magazine entitled *Khristianin* (The Christian).[20] The publication program included translated and original sermons, spiritually edifying articles, poems, stories, a special section for children and youth, etc. In addition, since1910 Prokhanov had published the newspaper *Utrenniaia zvezda* (The morning star). In 1907 the Baptist Union launched a magazine, *Baptist* (The Baptist). The leader of the St. Petersburg Baptists, V. A. Fetler, published two magazines, *Vera* (Faith) and *Gost'* (The guest).[21] The Adventists distributed a magazine brought from abroad, *Maslina* (The olive). Besides this, Evangelical Christians and Baptists cooperated with such Molokan periodicals as *Dukhovny khristianin* (The spiritual Christian) and *Molokanskiy vestnik* (The Molokan messenger).

After the edict of October 17, 1906, the Baptist congregation of Kiev was one of the first to register in 1907; in 1908 another two Evangelical Christian congregations led by I. S. Prokhanov and I. V. Kargel were registered in St. Petersburg.[22] On May 8, 1909, V. A. Fetler registered the Russian Baptist congregation in St. Petersburg.[23] The right-wing radical newspaper, *Zemshchina* (The populace), indignantly noted that in 1910 in St. Pe-

[19] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2165. L.136-136(back side).

[20] RSHA. F.776. In.8. File 2116. L.1.

[21] RSHA. F.776. In. 9. File 1679. L.7. See also, S. N. Savinskiy, *Istoriia russko-ukrainskogo baptizma* (The history of Russian-Ukrainian Baptism) (Odessa: Bogomyslie, 1995), 69.

[22] *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov*, 166.

[23] CSA (St. Petersburg). F. 1001. In. 7. File 47. L.4.

tersburg on Sundays twenty-eight Baptist groups met; twenty of them worshipped in the Russian language, the rest used German, Latvian, Estonian, Swedish, Finnish, and English.[24] In the same year, St. Petersburg Baptists began to build their first prayer house; the cornerstone was laid on September 9, on the 24th line of Vasil'evskiy Island.[25] Later it became known as *Dom Evangeliia* (House of the Gospel) and until 1930 was the largest Russian Protestant center in the city.

[24] *Zemshchina*. October 14, 1910.

[25] *Birzhevie vedomosti*, September 9, 1910. № 11908.

The popularity of the Seventh Day Adventists was also growing, although rather more slowly. In 1905 at a church congress they made the decision to open a northern "missionary field" centered in St. Petersburg. In 1908, according to the report of the Orthodox consistory (which refers to "their ringleader"), there were sixty Adventists in St. Petersburg. They energetically preached their message among the city dwellers, especially on Gutuevskiy Island and other outlying working class neighborhoods.[26]

[26] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2290. L.237.

The edict "On Strengthening the Beginnings of Religious Tolerance" undermined the position of the Orthodox Church. If before 1905 a person baptized into Orthodoxy as a child could not leave it without the threat of criminal or administrative punishment, now the edict allowed not only the mature adherents of other confessions to leave Orthodoxy, but also proselytes who had been converted as a result of free religious propaganda after 1905. In a speech at a pastors' meeting on September 23, 1909, St. Petersburg Metropolitan Antoniy (Vadkovsky) thus commented on the situation: "At first... mass apostasy from Orthodoxy was overwhelming, but those who fell away in fact did not belong to the Orthodox Church, they were simply registered with it. Before the law on religious tolerance was passed, any falling away from the Orthodox Church was penalized as a state crime. This kept many within the Church; there were cases when those nominal Orthodox asked to be let go, but were never granted release."[27]

[27] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2348. L.51-51(back side).

Having analyzed the spiritual condition of their flock, the representatives of the Orthodox clergy found it unsatisfactory. Tikhon, Bishop of Kostroma and Galich, wrote in his 1906 diocesan report: "Sincerely believing and deeply religious simple people, undeveloped and completely uneducated, remain ignorant of religion. Their

knowledge of doctrine is scant; their notions are vague, coarse, and even wild... The ignorance of the people is fertile soil for all sorts of superstitions, omens, and fortune telling. House spirits, wood-goblins, and water-sprites are commonly believed in."[28]

If before 1905 the spiritual education of the Russian people was the prerogative of the Orthodox Church, now it faced serious and extremely active competitors. Besides, the "exhortation" (that is, making somebody change his or her mind) of the sectarians could be performed only on a voluntary basis with no appeal to secular authorities. For example, in 1906, when two Russian Orthodox missionaries, Ayvazov and Kal'nev, turned up uninvited at the preachers' hall of the St. Petersburg Adventist, Colonel von Beiningen in Gorokhovaia Street and began to rebuke Adventism, "the colonel, having listened awhile to Ayvazov's admonition, demanded that he be silent, but when he kept talking, the colonel began to turn off the lights in his apartment. The missionaries had to depart..." (an excerpt from a report on the state of the St. Petersburg diocese, dated 1908).[29]

St. Petersburg was not the only place where Russian Protestantism spread in the northwest. Peasants who returned home from working in big cities often brought Protestant teaching to a village.[30] Frequently, the privileged classes became apologists of Russian Protestantism. For example, among the founders of the Evangelical Christian congregation in Novgorod was Zakhariy Alekseevich Sharov, the owner of a shoe factory.[31] In the Novgorod district of Shimsk, the evangelical congregation was organized through the efforts of Polunina, a merchant's wife who settled there in 1910.[32]

Pentecostalism was the youngest stream in Russian Protestantism; like Adventism it emerged in the United States and reached Russia in 1911-13. The teaching that the church possesses and should use the gifts of the Holy Spirit in worship ("speaking in tongues," prophecy, healing, etc.) found a response among the Evangelical Christians and other Protestants.[33] Owing to some similarities in prayer practices, the Pentecostals in Russia were often viewed as a variety of the *khlysty,* which caused difficulties in their identification as an independent movement. For example, a report on the state of the St. Petersburg

[28] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2152. L.74-74(back side).

[29] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2165. L.130(back side).

[30] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2645. L.52-53.

[31] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2757. L.63(back side).

[32] A. I. Korabel', "Koloski polynikhi" (Ears of wormwood), *Lad'ia* № 8,9 (2000).

[33] *Istoriia evangel'skih khristian-baptistov,* 397-398.

diocese dated 1914 notes that, "Some of the Baptists have fallen into *khlystovstvo* and call themselves "Pentecostals" who openly meet for their prayers..."[34] Certain "Stundo-khlysty" are mentioned in a Kherson diocesan report dated 1916.[35] As in the West, some newly converted Pentecostals stayed in their former congregations, others left and created separate communities (for instance, in 1913 in Helsingfors a part of the former members of Russian Evangelical Christian communities united in a group called Christians of Pentecost).[36]

Having become a legal movement and gradually gathering strength, Russian Protestants drew diverse reactions from political and social forces. The ultra-right radicals (Black Hundred), declaring their loyalty to the Orthodox Church, considered all sectarians in general, and Russian Protestants in particular, the enemies of Orthodoxy and hence of Russia in general. Newspaper issues published by the Union of the Russian People, *Russkoe znamia* (The Russian banner) and *Zemshchina* (The populace) concerning Russian Protestants (namely, the Evangelical Christians and the Baptists) bear representative titles: "A Baptist Crusade in Karelia,"[37] "The Defeat of Orthodoxy,"[38] "A Crusade Against Orthodoxy," "Against Fetler's Heresy,"[39] "The Jews and Russian Sectarianism,"[40] and many others. These articles are characterized by their fear of the real or overstated success of sectarian propaganda, emphasizing the imagined patronage of sectarians by local authorities and governments, and complaints about the underprivileged status of Orthodoxy, retreating under the attack of well organized, wealthy, protected sectarians. The position of the Black Hundred and their psychological perception of the sectarians to a great extent resembles their attitude to the Jews: fear mixed with hatred and an exaggerated emphasis on their true or imagined merits, such as determination, unity, and spirit of enterprise, as opposed to the Russians' helplessness and gullibility.

It should be noted that although some of the Orthodox hierarchs and clergy did share the ideas of the Black Hundred, this was not the official position of the Russian Orthodox Church. For example, St. Petersburg Metropolitan Antoniy (Vadkovskiy) expressed a more balanced view. At a pastoral meeting on October 26, 1909, when Prince M. N. Volkonskiy, a member of the Union of the Russian

[34] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2836. L.54(back side).

[35] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2769. L.27.

[36] Finland district report dated 1915. RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2741. L.21(back side).

[37] *Zemshchina*. July 28, 1910. № 372.

[38] *Russkoe znamia*. July 27, 1910. № 168.

[39] *Russkoe znamia*. July 23, 1910. № 164.

[40] *Russkoe znamia*. September 18, 1910. № 210.

People, expressed his outrage that Baptists were preaching openly at the city Duma and other places in the capital, Metropolitan Antoniy responded that previously, "falling away from Orthodoxy was punished by state laws, and thus missionaries were viewed by many as police officials," whereas nowadays, "Orthodox missionaries must rely on their moral vigor alone." Metropolitan Antoniy admitted that, "it was unworthy of the church to resort to coercive measures" (St. Petersburg diocesan report, 1909).[41]

Two newspapers belonging to the Constitutional Democrats *Rech'* (Speech) and *Russkie vedomosti* (The Russian gazette), promoting the equality of all nations and confessions, were very sympathetic to Russian religious minorities. Along with purely informational publications about the Russian Protestants, the Constitutional Democrats also criticized incidents of persecution on the part of the authorities. Such were the articles concerning the shutting down of religious meetings of the Evangelical Christian-Baptists in the village of Obodov, Kharkov diocese,[42] in Peterhof and Shlissel'burg in St. Petersburg *gubernia*,[43] and in Moscow.[44]

Whereas the Black Hundred feared the emancipation of Russian religious minorities and the Constitutional Democrats supported their striving for equality, the Social Democrats attempted to use their struggle in the cause of revolutionary goals. Already in 1903 the participants of the Second Congress of the Social Democrats adopted a resolution "On Work Among the Sectarians," "...in order to attract them to social democracy."[45] As a result of the resolution, a special newsletter for sectarians, *Rassvet* (The dawn), edited by V. D. Bonch-Bruevich, was set up, with a circulation of two thousand copies (nine issues were published in 1904). Bonch-Bruevich divided the sectarians into two groups according to their level of social activism: "freethinkers" and "evangelics" (Bible fundamentalists); actually the "evangelics" (in which group Russian Protestants were included) were less receptive of revolutionary propaganda than the "freethinkers."[46] The "evangelics" themselves confirmed that fact. Thus, the authors of "A Brief Account..." report that, "during the recent unrest and riots among the peasants of Poltava and other regions, the Evangelical Christians reached a common de-

[41] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2848. L.51-51(back side).

[42] *Rech'*. July 17, 1910. № 192.

[43] *Rech'*. August 2, 1910. № 208.

[44] *Russkie vedomosti*, 1910. № 176.

[45] *KPSS v rezoliutsiiakh i resheniiakh s'ezdov, konferentsiy i plenumov* (CPSU in resolutions and decrees of congresses, conferences, and plenums of the Central Committee), vol.1 (Moscow: 1983), 70.

[46] ACEB (St. Petersburg). F.4. In.1. File 20. L.17(back side)-18.

cision to excommunicate not only those who take part in riots, but also those who approve of the manner of action of mutineers, or among whom are found brochures and proclamations."[47]

[47] RSHA. F.796. In.445. File 709. L.224.

Undoubtedly, the revolutionary events of 1905-1907 that divided Russian society could not but influence the Russian Protestants. For example, the St. Petersburg diocesan report dated 1905 states that, "the Stundo-Pashkovites in Iamburg district declared themselves against the paying of land taxes and in favor of a genuine agrarian movement,"[48] though there is no information concerning their participation in disorders. Russian Protestants showed themselves more active in territories where sectarians were densely settled. For example, according to diaries of the renowned Baptist leader V. G. Pavlov, at the end of 1905, the Molokans and Baptists of the villages of Novo-Ivanovka and Novo-Saratovka in Elisavetpol'sk *guberniia* took part in "Armenian-Tatar disturbances," skirmishes, and robberies. On December 8, 1905, in Tiflis, Baptist and Molokan leaders adopted a resolution censuring robbery; and in January 1906, V. G. Pavlov, V. G. Vodop'ianov, N. G. Sachkov, and others left for Novo-Ivanovka and Novo-Saratovka. Having met with their fellow believers, they called them to repentance and the restoration of what was stolen or damaged.[49]

[48] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2105. L.115(back side).

[49] ACEB (St. Petersburg). F.4. In.1. File 27a. L.149-150.

Having past experience with involuntary confrontations with the law, Russian Protestants also defended their rights. For example, on May 21, 1906, the St. Petersburg Pashkovites submitted a petition to the chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, in which they "attempted to prove that the law must permit completely free and public propaganda of every religious teaching."[50] I.S. Prokhanov compiled and published a collection of regulations on freedom of conscience called *Zakon i vera* (Law and faith)[51] in cooperation with State Duma deputies (Constitutional Democrats and Octobrists). A Kiev lawyer, Ivan Petrovich Kushnerov also actively asserted the rights of his fellow believers. However, the majority of Protestants sought to use religious freedom first of all for mission and education, rather than social activism. In official church documents, Russian Protestants typically stressed their political neutrality and loyalty to the monarchy.

[50] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2165. L.137(back side).

[51] I. S. Prokhanov, *In the Caldron of Russia,* 138-141.

4. Russian Protestants During World War I

The beginning of World War I brought Russian Protestants a change for the worse. On the one hand, they shared all the hardships of the Russian people (military operations, thousands of refugees, the loss of wage-earners, economic crisis, high prices, etc.). A Pskov diocesan report dated 1916 states that the sectarians, "under the influence of dreadful war events have been keeping quiet since sectarian men have been drafted and the women have no time for propaganda because of housekeeping."[52]

On the other hand, Russian Protestants became an object of blame as adherents of the "German" faith, as German sympathizers, and as either actual or potential German agents. In 1914, along with the shutting down of German newspapers, the use of the German language was prohibited in private life; on August 18, 1916, the teaching of German was banned in all educational institutions throughout the Russian Empire. All Protestant periodicals, as well as theological courses in St. Petersburg, were closed down. The local authorities began to shut down prayer houses; active ministers who were not drafted were exiled from big cities. For instance, in Petrograd, of twenty meeting places of Evangelical Christians and Baptists, only four remained functioning, and, one after the other, the head of the Petrograd Baptist community V. A. Fetler (however, he and his family left for Sweden, due to the intercession of some influential persons[53]) and his successor I.V. Neprash[54] were sent into exile. In 1915, Adventist places of worship and a publishing house were also closed down in Petrograd, while their leader, S. S. Efimov, was arrested and exiled to the Angara River.[55]

The Protestants, who had become accustomed to freedom, realized that they were losing their status. However, they did not cease their missionary activities, although they became more cautious. "The seduction was more discreet than in pre-war time," stated the St. Petersburg diocesan report of 1915. "The 'evangelist' leaders avoided talking to missionaries or to zealous Orthodox laymen. The literary propaganda of the 'evangelists' has been nullified...The war put the seal of public restraint on the Baptists; however, they have penetrated secretly into field-hospitals, where they distributed their literature and gospels with underlined passages, etc."[56]

[52] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2760. L.17(back side).

[53] *Istoriia evangel'skih khristian-baptistov,* 163-164.

[54] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2783. L.47(back side)-48.

[55] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2783. L.47(back side)-48. See also, *Iz istorii tserkvi adventistov sed'mogo dnia,* 199-201.

[56] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2783. L.48.

During World War I, an "antimilitarist movement" (pacifism) become a noticeable phenomenon. A number of instances of refusing military service occurred not through religious convictions only. Already in 1914 mobilization caused reservists to riot and desert.[57] In subsequent years, pessimism, war fatigue, and also German and revolutionary propaganda caused mass desertion. Against this background the number of refusals of military service on the grounds of religious conviction appears insignificant.[58] Nevertheless, the pacifist position within Russian Protestantism, which became apparent during World War I, made a significant impact on the further development of these confessions. Among Christian anti-militarists one could find Russian Orthodox, Dukhobors, Molokans, Tolstoyans, Quakers, and other confessions; however, Russian Protestants such as Adventists, Baptists, and Evangelical Christians were considerably more numerous.[59]

Though the conditions of war and persecution shook the position of Russian Protestantism, it managed to become an irreversible phenomenon of Russian religious life. In a comparatively short period it forced out the traditional Russian sects and spread all over the country — especially in the regions of dense sectarian settlements in the south of Russia, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, and southern Siberia. According to the report dated 1916, in Kharkov diocese the number of sectarians (mostly "Stundo-Baptists") had reached 6,341 people.[60]

The Omsk diocese report dated 1916 refers to ten thousand sectarians of all persuasions, although probably that is an exaggeration, especially since a precise figure could not be determined because of the large number of migrants.[61]

According to the same report, "in terms of finances the sectarians of Omsk diocese live much better than most of the Orthodox around them. The sectarians in the city have businesses, mills, coaching inns, and trades; the rural sectarians are involved in farming and cattle breeding on a large scale. The Baptists support their poor brothers with money, bread, cattle, agricultural tools, and machines. To their credit, most of the sectarians, with few exceptions, excel in labor."[62]

[57] D. Sanborn, "Besporiadki sredi prizyvnikov v 1914 i vopros o russkoy natsii: Novy vzgliad na problemu" (Disturbances among draftees in 1914 and the question of the Russian nation: A new perspective), in *Rossiia i Pervaia mirovaia voyna* (Russia and World War I) (St. Petersburg, 1999), 208.

[58] For example, a list of antimilitarists of eighteen confessions, archived at the Department of the Religious Affairs of Foreign Confessions, contains several hundreds of these names. See RSHA. F.821. In.150. File 961.

[59] RSHA. F.821. In.150. File 961.

[60] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2768. L.74.

[61] RSHA. F.796. In.442. File 2791. L.11.

[62] RSHA. F.821. In.150. File 961. L.11-11(back side).

Thus, although during World War I the state politics was inclined to stop the development of Russian Protestantism as the "German faith," it did not lead to any appreciable result. As soon as the persecution was over, it began to spread with new strength.

5. Russian Protestants in 1917

The February Revolution of 1917 brought Russian religious minorities a complete, though brief, time of freedom and took away the priority position of the Russian Orthodox Church. Together with political prisoners, thousands of religious dissidents received amnesty. In various towns and villages the believers resumed their prayer and evangelistic meetings with no hindrances on the part of the local authorities. On March 20, 1917 the Provisional Government adopted a decree concerning the abolishment of all religious and national restrictions,[63] and on July 14, 1917, a decree concerning freedom of conscience was also adopted.[64]

Russian Protestant leaders hailed the new order, which they associated not only with the acquisition of rights and freedoms in the present, but also with wide prospects for future development. The leading articles of Protestant publications of that time are full of revolutionary phraseology. Thus, for example, the first issue of the Baptist magazine *Slovo istiny* (The word of truth) proclaimed:

"No, it is not a dream! Indeed, Great Russia has shaken off the ancient burden of dominating autocracy. The structure that oppressed soul and spirit has collapsed; the chains of evil have been torn asunder. And now the past seems to be a dream, so dreadful, murderous, poisonous, and endless. The dying agony took a long time; the whole country was choked by its stench."[65]

On May 17-25, 1917, the All-Russian Congress of Evangelical Christians took place in Petrograd with the participation of over one hundred delegates and guests from the Baptist Union. The participants studied a bill of the Provisional Government concerning confessional issues and put forward a number of proposals broadening religious freedom.

In addition, I. S. Prokhanov, who had always been interested in social activism, raised a question concerning the organization of a Christian-Democratic party, "Resur-

[63] CS. 1917. Section I. № 70. Art.400.

[64] CS. 1917. Section I. № 188. Art.1099.

[65] *Slovo istiny*, № 1 (1917): 1.

rection." However, the Congress found it "undesirable for the communities to be carried away by politics" and did not approve the idea of establishing a party from among local church members.[66] In his autobiography Prokhanov does not mention this episode and underlines his indifference towards politics: "Though I witnessed the development of revolution and its extraordinary political events, my consciousness was full of our religious questions only, not politics. Together with my brothers-in-arms we proclaimed the following slogan at one of the conferences, 'No to politics, yes to the gospel.'"[67] In fact, Prokhanov was very keen on politics and later even on communist ideas, as shown by his publications, advocacy, and even attempts at organizing communes during the first years of Soviet power.

The All-Russian Baptist Congress that gathered in Vladikavkaz on April 20-27 hailed the achievements of the February Revolution, although it did not pay any special attention to political and social questions.[68] Earlier, on April 3, 1917, Pavel Pavlov (V. G. Pavlov's son) and Mikhail Timoshenko put political and religious claims forward on behalf of the Baptists at the Grand Auditorium of the Polytechnic Museum in Moscow. "Baptist Political Claims," compiled by P. V. Pavlov, corresponded to the model of the secular democratic state realized in several Western countries (e.g. France, the United States). It included such principles as the establishment of a democratic republic, freedom of assembly, union, speech, and press, the separation of church and state, the state registration of marriage, and the equality of all citizens, regardless of their faith and nationality, etc.[69]

At the same meeting V. G. Pavlov delivered his report, which summarized the previous documents: "There cannot be any true freedom of conscience if the church is united with the state. For, if one faith is declared privileged, then the others are demeaned... Religion must be a private matter... Our ideal is a free church in a free state."[70]

On July 20-24, 1917, the Seventh Day Adventists gathered for their third All-Russian Congress in Saratov. The adopted resolutions included, "thankfulness to God for His miraculous protection in the past, for freedom granted, and for the release of all prisoners after the coup d'etat in Russia."[71] The congress also decreed to intercede before the Provisional Government for the separation of

[66] *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov,* 187.

[67] I. S. Prokhanov, *In the Caldron of Russia*, 170.

[68] *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov,* 179.

[69] *Slovo istiny*, № 1 (1917): 3.

[70] V. A. Popov, *Stopy blagovestnika* (The feet of him who brings good tidings) (St. Petersburg, 1996), 196.

[71] *Iz istorii tserkvi adventistov sed'mogo dnia,* 44.

church and state and the exclusion from the law of all restrictive paragraphs related to religion. In the delegates' opinion, the state should not interfere in the religious sphere, and vice versa.[72]

[72] Ibid., 44-45.

Later on, some of the ideas expressed by the Russian Protestants were reflected in such decrees as "On Land," "On the Separation of Church and State, and of Schools from the Church," and a number of other Bolshevist documents. However, despite its declared principles, the Soviet state became atheistic rather than secular, practicing interference in religious affairs, not to mention discrimination and unprecedented persecution of believers.

In 1917, Russian Protestants expressed their social and political positions at various meetings and congresses, worked out their ministry plans in accordance with the new conditions, and studied many internal church problems. The short period between February and October 1917 was very successful and fruitful for Russian Protestants, but it did not justify the bright hopes of the believers or of other Russian citizens. The Provisional Government, which followed a policy of equality for all confessions, was soon overthrown; the Bolsheviks, while they confirmed the principles of equal rights and supported the Russian religious minorities in word, left them no long-term perspective for free development in the future.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the period of 1905-1917 was a fairly auspicious time for the establishment of Russian Protestantism in its legal form. During events from 1905-1907 and in 1917, Russian Protestants were eager to use their political freedom and revolutionary achievements in the cause of active religious propaganda, the solution of organizational and other internal church questions, and the conducting of denominational congresses. Their successful missionary activities contributed to the rapid spread of Protestant ideas and the emergence of congregations in essentially all regions of the country. Although before 1917 they were a persecuted religious minority, their participation in political activities was sporadic, whereas their social activity was directed to freedom of conscience in Russia, the establishment of civil institutions, and the defense of

the rights of fellow believers. Unlike Protestants in the West, the Russian Protestants could not and did not strive to become an influential movement, claiming a special social and political role in the history of the country. Besides this, the period of relative freedom was too short and complex for the process of emancipation and integration of Russian Protestants into national society to become irreversible. Nevertheless, the legalization of Russian Protestantism was very significant. Later on, despite hardships and severe persecution, Russian Protestantism preserved its legal status (at least partly, on the level of individual communities or confessions) and proved itself to be an independent and tenacious phenomenon of Russian religious life.

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