

ABSTRACT

Human Rights and Religious Dissidents in the Brezhnev Era: The Effect of the Human Rights Movement on the Activism of Religious Dissidents

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On December 5, 1965, an unprecedented event took the entire world by surprise: Soviet dissidents held the first Soviet Constitution Day demonstration in Moscow, making the growing human rights movement in the Soviet Union official. Gaining ground in the Soviet Union since Nikita Khrushchev's Thaw, a temporary period of less repression and censorship of Soviet citizens by the Soviet state, the Soviet human rights movement exploded onto the public scene after the arrest of two prominent Soviet writers Yuli Daniel and Andrei Sinyavsky. The movement expanded further after Leonid Brezhnev's invasion into Czechoslovakia to crush the Prague Spring in 1968 garnered harsh criticism by Soviet intellectuals. Seeking to halt the violation of human rights by the Soviet state, the Soviet human rights movement expanded on all fronts, as movements pursuing freedom of conscience, press, speech, and national self-determination began to organize. Religious believers working toward the achievement of religious liberty were one of the most important groups within the Soviet human rights movement, and yet remain an understudied topic.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore the relationship between the emerging Soviet human rights movement and Orthodox and Baptist dissidents as well as to analyze and understand the role the human rights movement played in developing methods of dissent and activism among Russian Orthodox and Baptist dissidents. The research question this dissertation seeks to explore is: How did the growing human rights movement in the Soviet Union influence the methods and thinking of Russian Orthodox and Baptist dissidents in the Brezhnev era? This dissertation will demonstrate that Orthodox dissidents adopted methods of dissent and thinking from the Soviet human rights movement, because the Orthodox possessed no experience in opposition to the state in their history. Baptist dissidents, by contrast, inherited a strong legacy of dissent to the state from their predecessors and were not significantly influenced in their methods of dissent toward the Soviet state.

Human Rights and Religious Dissidents in the Brezhnev Era:
The Effect of the Soviet Human Rights Movement on the Activism of Religious Dissidents

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GLOSSARY

All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB): A Russian Baptist administrative union formed in 1944 comprised of Russian Evangelical Christians and Russian Baptist sects. The union received official recognition from the Soviet government and were allowed to register their church communities.

Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights: The Christian Committee was founded in 1976 by Gleb Yakunin, a Russian Orthodox priest and Orthodox dissident. The organization was ecumenical and sought to provide legal advice to all religious communities, lobby for freedom of conscience on behalf of all religious believers, and assist in publishing appeals and facts received from all religious denominations. The Christian Committee was inspired by Yakunin's work with the Soviet human rights movement and continued its operation until roughly 1980 after Yakunin's imprisonment.

Committee on Human Rights in the USSR: The group was founded by Andrei Sakharov in 1970 along with Andrei Tverdokhlebov and Valeri Chalidze. Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Pavel Litvinov, and Igor Shafarevich, and Elena Bonner were honorary members. The group was one of the first human rights groups established in the Soviet Union and was dedicated to publishing and collecting information on the violations of all basic human rights in the Soviet Union. The group opposed secret, close trials, punitive psychiatry, and arbitrary imprisonment for political dissidents.

Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC): Established by the Soviet state in July 1944 to handle communication between the Soviet state and all church communities and denominations apart from the Russian Orthodox Church. CARC was eventually merged with the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) to create the Council of Religious Affairs (CRA).

Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC): Established by the Soviet state in October 1943 to handle communication between the Soviet state and the Russian Orthodox Church. CAROC was eventually merged with CARC to create the Council of Religious Affairs (CRA).

Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists (CCECB): A union established in 1965 by a schismatic group of Russian Baptists, most often referred to as the *Initiativniki* Baptists. The CCECB was an administrative union, which oversaw communication among *Initiativniki* communities. The CCECB sought to stay out of the internal affairs of church communities and encouraged autonomy for each individual religious community.

Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU): The official and ruling party of the USSR. The only party in the USSR until 1990, the CPSU was founded in 1912 by Vladimir Lenin and the Bolsheviks and dissolved in 1991.

Council of Religious Affairs (CRA): Established in 1965 by the Soviet state, the organization replaced the former CAROC and CARC, effectively merging the two organizations into one. The newly formed CRA was responsible for managing communication between the Soviet state and all religious communities in the Soviet Union.

de-Stalinization: The process of political reform that the Soviet Union underwent beginning after the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953. The process was officially started by Nikita Khrushchev on February 26, 1956 at the Twentieth Party Congress where Khrushchev delivered the Secret Speech, which denounced the cult of personality created during Stalin's rule. Khrushchev proclaimed that the cult of personality was inconsistent with Communist ideology.

Helsinki Accords: Also known as the Helsinki Final Act, the act was signed in Helsinki, Finland in 1975 by the United States, Canada, and most European states, including the Soviet Union. Along with various other provisions, the Helsinki Accords included an article pledging to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, which included the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or belief. The Helsinki Accords were particularly important for human rights groups in the Soviet Union as the Accords provided an international standard for fundamental human rights and lent justification to the activists cause to achieve human rights. The Accords resulted in numerous Helsinki "watchdog groups" established in the Soviet Union, dedicated to reporting violations of human rights by the Soviet government. One of the largest of these was the Moscow Helsinki Watch Group.

Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR: The group was founded in May, 1969 by leading Soviet human rights activists including Tatyana Velikhanova, Natalya Gorbanevskaya, Anatoli Levitin, and Viktor Krasnin. The Initiative Group published information about violations of human rights in the Soviet Union, most specifically the right to hold independent convictions and disseminate those convictions through all legal means.

Initsiativniki: A group of schismatic Russian Baptists who formed in 1960 after the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB) adopted the New Statutes and Letter of Instructions, which sought to curtail religious activity in the Soviet Union. The *Initsiativniki* initially sought to reform the New Statutes and the AUCECB, but eventually broke away completely and formed their own union—the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists (CCECB). The group engaged in public dissent against the Soviet state, openly evangelized to young people, held outdoor meetings, and Sunday school classes for children. The group still exists in Russia today and has reported some incidents of persecution by the Russian government. Their churches were not officially

recognized in the Soviet period and therefore, never received registration. Their communities are still not registered today in Russia.

Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations: This is the current law concerning religious denominations and communities in Russia. The law was enacted in 1997 under President Boris Yeltsin. The law retains many of the same measures utilized in the Soviet period to register and categorize religious communities without the hostility toward religious groups and believers. The law maintains that the state and the church are separated, but the Russian Orthodox Church enjoys greater benefits and privileges under the 1997 law than many other religious communities. The 1997 law was strongly advocated by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Legalism: Legalism and constitutional awareness were both means employed by various dissident and human rights groups in the Soviet Union in order to lend justification to their cause for the achievement of human rights. Legalism employed the use of Soviet and international law in order to shame the Soviet government into following their own laws. Russian Baptists during the tsarist period were one of the first groups in Russia to employ legalism and the method became a hallmark element in the Soviet human rights movement.

Mayakovsky Square Readings: The Mayakovsky Square readings were spontaneous gatherings of mostly intellectuals and university students in Moscow around a statue of the Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. The gatherings began in the late 1950s and people gathered to read poetry and other literary works. The gatherings are credited by many Soviet human rights activists as directly contributing to the thoughts and beliefs later espoused by the Soviet human rights movement.

Moscow Helsinki Group: The group was established in 1976 in order to monitor and publicize human rights violations by the Soviet government. Comprised of some of the leading Soviet human rights activists including Yuri Orlov, Alexander Ginzburg, and Ludmilla Alexeyeva, the group still exists in Moscow today and remains one of the most influential human rights groups in the world. Alexeyeva is still a member of the group and continues to work on behalf of human rights in Russia.

New Statutes: The New Statutes were handed down by the Khrushchev administration in 1959 along with the Letter of Instructions, which endeavored to further control the internal affairs of the AUCECB. The AUCECB's adoption of the New Statutes led to open rebellion among some members, who eventually formed their own council—the CCECB.

Organizing Committee: This was the original name of the *Initsiativniki* before they officially separated from the AUCECB. The Organizing Committee was organized in 1960 in order to attempt the reform of the New Statutes. The Organizing Committee dissolved in 1965 when the members formed their own Baptist union—the CCECB.

Registered Baptists: The Registered Baptists were the officially recognized group of Baptists in the Soviet Union. Generally, their religious communities were part of the AUCECB, which were allowed registration by the Soviet state in exchange for their cooperation with the state, which included the curtailing of missionary activity and the discouragement of youth to attend religious services. The Registered Baptists were preferred over their counterparts the *Initsiativniki* Baptists, who openly engaged in public dissent against the Soviet state.

Renovationist Movement: The Renovationist Movement or Renovationist Church was a schismatic movement of the Russian Orthodox Church created in the early Soviet period by a group of Orthodox clergymen in an attempt to reconcile the traditions and doctrines of Russian Orthodoxy with the principles of Leninist-Marxism. The movement was exploited by the Bolshevik Party in order to divide the Russian Orthodox hierarchy and aid in the elimination of the Church as an institution. The movement was eventually cast aside by the Bolsheviks after 1927 when Patriarch Sergei agreed to cooperate with the new Soviet government.

Secret Speech: A speech delivered by Nikita Khrushchev on February 26, 1956 at the Twentieth Party Congress in the Soviet Union. The speech was made public almost immediately and ushered in a brief period of liberalization in the Soviet Union, known as the Thaw. The Secret Speech denounced the cult of personality that had formed around Joseph Stalin. Khrushchev also accused Stalin of deviating from the principles of Leninist-Marxism and committing crimes against the country.

The Thaw: The Thaw was a temporary liberalization created in the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Secret Speech delivered by Nikita Khrushchev in 1956. The death of Stalin and Khrushchev's acknowledgment of crimes committed under Stalin permitted the population to express their opinions, which led to the growth of public dissent in the early 1960s. Khrushchev's brief liberalization allowed for a blossoming of the arts and literature and many of the most important Soviet novels were written during the period, including Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*.

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DEDICATION

To Mom for always encouraging me
To Dad for all his knowledge
To Holly for always believing in me

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

“It is easier to sacrifice one day of peace than to suffer the consequences of unchecked arbitrary authority for years to come. You are invited to a public meeting on December 5...at Pushkin Square...Invite two more citizens using the text of this plea.”¹ These words served as among the first public cries against the capricious repression of the Soviet government towards its citizens. Part of a “civic plea” distributed around Moscow University and other liberal arts institutions in 1965 by Alexander Esenin-Volpin, a poet and mathematician living in Moscow, the words called for a formal protest against the government’s “judicial arbitrariness.”² The civic plea was a direct reaction to the arrests of Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, two Soviet writers from Moscow, arrested in the fall of 1965 for attempting to publish their works abroad. Sinyavsky and Daniel’s arrest was the final incident that pushed mounting dissent in the Soviet Union into the public sphere. Emerging after the death of Stalin, in conjunction with de-Stalinization and the Thaw, a temporary liberalization permitted by Nikita Khrushchev, the new Soviet leader, groups of intellectuals slowly organized to initiate action against censorship, repression, and human rights violations.

¹ Quoted in Ludmilla Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1985), 275.

² Ibid.

The Soviet human rights movement was the product of the growth of a “civic self-consciousness in Russia” following Stalin’s death.³ The principles of the movement evolved from the Mayakovsky Square readings, a spontaneous gathering of intellectuals and students beginning in the late 1950s where poetry and literature was openly read in Moscow around a statue of Russian poet Vladimir Mayakovsky.⁴ Legalism, publishing facts and judicial proceedings, peaceful protesting, and composing petitions to the Soviet government and the West calling for the halt of human rights violations constituted the methods of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union. The Soviet human rights movement never consisted of a formal structure; rather it was loosely organized and consisted of various movements with a membership of mostly intellectuals. Soviet human rights activist Ludmilla Alexeyeva described the movement as possessing “neither leaders nor subordinates” but rather a movement of a “voluntary and fraternal nature” resulting in “a selflessness not encountered under orders or compulsion.”⁵

While the movement was comprised of smaller movements, many members devoted their efforts to exposing all human rights violations by the Soviet state. Several organizations were established in the USSR dedicated to the struggle for all basic human rights including the Moscow Helsinki Group, the Committee for Human Rights in the USSR, and the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR. Members such as Alexander Ginzburg, Andrei Sakharov, Yuri Orlov, Ludmilla Alexeyeva, and Natalya Gorbanevskaya worked toward the achievement of the guarantee of all human

³ Quote from Eduard Kunetsov in *They Chose Freedom*, directed by Vladimir Kara-Murza (2005), accessed February 23, 2015, <http://imrussia.org/en/project/534-they-chose-freedom-the-story-of-soviet-dissidents>.

⁴ Quote from Vladimir Bukovsky in *They Chose Freedom*, accessed February 23, 2015, <http://imrussia.org/en/project/534-they-chose-freedom-the-story-of-soviet-dissidents>.

⁵ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 283.

rights in the Soviet Union, including the right to speech, press, assembly, emigration and worship. Other members dedicated their efforts to specific branches within the Soviet human rights movement, such as achieving the right to national self-determination, social and economic liberty, and the right to religious liberty. The struggle for freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union and its connection to the Soviet human rights movement is the subject of this dissertation.

While the Soviet Constitution and the Soviet government proclaimed the state separate from the church and guaranteed religious liberty to its citizens, the ideology of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) increasingly developed into the policies of the government, which included an adherence to atheism and the gradual elimination of religious belief among the Soviet population. Early religious policy following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution was relegated to the destruction of the Russian Orthodox Church as an institution, which included the systematic annihilation of the clergy, the mass closure of churches, and the acquisition of the Church's wealth. Other religious denominations, particularly small Protestant sects such as Pentecostal and Baptist groups, escaped the brunt of the Bolsheviks' early persecution of religion in the 1920s. However, the failure of the Bolsheviks' early attacks on religion to produce a decrease in religious belief among the citizenry coupled with the onset of the Stalinist purges in the 1930s, resulted in an increase in atheist propaganda, public anti-religious campaigns, and the persecution of religious believers.⁶

Following a hiatus in religious persecution because of the Soviet Union's involvement in World War II, Stalin intensified the state's attack on religion.

⁶ The Bolsheviks' initial foray into creating an atheist society did not include the persecution of religious believers, as per the belief of Lenin that attacking religious believers created an intensification of religiosity.

Khrushchev's ascension to power witnessed an important shift in the government's policy on religion as the Soviet state sought to involve itself more deeply in church affairs and control the administrative organizations of religious denominations.⁷

Khrushchev's attempt to further dominate the religious life of church communities effectively split the religious landscape of the Soviet Union into religious groups willing to cooperate with the Soviet authorities and religious groups refusing cooperation, citing a breach of the Soviet Constitution's guarantee of church-state separation. The mounting interference of the Soviet state in religious affairs and the increasing cooperation of church communities with the Soviet state created the first steps toward organized dissent by religious believers in the Soviet Union.

This dissertation focuses on the activities of Russian Orthodox dissidents and *Initsiativniki* Baptist dissidents, a group of schismatic Baptists, in the Soviet Union during the Brezhnev era and their respective connections to the Soviet human rights movement. Despite the significance placed on religious liberty by the Soviet human rights movement as one of the most fundamental human rights denied by the Soviet state and the fact that many Soviet human rights activists were religious believers, virtually no scholarship exists on the relationship between religious dissent and the human rights movement in the Soviet Union. Russian Orthodox dissidents and the *Initsiativniki* Baptists were chosen as a means to provide a juxtaposition not only to each group's relationship to the Soviet human rights movement but also to provide a comparison in dissent methods, history and tradition, and thinking toward state institutions.

⁷ The Soviet state's increased involvement in church affairs is explained in greater detail in Chapters Four and Five. Here it is helpful to say that greater involvement by the state included attempts to control the appointment of clergy and ministers, the baptism of children and young adults, and restrictions on evangelism and missionary work.

As the former state church, the Russian Orthodox Church struggled with their new role in the Soviet Union after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. Not only was the Church no longer favored or supported by the state, but the Orthodox Church was initially the most persecuted religious institution after the Revolution. By comparison, Baptists sects endured bitter persecution under the tsarist state, and initially gained greater freedom under the Bolsheviks after the Revolution. Thus, the relationship of each group was initially inverted after the 1917 Revolution, and yet in the 1960s as the Soviet human rights movement was developing, both Orthodox believers and Baptist believers were engaging in active dissent against the Soviet state. This dissertation seeks to answer: how did the Soviet government's policy on religion affect the attitude of Orthodox and Baptist believers to the state and did the Soviet human rights movement influence each group's methods of and thinking on dissent? In addition, if there was a relationship between Orthodox and Baptist dissenters to the Soviet human rights movement, did the movement's work influence Orthodox and Baptist dissenters to engage in activities beyond the goal of achieving religious liberty?

I argue that while Orthodox dissidents were significantly influenced by the Soviet human rights movement in their approach to dissent, the *Initsiativniki* Baptists were not influenced by the movement in their dissent methods, but rather took advantage of the aid the movement provided in garnering greater support for their cause of religious liberty. Because previous academic scholarship overlooks the relationship between the Soviet human rights movement and religious dissidents, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the existing literature by proposing that Orthodox and *Initsiativniki* Baptist dissidents related to the Soviet human rights movement in different ways; while the Orthodox were

more influenced by the movement than the *Initsiativniki*, both groups came to view the Soviet human rights movement as an outlet and way to organize and gain support for their cause of achieving freedom of conscience.

Relevant Literature

While most scholars writing on the Soviet Union relegate discussions on dissent and the human rights movement to one chapter, there are a few academic works devoted to understanding the phenomenon of dissent during the Soviet period. One of the earliest scholarly works to focus solely on dissent is *In Quest of Justice: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union Today* edited by Abraham Brumberg.⁸ *In Quest for Justice* provides an early examination of the rise of Soviet dissent, its link to the Soviet intelligentsia, and a short chapter on the issue of religious persecution and early forms of religious dissent. Not only does the work boast an impressive collection of early documents from Soviet human rights activists such as Alexander Ginzburg, Yuri Galanskov, and Pavel Litvinov, it also consists of a small collection of early protests, open letters, and appeals by religious dissidents. Published in 1970, the Soviet human rights movement was still in its initial phases and therefore, *In Quest of Justice* treats dissent by various groups as separate and not part of a larger movement for human rights.

Joshua Rubenstein's *Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights* seeks to understand the origins of dissent through the lives of various activists.⁹ Rubenstein's early examination of Soviet dissent provides important factual information about various

⁸ Abraham Brumberg, ed., *In Quest of Justice: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union Today* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970).

⁹ Joshua Rubenstein, *Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1980), xiv.

dissidents and attempts to explain the emergence of the human rights movement by analyzing the policies of Stalin and Khrushchev. He maintains that literary works such as *Doctor Zhivago* by Boris Pasternak and *Not By Bread Alone* by Vladimir Dudintsev fostered an interest in freedom of expression in Soviet intellectuals that eventually manifested into the human rights movement.¹⁰ Rubenstein's early work on dissent in the Soviet Union is significant in providing contemporary insight into the rising Soviet human rights movement and serves as a foundation to further understanding the influence of the movement in Soviet culture. Embarking on a study of Soviet dissent through a series of interviews with prominent human rights activists such as Alexander Esenin-Volpin and Yuri Glazov, Russian writer Irina Kirk in *Profiles in Russian Resistance* attempts to understand the motives and thinking of the dissidents, finding that initially many intellectuals believed a reform of the Soviet system was possible but gradually through increasing repression decided the only way to create change was by open and public opposition.¹¹

Emphasizing the revival of a Russian intelligentsia in the formation of the Soviet human rights movement, Vladislav Zubok in *Zhivago's Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* argues that the participants of the movement inherited the legacy of the 19th century Russian intelligentsia in the wake of Boris Pasternak's famous novel *Doctor Zhivago*. According to Zubok, the educated elite in the Soviet Union following the death

¹⁰ Rubenstein, *Soviet Dissidents*, 12-14.

¹¹ Irina Kirk, *Profiles in Russian Resistance* (New York: The New York Times Book Co., 1975), x-xix.

of Stalin were instilled with “humanistic individualism” leading them to call for justice, freedom, and equality in the Soviet system.¹²

Attempting to understand specific techniques and tactics employed by the various movement making up the Soviet human rights movement, *Dissent in the USSR: Politics, Ideology, and People* edited by Rudolf L. Tokes contains information on protest strategies, the emergence of the democratic movement in Soviet culture, statistical data, important writings and petitions, and communication methods among dissident groups.¹³ Peter Reddaway examined Soviet dissent through the lens of the Soviet human rights movement’s official periodical the *Chronicle of Current Events* in his book *Uncensored Russia: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union*. Reddaway offers an early interpretation of the movement’s importance arguing that the movement’s publication of human rights violations forced the Soviet state, in some cases, to retreat from exacting harsher penalties on dissidents.¹⁴

Cornelia Gerstenmaier in *The Voices of the Silent* calls attention to the emergence of political dissidents among the intelligentsia in the Soviet Union, but specifically does not discuss religious dissent that was also rising in the 1960s. While she admits that groups of religious and secular opposition were “moving closer together,” Gerstenmaier fails to give attention to the role of religious dissidents in the growing Soviet human

¹² Vladislav Zubok, *Zhivago’s Children: The Last Russian Intelligentsia* (Cambridge: First Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 21.

¹³ Rudolf L. Tokes, ed., *Dissent in the USSR: Politics, Ideology, and People* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1975).

¹⁴ Peter Reddaway, *Uncensored Russia: Protest and Dissent in the Soviet Union* (New York: American Heritage Press, 1972). The *Chronicle of Current Events* was a *samizdat*, self-published document, periodical by activists in the Soviet human rights movement. The periodical ran from 1968 to 1983, making it one of the longest running *samizdat* publications in the Soviet Union.

rights movement.¹⁵ However, her book contains important information on the role of democratic thinking among many Soviet human rights activists and discusses the role that Brezhnev's invasion of Czechoslovakia played in the decision of many Soviet intellectuals to move outside the Soviet system into open dissent.

Examining Soviet dissent from the perspective of the Soviet state, Walter Parchomenko in *Soviet Images of Dissidents and Nonconformists* argues that the policies toward dissent and the perceptions of dissidents by the Brezhnev administration were influenced by negative and stereotypical images of dissidents based on press reports and the Leninist-Marxist ideological concept of nonconformity.¹⁶ Additionally, Parchomenko argues that the predominance of images of dissidents as extremist and subversive “blurred the distinction between mild nonconformity and radical dissent.”¹⁷ Two case studies are presented to demonstrate Parchomenko's argument—Vladimir Shelkov, an influential Seventh-Day Adventist leader, and Yuri Orlov, a physicist and significant human rights activist.

Daniel C. Thomas analyzes the role that the Helsinki Accords played in establishing human rights norms globally in *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism*. Thomas' work takes an international approach, examining the relationship of the Soviet Union to Western governments, and he argues that the weaknesses of communist governments in the Eastern bloc were created, in part, through the “unprecedented social movement and opposition activity that

¹⁵ Cornelia Gerstenmaier, *The Voices of the Silent* (New York: Hart Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), 18.

¹⁶ Walter Parchomenko, *Soviet Images of Dissidents and Nonconformists* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

emerged...in the aftermath of the Helsinki Final Act.”¹⁸ The importance of Thomas’ work is in his attempt to place Soviet dissent within the international theater and understand its long lasting impact on totalitarian systems.

Ludmilla Alexeyeva, an active dissident in the movement, provides one of the earliest examinations of the Soviet human rights movement in its entirety in *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*.¹⁹ Still one of the most comprehensive studies on dissent in the Soviet Union, Alexeyeva’s analysis offers firsthand accounts and detailed information on the evolution of the movement’s methods, goals, and thinking, as well as links between various dissenting groups. Another former Soviet dissident and human rights activist Valeri Chalidze surveys the issues concerning human rights participants in the Soviet Union in *To Defend These Rights: Human Rights and the Soviet Union*.²⁰ Chalidze only briefly addresses the persecution of religious believers in the Soviet Union and does not present religious dissidents as active dissidents in the human rights movement. However, his work provides first-hand accounts of the motives and goals of human rights activists and calls special attention to the role that constitutional awareness played in lending legitimacy to the movement.

Some scholars have argued that dissent and the human rights movement in the Soviet Union played an important role in paving the way for *perestroika* and other reforms enacted under Gorbachev. Philip Boobbyer, in *Conscience, Dissent and Reform*

¹⁸ Daniel C. Thomas, *The Helsinki Effect: International Norms, Human Rights, and the Demise of Communism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2001), 6-7.

¹⁹ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*.

²⁰ Valeri Chalidze, *To Defend These Rights: Human Rights and the Soviet Union* (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1975), 59-61.

in *Soviet Russia*, notes that above all the dissident movement was a movement of morals, which contributed significantly to its success.²¹ Boobbyer contends that an ethical dilemma arose within the Soviet system and the state was unable to “resolve the contradictions that were inherent in the Bolshevik ideal,” which caused the “regime [to lose] its moral legitimacy.”²² The Soviet human rights movement offered an alternative moral culture “pervad[ing] Soviet political and social institutions” with repeated calls for a national moral renewal.²³ Christian Philip Peterson, in *Globalizing Human Rights: Private Citizens, the Soviet Union, and the West*, argues that the Soviet human rights movement influenced Mikhail Gorbachev to understand the necessity of reform in the Soviet system and address the issue of internal repression, which culminated in Gorbachev’s policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, resulting in the Soviet Union’s collapse.²⁴ Peterson notes that Gorbachev “read dissident tracts and works on socialist democratic thought” and surrounded himself with liberal-minded reformers in the Soviet Union.²⁵ Peterson emphasizes the increasingly crucial role that the Soviet human rights movement played not only in the Soviet Union but also abroad, especially in the United States. In *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratization, and Radical Nationalism in Russia*, Robert Horvath notes the importance of Soviet dissent in the

²¹ Philip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2-3.

²² Ibid, 1.

²³ Ibid, 2-3.

²⁴ Christian Philip Peterson, *Globalizing Human Rights: Private Citizens, the Soviet Union, and the West* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 14. While Peterson observes that other factors were in play causing the Soviet Union’s collapse, he contends that the importance of the human rights issue is traditionally overlooked as contributing to the fall.

²⁵ Ibid, 163-165.

1970s and 1980s and identifies four fundamental elements he calls dissident “vectors” that aided post-Soviet Russia’s transition to democracy.²⁶

While each of the works discussed above all recognize the importance of Soviet dissent and the Soviet human rights movement in creating a dialogue regarding repression and the need for change in the Soviet system, religious dissidents are never discussed independently from the larger movement. Religious dissidents are either not mentioned or are discussed only within the context of the human rights movement itself. While each of these works is helpful in understanding the foundations of dissent and the Soviet human rights movement, this dissertation seeks to build on the existing scholarship concerning the importance of dissent in the Soviet Union by examining the unique role religious dissidents and the issue of religious liberty played in the struggle for human rights.

Previous scholarship examining religion in Russia and the Soviet Union also lacks research in connecting religion and religious dissent to the Soviet human rights movement. Many scholars researching religion in the Soviet Union have focused on the Soviet state’s reaction to religious belief and the origins and manifestations of Soviet policy on religion. Because this dissertation focuses on Orthodox dissidents and Baptist dissidents, two scholarly works are crucial in providing significant background information on the history and traditions of each religious group. Dimitrii Pospelovsky’s *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* is one of the most noteworthy studies on the Russian Orthodox Church in providing pertinent historical background and an

²⁶ Robert Horvath, *The Legacy of Soviet Dissent: Dissidents, Democratization, and Radical Nationalism in Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 6.

analysis of the evolving relationship of the Church to the state.²⁷ Pospelovsky also examines the Church's connection to intellectual, societal, and cultural changes occurring in the late nineteenth century in Russia, which is particularly important in understanding the Church's status at the time of the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. In terms of Russian Baptists, Walter Sawatsky's *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* provides a nearly complete church history of evangelical sects in Russia and the Soviet Union while discussing the various reactions of evangelicals to the Soviet state.²⁸

Scholarship examining the early relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet state and Russian Baptist sects and the Soviet state are also crucial to understand dissent by each group of religious believers in the Brezhnev era. William B. Husband's *Godless Communists: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* examines the earliest years of the Bolsheviks' policies on religion and argues that the Bolsheviks drastically underestimated the importance of religious faith in the lives of the Russian masses.²⁹ Husband focuses primarily on the Bolsheviks' early campaigns against the Russian Orthodox Church and explores confrontations between the new secular Bolshevik state and the traditional religious belief of the Russian peasantry. In *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless*, Daniel Peris focuses on early anti-religious campaigns of the Bolsheviks through the work and success of the League of Militant Godless, which was created in 1925 as the state's official organization expected to promote atheism. Peris argues that the League of Militant Godless failed as a

²⁷ Dmitrii Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 1998).

²⁸ Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1981).

²⁹ William B. Husband, *Godless Communists: Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917-1932* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), xi-xvii.

successful organ of the state because of its extensive bureaucracy, poor planning, and inability to recruit cadres faithful to its mission.³⁰ Both Husband and Peris provide important research on the early actions of the Soviet state to religious institutions, which created a precedent for the Soviet state's future attitudes and actions toward religious communities and believers.

Edward E. Roslof examines the relationship between a group of Russian Orthodox clergymen, the so-called "red priests," and the new Bolshevik government in *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946*. Edward E. Roslof argues that the Russian Orthodox clergymen who participated in the Renovationist Movement acted out of a sincere attempt to accommodate Russian Orthodox beliefs and institutions to Leninist-Marxist principles, while initially the Bolsheviks used the Renovationists to create division and discord in the Church.³¹ Ultimately, the Renovationist Movement was rejected by the Orthodox laity and eventually cast aside by the Soviet government after the Russian Orthodox hierarchy agreed to cooperate with the state in 1927. In *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929*, Heather Coleman argues that Russian Baptists represented an alternative to the formation of new social identities in the revolutionary era and established the possibility for "cultural and political pluralism in Russia."³² Roslof's *Red Priests* and Coleman's *Russian Baptists* are important for this dissertation, because both examine the religious landscape of Russia surrounding the 1917 Russian Revolution and seek to explain early reactions by

³⁰ Daniel Peris, *Storming the Heavens: The Soviet League of the Militant Godless* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1-18.

³¹ Edward E. Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovationism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), ix-xii.

³² Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 2-5.

members of the Russian Orthodox Church and Baptist sects, respectively, to the new Soviet state.

Studies of the religious situation during the Brezhnev era are also needed in this dissertation to provide factual information as well as an understanding of the evolution of the relationship of religious institutions and believers to the Soviet state, which offer insights into the decisions of Orthodox and Baptist believers to dissent. The post-World War II policy on religion by the Soviet government is discussed by John Anderson in *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States*. Anderson gives an overview of the state's policy on religion, the process of policy making on religion under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev, and the implementation of religious policy by various government organs.³³ Anderson's book is particularly significant in its discussion of Khrushchev's shift in religious policy, which was a contributing factor in the split among Soviet Baptists.

Jane Ellis' *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History* is still to date one of the most significant studies on the Russian Orthodox Church during the Soviet period from the 1960s to the early 1980s. Ellis attempts to provide an understanding of Russian Orthodox doctrine, tradition, and thought by discussing theological education, the importance of monasticism, aspects of the laity, and church-state relations in Soviet Russia during the 1950s and 1960s.³⁴ Ellis' work is particularly helpful in its examination of the rise, growth, and flowering of Orthodox dissent from the 1960s to 1985. Looking at individuals important to Orthodox dissent such as Gleb Yakuin, Lev

³³ John Anderson, *Religion, State and Politics in the Soviet Union and Successor States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 1-5.

³⁴ Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986), 1-13.

Regelson, Alexander Ogorodnikov, and Anatoli Levitin, Ellis analyzes Orthodox dissident *samizdat*, the reaction of Orthodox dissidents to the Soviet state, and the revival of Orthodox belief in many young Russian intellectuals.

Michael Bourdeaux's *Patriarchs and Prophets: Persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church Today* examines the Russian Orthodox Church during the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras, providing previously unpublished primary sources from Orthodox believers and dissidents.³⁵ As the title suggests, Bourdeaux focuses on the persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church by the Soviet state, providing detailed accounts of persecution and the reactions of Russian Orthodox believers to the ongoing persecution. A companion piece to *Patriarchs and Prophets* is Bourdeaux's *Religious Ferment in Russia: Protestant Opposition to Soviet Religious Policy*, which is a collection of primary sources from the *Initsiativniki* Baptists with appropriate commentary by Bourdeaux.³⁶ Bourdeaux's work on the *Initsiativniki* provides statistics and profiles of the religious group as well as initial reactions to the sect by the Soviet state and the Soviet press. Bourdeaux uses previously unpublished sources to identify important factors leading to the *Initsiativniki* split from the officially recognized Baptist churches in the Soviet Union and to illustrate the dissenting Baptists' attitude toward the Soviet state.

Tracing the literature on dissent and the human rights movement in the Soviet Union and the literature on religion and dissident activities by religious believers reveals a gap in an understanding of the relationship between religious dissidents and the broader Soviet human rights movement. The importance of dissent and the human rights

³⁵ Michael Bourdeaux, *Patriarch and Prophets: Persecution of the Russian Orthodox Church Today* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 15-27.

³⁶ Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia: Protestant Opposition to Soviet Religious Policy* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1968), 1-4.

movement in calling attention to human rights violations by the Soviet state and embarking on change to push Soviet society toward a less repressive system of government is well established. However, the role played by religious dissidents in the Soviet human rights movement remains unclear. Understanding how religious dissidents participated in the human rights movement in the USSR will contribute to the existing literature, allowing scholars to gain a more nuanced perspective of the complexities of human rights issues in Soviet society.

Methodology, Sources, and Terms

To illuminate the discourse between religious dissent and the human rights movement in the Soviet Union, this dissertation utilizes a qualitative methodological approach in assessing relevant primary and secondary sources. In order to address the connection between Orthodox and Baptist dissidents to the Soviet human rights movement, an examination of the history, organizational structure, and relationship to state institutions by the Russian Orthodox Church and Russian Baptist sects is provided. Additionally, a brief analysis of the emergence and growth of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union is discussed.

The majority of sources used in this study are primary sources from the Keston Center for Religion, Politics, and Society housed in the Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies at Baylor University. The Keston Center consists of a vast collection of *samizdat* journals relevant for this dissertation, including *Bratskii Listok*, the *samizdat* journal for the *Initiativniki* Baptists, *Bratskii Vestnik*, the official journal of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists, *Obshchina*, a *samizdat* journal by a small group of Russian Orthodox dissidents, and the *Chronicle of Current Events*, the *samizdat*

periodical of the Soviet human rights movement. Additionally, Keston houses individual papers of religious dissidents and Soviet human rights activists including Anatoli Levitin, Alexander Ogorodnikov, and Gleb Yakunin, as well as petitions, appeals, and open letters from Soviet dissidents. Other research materials used in this dissertation include the documents of the Moscow Helsinki Group and memoirs of religious dissidents and human rights activists such as Ludmilla Alexeyeva, Vladimir Bukovsky, Andrei Sakharov, and Georgi Vins.

The parameters of this dissertation are limited almost entirely to Soviet Russia. An exception is made with Georgi Vins, an influential Russian leader within the *Initiativniki* Baptist group, who worked in Kiev before his emigration to the United States. Other significant human rights activists and religious dissidents discussed in this study worked almost exclusively in Russia, many in Moscow, such as Ludmilla Alexeyeva, Yuri Orlov, Alexander Ginzburg, Gleb Yakunin, Alexander Ogorodnikov, and Andrei Sakharov. Additionally, the terms “dissent” and “dissident” as used in this dissertation are defined as a private Soviet citizen who advocated publicly for change in the Soviet system, disagreed with one or more of the government’s policies, and actively sought to change those policies through the publication and dissemination of literature, writing of appeals and petitions, participation in public demonstrations, and the attending of public trials of dissidents. In defining the Soviet human rights movement, this dissertation defines the movement as a loose organization of various dissenting groups exhibiting public activism and acting out of moral convictions rather than political convictions.

Chapter Structure

The second chapter provides and analyzes the traditional relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church to the tsarist government and the Church's initial reaction to the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. It examines why the Russian Orthodox Church conceded to cooperate with the Soviet authorities in 1927 and endeavors to demonstrate that the Church's historical relationship to the tsarist government coupled with the reforms of Peter the Great prevented the Church hierarchy from effectively opposing the intense persecution placed on the Church by the Bolsheviks.

Chapter Three discusses the emergence of Baptist sects in Russia, the relationship of Baptist believers to the tsarist government, and their initial reaction to the new Bolshevik government. It seeks to demonstrate that persecution of Baptist sects under the tsar created a background of dissent for Baptist believers that strongly influenced their decision to oppose the Soviet authorities beginning in the late 1950s.

The fourth chapter examines the relationship of Orthodox dissidents to the Soviet human rights movement, and attempts to demonstrate that an absence of dissent in Russian Orthodox culture led to the influence in dissent methods by the movement on Orthodox dissidents in three ways: creation of a support system, ecumenism, and rhetoric.

Chapter Five looks at the unique connection of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists to the Soviet human rights movement, arguing that the strong legacy of dissent created by their predecessors determined the methods of opposition employed by the *Initsiativniki* toward the Soviet authorities in the Brezhnev era. While the *Initsiativniki* used the aid that the Soviet human rights movement provided in rallying greater support for their cause of

religious liberty, the movement did not significantly influence the Baptist dissenters' methods, and many *Initsiativniki* Baptists did not consider themselves "dissidents."

Finally, the concluding chapter discusses the legacy left by the Soviet human rights movement and religious dissidents in post-Soviet Russia. The Putin administration's response to actions of dissent and opposition is used to outline the importance that the issues raised by the dissidents in the Soviet era still carry into post-Soviet society.

CHAPTER TWO

Tradition as Present: Cooperation in Russian Church-State Relations

Chaos and uncertainty among the Russian population flourished during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the bloody civil war that followed. The Revolution and subsequent struggle for power hurled Russia into a tumultuous state of anxiety and change, and nowhere was this change more visible than within the realm of religion. The privileges that the Russian Orthodox Church enjoyed under the monarchy were abruptly stripped away, causing the Church to fumble for survival as its favored status was compromised. The status of other religious groups, such as Baptist and Pentecostal sects, also changed, albeit in different ways from the Russian Orthodox Church. Following the success of the Bolshevik Revolution, the new Bolshevik government struggled to formulate a policy on religion. However, indecisiveness by the Party on the most effective means of eliminating religious belief among the population combined with an underestimation of religion's influence on the population and the Leninist-Marxist principle that religious belief would wither away in the aftermath of a proletariat revolution resulted in consistently weak and ineffective programs.¹

¹ Several notable works exist on early Bolshevik policy on religion, including Daniel Peris' *Storming the Heavens*, which postulates that several schools of thought existed on the best method of removing religious belief. Two of the most important schools of thought in the Bolshevik Party concerning the elimination of religion was the culturalist approach favored by Emilian Iaroslavskii, which advocated for a gradual elimination of religion through education. The second was the interventionist approach favored by Maria Kostelovskaia, which advocated for swift elimination of religion through aggressive action by Party members, rather than specially created organizations such as the League of Militant Godless. Initially, the Bolsheviks favored Iaroslavskii's approach to dealing with the religion question but as religious belief persisted, the Party employed more aggressive tactics.

For a brief period, the Russian Orthodox Church was the only religious institution that suffered attack under the Bolsheviks. The initial attack on the Russian Orthodox Church was overwhelmingly political. The victory of Lenin and the Bolsheviks was not assured in 1917; the party was still a fledgling minority and any anti-Bolshevik group was the enemy, including the Church. Because the Russian Orthodox Church possessed vast amounts of wealth and authority, millions of adherents, numerous clergy, and close ties to the tsarist monarchy, the Bolsheviks' initial attack on the Church stemmed not from a hatred for religion but from the Party's crucial and pragmatic need to solidify its power, crush any Bolshevik opposition, and eradicate institutions that posed a threat to Bolshevik power.

While the Bolsheviks' initial attack on the Russian Orthodox Church was political in motivation, the Bolsheviks' ultimate rejection of all religion and determination to eradicate religious belief and religious institutions in the new society they endeavored to build was also motivated by ideological factors. Marx's declaration of religion as the "opium of the people" was strongly incorporated into Lenin's own philosophy and is evident in the Leninist-Marxist principles propagated by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union throughout its existence.² Lenin viewed religion as a psychological crutch, which acted as a barrier to the proletariat's achieving enlightenment and freedom from the bourgeois. Indeed, in Lenin's earliest writings on religion, he spoke of waging an "ideological" war against religion, not a physical war, which explains in part why the

² For a more thorough reading of the ideological factors that motivated the Bolsheviks' attitude toward religion, which manifested into the firm belief that religion needed to be removed to build a true "Communist" society, see Vladimir Lenin, *On Religion* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, LTD., 2007); William van den Bercken, *Ideology and Atheism in the Soviet Union* (Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter, 1988); David Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis: Soviet Ideology, Indoctrination, and Terror Under Stalin, 1927-1941*. Stanford: Hoover Institution, 2011; Karl Marx, *On Religion* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1974).

Bolsheviks initially only attacked the Russian Orthodox Church as an institution.³

Attacks on religious believers were not initially employed as a tactic for ridding religion from society, because Lenin believed that he and the Bolsheviks would lead the masses to reach class-consciousness by providing a “sense of ideological vision and discipline.”⁴

The Bolsheviks’ initial preoccupation with extinguishing the influence and power of the Orthodox Church as an institution gave way to an uneven engagement of tactics on the religious front, leaving the Church to bear the brunt of the religious persecution while other religious groups and organizations worshipped with fewer limitations on their activities than they had during the tsarist period. Particularly in the Soviet Union’s fledgling years, other religious groups suffered little persecution, either because of their small size and minute influence, making them no threat, or because the Bolsheviks believed that the Revolution’s liberation of the proletariat would naturally purge religious belief from society.⁵

After losing its position of favor in the new Soviet state, the Russian Orthodox Church experienced uncertainty in how best to react to the Bolsheviks. Intellectually and politically, the Church was unprepared to address the threat the Bolshevik Party posed. The unfolding of the twentieth century witnessed a Russian Orthodox Church void of progressive thinking, stifled intellectually, crippled by a mostly reactionary clergy subservient to the monarchy, unwilling or unable to inject meaningful reforms into

³ Lenin, *On Religion*, 5-35. Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis*, 9-11.

⁴ Brandenberger, *Propaganda State in Crisis*, 9-10.

⁵ In *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, Heather Coleman discusses the initial freedom that small Protestant sects enjoyed from 1917 to 1929. In Chapter Seven, Coleman notes that many early Bolshevik Party members believed that religious sectarians were potential allies in the Revolution and represented the “political and social transformation of the empire.” Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 130-136.

Church life, and disconnected from the laity due to the inferior position imposed on the Church during the reign of Peter the Great.

The Church's uncertainty resulted in numerous small schisms, questioning by and quarrels within the clergy over the Church's official stance toward the new government and the creation of a faction within the Church, which sought to reconcile the principles of Christianity with the principles of socialism. The Bolshevik's rise to power unintentionally brought about an awakening in the clergy and ordinary believers in the early years as they fought against an unprecedented threat to their religious beliefs. Previously discussed, but rarely effectively implemented, the Bolshevik Revolution forced the Church hierarchy to closely investigate the need for Church reform, evaluate its relationship to the laity, and decide the Church's place in the new Soviet state.

Five characteristics representative of the Russian Orthodox Church emerged from tradition and doctrine, which contributed to the Church's eventual cooperation with the Soviet government. It is now known that the cooperation of the Russian Orthodox Church with the Soviet government was extensive. Cooperation included the complete infiltration of the Patriarchate by the secret police, control of church affairs by the Soviet state, an oath of loyalty from each head of the Church to the Soviet government, the defrocking of Orthodox priests involved in dissent under the orders of the Soviet authorities, and church dignitaries traveling abroad denying the existence of religious persecution in the Soviet Union.⁶ While the Church did indeed suffer tremendous

⁶ See Zoe Knox's *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church: Religion in Russia after Communism* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 92-94 for a deeper discussion of the Russian Orthodox Church's cooperation with the Soviet state. According to Knox, materials about the cooperation was first published in the dissident journal *Glasnost*. Additionally, Knox notes that the Moscow Patriarch Aleksii's admission and apology in 1993 for the "forced passivity and expressions of loyalty of the church leadership during [the Soviet] period" led many former Soviet Orthodox dissidents to call for the removal from the Church's ranks of former members of the Orthodox hierarchy who participated in the Soviet collaboration.

persecutions and attacks in the early Bolshevik period, it is argued here that the Church's decision to cooperate with the Soviet state emerged not only from pragmatism and the result of persecution but also from innate factors arising from Orthodox tradition and the Russian Church's prerevolutionary connection to Russia's monarchical system. The Church's prerevolutionary role in Russian society, relationship with the monarchy, the state of Orthodoxy on the eve of the Revolution, and the perception of the Church by the intelligentsia and peasants are all analyzed to offer a previously unexplored connection between the early relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet state. In addition, the Orthodox Church's decision to cooperate with the Soviet state greatly impacted the future participation in dissent for Orthodox believers in the post-World War II period. Therefore, to garner a more complete picture of the future methods and perspectives of the Orthodox on dissent and the human rights movement in the Soviet period, the distinct responses and actions of the Church and its believers toward the Soviet state prior to the Brezhnev era are examined.

Five Characteristics Presented

The five characteristics identified as contributing to the Church's decision to cooperate with the Soviet state beginning in 1927 are a failure in understanding the concept of church and state separation, a tradition of compliance through domination, dependence and loss of spirit brought on by excessive entanglement with the state, intellectual isolation, and inexperience in opposition. Each characteristic aids in analyzing the Church's role in prerevolutionary Russian society, its relationship to the monarchy, and its situation on the eve of the 1917 Revolution in order to demonstrate that the historical legacy bequeathed to the Church in the tsarist era contributed to the

Church's relationship to the Soviet state. The five characteristics analyzed here do not suggest that these are the only reasons for the Russian Orthodox Church's decision to cooperate with the Soviet state. As mentioned above, pressure from the Soviet state and tremendous persecution certainly produced an immediate effect. The five characteristics examined in this chapter merely attempt to demonstrate parallel elements between the relationship of the Church under the monarchy and later under the Soviet Union, demonstrating that the characteristics led to a traditional way of thinking and acting.

Before examining each characteristic, it is useful to briefly define each item for clarity. Tradition of compliance denotes the subservient position that the Church occupied under the Russian monarchy, partially stemming from the tradition of symphonia, as it was practiced in Russia. Dependence and loss of spirit brought on by excessive entanglement are defined as the relationship created out of the reforms of Peter the Great, causing the Church to lose autonomy and have the state control and decide the internal affairs of the Church.

The failure of the Russian Orthodox Church to understand the separation of church and state, which was the official, although not practiced, relationship of religious bodies and the state in the Soviet Union, is self-explanatory. The Church's inability to comprehend the concept of church and state separation originates from the tradition and doctrine of symphonia. The fourth characteristic is the intellectual isolation and stagnation that the Church suffered mostly as a result of Peter the Great's church reforms. Inexperience in opposition deals with the close relationship that the Church and state maintained during the tsarist period to the point that the Church never needed to develop meaningful methods of dissent, which affected its preparedness to counteract the

Bolshevik attack on the Church after the 1917 Revolution. It is important to note the two primary causes responsible for these characteristics in the Russian Orthodox Church—the tradition and doctrine of symphonia and the reforms of Peter the Great.

Symphonia

Before Tsar Peter I, the Church and the state attempted to exist in symphony. The symphonic ideal, as defined by Emperor Justinian I, is the notion that the church and the state ultimately originate from the same source—God—and are tasked with ministering to the spiritual and physical wellbeing of mankind, respectively. According to Justinian, “if the priesthood is in every way free from blame and possesses access to God, and if the emperors administer equitably and judiciously the state entrusted to their care, general harmony will result, and whatever is beneficial will be bestowed to the human race.”⁷ Symphonia theorizes that this natural harmony allows for the ecclesiastical leader and the temporal leader to each rule their sphere of influence but with no separation between the two. Therefore, the two entities rule in symphony causing an inevitable and desired link between the church and the state.⁸ Although symphonia allows each entity autonomy in their respective spheres, each entity influences the other, and church and state policies are interconnected. The Church’s responsibility revolved around the “spiritual guidance of secular affairs and the sanctification of the civil authority,” whereas the monarch “protected church traditions, doctrine, and faith.”⁹

⁷ Cited in John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1979), 213.

⁸ Zoe Knox, “The Symphonic Ideal: The Moscow Patriarchate’s Post-Soviet Leadership,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 55, no. 4 (June 2003), 576.

⁹ Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 106.

The nature of the symphonic relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian tsar and empire is continuously debated among historians and scholars of Orthodox and Russian history. Indeed, the symphonic ideal as presented by Justinian was never realized in Russia. Zoe Knox argues that the relationship between the Church and the state in Russia never strictly adhered to the doctrine of symphonia.¹⁰ Knox argues that caesaropapism, not symphonia, existed in Russia.¹¹ The term “caesaropapism” indicates a relationship where “civil authority is clearly greater than religious.”¹² Dmitrii Pospelovsky argues that as soon as the doctrine of symphonia was established under Justinian it was abused and twisted into caesaropapism.¹³ Although never concretely realized, the ideal of symphonia acted as a model for the Russian Orthodox Church and inherently tied the Church to the Russian state. The caesaropapist relationship that emerged between the Church and the Russian state reinforced not only the Church’s tie to the state but also subjugated the Church to the secular authority.

Concept of Church and State Separation

Through the symphonic model, two of the five characteristics cultivated within the Russian Orthodox Church during the tsarist period are present. The most obvious is the Church’s inability to understand the concept of the separation of church and state. The Bolshevik decision to separate the church from the state initially stemmed from their

¹⁰ Knox, “The Symphonic Ideal: The Moscow Patriarchate’s Post-Soviet Leadership,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, 55, no. 4 (June, 2003), 576-577.

¹¹ Ibid, 576.

¹² Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 107.

¹³ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 2-4.

desire to create a nonreligious society or secular society.¹⁴ Their promotion of church-state separation did not at first include a staunch program of atheism, because they functioned under the notion that religious belief would eventually disappear in Soviet society.

For the Russian Orthodox Church and its believers, there was no difference between a nonreligious nation and an atheist nation.¹⁵ Even after the reforms of Peter the Great desecrated any remaining aspects of the symphonic ideal, the monarchy and the Church remained intertwined and Orthodoxy remained the official state religion. Although the relationship was distorted, Peter's reforms reinforced what the Church hierarchs saw as a natural tie between the church and the state. The Russian Orthodox hierarchy initially assumed that Orthodox believers would coerce the Bolsheviks into accepting traditional ties between the Church and the state.¹⁶ When this did not occur, Church leaders "expressed a willingness to cooperate with the Bolsheviks based on the formula of a completely free church that was simultaneously established in law as the primary religious institution of Russia."¹⁷ Of course, the Soviets did not agree to this, and the Church decided to cooperate with the state under Soviet terms.

Again the Church's belief that a natural tie existed, even in the absence of a monarchy, between the Church and the government is demonstrated when the Church directly appealed to the Soviets to allow the Church to provide aid and assist in the

¹⁴ William B. Husband's first two chapters in *Godless Communists* discusses the evolution of Bolshevik thinking on the religious question and the gradual shift from promoting a non-religious or secular society to an atheistic society.

¹⁵ Husband, *Godless Communists*, 49.

¹⁶ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 23.

¹⁷ Ibid.

collection of money during the widespread famine occurring throughout Russia in 1921 and 1922. The Church continued to believe that the Christian values espoused by the Church should be the basis for government action in helping those in need—in their mind, a separation did not exist, and indeed, was not desirable within the symphonic model. In time, the constitutional separation of church and state in the Soviet Union proved a façade with regard to the Orthodox Church and the state, and the Church’s inferior relationship to the Soviet state in many ways mirrored the Church’s position under Peter the Great. Ultimately, the historical connection between the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist state coupled with the symphonic ideal, which encouraged a strong bond between the government and the Church, created a failure among the Russian Orthodox hierarchy to understand the concept of church-state separation propagated under the new Bolshevik state.

Compliance through Domination

The second characteristic offered as a contributing factor in the Church’s cooperation with the Soviet Union is a tradition of domination by the state resulting in the Church’s compliance, which created within the Church an obedient nature to the monarchy and an exertion of power over the Church by the monarchy. Compliance by the Church in its relationship to the monarchy and later to the Soviet authorities partially stems from the Russian Orthodox Church’s understanding of the symphonic model where the emperor is to “lead and the church [is] to follow,” but became more firmly entrenched during the Synodal Period after Peter the Great’s reforms.¹⁸ As previously discussed, in

¹⁸ Gvosdev, Nikolas K. *An Examination of Church-State Relations in the Byzantine and Russian Emphasis on Ideology and Models of Interaction* (Queenston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 93-94.

Russia, many scholars have identified a caesaropapist relationship rather than a symphonic relationship when describing the Church's relationship to the state before Peter the Great's reign.

Pospelovsky explains the tendency for symphonia to encourage caesaropapism by pointing out that all power and force remains in the monarch's hands. Because the monarch holds all power, the Church is incapable of effectively rebuking monarchs who break Church law. Pospelovsky claims that in this environment, the Church sinks into the civil structure and merges with the state.¹⁹ Caesaropapism is most clearly exhibited under Tsar Ivan IV, better known as Ivan the Terrible, when he had Metropolitan Fillip strangled for denouncing Ivan's tyrannical reign and opposing the *oprichnina*, a systemic police force created to exterminate Ivan's enemies.²⁰ Pospelovsky notes that Fillip's death was "the end of Church leaders' vocal opposition to Ivan's terror," which left Russia without moral leadership and contributed to the "instability of power and absence of authority once Ivan died."²¹

During the Time of Troubles in Russia from 1598-1613, Job was elected in 1589 as the first patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, but because Boris Godunov²² chose Job, the newly elected patriarch was immediately deposed and exiled to a monastery when Godunov died. The election or deposing of the patriarch often occurred

¹⁹ Quoted in Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 3.

²⁰ Russian historian Anatoli Andreevich Kraskov described this act as "the most odious manifestation of Russian caesaropapism before Peter the Great." Anatoli Andreevich Krasikov, "Church-State Relationships in Russia: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," in *The Law of Religious Identity: Models for Post-Communism*, edited by Shlomo Avineri and Andras Sajo (Cambridge, Mass: Kluwer Law International, 1999), 157.

²¹ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 66.

²² Boris Godunov was a boyar, a nobleman, and ruled as regent of Russia from 1585 to 1598 for Tsar Fyodor I.

at the will of the tsar; therefore, the acceptance of the Russian Orthodox Church as autocephalous after the establishment of the Patriarchate did not necessarily make the Church more powerful. When Tsar Alexis deposed Patriarch Nikon in 1666, the Church's autonomy suffered a significant setback.²³ Nikon was defrocked in 1666 after Eastern patriarchs and other Orthodox hierarchs were "bribed by the tsar to make sure that their judgment would be in accordance with tsar's expectations."²⁴

At a time when the state was growing more powerful and authoritarian, the Church was growing weaker. Patriarch Nikon's dismissal resulted in a strengthening of the monarchy and a lowering in the prestige and power of the Moscow Patriarchate. Interestingly, Nikon insisted on the superiority of the Church to the state during his tenure as patriarch. This claim along with an increase in his wealth and influence prompted the tsar's decision, and at Church councils in 1666 and 1667, the "supremacy of the state over the Church was reiterated."²⁵ Indeed, at the 1666-1667 councils, the Eastern patriarchs stated, "The tsar [is] the sole legislator of all civil matters...No one has the freedom to oppose the tsar's statutes, because he is the law. For this reason, even if a person is a representative of the religion, even the patriarch himself...let him fear the threat of punishment."²⁶ This statement was later used to justify tsars' replacements of church leaders in the interest of the state.

²³ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 75.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Nicholas V. Riasonovsky and Mark D. Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 8th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 198.

²⁶ Daniel H. Shubin, *A History of Russian Christianity: Volume II The Patriarchal Era through Tsar Peter the Great, 1586-1725* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), 126.

Additionally, the tsar further weakened the Church hierarchy by defrocking and exiling leaders of the Old Believers, which “weakened ecclesiastical resistance to aggression by the state.”²⁷ Although Church leaders in Russia in the pre-Petrine era attempted to maintain the ideal of *symphonia*, or in the case of Nikon, to rise above the state’s authority, the tsar more often dominated the Church, defrocking clergymen who disagreed with his policies, instituting reforms by his own hand, and stacking the Church leadership with men willing to bend to the state’s power.

Peter the Great’s reforms of the Russian Orthodox Church, which began in 1720, increased the state’s domination over the Church and its hierarchy. As part of an overall process of Westernization, Peter sought to modernize all aspects of society while strengthening the state and expanding Russia. As early as 1700, Peter considered abolishing the patriarchate after Patriarch Adrian died and boyar Tikhon Streshnev recommended that Peter replace the patriarchal office with a council of bishops, monks, and state officials. Peter’s use of the Church as a political instrument is exhibited by his order in 1708 to Metropolitan Stephen (Yavorskii) to excommunicate Ivan Mazepa, a leading military commander and close friend to Stephen, for supporting Sweden’s King Charles XII against Peter. In his desire to Westernize Russia and expand Russia’s influence abroad, Peter’s reforms of the Church were “basically concerned with the structure and role of the church as an institution and the relation of that institution to the state.”²⁸ Peter associated the Orthodox Church with “oppressive conservatism” and

²⁷ Francis House, *Millennium of Faith: Christianity in Russia* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1988), 23.

²⁸ Robert K. Massie, *Peter the Great: His Life and World* (New York: Knopf, 1986), 809.

demanded that Church “make itself useful to society.”²⁹ Peter’s decision was deeply influenced by his travels to Western Europe and the witnessing of Protestant churches administered by a synod or assembly of administrators. With his government already reformed and administered through a system of colleges, in 1718, Peter charged Feofan Prokopovich with drafting a resolution for enacting a similar structure to the Orthodox Church.³⁰

Two years later, Prokopovich finished the *Spiritual Regulation*, which established the “College for Spiritual Affairs” and in January 1721, all bishops were required to “pledge their acceptance of the new system and give an oath of loyalty, not only to the tsar but to all members of the dynasty” and recognize the tsar as their ultimate judge.³¹ Bishops were forced to alert the state to any expression of opposition during confession, church finances were brought under state control, the number of clergy and monks was drastically reduced, and the establishment of new parishes was limited.³² In 1722, the clause requiring all bishops to report confessions of intent to commit criminal offenses by the laity was extended to the lower clergy, as well, which “was a scandalous breach of the universal Church tradition of secrecy of confession.”³³ Coerced obedience such as this hurt the Church’s relationship with the laity but to greater detriment created a Church

²⁹ Massie, *Peter the Great*, 54, 807.

³⁰ Ibid, 804-813. According to Pospelovsky in *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, Francis Lee, an English legal scholar, suggested to Peter that one of his “colleges” be made responsible for church affairs.

³¹ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 111.

³² Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 112 and Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 43.

³³ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 112.

utterly dependent on the state, a situation that continued under the Soviets.³⁴ The Church complied with the state's new regulations. Peter's church reforms initiated what developed into the complete domination of the Church by the state. The continued stripping of the Church's power after Peter's death left the hierarchy dependent on the state and resulted in a pattern of obedience, which the Church was powerless to halt. The Church had little resources available to enact reforms or take action against the monarch.

After Peter's death, various monarchs continued to strip the Church of its power, in some ways going further than Peter and dominating all aspects of administration. Under Empress Elizabeth, the overprocurator Prince A. Shakhovskoi created a network of lay bureaucrats on the diocesan level who did not answer to the local bishop, effectively denying bishops any "real power in the Church."³⁵ In addition, Elizabeth assembled a conference of the Holy Synod and Senate and placed land owned by monasteries and diocesan administrations under the control of retired military officers and villages owned by monasteries over to landed gentry. Most income from the lands went to support disabled military men and a small amount was given to the Church as compensation for the lost land. Catherine the Great claimed that estates owned by monasteries were rightfully the property of the state because the "Church's Kingdom was not of this world."³⁶ She called for the clergy to imitate the poverty of Christ and in a commission consisting of civil servants and "compliant" bishops, ordered all monastic estates to come under the control of the state.³⁷ Other examples of domination and

³⁴ This aspect of the Church's relationship to the laity is discussed in greater detail below.

³⁵ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 119.

³⁶ Ibid, 120.

³⁷ Ibid, 120-121.

compliance of the Church included Catherine the Great's proclamation that religion deserved respect but in no way should it influence political and state affairs. Attempting to speak up for the Church, Metropolitan Arsenii, appointed to the metropolitanate of Rostov and Yaroslavl', protested the state's seizure of monastic lands and called for the restoration of the patriarchate. While other bishops agreed with him, they kept silent, and Catherine eventually imprisoned him and ordered the Church to defrock and excommunicate him.³⁸ The Church attempted to work with the state in the spirit of symphonia, but the reforms of Peter the Great and those continued under Catherine II resulted in the monarchy continuing to view the Church as a department of the state.

In the spirit of the Enlightenment, Catherine established a program of updating and modernizing the empire's laws and improving infrastructure. The Church was permitted to send one representative to the legislative commission convening and submit a proposal for church reforms. The overprocurator at the time Ivan I. Melissino took it upon himself to represent the Church and submitted a thirteen-point proposal to the Synod, which he then intended to submit to the commission. The proposal included suggestions such as, "Permission for priests to wear 'more appropriate clothes'" and the "abolition of prayers for the dead as acts of extortion."³⁹ Needless to say the Synod ignored Melissino's proposals and met with success in their request to Catherine for Melissino's retirement. However, the continuing domination of the Church by the state resulted in uncertainty within the Synod regarding its proper role in creating church

³⁸ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 120-121. Metropolitan Arsenii was fully rehabilitated by the 1917-1918 Sobor.

³⁹ Ibid, 126.

reforms, and the Synod offered no substitute program for the commission.⁴⁰ Ultimately, the Church's history of domination by the monarchy and helpless compliance contributed to the Church's traditional way of thinking and acting with regard to the state and created an uncertainty within the hierarchy in combatting the threat that the Soviet government posed to the existence of the Church.

Dependence

Connected to the Church's compliance through their domination by the state is the eventual dependence of the Church on the state. This third characteristic indicates the unwelcomed, yet eventual reliance upon the state that gradually occurred within the Church. The state's domination of the Church created a coerced compliance, which led to a dependence and loss of will and spirit by the Church. Indeed, in 2000 Metropolitan (now Patriarch) Kirill rejected the previous historical relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church to the monarch, stating, "We are not striving to resurrect the role which the Orthodox Church exercised in the Russian empire. Well before the 1917 Revolution, the Church's best representatives were aware of how the church's dependence upon the state, the subjugation of her life to the interests of the state, [was] so detrimental to the church's own mission."⁴¹ The Church's dependence on the state evolved primarily from Peter's reforms and the subsequent stripping of power and functions from the Church. During Peter's reign, the overprocurator's position was ambiguous but gradually expanded into one of extensive authority over the Church. Drafting changes to the Church without the input of the Synod, the overprocurator was responsible only to the

⁴⁰ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 130.

⁴¹ Quoted in Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 112.

tsar, appointed key positions in the Church, and directed the activities of the Synod to coincide with the political desires of the monarch and exploit the resources of the Church.⁴² The desires and policies of the state evolved into the desires and policies of the Church.

A desire for the reinstitution of the patriarchate is indicated as existing throughout the Church leadership, but for fear of exile, execution, or defrocking, bishops kept silent. Orthodox priest and theologian Georges Florovsky argues that overprocurator Feofan Prokopovich left the Church with a legacy of fear that lasted for decades.⁴³ Fear developed into a tactic through Prokopovich and his intention to break the clergy's spirit and oppose "any form of independent thought, to force them to give up their dreams of some Byzantine symphony or dualism of power."⁴⁴ Prokopovich often participated and initiated the execution, torture, and imprisonment of clergy, which began under the Peter, increased under Anna, and continued during Catherine the Great's reign. The most extreme case was the severe torture and life imprisonment of Archbishop Feofilakt of Tver', who was condemned for publishing Stephen Yavorskii's *The Rock of Faith* in 1728. He was also accused of acting as an agent of the Pope and Polish spies. In the shadow of this level of repression, it is easy to understand why the Church complied

⁴² Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 43. Knox observes that the Overprocurator had the power to introduce measures involving religious worship, the persecution of other religious groups, and appoint representatives to the Church in order to keep the clergy in submission. For a complete history and examination of Peter's the Great's reforms of the Russian Orthodox Church, see historian Dimitrii Pospelovsky's *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*. According to Knox and Pospelovsky, the Overprocurator's power was fully realized under Konstantin Pobedonostsev, who occupied the position from 1880 until 1905 and worked to suppress liberalism and progress in Russia and revived religious repression. The overprocurator, a lay person, as the head of the Church rather than a member of the clergy was a completely foreign concept to the Church hierarchy.

⁴³ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 115.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

with Peter's reforms and how that compliance led to a general loss of will and spirit in enacting reforms.

Even when the Church tried to enact simple reforms in Church life such as a program to make worship more uniform in the nineteenth century, the Church struggled and attempts to resist were futile and half-hearted.⁴⁵ Morale continued to diminish among the clergy as reports came in from rural clergy that the laity lacked interest in the most basic of Church teachings.⁴⁶ This failure to capture the attention of its flock also contributed to the Church's loss of spirit to sanction reform and change. When the Church attempted to "rechristianize" the laity from 1750 to 1850, new burdens on the clergy from the state, insufficient education, and a widening cultural gulf between the Church and the laity further impoverished the Church's spirit making any experiments in reform only marginally successful.⁴⁷ By 1900, the futility of the Church's methods at "rechristianizing" parishioners led advocates of meaningful reform within the Church to argue that the loss of the Church's sovereignty during the Petrine reforms resulted in the "spiritual decay" of Russia.⁴⁸

During the Great Reforms of Tsar Alexander II, the Russian Orthodox Church attempted to receive some benefits from its effects but was further undermined by the state. The Church proposed a greater amount of freedom and independence from the

⁴⁵ This example is discussed in greater detail below.

⁴⁶ Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 44.

⁴⁷ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 2-6. In *Red Priests*, Roslof briefly discusses the pressures for change within the Orthodox Church between the Petrine period and 1905 and argues that the organizational changes in the Church instituted by Peter and the coming changes of the nineteenth century contributed to the Church's downfall in meeting the needs of the peasantry and losing the respect of the intelligentsia as many intellectuals turned to philosophies of the West for guidance.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 3.

state, which the state rejected and instead enacted measures that further alienated the clergy from the laity.⁴⁹ The introduction of parish councils led to a reduction in the number of ecclesiastical positions and greater burdens were placed on clergy as the state called on the clergy to simultaneously supply the laity with greater moral guidance while monitoring them for evidence of social problems such as excessive alcohol consumption.⁵⁰ If a priest rebuked a parishioner for drunkenness, he risked the loss of substantive income, as priests were often forced to beg for living necessities from parishioners or the state. Begging afforded parish clergy no respect from parishioners.⁵¹ In the late nineteenth century, youths sang a rhetorical rhyme suggesting the loss of authority priests possessed among the laity:

What thief or demon came from hell,
What dark magician cast a spell,
Squeezed the worker, sucked him dry,
Takes my money, lets me die?
Why, that's no thief or being from hell,
Or sorcerer who casts a spell,
That takes my money every day
And sucks the worker's blood away.
It's just the merchant and the priest,
It's just the tsar—our father pure.⁵²

⁴⁹ Dmitrii Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime: 1917-1982* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1984), 1:21.

⁵⁰ Glennys Young, *Power and the Sacred in Revolutionary Russia: Religious Activists in the Village* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 16-17. In the early part of this work, Young discusses the various pressures on the clergy during the Great Reforms period and notes that clergy and parishioners “demonstrated increasing autonomy...because political elites treated them as extensions of the state.”

⁵¹ Ibid, 21.

⁵² Ibid, 33.

Attitudes such as this by the laity combined with the Church's dependence on the state for money and legitimacy left the clergy "lack[ing] a sense of their mission, purpose, and place in changing Russian society."⁵³

In the long run, Peter's modernization of Russia created a number of important changes in society and detrimental consequences for the Church. While the Russian Orthodox Church historically functioned in conjunction with the government, until Peter's reforms, the Orthodox Church still maintained a fair amount of independence. While it can be sufficiently argued that the tsar exerted more authority over the Church than the doctrine of symphonia permitted, the Russian patriarch after 1589, as is seen in the case of Nikon, often acted as a barrier to tsars' desire for power and possessed substantial political influence that tsars had to work to overcome. Peter's subjugation of the Church to the state resulted in not only the loss of the Church's independence, but undeniably tied the Church to the state until the state all but absorbed the Church.⁵⁴

Intellectual Isolation

Adding to the Church's dependence on the state and lack of energy in reform and new thinking was the absence of intellectual stimulation in the Church, which is the fourth characteristic that contributed to the Church's approach to the Soviet state in 1917. It is helpful to provide some background of the intellectual atmosphere and the intelligentsia's view of religion and the Church in Russia during this time period.

⁵³ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 3.

⁵⁴ Daniel H. Shubin points particularly to the institution of the overprocurator as contributing to the completion of the "absorption" of the Church into the state bureaucracy. Daniel H. Shubin, *A History of Russian Christianity, Vol II The Patriarchal Era Through Peter the Great* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2005), 198

Indeed, many members of the intelligentsia, by the late nineteenth century, were atheists, agnostic, or retained a general loss of faith in the Church.⁵⁵ Influence from the West combined with the country's need for reform and the paralyzed state of the Church in offering spiritual guidance led many intellectuals to put their faith in other philosophies. In the nineteenth century, the ideas and viewpoints that flooded Russia due to Peter's "westernization" erupted in a "national political awakening" and intellectuals debated over "proletarian socialism, parliamentary constitutionalism or constitutional monarchy and reform of the autocratic system from within."⁵⁶ Ideas from the Enlightenment and other Western notions led some members of the intelligentsia to embrace materialism, rationalism, nihilism, or positivism as solutions to Russia's "backwardness" and isolation.⁵⁷ Others found hope in Russia's past and traditional values. Generally, the Russian intelligentsia at this time was separated into Slavophiles (*slavianofily*) and Westernizers (*zapadniki*).⁵⁸ Although different strains of Slavophilism existed, the movement rejected Western ideas and advocated for a return to traditional Russian values found in Russia's history. For many Slavophiles, such as Fyodor Dostoyevsky, this included the authority and majesty of the Russian Orthodox Church before the Petrine reforms. Westernizers pinned their hopes for Russia on the West and

⁵⁵ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 1:20-21.

⁵⁶ Husband, *Godless Communists*, 29.

⁵⁷ Lesley Chamberlain, *Motherland: A Philosophical History of Russia* (New York: Rookery, 2007), 16-25. Chamberlain notes that beginning in the 19th century members of the intelligentsia became aware of Russia's backwardness and began to call for change. Pyotr Chaadaev was the first Russian intellectual discuss Russia's difference from both the East and the West and Russia's need for greater education.

⁵⁸ The terms "Slavophiles" and "Westernizers" were created by each side as an ironic and mocking definition of the other.

Western concepts of government, culture, and industrialization.⁵⁹ When Slavophiles and Westernizers came together to discuss religion and the Church's role in Russia's future, they proposed numerous solutions but discovered that no simple answer existed.

As Husband notes, the value of the Church and religion inevitably occupied discussions by the intelligentsia in the nineteenth century. Russia's "religiosity" was not to be taken for granted.⁶⁰ Some nineteenth century thinkers in Russia possessed no intention of eliminating religion, but rather sought to "harness the passions of discontented religious sects toward revolutionary purposes."⁶¹ Others attempted to reconcile elements of Christianity with new ideals for a better Russia. Nicholas Berdiaev joined materialism with mystic elements in an attempt to create a more moral Russia.⁶² Anatolii Lunacharskii, Alexander Bogdanov, and Maxim Gorkii attempted to join Bolshevik Marxism with Nietzsche's concept of the *Übermensch* to create a religion of humanity where the cultural aspects of religion were retained but worship focused on man.⁶³ The repudiation of religion by radical thinkers such as Nikolai Chernyshevskii and Ludwig Feuerbach created a political opposition to religion by many prominent

⁵⁹ A more complete understanding of the ideals held by the Slavophiles and the Westernizers is found in Riasonovsky and Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 354-361.

⁶⁰ Husband, *Godless Communists*, 29-30.

⁶¹ Ibid, 29.

⁶² Ibid, 30.

⁶³ The concept of "God-building" was never adopted by the Bolsheviks as a policy on religion because of Lenin's fierce opposition to anything "religious." The idea was designed to harness the emotional attachment and moral value that man projected onto a deity and use it to create a moral communistic society that provided the same psychological needs to man as religion. More in-depth discussions of "God-building" can be found in George L. Kline's *Religious and Anti-Religious Thought in Russia* and Edward E. Roslof's *Red Priests*.

revolutionaries and intellectuals such as Vladimir Lenin.⁶⁴ Philosophical materialism, socialism, and positivism, all of which reject religion in various degrees, came to dominate the thinking of many intellectuals and revolutionaries at a time when Russia was no longer able to continue its current path of isolation from the world, suppression of its largest population (peasants), and failure to embrace modernity. As Tsar Alexander II ascended to power, he realized that action was required.

Alexander II's reforms, known collectively as the "Great Reforms," were designed to "[nurture] a modern civil society."⁶⁵ The reforms were initially motivated by an increased call for the abolition of serfdom by nearly all members of the intelligentsia including Slavophiles and Westernizers. Soon a wave of new reforms were ushered in, including the reform of the local government and judiciary system, financial innovations such as the publication of an annual budget, the establishment of a state bank to centralize credit and finance, and the creation of a single state treasury. The reforms brought about the growth of capitalism, "the evolution of the peasantry, the decline of the gentry, the rise of the middle class...and the development of a public sphere."⁶⁶ The Russian Orthodox Church, however, received none of the benefits of the Great Reforms.

The former church reforms of Peter the Great intellectually stagnated the clergy and resulted in a deep segregation of the clergy from the laity. Peter instituted an increase in ecclesiastical schools, but the "education [the clergy] received was mostly

⁶⁴ Husband, *The Godless Communists*, 30. The effect of Chernyshevsky's work, particularly *What is to Be Done*, on Lenin is well documented and is discussed in some detail in Dmitrii Volkogonov's *Lenin: A New Biography* (New York: The Free Press, 1994), 17-21.

⁶⁵ Riasonovsky and Steinberg, *A History of Russia*, 345.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 344-351.

irrelevant to the Russian reality, as well as to their future pastorate.”⁶⁷ Lack of a progressive education made any contribution to intellectualism impossible and because there was little attraction to joining the Church, the clergy stagnated and, for many in Russian society, lost their value and prestige.⁶⁸ The decline in the number of priests available to perform everyday rites and other spiritual functions for peasants and the lower classes as well as Peter’s limitations on the establishment of new parishes left many areas without sufficient clergy. Many believers experienced alienation from the Russian Orthodox Church and “lost any sense of reverence for [its] prelates.”⁶⁹ For many less educated Orthodox believers, dissatisfaction with the Church’s new organization led them to turn to a more personal faith or to join various sects such as the Old Believers, Khlysty, Dukhobors, Molokanes, and Stundists. It is noteworthy that each of these sects increased in followers during the end of the 19th century; by 1905, an estimated 20 million Russians adhered to a “dissenting” sect.⁷⁰

In addition, the moral character of the Church was at times called into question as priests turned to robbery, larceny, and petty begging from their parishioners.⁷¹ Parish priest I. S. Belliutsin lamented that the state of the Orthodox Church in the nineteenth century created the “maximum humiliation and disgrace” in converting “a lofty and miraculous calling into a trade,” when priests were forced to travel around the village

⁶⁷ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 114.

⁶⁸ Nicolas Zernov, *Moscow: The Third Rome* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 44.

⁶⁹ Daniel H. Shubin, *A History of Russian Christianity, Vol III Synodal Era and The Sectarians, 1725-1824* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2004), 80-81.

⁷⁰ Eugene B. Shirley, Jr. and Michael Rowe, ed., *Candle in the Wind: Religion in the Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1989), 17.

⁷¹ Shubin, *A History of Russian Christianity, Vol III*, 80-82.

seeking money.⁷² Zoe Knox notes that drunken and immoral behavior of Orthodox clergy created “contempt” for Orthodox priests.⁷³ Within the nobility and the intelligentsia, Peter’s reforms caused “such Western movements as the Enlightenment, Romanticism, Darwinism, and Marxism [to take] the place of Orthodox Christianity in providing insight and inspiration for Russia’s modern development.”⁷⁴ Therefore, many of the intelligentsia came to view the Church and the clergy as stagnant, irrelevant, and a hindrance to Russia’s progress while many peasants and lower class laity viewed the clergy as drunkards constantly seeking money.

Inexperience in Oppositional Methods

The fifth characteristic offered in demonstrating the eventual cooperation between the Church and the Soviet state is the Church’s inexperience in actively opposing state domination, repression, and excessive entanglement with the state. Two observations are noteworthy in attempting to explain the Church’s failure to produce methods of opposition to the state in the monarchical period. The first reason is that the Russian Orthodox Church never experienced a government hostile to the Orthodox religion or existence of the Orthodox Church itself in the prerevolutionary period. While the tsar persecuted Orthodox clergymen at times, the state was never opposed to the Orthodox religion as a belief system or as an institution. Indeed, the state took legislative, and at times, physical, measures to stop various religious sects from converting Orthodox laypeople.

⁷² I. U. Belliutsin, *Description of the Clergy in Rural Russia: The Memoir of a Nineteenth-Century Parish Priest* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1985), 122.

⁷³ Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church*, 44.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 16-17.

The domination of the Church by the state in the monarchical period occurred due to Russia's increasingly autocratic government and Peter's desire for westernization and greater control over all facets of society, but the government never objected to Orthodoxy as the state religion or sought to destroy the Church's presence. Dissent committed by members of the Orthodox Church, beginning in the Khrushchev era was born out of the government's attempts to destroy religious worship, religious belief, and the life of the Church. Believers in the Soviet period objected to the destruction of their churches, the government's changes to Church ritual, the government's requirement that the Church not teach the youth, and the arrest and imprisonment of religious believers.

Second is the combined impact of fear and the historical relationship that existed in Russia between church and state. These two elements, it is argued here, are related in the Orthodox Church's case. Typical is the lack of any concerted effort by the Orthodox hierarchy to restore the patriarchate after the Petrine reforms, despite that the majority of the hierarchy supported the patriarchate's reinstallment. There was no serious opposition mounted against the tsar.⁷⁵ This can be explained by the Church's close direction under the government and close tie to the government. Certainly Peter subjugated the Church to the state, but the Church was historically, and according to the symphonic ideal, divinely connected to the state. Mounting resistance meant severing that ideal, separating the two joint forces created by God to rule the Orthodox people. Additionally, on a more

⁷⁵ One exception to dissent from within the Russian Orthodox Church in the tsarist times is exemplified in the "Holy Fools." Holy Fools were an order of canonized saints in Eastern Orthodox tradition. Known at times as "fools for Christ," they feign madness or foolishness in an attempt to prophetically challenge the community. In Russia, Gvosdev notes that a Holy Fool "shamed" Ivan IV into stopping "cruelties in Novgorod." Gvosdev, *An Examination of Church-State Relations*, 111-114. The influence of the Holy Fools after the sixteenth century is less clear. Out of concern that many practitioners were false Holy Fools, the authorities and the Church no longer canonized Holy Fools and beginning in the seventeenth century, there appears to have been a decline in the number of Holy Fools in Russia. Georgi P. Vins, *The Russian Religious Mind, Vol. II* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1966), 316-343.

practical level, the Church hierarchy accepted the fact that the state was far more powerful than they. Ultimately, the Orthodox Church as the official state church of Russia, under the watchful direction of the tsar, simply never had occasion to develop methods of dissent against authority. Subsequently, with no historical background in opposing state institutions, the hierarchy was ill-equipped to respond adequately to the atheistic Soviet threat, which sought to destroy not only the Church's existence but the very beliefs and ideals of the Church.

Looking at the history of the Russian Orthodox Church, its place in society, and relationship to the laity and the state from the Petrine period demonstrates a number of elements crucial to understanding the Church's position at the time of the Bolshevik Revolution and the role that it eventually occupied in Soviet society. First, Peter's subjugation of the Church to the state crippled the Church independently, making it a bureaucratic department of the state, alienating the clergy from the laity, often contributing to a loss of respect from the laity and destitution of parish priests, and stifling the intellectual development and contributions of the Church to Russia's efforts to reform. Furthermore, the clergy lacked a sense of mission and purpose, gradually becoming more and more unsure of their role in society.

Second, the "Great Reforms" of Alexander II, while facilitating modernity, industrialization, and economic growth, contributed to a further isolation of the clergy from the laity. Alexander's reforms gave Russia a much-needed push but did little to quell social unrest, which led to a rise in revolutionary movements within the intelligentsia as the call for greater reform fell on deaf ears. Simultaneously, increased industrialization caused a massive out-migration of villagers, leading to a decline in

religious observance, particularly among young people. By the beginning of the twentieth century, it was plain that religious disunity compounded by social turmoil and a restless intelligentsia signaled that change was on the horizon for Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church.

Early Twentieth Century Church Reforms

In the years just before the 1917 Revolution, the clergy showed signs of renewal, realizing the necessity for reform. Frustration concerning reform among church leaders led one priest to remark, “We have in Russia a score of orthodoxies that differ from each other in their fundamental beliefs.”⁷⁶ By 1905, Russian Orthodoxy was divided into three groups—white clergy, black clergy, and laity. The black clergy were priests from whom the Orthodox episcopate was chosen, and by 1905, they emerged as a group loyal to the Church as an institution. They supported a program of “episcopal conciliarism,” which included eliminating the Holy Synod, reinstating the patriarchate, convening cyclic church councils, and restoring the sovereignty of the Church over its affairs. Ultimately, the black clergy hoped to restore the traditions of the Orthodox Church.

The white clergy (married parish priests) generally opposed measures by the black clergy on the foundation that such reforms yielded even more ecclesiastical power to the episcopacy. Parish clergy received little respect and lived in impoverished conditions due to circumstances arising from Peter’s reforms. Roslof identifies the white clergy as creating reforms of “clerical liberalism,” which is defined as a “philosophy critical of both ecclesiastical and governmental authority, sympathetic to public needs,

⁷⁶ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 4.

and supportive of the parish clergy's social and economic interests."⁷⁷ Liberal parish clergy supported the convening of a church council in order to revitalize church life and governance and desired that bishops be held accountable to the priests and laity in their diocese. Ultimately, liberal parish priests believed they could solve Russia's spiritual crisis if they were allowed to command the direction of the church, which only came by their acceptance into the episcopate.⁷⁸ Reforms supported by the parish clergy with regard to the episcopate challenged the traditions of Russian Orthodoxy because their ideas drew on Western concepts of equality.⁷⁹ It is easy to understand why this group of liberal parish priests received little support either from their superiors or the laity.

In the midst of the clergy considering change and growing increasingly frustrated with their subjugation to the state and the Holy Synod, a number of important events occurred that hinted at the Church's renewal and its return as a key player in Russia's future. The first resulted from an imperial manifesto handed down on December 12, 1904, declaring that a law on religious tolerance was in the works. The manifesto was handed down amidst increasing cries for a constitutional monarchy, which eventually led to the 1905 Revolution in Russia during the reign of Tsar Nikolai II. Metropolitan Antonii (Vadkovskii) of St. Petersburg sent a memorandum to Tsar Nicholas II requesting permission for Orthodox clergy and laity to convoke a conference without state officials in order to discuss a system of independence for the Church. The metropolitan feared that a law establishing religious tolerance in Russia would further

⁷⁷ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 5.

⁷⁸ James W. Cunningham, *A Vanquished Hope: The Movement for Church Renewal in Russia, 1905-1906* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 106.

⁷⁹ Paul R. Valliere, "Theological Liberalism and Church Reform in Imperial Russia," in Geoffrey A. Hosking, ed., *Church, Nation, and State in Russia and Ukraine* (Basingstoke, UK: Macmillan, 1991), 108.

cripple the Church and the council was meant to free the Church from direct political or state functions.⁸⁰ When Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the overprocurator, protested the council and recommended to the tsar that the Synod discuss the issue of church autonomy and other reforms, the Holy Synod responded with a call for the immediate convening of a local council and the election of a patriarch. Although Nicholas II initially agreed, he soon postponed the council under the recommendation of Pobedonostsev.

Pobedonostsev won Nicholas II over, but his stronghold on the Synod was failing. This became obvious to Pobedonostsev when he learned of the bishops' responses to a questionnaire he sent out concerning Church reforms. The bishops' responses were published in three large volumes and called for a myriad of major reforms, including the restoration of the patriarchate, consistent councils, the eradication of the overprocuratorial system, autonomy for the Church from the state, greater participation by the Church in Russian society, and a shift in the language of the liturgy to make it closer to spoken Russian, in order to make the liturgy more accessible to the average parishioner. Indeed only two diocesan bishops out of sixty-two did not support the dissolution of the Synod.⁸¹ The future patriarch Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin) supported the proposed reforms, believing that a return to the traditions of Russian Orthodoxy

⁸⁰ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 191. A law on religious tolerance with the Orthodox Church still under the thumb of the state would constrain the Church's activities and place the Church in an underprivileged position while other religious institutions would enjoy freedom. However, as Daniel H. Shubin notes in *A History of Russian Christianity: Vol IV The Orthodox Church 1894-1990, Tsar Nicholas II to Gorbachev's Edict on the Freedom of Conscience*, the impact of the decree on the freedom of other religions was minimal because it was suppressed by Pobedonostsev, who stated that the decree was "not directed toward the guarantee of freedom of worship, but only to toleration in matters of confession."

⁸¹ William B. Stroyen, *Communist Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church, 1943-1962* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1967), 4.

would result in a more pious laity and “Christianization” of Russian politics.⁸² Calls for an overhaul of the Church’s structure and a return to the patriarchal system by numerous members of the Church hierarchy demonstrated a new boldness and recognition of the necessity for the Church to free itself from the constraints of the state. This realization along with concern over the perceived declining religiosity of the laity and the failure of previous methods to “rechristianize” parishioners and reduce deviations from institutional Orthodoxy led many clergy to pursue reforms.

For some clergy, necessary reforms included social changes and a solution to the growing unrest throughout all classes.⁸³ In late 1904, Orthodox priest Georgii Gapon organized thousands in St. Petersburg into the Assembly of Russian Factory Workers. Following a strike throughout the city, Gapon led a large group of protestors to the Winter Palace in an attempt to present a petition for higher wages, shorter work hours, and constitutional reforms to Tsar Nicholas II. As the protestors, who included women and children, carried Orthodox icons and banners, the tsar ordered soldiers to fire on the group. The event, which occurred on January 9, 1905, came to be known as Bloody Sunday and it sparked the 1905 Revolution.⁸⁴ Most Orthodox clergy stood apart from the main currents promoting broad social change, and most reforms advocated by bishops stemmed from “episcopal conciliarism.”

During this time, a new movement within the Orthodox Church was also taking place—a precursor to the later Renovationist movement promoted briefly by the

⁸² Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 192.

⁸³ This societal unrest resulted from the Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, frustration by the intelligentsia, and a failure by the government to continue necessary reforms begun under Tsar Alexander II. According to Daniel H. Shubin, “political events in the country made the need for reform in the ROC all the more urgent.” Shubin, *A History of Russian Christianity, Vol IV*, 10.

⁸⁴ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 6-7.

Bolsheviks. Originally a group of parish priests wrote a collection of essays published in 1906 in a single book titled *Toward a Church Council*.⁸⁵ They opposed the restoration of the patriarchate and favored a kind of Christian socialism. Quickly joining with a group of lay advocates of Christian socialism, they formed the Union for Church Regeneration, which included a wider reform agenda.⁸⁶ The group published a memorandum supporting the separation of church and state, a democratic and conciliar system for administration of the Church, induction of the Gregorian calendar by the Church, and translation of the liturgy into vernacular Russian.⁸⁷ Roslof notes that parish clergy who favored the development of a socialist Christianity in Russia during this time were active in achieving their goals for reform and engaged in a number of social protests during the first Russian Revolution.⁸⁸ Pospelovsky argues that the radicalism of the parish clergy and support for socialist Christianity was not altogether surprising during the early twentieth century in Russia and notes that Archimandrite Mikhail (Semenov), a professor at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, published a *Program of Christian Socialism*. Although the Union of Church Regeneration was more radical than other groups at this time particularly with regard to their attacks on “academic monasticism,” their memoranda was accepted as a proposal for the future Sobor’s agenda by Metropolitan Antonii in 1906.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 194.

⁸⁶ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 7.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 7.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 194-195.

However, the Union for Church Regeneration did not last long in the changing political environment in Russia. The tsarist government of the Duma era was shocked by the radicalism of parish priests and after the majority of priests elected to the First and Second Duma joined leftist and centrist factions, the Holy Synod prohibited all clergymen from supporting leftist groups in the Duma. Those who persisted were defrocked.⁹⁰ Bishops desiring change pushed for the convening of a church council but in 1907, the tsar decidedly said no. As tension between the Church, the Duma, and the tsar mounted in conjunction with the increasing splits among clergy in the Church hoping to enact reform, confusion became rampant, and in 1908, the Holy Synod ended calls for church renewal.⁹¹ The Church hierarchy clamped down on protestors in the seminaries, academies, and parish clergy, and all proposals for ecclesiastical reform including social status, education, and financial support of parish priests were halted.⁹² The Union for Church Regeneration lacked the support necessary by the laity to enact any meaningful revolutionary changes in the ecclesiastical or political arena, and the group shriveled up. Ultimately during this early revolutionary period, the church hierarchs in the Orthodox Church became even more closely associated with reactionary groups that supported the tsar.⁹³ However, the 1905 Revolution, the thrusting of Russia into a constitutional monarchy of sorts along with the participation of the clergy in the Duma hinted at change on the horizon for the Church.

⁹⁰ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church*, 195.

⁹¹ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 8 and Shubin, *A History of Russian Christianity: Volume II*, 11.

⁹² Roslof, *Red Priests*, 8.

⁹³ *Ibid*, 9.

During this period, the return of members of the intelligentsia to Russian Orthodoxy and its traditions cannot be ignored. Many were former Marxists such as Sergei Bulgakov, Nicholai Berdiaev, Peter Struve, and Semyon Frank who criticized the radicalism of many Russian intellectuals and their adoption of Western views of nihilism, relativism, and other “rootless” philosophies.⁹⁴ Berdiaev advocated a mixture of materialism and mysticism to effect a moral Russia while Bulgakov expressed concern over the practical failings in the Church. Struve, who had previously collaborated with Lenin, and Frank took an anti-revolutionary but anti-tsarist stance at the dawn of the twentieth century.⁹⁵ The four along with G. O. Gershenzon, A. S. Izgoev, and B. A. Kristiakovskii wrote *Vekhi (Landmarks)* in 1909, which urged the intelligentsia to cultivate a cooperative, religious orientation.⁹⁶ According to Pospelovsky, the energy and rejuvenation of some intelligentsia for Russia’s historical faith brought about an “atmospheric” change for the Church that cultivated a continued desire for freedom from the state for the clergy. One of the Church’s brightest intellectuals at this time was Alexander Ivanovich Vvedenskii, an important Renovationist leader and a man who came to embody “converging desires for church reform among the religious intelligentsia and parish clergy.”⁹⁷ The Church’s future was, therefore, comprised of a multitude of individuals from different backgrounds, all believing they possessed the solution for the Church’s future. The Holy Synod and official position of the Church may have halted talks of ecclesiastical reforms, but among the various groups of intellectuals, bishops,

⁹⁴ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 197.

⁹⁵ Husband, *Godless Communists*, 30-32.

⁹⁶ Poltoratzky, Nikolai P. “The Vekhi Dispute and the Significance of Vekhi.” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 9, no. 1 (Spring 1967), 86-106.

⁹⁷ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 9.

parish clergy, socialists, rightists, and centrists, church reforms remained a hotly debated topic. The revolutions of 1917 created deeper lines of division among these groups.

Revolution, Rejection, and Reaction

In March 1917, Nicholas II abdicated the throne, and Russia was thrown into the beginning of a chaotic period that would last until the Bolsheviks consolidated their power in the early 1920s. Initially, the Provisional Government was created to serve as the country's main government apparatus. Both black and white clergy experienced a kind of "psychological catastrophe" when the tsar abdicated. Archbishop Arsenii Stadnitskii of Novgorod is said to have exclaimed, "There is no tsar, there is no church!"⁹⁸ Roslof explains the surprise and confusion of the Church as the result of the "sudden split between politics and religion" and argues that clergy and laity who had earlier opposed the connection between the Church and the tsar exhibited the "greatest ability to adapt their religious beliefs to political change."⁹⁹ This exhibits further evidence that the traditional mindset of the Church prevented the Russian Orthodox hierarchy from adapted to a persecuted church that existed separate from the state. Sergei Pushkarev, a Russian historian, theorizes that the February Revolution and establishment of the Provisional Government propelled the Church into action.¹⁰⁰ The Provisional Government existed as a secular organization and abolished all privileges based on religion.¹⁰¹ The Synod and overprocurator system continued uninterrupted, but talk of a

⁹⁸ Quoted in Roslof, *Red Priests*, 12.

⁹⁹ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 13.

¹⁰⁰ Sergei Pushkarev, Vladimir Rusak, and Gleb Yakunin, *Christianity and Government in Russia and the Soviet Union: Reflections on the Millennium* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), 42.

¹⁰¹ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 201.

council convocation was renewed. At the same time, social unrest continued and groups surfaced such as the “Petrograd Union of Progressive Clergy,” which called on priests to join factory workers in their struggle for social justice and the “All-Russian Union of Democratic Orthodox Clergy,” which preached Christian socialism and was led by Alexander Vvedenskii. Vvedenskii’s group was particularly active in opposing the restoration of the monarchy, supporting efforts to establish a democratic government in Russia allowing civil liberties, and reforming the Church and separating it from the state.¹⁰² Within the hierarchy of the Church and the Holy Synod, a Sobor was called.

Kartashev, an Orthodox priest, described the atmosphere at the time, saying:

When the 1917 revolution broke out and placed the convocation of the Sobor on the agenda, the Russian Church proved to up to the challenge, both technically and in principle...there was elation that the Church had at last achieved freedom after two centuries of shackles, and the long waited possibility to act had finally arrived. On the other hand, with the Tsar’s abdication ‘the juridical base linking the Church with the state disappeared.’ The new government was based no long ‘on God’s mercy’ but on ‘the will of the people.’¹⁰³

At the Sobor in August, among other remarkable changes, the Church reinstated the office of the patriarch. The Sobor’s agenda streamed from sources such as the pre-sobor consultation and subsequent conference of 1906 and 1912, the 1917 Moscow congress of representatives of leftist-populist groups supporting the abolition of large landed estates, freedom of speech and religion, distancing of the Church from the government without establishing complete separation, and the retention of Church-run schools and a status of first among equals with regard to other religions.¹⁰⁴ Aside from the restoration of the

¹⁰² Roslof, *Red Priests*, 14.

¹⁰³ Quoted in Roslof, *Red Priests*, 202.

¹⁰⁴ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 204. Chapter nine of Pospelovsky’s book discusses in great detail the measures, proposed reforms, and discussion among clergy during the pre-sobor meetings.

patriarchate, the Church allowed each parish autonomy, which in practice meant permission to elect its administration and priest and own property. The most significant event resulting from the Sobor was the election of Tikhon (Bellavin) as patriarch.

Tikhon supported episcopal conciliarism, the revival of Orthodox missionary work and pastoral leadership, the active participation of the laity in parish life, and he desired for the Church to become involved in the sociopolitical life of Russia in order to “unite everyday existence with spiritual values.”¹⁰⁵ However, the church hierarchs and Tikhon soon realized that as the former national church of Russia, Lenin and the other Bolsheviks considered the Church an enemy of the proletariat and soon commenced an attack against the Orthodox Church.¹⁰⁶ On January 19, 1918, Tikhon published an anathema against the Bolsheviks chiding them as the “scum of the earth” for committing “truly satanic” acts against the Church, declaring “blessed sacraments” as “unnecessary and superfluous,” and “plunder[ing] and blasphemously costum[ing]” churches.¹⁰⁷ Tikhon beseeched the Bolsheviks to “cease [their] bloody reprisals” or suffer excommunication.¹⁰⁸ Clergy were instructed to “call [their] children to the defense of the now trampled rights of the Orthodox Church, quickly set up religious unions, and call upon them to join.”¹⁰⁹ The laity, referred to as “true children of the Church,” were asked

¹⁰⁵ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ William B. Stroyen in *Communist Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church* posits that because of the internal struggle happening within the Church, the majority of church hierarchs did not fully comprehend the extent to which the Bolsheviks hated religion and desired its full destruction in their new society.

¹⁰⁷ Edward Acton and Tom Stableford, ed., *The Soviet Union: A Documentary History, Volume 1: 1917-1940* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2005), 85-87.

¹⁰⁸ Acton and Stableford, *The Soviet Union: Volume 1*, 86.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

to “come to the defense of our insulted and persecuted Holy Mother Church.”¹¹⁰

Tikhon’s anathema against the Bolsheviks was the Church hierarchy’s first attempt to stand in defense of the Church and denounce the actions of the Bolsheviks.

The response of the Orthodox laity was overwhelming supportive toward Tikhon and the anathema, which provided Tikhon with assurance and justification when he sent a direct letter to Lenin on the first anniversary of the October Revolution in which he listed grievances committed against the Church, stating, “You have closed a whole series of monasteries and chapels without any pretext... You are closing down brotherhoods and other charitable and educational organizations maintained by the Church.”¹¹¹ Tikhon insisted that the Bolsheviks “celebrate the anniversary of [their] taking power by releasing the imprisoned, by ceasing bloodshed, violence, havoc, restriction of the faith” and ended his letter with a well-known reference from the Gospel of Matthew, “...with the sword will perish you who have taken up the sword.”¹¹² The letter was part of Tikhon’s decision to remove the Church from political sides and entanglement with the civil war raging between the White Army and the Bolsheviks. Tikhon’s letter directly to Lenin is another demonstration of Tikhon’s importance as he continued to lobby in defense of the Church.

After August 1918, when the Bolsheviks formally separated the church from the state, Tikhon changed the course of the Church when he refused to bless a leader in the White Army although many clergy in areas heavily controlled by the White Army

¹¹⁰ Acton and Stableford, *The Soviet Union: Volume I*, 86.

¹¹¹ William C. Fletcher, *The Russian Orthodox Church Underground*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 22.

¹¹² *Ibid*, 23.

maintained staunch anti-Soviet positions.¹¹³ This was followed by an encyclical published in 1918 by Tikhon instructing the clergy to stand apart from politics and freeing the laity from political obligations on the basis of the separation decree.¹¹⁴ In light of the new separation decree, Tikhon wanted to remove the Church from the political realm in an attempt to preserve it and continue reforms.

The initial response to the Bolshevik takeover by clergymen was mixed. Many bishops and leading laymen, now free from the constraints of the Petrine reforms, sought independence from the state while attempting to hold on to privileges they had enjoyed when Orthodoxy was the national religion.¹¹⁵ Some lower clergymen, particularly married parish priests, perceived the new communist government as a friend and attempted to merge Christianity with socialist principles in a kind of “Bolshevik Christianity.” This movement is referred to as Renovationism or the Living Church Movement. The Living Church, formed by Vladimir Krasnitskii, modeled itself after the Bolshevik Party and formed an early alliance with the Bolsheviks in a sincere attempt to save Orthodoxy.¹¹⁶ The Renovationist movement at first attracted parish clergy from across Russia and Renovationist leaders such as Vvendenskii and Krasnitskii believed that through the new government their goal of Bolshevik Christianity was reachable.¹¹⁷ However, the Renovationists failed to realize what the Bolsheviks truly saw them as—

¹¹³ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 26. Roslof argues that many clergy, including Tikhon, hoped that political neutrality would allow the Church to act as a force for reconciliation in Russia. The Bolsheviks interpreted this sudden turn to neutrality as support for their enemies.

¹¹⁴ Pospielovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 39.

¹¹⁵ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 22.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 206.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 207.

another method for purging Russia of religion, creating division in the Orthodox Church, and cultivating mistrust and disappointment in the Church among the laity.

While the Renovationist movement peaked in 1923, claiming control over nearly seventy percent of Orthodox parishes in Soviet Russia, the movement remained unpopular with the majority of the laity. By 1929, support for the Renovationists had dropped drastically to only fifteen percent of Orthodox parishes. In many cases, the laity despised Renovationism so much that they boycotted the churches, even if no alternative Tikhonite supported church was available.¹¹⁸ Tikhon's importance to the laity as the defender of the "true" Orthodox faith is exhibited in the failure of the Renovationist movement. The laity remained overwhelmingly supportive of Tikhon. In 1923, Tikhon was forced to abdicate the patriarchate under pressure from the Renovationists, who accused him of anti-Soviet political activity.¹¹⁹ After Tikhon's abdication as patriarch, support for traditional Orthodoxy continued among the laity, while, simultaneously, the Bolsheviks began to withdraw their support of Renovationism.¹²⁰ The Bolsheviks' eventual withdrawal of their support of the Renovationist movement is not surprising. During the early tentative years of the Civil War, the Renovationists were a convenient method of splintering the Orthodox Church, but as Stalinism and the Cultural Revolution gathered steam, the Bolsheviks adopted more sophisticated measures for destroying Orthodoxy; these measures consisted mostly of strictly enforcing the laws prohibiting public religious activity, the continued closing of churches, and the execution of

¹¹⁸ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 164.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 54-5.

¹²⁰ Roslof's *Red Priests* remains the most comprehensive study ever conducted of the Renovationist movement, its motives, interplay with the Bolshevik Party, major players, successes, failures, and eventual demise in 1946. Roslof argues that by the 1930s the influence of the Renovationists had dwindled to the extent that they no longer remained an important force against traditional Orthodoxy.

Orthodox clergy until 1943. The failure of the Renovationist movement also emerged out of the Russian Orthodox Church's evolving relationship with the new Soviet government. The Bolsheviks never intended for the Renovationist Church to be a permanent solution to the problem of religion or the influence of the official Orthodox Church. Indeed, giving support to Renovationism was only one of the tactics the Bolsheviks used against the Church.

Exploiting the widespread famine in Russia in 1921 as a means to further drain the Church of its resources was another Bolshevik tactic against the Church. When the famine of 1921 hit, Patriarch Tikhon and the Church reacted by appealing directly to the new government asking if the Church could make donations and enlist the help of the laity. In February 1922, Tikhon continued to work with the government agreeing that donations thus far were insufficient. Therefore, Tikhon, with the approval of the Bolsheviks, issued a new appeal giving clergy and parish councils "permission to contribute parish valuables for famine relief if parishioners as a community of believers (*obshchina veruiushchikh*) agreed and the items had no liturgical use."¹²¹ Tikhon and Archpriest Tsvetkov, the patriarchal representative to the State Commission for Famine Relief, granted parish councils permission to donate "icon adornments, old or discarded items, bracelets, medallions, and even vestments."¹²² Tikhon's request for approval by the Bolsheviks in collecting valuables for the famine relief demonstrates the hierarchy's continued belief that the Orthodox Church and the government operated under a natural tie to create the best society possible for their people.

¹²¹ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 40.

¹²² Ibid, 40-41.

The Church's initial response to the famine bothered many Bolshevik hierarchs like Trotsky and Lenin, who objected to allowing the Church the luxury of dictating what religious objects were donated. Trotsky took the initiative (with Lenin's approval) to order the State Commission for Famine Relief and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee to draw up a plan for requisitioning all church valuables. In the meantime, the Party newspaper *Pravda* published an article claiming that Tikhon and other Church leaders refused to help in the famine relief and that only a "church revolution would help village clergy who wanted to give church treasures to funds for the starving but feared the patriarch."¹²³ Taking their cue from Trotsky, the state ordered the local soviets to seize all objects made of gold, silver and precious stones inside churches.

The patriarchal representatives to the State Commission for Famine Relief were not consulted, and in response Tikhon sent a letter of protest to VTsIK president Mikhail Kalinin. Tikhon's letter noted the Church's assistance and cooperation with the state in relieving the widespread famine and argued that the state was hesitant in accepting the Church's help. Fearing that the laity would associate him with the Bolshevik's exploitation of church resources in their desire for gold, Tikhon, in a new appeal on February 28, 1922, announced that it was his "sacred duty to explain the Church's attitude to this act and also inform the faithful."¹²⁴ Tikhon restated that he continued to permit "the sacrifice of unconsecrated and non-liturgical Church items," but emphatically declared, "I cannot approve of the removal of consecrated items from churches, even through voluntary sacrifice. Their use for non-liturgical purposes is forbidden by Canon Law and punishable, as sacrilege, by excommunication for lay members or defrocking for

¹²³ Roslof, *Red Priests*, 40-41. .

¹²⁴ Acton and Stableford, *The Soviet Union: Volume 1*, 246.

priests.”¹²⁵ Indeed, Tikhon referred to the Bolsheviks’ seizure of all church valuables as an “act of sacrilege.”¹²⁶ Tikhon’s proclamation further exhibits his importance in standing against the Bolsheviks, which ultimately the Bolsheviks refused to allow.

Despite the Church’s help in providing famine relief, Tikhon was arrested in May for allegedly resisting the seizure of church valuables in a time of famine.¹²⁷

Furthermore, several bishops and priests were executed or imprisoned after being found guilty of inciting the laity to engage in protests and violence against Bolsheviks in charge of seizing church valuables.¹²⁸ In 1923, Tikhon was released from prison before standing trial amid protests and pressure from abroad, particularly from the Archbishop of Canterbury in the United Kingdom. Tikhon was forced to write a confession in which he stated that influence from anti-Soviet circles in the monarchical society in which he was raised had caused him to adopt a negative attitude toward Soviet power. In 1925, before his death, Tikhon signed his last will and testament, which is still hotly debated among historians, scholars, and theologians of Russia and Orthodoxy. In his last testament, Tikhon stated,

Nation’s destinies are settled by the Lord, and the [Orthodox people] must accept all that has happened as an expression of God’s will...in civic terms we must be sincere vis-à-vis the Soviet power and in our work in the USSR for the common cause...appealing to parish communities...to prevent any anti-government activities by disloyal elements...¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Acton and Stableford, *The Soviet Union: Volume 1*, 246.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Peris, *Storming the Heavens*, 26.

¹²⁸ House, *Millennium of Faith*, 58.

¹²⁹ Quoted in Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 1:123-124.

At the time, many clergymen, laity, and others decried the document as a forgery, but Anglican clergyman Francis House and scholar Dmitri Pospelovsky argue that Tikhon signed the document under the advisement of Metropolitan Peter.¹³⁰ Tikhon and Peter were both concerned over the usurpation of the patriarchal office by the Renovationists and Tikhon hoped that the testament would restore order in the Church and improve the Orthodox Church's relationship with the state.¹³¹

After Tikhon's death, the Church hierarchs fought to install a new patriarch despite repeated problems from the Bolshevik state. All three candidates chosen by Tikhon were imprisoned, including Metropolitan Peter, who eventually died in exile. Peter's first choice to succeed him was Metropolitan Sergei (Stragorodskii). Upon succeeding Peter, Sergei sought a legalized status for the Orthodox Church and offered the Bolsheviks the Church's loyalty in 1926.¹³² Sergei was arrested and imprisoned after refusing to give the Soviets the power to dismiss bishops. As the Church faced increasing persecution and new, heightened campaigns of assault by the government, Sergei believed that a compromise was imperative. In addition, the GPU informed Sergei that his refusal to sign a declaration of loyalty would result in the execution of all currently imprisoned bishops, which was at the time 117.¹³³

¹³⁰ House, *Millennium of Faith*, 59-60 and Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 1:122-124.

¹³¹ House, *Millennium of Faith*, 59.

¹³² Eugene B. Shirley, Jr. and Michael Rowe, eds., *Candle in the Wind: Religion in the Soviet Union*, 30.

¹³³ *Ibid*, 255.

He responded to his imprisonment by continuing negotiations with the state and was released in March 1927. On July 20, he issued his declaration of loyalty to the Soviet state, writing,

It is...the more imperative for us now to show that we, the church functionaries, are not with the enemies of our Soviet state, and not with the senseless tools of their intrigues, but are with our people and our government...

We express, with all the people, our thanks to the Soviet government for such attention to the spiritual needs of the Orthodox inhabitants...and we at the same time assure the government that we will not abuse the confidence shown us...

We wish to be Orthodox and at the same time to claim the Soviet Union as our civil motherland, the joys and successes of which are our joys and successes...¹³⁴

Sergei's declaration of loyalty to the Soviet government was prompted by the persecution of the Church and a need for the Church to obtain some form of legitimacy and existence under the new government. The historic legacy of ties to the state and dependence on the state resulted in Sergei's belief that the Church could not function underground. The hierarchy was not versed in methods of opposition to the state and was finally forced to conclude that cooperation with the government was its only option. The grim situation that the Russian Orthodox Church faced was Sergei's motivation to declare civic loyalty to the Soviet government.

Sergei's declaration of loyalty yielded little to the Church in practical terms, which Sergei no doubt expected. A theological institute was temporarily opened only to be shut down a few years later, a small proportion of bishops and priests were released,

¹³⁴ Shirley, Jr. and Rowe, eds., *Candle in the Wind*, 31. It should be noted that Sergei's declaration of loyalty to the Soviet government did not differ too greatly from previous declarations of loyalty by the Church, including Tikhon's. In addition, many scholars have noted that Sergei pledged civic loyalty to the state and not ideological loyalty to Communism. His reference to the motherland and the sharing of her joys and successes indicates that Sergei's loyalty was to Russia and not the Bolshevik regime.

and the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* was allowed monthly publication, but with a circulation of only 3,000 copies and it was closed in 1935.¹³⁵

Sergei received much criticism for his alleged collusion with the atheistic Soviet state, but evidence suggests that Sergei's actions were out of sincere concern for the Church and its existence. Critics rebuke Sergei and others in the hierarchy for agreeing to cooperate with the secret police and telling foreigners that citizens were not persecuted for their religious belief. However, the Church's response to domination, repression and fear under the monarch was compliance, dependence, and a loss of spirit. The five characteristics identified in the Church's historical relationship to the monarchy along with the extreme persecution of the Church contributed significantly to Sergei's decision. Sergei and other clergymen rejected the idea of the Orthodox Church functioning underground. Sergei hoped that his loyalty would relax tensions between the Church and the state. However, throughout the 1930s the Church was nearly obliterated by the Soviets while the Church continued on its path of loyalty. Indeed in 1941, Sergei remarked to a visiting archpriest, "Our Church is living through her last days of existence."¹³⁶

World War II, however, changed the dynamic of the Church's relationship to the Soviet state. Had the war never threatened Russia, Stalin most likely would have continued his slow annihilation of the Church. Because of the Axis invasion in 1941, Stalin eventually relied on the Orthodox Church's influence among the people to bolster patriotism and, according to Pospelovsky, utilize the Church's agreement for cooperation to his advantage. The Anglican Church in England repeatedly requested

¹³⁵ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 110.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 260.

meetings with dignitaries from the Church and Stalin hoped that by “convincing the Anglicans that the Russian Church was doing well and that there were no religious persecutions, Stalin hoped to put additional pressure on English public opinion and on the British Government to support an early invasion of Normandy.”¹³⁷

The true relationship and cooperation between the Soviet government and the Russian Orthodox Church began during World War II at the meeting with Stalin. The war ushered in a new period in church-state relations as the government found a new use for the Church. Church hierarchs were continually used, as in the monarchical period, as a tool of politics. During the meeting with the Orthodox bishops, Stalin placed Georgi Karpov in position as a liaison officer between the Church and the state, which in effect placed him in a position similar to the overprocurator during tsarist times. Karpov and his successors constantly interfered in Church affairs and executed decisions without the input of the Church. The Church continued its cooperation with the Soviet state, traveling abroad to dispel reports of religious persecution in the Soviet Union and defrocking priests who refused to bend to the Soviet’s subjugation of the Church. The Church’s decision to cooperate with the Soviets was assuredly brought about by a combination of religious persecution and a traditional outlook on church-state relations in the wake of its previous relationship to the state. The Church’s historic understanding of the tie between church and state created the unlikelihood that dissent against the Soviet government would come from above within the hierarchy and upper levels of clergy. The Orthodox Church as an institution played no role in dissent in the Soviet Union; rather Orthodox methods of dissent rose from individuals, some clergy and others parishioners. Occurrences of dissent and resistance among Orthodox parishioners and

¹³⁷ Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia*, 286.

clergy before Brezhnev became General Secretary was limited, often insufficient, and unorganized.¹³⁸ Rather, the gradual awakening of Orthodox dissenters occurred in the 1950s.

Finally, the Russian Orthodox Church's failure to understand church-state separation, the compliance to the state, dependence on the state, intellectual stagnation, and an absence of methods of opposition in its history led to a pattern of behavior and thinking among the Church hierarchy, which contributed to the Church's decision to cooperate with the Soviet state in 1927. In the Church's experience, although the monarch dominated the affairs of the Church, it also provided legitimacy and an existence. Cooperation with the Soviets allowed the Church a small existence, the feeling that a physical church was present.

¹³⁸ In Chapter Five, William B. Husband discusses early protests by Orthodox parish priests and ordinary laity in stopping the Bolsheviks from pilfering the churches. Many of the protests turned violent with both Bolshevik cadres and Orthodox parishioners dying. Ultimately, Husband notes that in this early period, the protests were rarely organized or effective and the parishioners were often forced to reconcile their faith with the secularization promoted by the Bolsheviks. Husband, *Godless Communists*, 130-158.

CHAPTER THREE

The Inevitable Dissidents: Baptists in Russia

“The Baptist teaching, which experienced the most brutal persecution under tsarism, also preaches international communism...setting the moral rebirth of the individual as the first condition,” wrote Vasili Pavlov in October 1918, to a department of the Moscow Soviet after only a year of Soviet rule.¹ Although he spoke of a different type of “communism” than the Bolsheviks proffered, as Pavlov alluded, after decades of persecution under the reactionary tsarist monarchy, Baptists in Russia welcomed the introduction of a new government, inviting citizens to hold whatever religious beliefs they preferred. Previously, Baptists led a precarious existence teetering between outright hostility and restrained tolerance by the government and surrounding Russian population. The Baptists were a religious group unlike any other previously known in Russia with aggressive conversion techniques, unwavering spiritual enthusiasm, and Western conceptions of organization. The early Bolshevik promise of freedom of conscience and condemnation of the previous regime for persecuting dissenting religious groups excited non-Orthodox groups such as the Baptists, and in the early 1920s, many smaller Protestant groups such as Baptists, Pentecostals, and other evangelical sects enjoyed unprecedented opportunities in Russia. For the first time, these previously ostracized religious groups legally evangelized among Russian citizens and received exemption from military service based on their belief in pacifism.

¹ Quoted in Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 160.

Initially, the Bolshevik's preoccupation with solidifying their unstable new position as ruling government and disassembling the power of the Russian Orthodox Church left sectarian groups to their own devices more or less, and Baptists embraced the newly leveled playing field. However, by 1929, the Bolsheviks began to significantly reign in the sectarian groups' liberties in an aggressive effort to eliminate religion among the populace. Along with all other religious groups, Baptists returned to their former oppressed status, but a history of persecution, dissent, and governmental pressure combined with influences from the West in thought and organization left Baptists in Russia with a strong inheritance and ability to survive and thrive under harsh conditions.

Having examined the complex relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church to the monarchy and the Church's subsequent relationship with the Soviet state, this chapter turns to analyze Baptists in Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution and their existence in Russian society. In an attempt to juxtapose the Orthodox Church and its relationship to the state, an examination of the Baptists, their relationship to the monarchy, and legacy of dissent is provided. Each of these elements is examined in an effort to further understand Russian Baptists as religious dissidents and the unique role they played within the human rights movement in the Soviet Union.

I argue in this chapter that certain features or characteristics present in the Baptist culture emerging in Russia in the nineteenth century contributed to a particular way of thinking, which later directed the Baptist relationship with the Soviet state, including activities of dissent. While scholars have recognized that Baptists were a dissenting group under the tsar and subsequently continued as a dissenting group under the Soviet state, I argue that elements particular to Russian Baptist culture and values developed

during the monarchical period explain the Baptist legacy of dissent and the “inevitable” dissenting behavior and activity of Baptists during the Soviet period, particularly after the split among the Baptists in 1961. The word “inevitable” employed here is not to suggest that Soviet Baptists had no choice but to dissent against the government, but rather that certain values and beliefs intrinsic within the Russian Baptist lifestyle made Baptists more likely to dissent against the Soviet state.

The five characteristics cultivated in early Russian Baptist culture are identified as experience in dissent methods, persecution from the state and population, a strong support system through an autonomous local church community, aggressive conversion tactics preventing privatization of belief, and Western concepts of church-state separation leading to the advocacy of democratic procedures. Before delving into the five characteristics, a few clarifications are necessary. First it should be noted that in the Soviet period, two groups of Baptists emerged by the 1960s. One group, usually termed the Registered Baptists, existed in cooperation with the Soviet government and agreed to make certain concessions in their worship and conversion methods in order to receive legal registration from the state. While this cooperation did not protect certain individuals in the group from Soviet persecution, generally, the government tolerated the Registered Baptists, because they were preferred over the other Baptist group. The other group, termed the *Initsiativniki* or “Activist” Baptists, officially split from the Registered Baptists in the early 1960s after refusing to accept new restrictions placed on religious groups by the Soviet government. They remained underground, were heavily persecuted by the Soviet government, and never received any form of legal registration. The *Initsiativniki* are the subject of this dissertation when discussing Baptists in the Soviet

Union, unless otherwise indicated. Registered Baptists, generally, did not participate in active dissent against the government. Therefore, it is argued here that the *Initiativniki* Baptists are, in a sense, the inheritors of the legacy of the methods of dissent used by Russian Baptists in the tsarist period. They possess each of the five characteristics identified in this chapter.

Another clarification needed involves the definition of various “Baptist-like” groups during the tsarist period. Defining a Baptist believer in tsarist Russia was often difficult both for believers and the government. In the century following the introduction of the Baptists denominations, during the reign of Catherine II, various sects similar to Baptists emerged. In this chapter, the term “Baptist” during the tsarist period pertains to believers originating from four different areas in the Russian Empire in the 1860s and 1870s and at times were variously known as Stundists, Pashkovites, Evangelical Christians, and Baptists in the latter nineteenth century. By 1900, these groups were merged into two groups in Russia: Baptists and Evangelical Christians. The two separate streams of Baptists recognized their similarities and worked together on several occasions. Both groups belonged to the Baptist World Alliance and placed strong emphases on the Bible, autonomous local congregations, and the witness of individual spiritual experiences.² Pashkovites, Stundists, Baptists, and Evangelical Christians were evangelical, and the term “evangelical” is utilized in this chapter as a way of conveying particular traits shared by each of the groups analyzed. “Evangelical” is employed, in much the way Heather Coleman uses the term in her book *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, to refer to religious groups “which not only adhere to traditional Protestant

² Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 2.

principles but in addition emphasize personal religious conversion, a disciplined Christian life, evangelism, and revivalism.”³

Beginnings of Evangelical Sectarianism

The influx of Baptists and “Baptist-like” religious sects into Russia in the 1850s was not the country’s first foray into non-conformist religious groups differing from Russian Orthodoxy. Old Believers, one of the largest sects, separated from the Church in 1666 during a conflict over changes to ritual. Other significant groups splitting from Russian Orthodoxy in the 17th and 18th centuries were the Molokans, Dukhobors, the Subbotniks, and the Khristovshin.⁴ Concern over the malevolent influence of these sects on the greater Orthodox population led to the pronouncement of an edict in 1830 by the state ordering all religious *sektanty* (sects) classified as “most pernicious” to relocate to Transcaucasia, either voluntarily or by force.⁵ In 1830, Molokans, Dukhobors, and Subbotniks, but not Old Believers, were all classified as “most pernicious.” The edict’s purpose combined three goals: reduce religious dissent in Russia’s center, provide settlers to the newly acquired Transcaucasia, and fulfill state obligations of strengthening frontier defense through military defense.⁶ Diminishing the threat of religious “heresy” among the population was the tsar’s primary concern; those convicted of spreading heresy were impressed into military service in Transcaucasia or exiled to Transcaucasia, whereas

³ Quoted in Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 9.

⁴ For a brief description of these groups including information about their theology, worship services, and attitude toward the state see Daniel H. Shubin, *A History of Russian Christianity Vol III: The Synodal Era and the Sectarians, 1725-1894*.

⁵ Nicholas B. Breyfogle, “Heretics and Colonizers: Religious Dissent and Russian Colonization of Transcaucasia, 1830-1890” (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1998), 1.

⁶ Ibid, 25.

other dissidents were encouraged to voluntarily resettle.⁷ Nicholas I's decision in 1830 resulted from a shift in religious policy toward more intolerant legislation emerged in the latter years of Alexander I's reign. During the first third of the nineteenth century, state religious policy established the practice of what Nicholas B. Breyfogle terms "toleration through isolation," meaning non-Orthodox Russians were tolerated only if separated from the Orthodox population. Hence, the 1830 edict was part of a larger goal to separate sectarians from the empire's interior areas and halt sectarian proselytism.⁸

The 1830 edict demonstrates that the tsarist state employed careful methods aimed at protecting the Russian Orthodox Church and impeding religious dissent. The emergence of the Baptists, however, proved to be a different sort of challenge to the state. Each of the groups affected by the 1830 edict were distinctly Russian, whereas from the very beginning Baptists in Russia were associated with ethnic Germans and treated with suspicion. Despite the fact that the first Baptists in Russia were German, the Baptist faith was traditionally associated with America and England, and initially in Germany, it was known as the "new English religion."⁹ The Baptist faith entered Germany in the 1830s by Johann Oncken, a German converted while living in England. After early persecution by German governments, the Baptist faith garnered more acceptance by the 1850s, and German Baptists subsequently initiated a campaign of evangelism in Eastern Europe.¹⁰

⁷ Breyfogle, "Heretics and Colonizers," 26.

⁸ Ibid, 27-29.

⁹ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 14.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Upon the invitation of Catherine II, numerous Germans settled in the south of Ukraine (New Russia), many of whom were Baptists.¹¹ Russian peasants employed by the German colonists developed an interest in the German religion and began attending *stunden*, evening meetings of Bible reading and prayer. Because it was prohibited to convert an Orthodox believer, the Germans did not always welcome the Russian peasants to their *stunden*, although some were willing to discuss religious issues. Soon the Russian peasants organized their own *stunden*, receiving the name Stundists by other Russians. During the 1860s, Stundist groups existed in villages in Kiev, Kherson, Podolia, Ekaterinoslav, and Volhynia.¹² Concern over their meetings caused a stir and in January 1865, Orthodox priest Father Kirakov reported the appearance of a new sect near Odessa.¹³ According to reports, for the last four years, several families assembled in Mikhail Ratushnii's home for Bible reading, hymn singing, and prayer, although they continued to attend Orthodox worship services and venerate the icons.¹⁴

Mikhail Ratushnii's interest in the evangelical ideas of the Germans developed when a man named Ivan Onishchenko asked the literate Ratushnii to read the Bible to him. After visiting with Germans and attending *stunden* in the Rorbach colony, Ratushnii began his own *stunden* and by 1870, about 100 men and women attended.¹⁵ At about the same time, Ivan Riobashapka became interested in Baptist ideas after

¹¹ Paul D. Steeves, "The Russian Baptist Union, 1917-1935, Evangelical Awakening in Russia." (PhD diss. University of Kansas, 1976), 6.

¹² Samuel John Nسدoly, "Evangelical Sectarianism in Russia: A Study of the Stundists, Baptists, Pashkovites, and Evangelical Christians, 1855-1917" (PhD diss., Queen's University, Kingston, 1971), 47.

¹³ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 16. Lawrence Klippenstein, "Religion and Dissent in the Era of Reform: The Russian Stundobaptists, 1858-1884," (M.A. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1971,) 24.

¹⁴ Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 16.

¹⁵ Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 8.

conversing with German Martin Huebner. Riobashapka bought a copy of the New Testament and asked the Germans to baptize him. Although they refused because of the law prohibiting the conversion of the Orthodox, alarm over this new religious activity continued and in 1867, the *Odessa Messenger (Odessa Vestnik)* expressed fear over so-called Stundism that was increasingly practiced among Russian Orthodox peasants.¹⁶ Stundism, from the outset was a pejorative term coined by outsiders, and Russian converts usually did not refer to themselves as Stundists because of the negative connotation.¹⁷

While separation from the Russian Orthodox Church was not the initial intention of the Stundists, the independent reading of the Bible along with lay discussion and influence from German settlers naturally weakened ties to their traditional religious roots.¹⁸ In 1947, writers of the journal *Bratskii Vestnik*, explained in a short biography of Ratushnii that at first many attended both the Orthodox Church and his *stunden*, but through Bible reading, they perceived inconsistency (*nesoglasovannosti*) in the teachings of the Orthodox Church with the Gospels.¹⁹ As the Stundists studied the Bible on their own, new questions arose concerning salvation and the Christian life. One Russian Baptist, in thinking about his conversion, stated, “Peasants, beginning to read the Bible, began to notice the incongruity between the teachings of Christ and life around them...in them there grew a desire to build their lives on evangelical bases on the model of the first

¹⁶ *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 3 (1957), accessed April 5, 2014.
http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/119/2171/.

¹⁷ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 9-10.

¹⁸ Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, 16. Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 9.

¹⁹ *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5 (1947), accessed April 6, 2014.
http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1628/.

Christians and as a result “Stundism” arose.”²⁰ Rozhdestvenskii, who interviewed numerous Russian sectarians, echoed this statement when he noted that, “the Stundists...candidly stated that the main reason for going over into the sect was the desire to separate themselves from a society in the midst of which they lived and in which all sorts of corruption and vices reigned...”²¹ For example, both Ratushnii and Riobashapka broke with the Orthodox Church in 1867 as “their revulsion to the drunkenness, theft, and immorality prevailing in southern Russia, often among members of the clergy, intensified.”²²

In addition to the desire to live a more moral life, the Stundists’ decision to break with the Orthodox Church was also influenced by the Baptist practice of adult water baptism among the Germans. Paul Steeves notes that the Stundists developed into true “sectarians” and “Baptists” when they accepted this practice.²³ In 1871, Riaboshapka baptized Ratushnii and 48 others in Osnova. Because the Stundists were baptized as infants in the Orthodox Church, the decision to receive baptism as an adult marked a new meaning and understanding of baptism and a strong commitment to a new faith. Re-baptism produced extensive debate among early Baptists and Stundists and many initially resisted the practice. For example, in two villages where Stundism first took hold, of the 219 Stundists in 1870, only 48 had received baptism again by 1871.²⁴

²⁰ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 9.

²¹ Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 167.

²² Andrew Quarles Blane, “The Relations Between the Russian Protestant Sects and the State, 1900-1921” (PhD diss., Duke University, 1964), 13.

²³ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 10.

²⁴ Klippenstein, “Religion and Dissent,” 25.

The negative response from Orthodox clergy, authorities, and other Russians to the conversion of Russian peasants to a foreign faith also prompted the Stundists to break with the Orthodox Church. Although it was not illegal to be a Stundist initially, Father Kirakov advised “unremitting surveillance” in an effort to “divert the non-conformists” from their evening activities.²⁵ Through various reports, Orthodox clergy and the authorities became aware that the new sect was spreading and in 1867, the governor over the region commissioned the police chief in Odessa to investigate the Stundists. The investigation, completed the following year, concluded with the chief referring to the Stundists as “obnoxious” and noting, “As a consequence there has developed a stubborn attitude, so that [the Stundists] no longer attend the Orthodox church or acknowledge its rites, nor do they honor ikons...It is necessary to initiate proceedings...”²⁶ The belief in the need for legal action was exacerbated when the Stundists returned their ikons to the priest and announced their intention to separate formally from the Church.²⁷

One of the major concerns among the authorities and Orthodox clergy was the foreign element attached to the Stundist and Baptist faith. Religious dissent existed in Russia prior to the influx of these evangelical sects, but because Baptist theology stemmed from outside Russia, they appeared as a threat to the Russian state and Russian identity. Orthodoxy was so intertwined into Russian culture and considered inseparable from what it meant to be Russian, that it led one Russian Orthodox missionary-priest, heavily involved in anti-sectarian work, to state, “Unity of church and state is too great in

²⁵ Klippenstein, “Religion and Dissent,” 25.

²⁶ Ibid, 26.

²⁷ “Mikhail Timofeevich Ratushnii,” *Bratskii Listok*, no. 5 (1947), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1628/. Klippenstein, “Religion and Dissent,” 27.

Orthodox autocratic Russia to be able to repudiate the one without touching the other.”²⁸ Intellectual and Slavophile Ivan Aksakov proclaimed, “Russian nationality is unthinkable outside Orthodoxy.”²⁹ In the mid 1880s, the Exarch of Georgia Pavel labeled the Baptists as a threat to the Orthodox Church and the Russian state because Stundists and Baptists “are imminent enemies of Russia and allies of Protestant Germany.”³⁰ He warned that the “infection” of alien faiths shattered “all sympathy for the *russkii narod*” (Russian people), their ideals, mythology, and traditional beliefs, resulting in “hate both for Orthodoxy and for *russkaia narodnost*” (Russian nationality), destruction of the traditional family unit and the advent of secular marriages.³¹ He continued, stating, “In a word, it makes them non-Russian.”³²

However, one of the most important elements of the new evangelical wave spreading over the Russian empire was the novel idea that one’s Russian identity was not contingent on Orthodoxy. This is the challenge that the Stundists, Baptists, and others brought to the Orthodox Church and the monarchy. In turn, the authorities and the Church challenged the new converts to continuously work to identify and clarify their beliefs and place in a society unsure of how to respond to them. As knowledge of the Stundists permeated the general population, concern mounted leading one Orthodox believer to condemn the “falling from the Orthodox faith.”³³ And while the Orthodox

²⁸ Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 142.

²⁹ Ibid, 141.

³⁰ Quoted in Breyfogle, “Heretics and Colonizers,” 176.

³¹ Quoted in Breyfogle, “Heretics and Colonizers,” 176-177.

³² Quoted in Breyfogle, “Heretics and Colonizers,” 177.

³³ Klippenstein, “Religion and Dissent,” 27.

Church was never in danger of losing a significant portion of its adherents, by 1870, in Osnova and surrounding villages over 300 people had converted to Stundism with the Ministry of the Interior reporting that hardly any families still attended Orthodox services there.³⁴

With the Stundist converts gaining more publicity, Baptists in the Caucasus region soon heard the reports about the new sect in the South. During the middle of the nineteenth century, Molokans in the Caucasus began rethinking their rejection of the sacraments, particularly baptism, as an emphasis on biblical reading and study developed in Russia.³⁵ Nikita Voronin, a merchant, was an adherent to the Molokan sect, who after study of the Bible and conversations with Martin Kalweit, a German-Latvian Baptist, rejected the interpretation of baptism of the Molokans and received baptism on August 20, 1867.³⁶ Unlike the Stundists, most of whom were former Orthodox believers, the Baptist movement in the Caucasus mostly contained former Molokans exiled to the region by the government.³⁷

³⁴ "Mikhail Timofeevich Ratushnii," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5 (1947), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1628/. Klippenstein, "Religion and Dissent," 27.

³⁵ Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 2. The new emphasis placed on reading and the Bible was part of the increase in literacy and education in Russia throughout the nineteenth century. In addition, the first translations of the Bible into vernacular Russia surfaced in the nineteenth century, contributing significantly to the development of sectarianism in the Russian Empire.

³⁶ A. Karev, "Iubileinii doklad generalnovo sekretar," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 4 (1967), accessed April 5, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/149/2515/. A. Belousov, "Iubileinia tserkov' v Tbilisi," *Bratskii Vestnik*, No. 4 (1967), accessed April 5, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/149/2515/.

³⁷ V. Krasinskii, "Nachalo i razvitiye yevagel'sko-baptistskogo dvizheniya v g. Tiflis," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 4 (1946), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/113/1621/. Nesdoly, "Evangelical Sectarianism," 49.

After his conversion to the Baptist faith, Voronin started preaching to other Molokans and established his own church. In 1876, his congregation in Tiflis had grown to about 40 members.³⁸ Voronin and his fellow converts immediately called themselves Baptists, because Kalweit identified himself as a “Baptist.” They believed the name was appropriate because they chose baptism as individual conscious believers—a believer’s baptism (*kreshchennyye po vere*).³⁹ Through Voronin’s preaching in the Caucasus, the movement slowly spread and attained a number of new converts who were important evangelical sectarian leaders within the Baptist movement—Vasilii Pavlov, Vasili Ivanov, G. I. Mazaev, D. I. Mazaev, and I. S. Prokhanov—and pivotal figures in establishing precedents for the relationship between Baptists and the state, both under the tsar and the Soviet authorities. Vasili Pavlov, for example, established the Russian Baptist Union in 1884, the first Baptist organization in Russia and worked tirelessly to develop a distinct Russian Baptist identity.

By 1875, whereas Stundism had acquired adherents in the thousands, the Baptists in the Caucasus had not grown as quickly. However, the Caucasus Baptists were more adept at organization and structure, particularly in terms of missionary endeavors. Early in 1875, Andrei Markovich Mazaev, a former Molokan, converted to the Baptist faith and became the primary administrator of missionary activities for the next fifteen years.⁴⁰ In addition, the Caucasus Baptists desired contact with Baptists in other countries in order to

³⁸ V. Krasinskii, “Nachalo i razvitiye yevagel’sko-baptistskogo dvizheniya v g. Tiflis,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 4 (1946), accessed April 5, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/113/1621/.

³⁹ Pavel V. Ivanov-Klishnikov, “Nashe shestidesiatiletie,” *Baptist Ukrainy*, no. 9 (1927), accessed April 5, 2014. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15799coll14/id/5606/rec/17>.

⁴⁰ Pavel V. Ivanov-Klyshnikov, “Nash mech ne iz stali blestiashei,” *Baptist*, no 2. (1925), 4, accessed April 6, 2014. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15799coll14/id/3740/rec/3>.

foster knowledge and unity. They were the first in the Russian Baptist movement to make contact outside Russia when they sent Vasilii Pavlov to Hamburg, Germany in 1875 to study at Oncken's school.⁴¹ Because Oncken's school emphasized evangelism, Pavlov returned to Russia with a new awareness of the necessity for ministry and innovative ideas on ways to spread the Baptist message.⁴²

Pavlov immediately undertook traveling to villages in the Caucasus and successfully organized small groups of former Molokans in several places.⁴³ Returning to Tiflis, Pavlov embarked on the task of organizing the congregation in Tiflis according to the patterns observed by Baptists in Germany. He translated the German Baptist confession of faith into Russian to serve as a fundamental doctrinal guide and rented a small building as a prayer house in Tiflis, which helped the small community to grow numerically.⁴⁴ Pavlov states that the opening of the prayer house in a more centralized location in Tiflis assisted the congregation in attracting not only peasants, but also "intelligent people" (*intelligentnymi lyud'mi*).⁴⁵ Pavlov's directing of the congregation along German Baptist lines was only the first basic step in ensuring that the movement was doctrinally sound according to Baptist tradition. As the movement grew, the Baptists

⁴¹ "Vasilii Gure'vich Pavlov: Avtobiographiia," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 3 (1945), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/112/152/. Pavlov's autobiography was originally written in 1899 and reprinted here in *Bratskii Vestnik*. Pavlov explains here that at this time, the Baptists in Russia had no right to establish missionary schools and thus, he attended Oncken's school to "prepare for the ministry."

⁴² Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 13.

⁴³ One of the Molokans Pavlov converted was Stepan Prokhanov, who established and led a new Baptist congregation in Vladikavkaz and whose son Ivan Prokhanov later became an important leader in the Russian Baptist Union. Ivan Prokhanov's importance is discussed later in this chapter.

⁴⁴ Vasilii Gure'vich Pavlov: Avtobiographiia," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 3 (1945), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/112/152/. Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 15.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

in Russia developed greater confidence and certainty and were able to make the Baptist tradition part of their Russian identity.

Around the same time as Stundism took hold in the Ukraine and the Baptist faith took hold in the Caucasus, a third religious phenomenon similar to the other two evangelical streams was developing in St. Petersburg. The new movement known as Pashkovism developed from the preaching of English aristocrat Granville Augustus William Waldegrave, or Lord Radstock, as he was known in Russia. Waldegrave was a member of the English Plymouth Brethren, a religious group whose doctrine was closely related to the Baptists.⁴⁶ Long tempted to preach Christianity in Russia, Radstock traveled to St. Petersburg in 1874 at the invitation of Madame Elizabeth Chertkov, widow of the late General Chertkov of the imperial army.⁴⁷ He preached in the salons of St. Petersburg to aristocrats such as Countess Shuvalov, Countess Gagarin, Princess Lievin, Princess Golitsyn, Count Alexis Bobrinskii, the former Minister of Communications for the tsar, Count M. M. Korf, former Minister of Ceremonies for the tsar, and Colonel V. A. Pashkov of the Imperial Guards. These last three men were among the most active members of Pashkovism, spreading their evangelical message through individual evangelism, public meetings, and distribution of religious literature.⁴⁸

Pashkov, in particular, was responsible for producing large quantities of religious literature, initiated by his founding of the Society for the Promotion of Spiritual and Moral Reading in 1882.⁴⁹ With the approval of the Holy Synod's Russian Bible Society,

⁴⁶ Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 18-19.

⁴⁷ James Yeoman Muckle, introduction to *Schism in High Society*, by Nikolai Leskov (Nottingham, England: Bramcote Press, 1995), 1. Nesdoly, "Evangelical Sectarianism," 50.

⁴⁸ Nesdoly, "Evangelical Sectarianism," 51.

Pashkov used his organization to issue the printing of the Russian Bible as well as other religious pamphlets and tracts, which were then distributed to Baptist and evangelical groups throughout Russia.⁵⁰ Pashkov also used his Society to produce hymnbooks that became part of Baptist worship in Russia.⁵¹ Furthermore, Pashkov utilized his wealth for the Baptist cause by purchasing land on the Don to establish a Baptist colony and organizing and supporting a group of sectarians working in Sevastopol'.⁵²

In his memoirs, Korf wrote that a deep desire to maintain a good moral state accompanied him all his life and he prayed earnestly and unceasingly and fervently (*revnostno*) attended Orthodox services, but “Him, who suffered on the cross for my sins, I did not know.”⁵³ Like his fellow convert and close friend Pashkov, Korf used his position to disseminate literature and speak to other members of the aristocracy about his new faith. In the late 1860s, after returning from an exhibition in Paris where he witnessed for the first time a complete Russian Bible, Korf received 3000 copies of the Gospel of John. He writes that his position in Petersburg society allowed him the ability to distribute the literature quickly and that spreading copies of the Bible was helpful to those searching for spirituality.⁵⁴ In his memoirs Korf discusses Pashkov’s conversion and subsequent work for the movement. According to Korf, passages from the Bible urging believers to communicate their belief to others encouraged Pashkov to begin

⁴⁹ Iakov I. Zhidkov, “Vosem’desiat let evangel’sko-baptiststikh izdanii,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5 (1947), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1628/.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 134.

⁵³ M. M. Korf, “M. M. Korf i V. A. Pashkov,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5 (1947), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1628/.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

holding religious meetings in his home. After Pashkov's conversion, he used his large estate to hold meetings that started off small, but quickly became overcrowded—at one meeting, 700 people attended. According to Korf, the Over-Procurator Konstantin Pobedonostsev attended this meeting because of the rumors circulating that Pashkov was holding religious meetings in his home.⁵⁵ Because the meetings were so similar to the spiritual awakenings in the Ukraine, it was referred to by French essayist Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu as “drawing-room Stundism.”⁵⁶

Related to the Baptist movement emerging in the Caucasus was a similar religious group in the lower Volga region in Russia, initially led by the same colporteur that introduced Voronin to Martin Kalweit, Iakov Deliakov. Deliakov embarked on an evangelistic mission, preaching to Molokans and successfully converting many of them. The converts continued to consider themselves Molokans but also accepted the name Evangelical-Christians. The authorities, however, often referred to the group as Stundists because of their similarities with the evangelical group in Ukraine.⁵⁷ In the course of preaching, Deliakov met and married a widow, whose son Ivan Zhidkov converted to the Evangelical-Christian faith. Ivan's son Iakov Ivanovich Zhidkov eventually served as the first president of the All-Union Council for Evangelical-Christian Baptists.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ M. M. Korf, “M. M. Korf i V. A. Pashkov,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5 (1947), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1628/.

⁵⁶ Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *Empire of the Tsars and the Russians: Part III The Religion*, trans. Zenaide A. Ragozin (London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1896), 471, accessed April 6, 2014. Digitized and available: <https://archive.org/details/empireoftsarsrus03lerouoft>.

⁵⁷ Iakov I. Zhidkov, “Nemnogo o sebe,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5-6 (1954), accessed April 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/122/2158/.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Gradually these four separate communities of Baptists, Stundists, Paskovites, and Evangelical-Christians discovered each other and initiated contact through various channels. Vasilii Pavlov acted as one of the most important initiators of communication among the Baptist groups, especially when one considers the vast distance between each sect. After returning from Hamburg, Pavlov visited the Stundist community, meeting Ratushnii and other Stundists, in 1876 in Osnova, after learning of the group from Oncken. This is the first known contact between evangelical sectarian groups in Russia. Pavlov's enthusiastic desire for communication combined with his missionary efforts and eye for organization quickly resulted in Tiflis developing into the center for the Baptist movement. Pavlov started thinking about a large organization to unify all the new Baptist and evangelical sectarian movements. In October 1879, Pavlov prepared for a conference in Tiflis, but the conference did not result in any type of permanent association.⁵⁹

Deliakov and Ivan Zhidkov initiated communication between Baptist groups in the early 1880s. Deliakov used his position as a book seller to distribute religious literature printed in St. Petersburg by Colonel Pashkov.⁶⁰ Soon Baptist groups throughout Russia received pamphlets and tracts with titles such as: "Come to Jesus Christ," "What do you think of Christ," "Have you been Reconciled with God," and "Wheat or Straw."⁶¹ Deliakov and Pashkov formed a close friendship, and from approximately 1882-1887, Pashkov funded Deliakov's travels to sell literature and preach

⁵⁹ *Baptist*, no. 6-7, 1925, accessed April 7, 2014. <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15799coll14/id/3873/rec/25>.

⁶⁰ Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 18.

⁶¹ Iakov I. Zhidkov, "Vosem' desiat let evangel'sko-baptistskikh izdanii," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5 (1947), accessed April 7, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1628/.

conversion. Pashkov's influence over Deliakov was such that through letters back and forth and discussions, Pashkov convinced Deliakov in the error of infant baptism.⁶² Deliakov preached adult baptism for the remainder of his religious career, which helped affirm the doctrine in the minds of other Evangelical-Christians.

Pashkov also endeavored to facilitate communication more directly among evangelical sectarians with his friend Korf. Pashkov and Korf made an attempt in 1884 to unite the groups by calling delegates to St. Petersburg.⁶³ The conference took place from April 1-5, and although the representatives were again unable to agree on unification, it was another important step in Baptist leaders moving toward unification. Of the conference, Vasilii Pavlov stated, "Especially at meal time was the evangelical brotherhood revealed, a peasant sat next to a count, and cultured ladies waited on their simple brothers. This remains the brightest memory of my life."⁶⁴ This conference also resulted in the state's intensifying its efforts against Baptist groups; a few months after the 1884 conference, both Pashkov and Korf were exiled outside of Russia. However, attempts to unite the sects continued and on April 30-May 1, 1884, in Novo-Vasil'evska in Taurida (the location of one of the largest Baptist churches in the region), Baptist representatives again convened to discuss evangelistic endeavors. Thirty-three representatives attended with twenty-six of them specifically from Baptist churches. The

⁶² Iakov I. Zhidkov, "Nemnogo o sebe," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5 (1954), accessed April 7, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/122/2158/.

⁶³ Nesdoly, "Evangelical Sectarianism," 51-52.

⁶⁴ Vasilii Gurevich Pavlov, "Avtobiografiia," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 3 (1945), accessed April 14, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/112/152/.

conference produced the Russian Baptist Union, the foremost Russian Baptist organization at the time, and in the coming years, more congregations joined.⁶⁵

The creation of the Russian Baptist Union was important for a number of reasons. Although the association possessed no legal standing, the union did much to unify the evangelicals, affirm doctrine, and provide structure to smaller groups. The Stundists, for example, were previously unconcerned about church structure, but the union demonstrated “that the Christians of the New Testament period, whom the sectarians were seeking to imitate,” had ordained presbyters “according to the Word of God.”⁶⁶ The enhanced church organization in Stundist churches provided a greater element of authority as well as allowing the new leaders to oversee and direct activities. Consequently, the Stundist communities increased their level of activities and missionary efforts. The creation of the union also played a vital role in attempting to establish an identity for the believers that was both Baptist and Russian.

Additionally, the union elevated one of the most important leaders of the sect Dei Ivanovich Mazaev. Vasili Ivanov, a prominent Baptist leader at the time, ordained Mazaev, a skillful administrator and man of tremendous energy, as president of the Russian Baptist Union in 1886. Ivanov wrote in 1907 that Mazaev “strengthened the union and organized it to the necessary degree, devoting to it his eminent abilities and energies.”⁶⁷ Referred to as “Baptist Solomon” by some evangelicals, Mazaev was chosen

⁶⁵ Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 52.

⁶⁶ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 28.

⁶⁷ Vasili Ivanov, “Nashi presviteri,” *Baptist*, no. 4 (1907), 18.

as a candidate to represent the Union at the representative assembly convened with the permission of Nicholas II after the Revolution of 1905.⁶⁸

As leaders such as Mazaev and Ivanov endeavored to create uniformity and organization among the Russian Baptists through the creation of unions, conflict arose over the term “Baptist.”⁶⁹ Some believers hesitated in joining the new union, arguing that the term “Baptist” was neither biblical nor Russian. At the first congress after the 1905 Revolution, held in May 1906 in Rostov-Don, one of the delegates inquired whether the use of the term “Baptist” was mandatory among believers.⁷⁰ He expressed that many desired a union incorporating all Russian Baptists but objected to the term “Baptist.” Although terms were perhaps not initially a concern to the sectarians, as the structure of their movement took shape, terms and names took on increasing importance. Reflective of Baptists worldwide, William Henry Brackney writes, “Baptists are a denominational family with a common heritage but at the same time they have done everything imaginable to atomize their respective identities.”⁷¹ Paul Steeves notes that Russian Baptists exhibit a “propensity to divide among themselves.”⁷² Similarly, in an issue of *Bratskii Vestnik*, the writer humorously explains the Russian Baptist tendency to split

⁶⁸ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 31.

⁶⁹ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 45.

⁷⁰ The 1905 Revolution resulted in, among other changes, an Edict of Toleration from the tsar. The Edict granted freedom of religion to all sectarians and also granted the groups the freedom to publish. However, shortly after the state granted freedom of conscience to sectarians, new restrictions were gradually introduced and persecution of the evangelical sectarians continued.

⁷¹ William Henry Brackney, *The Baptists* (New York: Greenwood, 1988), xix.

⁷² Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 60.

over issues and create new unions, declaring that “wherever three Russian Baptists gather, there will be four unions.”⁷³

Differences over theological issues involving hierarchy and authority also played a role in dividing the Baptist sectarians. The Evangelical Christians tended towards a less strict view than the Baptists on issues of membership, ordination, and doctrinal exclusiveness, although the two shared basic doctrinal traits. However, Prokhanov’s insistence on the term “Evangelical Christians” combined with his ambition to dominate the Russian Protestant movement proved to be the most substantial factor in preventing the two groups from merging. In 1909, Prokhanov organized a conference in St. Petersburg and founded the All Russian Union of Evangelical Christians. While attempts at reconciliation were continuously made, infighting among the leaders proved to stagnate all discussions of unity. The two groups remained separated until 1944 when they united under the All Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists.⁷⁴

Appeal and Origins of Sectarianism

In 1891, the Second Missionary Conference of the Russian Orthodox Church reported that the Baptist faith had reached about half of the provinces in the Russian Empire.⁷⁵ A conservative, contemporary estimate places the Baptist and other similar faiths at over 20,000 members. What explains the appeal of the Baptist movement in the Russian Empire, especially in light of its foreign origins and cultural novelty? The Holy

⁷³ *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 6 (1966), accessed April 7, 2014.
http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/135/2407/.

⁷⁴ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 45.

⁷⁵ Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 60. For a thorough examination and analysis of factors contributing to the development of sectarian growth in Russia in the 19th century, see Samuel John Nesdoly’s dissertation “Evangelical Sectarianism in Russia: A Study of Stundists, Baptists, Pashkovites, and Evangelical Christians, 1855-1917.”

Synod maintained that sectarianism was “a product of Western European culture, a bridge to unbelief. And in this respect it is inimical not only to Orthodoxy but to the genuine nature of the Russian person.”⁷⁶ Contemporaries of the period, whether they represented the Church, the state, the intelligentsia, or the evangelicals themselves agreed that this new wave of religious dissent was the product of a changing environment. The latter 19th and early 20th centuries were an especially volatile time in Russia, but was the growth of sectarianism a product of the fickle times or was it more akin to an increasing invasion of Western ideas?

In analyzing the origins and influences contributing to the rise and growth of evangelical sectarianism in Russia, the state of the Russian Orthodox Church in the nineteenth century is especially important. As discussed in the last chapter, the Russian Orthodox Church struggled immensely in the nineteenth century as Russia moved toward a more modern society. The Church fell behind in part because of its entangled relationship with the state and the uncertainty of the leadership in matters of church reform. Suspicion by the laity of the clergy, lack of clerical morality, as well as the clergy’s ignorance in answering basic spiritual questions also contributed to the growth of evangelical sectarianism.⁷⁷ Additionally, transformations in Russia’s social structure, economic upset, and increasing industrialization all served as major catalysts contributing to disturbances in Russia’s religious culture. Christian theologian H. Richard Niebuhr commented, that “if religion supplies the energy, the goal, and the motive of sectarian

⁷⁶ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 100.

⁷⁷ Numerous members of the Orthodox clergy admitted that the Church had lost its intellectual roots and many who converted to the Baptist faith, such as Mikhail Ratushnii, explained that the inability of priests to answer basic spiritual questions was one of the biggest factors in leaving the Orthodox faith. Additionally, according to Orthodox priest Arsenii Rozhdestvenskii the emancipation of the serfs caused an increase in the concern over money among parish priests.

movements, social factors no less decidedly supply the occasion and determine the form the religious dynamic will take.”⁷⁸ In other words, the religious situation coupled with the dramatic social change of the nineteenth century in Russia provided an environment conducive for sectarian growth.

Other factors at play in the rise of sectarianism, and specifically Baptist-like sects, in Russia in the nineteenth century arose from urbanization and industrialization, increased literacy and education, agricultural and economic changes, stratification of the peasantry and emancipation of the serfs, the loss of the Crimean War, and the death of Tsar Nicholas I. These changes occurred rapidly in Russia and placed psychological and, at times, physical pressure on individuals leading to an interruption in traditional life patterns, which led to a questioning and natural weakening of ties to the old system.

In addition to these external factors, several internal elements of evangelical sectarianism aided the continued growth of Baptist-like sects in the Russian Empire. Some of the most important internal factors of evangelical sectarianism that outsiders found appealing were the willingness to withstand persecution, a higher moral standard than was often practiced in the Russian Orthodox Church, belief in the sole authority of the Bible, the doctrine of justification by faith, the assurance of salvation, direct participation in worship, and simplified worship services.⁷⁹ Soviet writer and historian Vladimir Bonch-Bruевич described the appeal of Baptist sects in the following way,

⁷⁸ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc, 1929), 27.

⁷⁹ Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 203-307. This section of Nesdoly’s work examines the internal factors contributing to the appeal of evangelical sectarianism. As this chapter examines factors contributing to the eventual dissent of Baptists against the Soviet state, the internal appeal of evangelical sectarianism is treated only briefly here. For a more extensive analysis of its appeal to Russians, see Nesdoly. The internal factors listed here are not meant to be comprehensive.

Baptism [the Baptist faith] appeared as a truly new world, actually uniting all believers into one, offering to every one of them the possibility of taking active part in divine service, prayer, and other ceremonies. Baptism, or as it was more frequently called then 'Stundism,' established among its followers mutual help, support, and solidarity, and not only did not seize the last crumbs, as happens with the members of the Orthodox church, but, on the contrary, strengthened the welfare of the members of the new Christian society...⁸⁰

The above internal and external factors influenced the development and growth of evangelical sectarianism in Russia in the nineteenth century. The chaos of the later nineteenth century coupled with failures of the Russian Orthodox Church urged many to look to evangelicalism as a way to either escape their desperate condition or find spiritual fulfillment. The internal appeal of evangelicalism ensured its steady growth and staying power as a viable alternative religious option to Orthodoxy.

The weakening of ties to the traditional institution of the Orthodox Church created a greater likelihood of dissent among those who converted to evangelical sectarianism. The Orthodox faith and Russian identity were, historically, linked, thereby seemingly preventing one without the other. The emergence of the Baptists and Evangelical Christians proposed a new way of connecting religious association and Russian identity.

In order for this to occur, however, a convert first had to shed his ties to the Orthodox Church. The link between personal identity and religion made conversion to a historically Western religion a radical break with one's tradition and heritage in Russia. Conversion to the Baptist faith often meant suffering persecution, suspicion, and banishment from one's family and yet thousands of Russians undertook this challenge in

⁸⁰ Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich, *Iz Mira Sektantov* (Moscow: State Publishing House, 1922), 28-29. Accessed April 26, 2014, <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/ref/collection/p15799coll14/id/148153>. Despite that this text was published by the Soviet state, Bonch-Bruevich's interest in sectarianism dates back to the 1880s. He published a book on Dukhobors in 1909 and remained interested in religious dissidents all his life while working in the Socialist Academy of Social Sciences in the Soviet Union. In addition, his observations above about the Baptist faith are affirmed by analyzing Baptist practices in Russia and by other scholars, as is demonstrated in this chapter.

the nineteenth century. The decision to convert to the Baptist-like sects signified such a profound break with tradition that once joined to the sect, the likelihood of dissent increased. Not only were converts willingly accepting a dissenting faith, directly at odds with Russian Orthodoxy and socially objectionable to their peers, but their entrance into the new faith lent itself to a receptiveness to new ideas and engagement in dissenting activities.⁸¹ Particularly in the face of persecution, Baptists chose to engage in active dissent; they had already taken the plunge into rebellion by joining an illegal sect. The following five characteristics intrinsic to Baptist culture aid in explaining the legacy of dissent among the Baptists and their opposition to the Soviet state.

Experience in Dissent

The first characteristic offered in contributing to the particular response cultivated by Baptists in the tsarist period, which in turn led to the *Initsiativniki* Baptist group's response to the Soviet government is the experience of dissent itself and the resulting techniques and methods utilized in that dissent. This characteristic is first and foremost indicated in the Baptist's continued disregard for the official religious and state system in place. Baptists freely preached to any person, practiced charity work, and professed their faith openly within an unfree system. As demonstrated later, this was an important element in the Soviet human rights movement and for religious dissident in the Soviet Union. In 1911, a report by the Department of Spiritual Affairs described that Baptists "quite often do not take into account the actual position of Orthodoxy in Russia."⁸² In

⁸¹ In the same way that literacy and access to literature caused many in the peasantry to become critical of Russia's traditional institutions, conversion and joining the Baptist sects, by default, lent itself to dissident ideas.

⁸² Quoted in Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 73.

1913, the Minister of Internal Affairs Nikolai Maklakov gave a report to Vladimir Kokovtsov, chairman of the Council of Ministers, writing that Baptists pursued a “privileged position, such as none of the approved faiths of the empire enjoys.”⁸³ However, the Baptists’ intention was not a position of privilege. Rather, they hoped for full freedom of conscience in order to carry out their faith, and because their faith proclaimed preaching as its followers’ chief commitment, the Baptists’ acted above the system carrying their commitment to action. The Baptists’ adopted mentality of acting free in an unfree society challenged the tsarist system and later the Soviet system. Their mentality was, by default, a form of dissent, and when measures were created to prevent them from carrying out their faith, the Baptists responded with methods of opposition.

From the Baptists’ attitude of acting free in an unfree society, stemmed four main methods of active dissent employed in the late tsarist to facilitate the freedom of religion and protect sectarian interests: petitions to the state and other legal measures, the willingness to openly disobey state law and the refusal to halt activity, appeals to Western Baptists, and the dissemination of literature detailing persecution and other important information. Activists used four techniques in response to specific measures taken by the state to restrict evangelical sectarianism and its spread. Each method emerged during the tsarist period in the struggle for religious freedom; in the Soviet period, the *Initsiativniki* Baptists drew upon that previous experience and tradition of dissent in a renewed struggle for freedom of conscience.

The use of petitions and other legal channels by the Baptists commenced relatively early in response to state repression and censorship. In 1903, Orthodox missionary V. M. Skvortsov wrote in *Missionerskoe Obozrenie* that Baptists and other

⁸³ Quoted in Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 73. .

evangelicals possessed incredible skills at hiring legal experts and writing petitions to express legal-religious grievances.⁸⁴ In 1907, in response to the 1906 decree that the signatures of 50 members over the age of 25 were required for a congregation to qualify for registration, a congress was assembled by Baptists and Evangelical Christians to discuss the implications of the new law.⁸⁵ Seventy representatives from seventeen provinces assembled for the congress.

While the Baptists had several problems with the 1906 edict, the Baptists were mostly concerned with the limitations the law sought to impose on its activities.⁸⁶ The law asked that each congregation define its activities within a geographic area. Baptists protested that the scope of their activity was the world. They refused to confine their activities to one area, and the delegates at the 1907 congress drew up a petition for the Duma in which they recommended particular amendments to the law.⁸⁷ In essence, the petition asked for a more dynamic understanding of activity that did not relegate congregations to one geographic area or social boundary. Although the proposed amendments never gained any attention from the authorities because of the state's

⁸⁴ V. M. Skvortsov, "Missionerstvo, sekty, i raskol," *Missionersko Obozrenie*, (January, 1903), 117-127.

⁸⁵ Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 63. Steeves states that while 25 was the minimum age requirement under the 1906 law, it was later lowered to 21. The 1906 decree sought to limit autonomy of the Baptist sects further by requiring that all presbyters gain approval from the state and requiring congregations to keep official registers of statistics. The government's issuance of the law emanated from the tsar's declining fear in the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution and the subsequent quasi-constitution he was forced to sign. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 33.

⁸⁶ A closer examination of the Baptists' understanding of church-state relations and the influence of Western democratic thinking is provided below.

⁸⁷ The law and some of the problems Baptists had with the law is discussed briefly in Baptist, No. 2 1908, 28. One example is the replacement of the phrase that guaranteed the "free confession of their faith and the performance of religious rituals according to rules of their faiths," with the phrase "free confession of their faith and the spreading of its teaching through means of individual conversation, preaching, and literature," referenced in Aleksandr I. Vvedenskii, *Dieistvuiushchiiia zakonopolozheniia kasatel'no staroobriadsev i sektantov* (Odessa: Tipografiia Odesskikh Novostei, 1912), 33, 176.

extensive bureaucracy, the Baptists continued preaching outside their local area and while a few congregations hurried to register with the state, many withheld from registering in hopes of the state approving their petition.⁸⁸

In 1910, the Baptists assembled a congress in St. Petersburg to orchestrate a new petition to the state following additional restrictions by the state.⁸⁹ In part, the petition called for the halt of all government persecution toward Baptists, stating,

Freedom of conscience has been granted, but the local administrations put all possible restrictions in the way of Baptists. Our congregations are refused registration; they do not permit us to pray. It is necessary to ask the Ministry for the publication of a single circular, common for all of Russia, in which it would be indicated clearly and precisely what is, and what is not permitted to us Baptists.

The draft of the law regarding sectarian congregations [the 1906 decree] contradicts the demands of the Baptist faith. It does not permit us to accept into our congregations and to baptize persons from fourteen to twenty-one...⁹⁰

Again the petition was unsuccessful, and the government continued to create restrictions to the Baptists' activities until the overthrow of the monarchy. However, petitions remained an important weapon in the Baptists' struggle against the state, even when the monarchy fell and the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917.

The Bolsheviks' initial attitude toward the Baptists and other Protestant sects was generally either apathy or one of exploitation. Bolsheviks with little concern over

⁸⁸ Prokhanov was among the first of the evangelical sects to apply for registration with the state. Some in his congregation disapproved, resulting in a split in the congregation. Prokhanov's decision to go against the wishes of the 1907 Congress was the beginning of the split among the Baptists. Only 2 years later, Prokhanov announced the creation of the All Russian Union of Evangelical Christians, effectively separating the movement into two organizations.

⁸⁹ In 1910, the Ministry of Internal Affairs initiated a new restriction on Baptist groups by requiring that all baptismal ceremonies receive approval by the Ministry. In addition, the Ministry prohibited the distribution of all religious books by sectarians and imposed stricter rules for gaining permission for sectarian congresses. Blane, "Russian Protestant Sects," 77, 270.

⁹⁰ Quoted in *Vestnik Spaseniia*, no. 3, 1967, 22. Although religious toleration was decreed in 1905, persecution against Baptists continued and grew steadily worse after 1906. Aspects of persecution toward Baptist-like sects is discussed below.

sectarians considered the groups too small to exact significant influence in society. Bolsheviks wishing to exploit sectarians saw the possibility of sects aiding in the destruction of the Russian Orthodox Church. Other Bolsheviks initially believed that the sects contained within them the potential for social revolution.⁹¹ The Baptists generally rejoiced at the fall of the monarchy, because they believed in the Bolshevik promise of equality, church-state separation, and freedom of conscience.⁹² Vasili Ivanov, for example, exclaimed, “No one knows what will happen next but now all political prisoners will probably be freed, and our brother-sufferers will leave the prisons and return from exile and our gatherings will open!”⁹³ However, after a brief stint of freedom, the Bolsheviks established restrictions against Protestant sects, and the Baptists’ grappled to understand their new fate.

Some of the first petitions composed by the Baptists in the early Soviet period were from local congregations when officials closed their prayer houses or churches.⁹⁴ In the early Soviet period, before the Bolsheviks tightened their control on Protestant groups and initiated their campaign against religion, local Baptist congregations and the central

⁹¹ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 129-130. Coleman argues that the Bolsheviks’ early concessions to the Baptists simply reflected the weaknesses of the infant state. In fact, the frequent dissent of the Baptists during the tsarist period caused alarm among many Bolsheviks and it can be generally accepted that their existence to the Bolsheviks was temporary until a more permanent religious policy was established.

⁹² Ibid, 127-128.

⁹³ Ibid, 128.

⁹⁴ When discussing Baptists in the early Soviet period, this refers to the Evangelical Christians and Baptists of the nineteenth century, not the *Initiativniki* of the later Soviet period. In regard to the Baptists’ early petitions to the Bolsheviks, Heather Coleman notes that Vladimir Bonch-Bruevich, who served as the administrator of the Council of People’s Commissars in the early Soviet period, often defended the Baptists and other sectarian groups with their legal problems. If their prayer houses were closed, Bonch-Bruevich considered the Baptists’ appeals and worked for the return of their houses of worship. Bonch-Bruevich pushed for the 1919 decree exempting Baptists and other sectarians from military service if their faith precluded them from bearing arms. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 158-159.

Baptist organizations, the All Russian Union of Evangelical Christians and Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, attempted to engage with the Soviet authorities on laws pertaining to religion.⁹⁵ One of the most important issues for the Baptists concerned the religious education of children.⁹⁶ For a while, the Baptists organized Sunday schools and educational weekly programs for children without any disturbance from the Soviet government.⁹⁷ The Baptists most likely believed that these programs fell under private instruction. However, when the Baptists petitioned the Soviet government for permission to erect parochial schools, the Commissariat of Education refused; afterwards, steps were taken by the state to restrict the teaching of minors by the Baptists.⁹⁸ The Union sent an appeal to the Soviet authorities, stating, “We stand on the belief that the law does not prohibit one to teach and be taught religion in a private way, and our Sunday children’s meetings...should be considered private instruction.”⁹⁹

⁹⁵ In all political matters, the Baptists maintained neutrality except for in matters of legislation affecting their ability to practice their faith. Many scholars such as Heather Coleman and Paul J. Steeves note the continuous alluding to of a “revolution of the spirit” by the Baptists. For Baptist groups, “revolution of the spirit” encompassed the transformation of the world through evangelism and the acceptance of salvation. The Baptists advocated for transformation through peaceful means and rejected all forms of violence.

⁹⁶ Regarding religious education, the Decree of 1918 on the separation of church from state and school from church, the Soviets stated, “The school is separated from the church. The teaching of religion in state and public schools, as well as in private schools where general subjects are taught, is forbidden. Citizens may teach religious subjects privately.” The Soviet Decree of January 23, 1918 Concerning the Separation of Church from State and School from Church is provided in Blane, “Russian Protestant Sects,” 277.

⁹⁷ William Thomas Whitley, ed., *Third World Baptist Congress: Stockholm, July 21-27, 1923 Record of Proceedings* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1923), 147.

⁹⁸ Pavel V. Gidulianov, *Otdelenie tserkvi ot gosudarstva v S.S.S.R.* (Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishing, 1971), 365. On June 13, 1921, the Commissariat of Justice ruled that religious buildings leased to groups for worship were prohibited from holding meetings with the express purpose of instructing minors.

⁹⁹ *Slovo Istini*, no. 5-6, 1921, 46.

While the debate over Sunday schools continued into 1922, the Baptists' appeals held no sway with the state and in a resolution adopted by the Union in 1922, the Union decided that because Sunday schools were not specifically commanded in the Bible, congregations should, for the time, provide instruction to children privately in their homes.¹⁰⁰ It is important to note that while the central Union decided to oblige the state, local congregations continued to organize Sunday schools for children.¹⁰¹ The relative autonomy afforded to local congregations, as well as the Baptist tendency to separate over issues of conflict, was later an important component in the formation of the *Initsiativniki* group.

The issue of church registration in the Soviet Union reared its head in 1922 and again resulted in numerous petitions from Baptist groups in Russia and the Ukraine. The Baptists disagreed with the requirement to register; they believed it directly violated the state's law on the separation of church and state.¹⁰² Initially, the Board of the Baptist Union composed a petition to the state recommending changes to the law. The Baptists were willing to concede the principle of registration but balked at the measures involving the bylaws. The state did not take up the Baptists' proposed amendments. In the end the central Union petitioned the government for a circular explaining the law of registration as to avoid confusion; they decided to comply with registration, because registration was

¹⁰⁰ Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 550-552.

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 552.

¹⁰² The state's 1922 requirements for a congregation to obtain registration can be found in Pavel V. Gidulianov, *Otdelenie tserkvi ot gosudarstva v S.S.S.R.* (Farnborough, England: Gregg International Publishing, 1971), 75-81. The original edition was printed in Moscow in 1926. This edition, printed in England, is the third. The 1922 law required all congregations to send a copy of its bylaws to the local soviet to determine if its activities were legal. The law had numerous problems for the Baptists: the structure of the bylaws were required to adopt a Soviet approved model, the new law stipulated that the state had the right to conduct surveillance on the congregation's activities, and registration allowed for the state to arbitrarily dissolve a religious congregation.

not unbiblical, as well as registration allowing their organizations and congregations a certain amount of legitimacy.¹⁰³ Registration remained a sensitive issue for the Baptists, and when registration was further complicated under Khrushchev, it provided the *Initsiativniki* Baptists with another reason to separate from the official Baptist Union. As a dissenting group, the *Initsiativniki* in the Soviet Union pulled from their history of dissent, making extensive use of petitions.

Another method of dissent utilized by the Baptists in the tsarist period was the publishing of journals and other literature to disseminate information regarding legislation affecting the Baptist sects and reports of persecution by the state. One of the earliest examples is their publication *Beseda (Conversation)*, which was printed and distributed illegally in St. Petersburg in the 1890s by Prokhanov and others. After obtaining the right to publish in 1905, *Bratskii Listok (Fraternal Leaflet)* was founded. Started by Prokhanov in 1906, as a supplement to *Khristianin (Christian)*, *Bratskii Listok* sought to inform readers of local events and pertinent legislation by the state, reprint letters of petitions and appeals by congregations, relate stories of persecution, and communicate information from Baptist congresses. While this tactic was not employed as heavily during the tsarist period or the early Soviet period due to limitations, various dissident groups extensively employed this tactic in the Soviet Union in the late 1950s. For the Baptists, it had a long history as a method of opposition against the state.¹⁰⁴

Another direct method of dissent established in the 19th century by Baptist sects was simply the refusal to halt activity the state deemed illegal and the willingness to

¹⁰³ Gidulianov, *Otdelenie tserkvi ot gosudarstva v S.S.S.R.*, 116f.

¹⁰⁴ As demonstrated in chapter five, the *Initsiativniki* were among the most prolific religious dissident groups in the Soviet Union to use “samizdat,” or underground literature, to disseminate information about the conditions of their life and persecution.

disobey the law. Baptists in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the subsequent *Initsiativniki* Baptists in the later Soviet period sought to stay within the confines of the law as long as the law did not prohibit practices necessary to their faith. The most obvious example of this is evangelism. Throughout the latter nineteenth century and even after the Edict of Toleration in 1905, it was prohibited for a member of a dissident faith to convert a member of the Orthodox Church.¹⁰⁵ Evangelical sectarians engaged in prolific missionary work and sought to convert anyone they came in contact with, which particularly alarmed the Orthodox Church and state authorities. During his return from exile in 1891, Pavlov refused to sign a government document pledging “to make no sectarian propagandism.”¹⁰⁶ In 1926 during the Russian Baptist Congress, Ivanov-Klyshnikov stated that the higher goal for the Baptists was “to go and teach all nations” and therefore, if the authorities attempted to prohibit the ability for Baptists to engage in evangelism, “there the Baptists [were] not able to submit.”¹⁰⁷ In addition to the refusal to halt evangelism activities, Baptists also willingly disobeyed the law when their prayer houses were closed by the state and their meetings deemed illegal. In the late nineteenth century, Baptists held meetings and baptisms at night and often outside the village, rather than halting their meetings.¹⁰⁸ These methods of attempting to conceal worship rather than ceasing meeting and refusing to halt activities of evangelism by

¹⁰⁵ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 55. Steeves notes that the 1905 Edict of Toleration allowed for the Baptists to move around more freely but converting an Orthodox believer remained illegal.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Vasilii Pavlov, “Christianizing the World—Russia,” in *The Baptist World Alliance: Second Congress, Philadelphia, June 19-25, 1911, Record of Proceedings* (Philadelphia: Harper & Brother Company, 1911), 231, accessed May 5, 2014. <https://archive.org/details/baptistworldalli00bapt>.

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Steeves “Russian Baptist Union,” 506-507.

¹⁰⁸ N. Melnikov, “Vosem’desiat let evangel’sko-baptistkogo dvizheniia v Dnepropetrovskom oblasti,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 5, 1955, accessed May 4, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/120/2162/.

Baptists in the 19th and early 20th centuries were drawn upon by the *Initsiativniki* Baptists from the outset of their separation from the Registered Baptists in the 1960s.

The method of appealing to Baptists in the West also commenced early in response to repression by the tsarist state. The cultivation of relationships with other Baptists in the West was a logical action for Russian Baptists in the late 19th century, because the Baptist faith originated in the West. As the Russian Baptists sought to practice their new faith according to its tradition, they reached out for instruction and proper structure from their fellow believers. Particularly in the early 1880s, after initial contact with Oncken's school, Pavlov initiated greater organization among the Baptist groups. He borrowed from the German model, while attempting to also carve out a distinct Russian path for Baptists in Russia.¹⁰⁹

The first official meeting of Russian Baptists with foreign Baptists was in 1903 when Mazaev sent Fyodor Balikhin, a Baptist evangelist, to a conference of European Baptists in Berlin.¹¹⁰ The meeting was especially important as it allowed for the Russian Baptists to not only meet their foreign counterparts, but it initiated the process for the Russian Baptist Union to gain acceptance into the Baptist World Alliance. Balikhin requested of his foreign brethren, "I ask you...to pray to the Lord for us and our Sovereign, that through him He will give us full freedom to meet and to proclaim His gospel unhindered."¹¹¹ Balikhin's appeal for help here is more of a spiritual and

¹⁰⁹ Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 97. Pavlov's time spent in Germany studying an Oncken's school had a significant impact on him when considering elements of organization for Russian Baptists.

¹¹⁰ Johann Kargel also attended this conference.

¹¹¹ Fyodor P. Balikhin, "Moia poezdka zagranitsu," *Baptist*, no. 1, 1907, 15. Balikhin writes here that those at the conference were curious to hear about the Baptist movement in Russia, and he was received with enthusiasm.

psychological appeal, but his request allowed Baptists in the West to understand the challenges Russian Baptists faced daily. Early connections such as these benefitted the Russian Baptists during times of intense persecution by the state and in times of physical need.

Even in the early Soviet period, the Russian Baptists often appealed to their counterparts in the West for support, although in the chaos of the subsequent civil war and the authorities' ability to conceal facts, these appeals were often unsuccessful. For example, during the struggle with the state over the issue of Sunday schools for children, James Henry Rushbrooke, a Baptist minister in London, interceded on the behalf of Baptists in the Soviet Union.¹¹² Rushbrooke's intercession for the Russian Baptists appears to have originated through contact with Russian Baptist leaders able to periodically attention international Baptist conferences. Rushbrooke later stated, "That parents were free to teach their children did not meet the case...They depended on the church fellowship to give their children, through the Sunday school, the Bible knowledge and instruction, which they themselves were incompetent to offer."¹¹³ Rushbrooke was unsuccessful in his attempt to persuade the authorities to allow the organization of Sunday schools, but his intercession is important in noting early techniques utilized by Russian Baptists in their struggle for freedom of conscience.

In looking at these four early and distinct methods of dissent established by the Russian Baptists in the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, it is

¹¹² James Henry Rushbrooke, "The Position and Progress of the Baptist Denomination in Europe," in William Thomas Whitley, ed., *Third World Baptist Congress: Stockholm, July 21-27, 1923 Record of Proceedings* (London: Kingsgate Press, 1923), 88.

¹¹³ James Henry Rushbrooke, *Baptists in the USSR: Some Facts and Hopes* (Nashville, Broadmen Press, 1943), 9.

demonstrated that the Baptists were willing to exist within the framework of the law provided that the law did not prevent activities that Baptists considered essential for their faith. Pavel Ivanov-Klyshnikov stated, “Where the government takes away from us our basic right of profession of faith and preaching the gospel, there the insubordination of Baptists to the commands of the ruling authority begins. All our history brilliantly confirms that.”¹¹⁴ Nesdoly observes that “in more purely religious matters—attendance at worship services and spreading the evangelical message...[they] felt most strongly compelled to obey God rather than men.”¹¹⁵ Active dissent such as that practiced by the early Baptists in Russia against the state was distinct and bestowed an important tradition on the *Initsiativniki* Baptists in the later Soviet period as they renewed the fight for freedom of conscience.

Persecution from the State and Population

The second feature that emerged as part of Russian Baptist culture in the 19th century, contributing to the Baptist heritage of dissent and the Baptists’ specific attitude toward the state making dissent in the Soviet period more likely in response to repression, is persecution from the state and the population. Persecution was from the outset of their existence a part of daily life for the Russian Baptists and stands as one of the key components that set them apart from the Russian Orthodox Church and its reaction to the Soviet state. While the Russian Orthodox Church never experienced hostility to the Orthodox faith or the Church’s existence from the tsarist state, the Baptists were forced to exist, grow, and practice their faith under intense harassment and oppression. The

¹¹⁴ Quoted in Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 508.

¹¹⁵ Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 326.

tradition of learning to survive under persecution aided the *Initsiativniki* Baptists in the Soviet Union as they undertook the decision to rebel against the state.

By the late 1860s, the authorities and the Orthodox Church were aware that the Stundist sect was spreading and slowly initiated persecution in an attempt to halt the group's activities. Both Riobashapka and Ratushnii were arrested numerous times before 1871, and in some villages, Stundists received fines because of their refusal to cease their meetings.¹¹⁶ Persecution of other Baptists in Russia commenced in the 1880s, mostly because of their missionary endeavors. In 1885 and 1886, Pavlov, while preaching in Liubomirka, was arrested. The permit granted to the church to gather for meetings was rescinded along with Pavlov's permission to serve as minister. Later, Pavlov and Nikita Voronin were charged with spreading Stundo-Baptism and exiled to Orenburg.¹¹⁷

The intense persecution of Baptist-like groups in the last two decades of the nineteenth century partially resulted from Konstantin Pobedonostsev's appointment as Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod. Pobedonostsev's hatred for religious dissenters encompassed not only Baptists but Old Believers and other sects as well, even if indigenous to Russia. In dealing with religious dissent, Pobedonostsev sought to "deny the Old Believers and the sects any rights not clearly granted them under Russian law and to harass them in every way possible."¹¹⁸ After a conference with the Holy Synod in

¹¹⁶ *Baptist*, no. 11, 1908, 36. Interestingly, Slavophile Ivan Aksakov noted the futility of persecution against the evangelicals by the state. He observed that persecution only seemed to strengthen the movement. He is quoted as saying, "If there had not been persecution, Stundism would not have grown." Quoted in Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 12.

¹¹⁷ "Vasilii Gure'vich Pavlov: Avtobiographiia," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 3 (1945), accessed May 6, 2014. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/112/152/.

¹¹⁸ Robert F. Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev: His Life and Thought* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1968), 179. Byrnes observes that Pobedonostsev believed that state power should be used

1891 in which Pobedonostsev learned that of the forty-two Orthodox dioceses, thirty were “infected with Stundism,” Pobedonostsev proclaimed all Stundist meetings forbidden.¹¹⁹ In the campaign to end evangelical sectarianism, government persecution intensified and the state initiated the removal of children from Baptist homes if they refused to stop meeting. The son of a Baptist minister in Kiev remarked on this period, stating, “This was a time of horrible persecutions. Exiles, arrests, fines, and beatings of believers rained down abundantly...Under continual fear of being caught by the police, brethren still conducted meetings, holding meetings in basements, across the Dniepr, in the woods, in the cemetery...and in some of the wealthier members’ homes.”¹²⁰ Additionally, Pobedonostsev kept close watch to prevent the publication of sectarian literature.¹²¹ In 1894, persecution against Baptist groups grew worse when the Ministry of Internal Affairs pronounced Stundists as an “especially harmful” sect, resulting in the closure of prayer houses, surveillance of members, and the deprivation of certain privileges and services.¹²²

The 1905 Edict of Toleration improved conditions for Baptists temporarily, but after 1908, persecution was renewed and restrictions increased by the state.¹²³ Disruption

against any group or individual attempting to convert Orthodox members to another faith, as well as eliminate the attractions rival faiths presented.

¹¹⁹ Pavel V. Ivanov-Klyshnikov, “Nashi obshchiny kak estestvennye kollektivy,” *Baptist*, no. 1 (1925), 13. Bonch-Bruevich, *Iz Mira Sektantov*, 55. At this time, the term “Stundist” was often employed to refer to all Baptist and Baptist-like sects. Because the Baptist faith was not indigenous to Russia, early on, the state authorities claimed that Russian Baptists did not exist.

¹²⁰ Mikhail Timoshenko, “Sredi Kievskikh veruiushchikh,” *Baptist*, no. 3, 1927, 29, accessed May 10, 2014, <http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15799coll14/id/4180/rec/2>.

¹²¹ Byrnes, *Pobedonostsev*, 181.

¹²² Quoted in Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 38.

¹²³ Although limited, the Edict of Toleration allowed for Baptists to gain greater public visibility, resulting in numerical growth. Additionally, in a freer environment, the Russian Baptist Union became

of meetings by police, arbitrary arrests, and penalties of exile again befell Baptist believers. In 1909, for example, Daniil Timoshenko was arrested after baptizing converts in Bezhitza and exiled to the Narymsky province after refusing to recant his faith.¹²⁴ Restrictions established by the authorities ranged from bureaucratic formalities such as permission to perform baptisms on an individual basis and assemble congresses to more blatant repressive restrictions such as prohibiting the distribution of sectarian religious books.¹²⁵ In addition to these persecutions from the state, Baptists often endured physical harm and criticism from ordinary Russian citizens. In 1911, Pavlov reported to the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Philadelphia that in many places, believers were beaten and meetings were dissolved by mobs. Pavlov recounted an instance when a preacher Yourtshenko was killed after an attack by a mob during a prayer meeting.¹²⁶

Persecution of Baptists continued in the early Soviet period despite the considerable improvements in their initial situation. In 1918, two ministers in Petrograd were exiled to eastern Siberia to perform manual labor. In 1920, after Baptist workers on a commune expressed to the Soviets a willingness to work on any day but Sunday, armed police raided their worship service the following Sunday, arrested all 33 believers, and escorted to the fields for labor. Refusing to work, the Baptists started singing hymns.

Taken back for interrogation, most of the believers were released late that evening.

more structured and organized. This was also the period when Prokhanov split the group and created his own union.

¹²⁴ I. Ia. Lipstok, "Kratkii otchet o rabote starshego presvitera po Estonskoy SSR," *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 6 (1955), accessed May 10, 2014.
http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/120/2163/.

¹²⁵ Steeves, "Russian Baptist Union," 78.

¹²⁶ Vasilii Pavlov, "Christianizing the World—Russia," in *The Baptist World Alliance: Second Congress, Philadelphia, June 19-25, 1911, Record of Proceedings* (Philadelphia: Harper & Brother Company, 1911), 233. The mob subsequently prevented the burial of Yourtshenko and the believers were forced to move the corpse 10 miles away on the estate of a fellow believer.

However, the authorities did not relent so easily and over the next two weeks, two of the congregation's leaders Popev and Konochuk were killed.¹²⁷ Beginning in the latter 1920s and into the 1930s, repression and persecution of all religious believers intensified as the Soviets established the Law on Religious Associations in 1929 and unleashed a campaign of antireligious propaganda on the population. However, the experience of continuous persecution Baptists suffered under both the tsarist government and the Soviet government aided in the creation of a tradition of survival and dissent within Baptist communities.

Support Through Local Church

In terms of moral and, at times, physical support, the Russian Baptist communities organized in such a way as to exist as independent, autonomous local congregations with a wide support group reaching globally. Persecution of the groups was such that the Baptists often met clandestinely in small gatherings, coming to rely on and trust each other. Each member was viewed as equal to another, an element distinctly missing in the Orthodox tradition, as parishioners and members of the clergy were not in the same class. Peasants trusted other peasants, and especially in the Baptist culture that emerged in Russia in the late nineteenth century, ministers and preachers were often no more educated than those they preached to. Orthodox Slavophile Aksakov observed that “a literate, clever peasant has more authority in the eyes of other peasants than any priests.”¹²⁸

¹²⁷ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 130-134.

¹²⁸ Quoted in Ethel Dunn, “A Slavophile Looks at the Raskol and the Sects,” *Slavonic and East European Review* 44, no. 102 (January, 1966): 173.

In addition to the trust manifested in equality, the autonomous nature of local Baptist congregations played a significant role in building a community of believers able to provide a support system for each other. Without the hierarchy found in the Orthodox Church, Baptist communities emphasized intimate fellowship with fellow believers. Assistance from afar by the central Baptist unions established an important line of communication and support without significant interference. Local congregations hosted special meetings called “evenings of love” (*vechera liubvi*) designed as a celebration of “fraternal and genuine” fellowship.¹²⁹ During regular worship services, the preacher offered help to those in need, whether physical or spiritual; the Baptists stressed the responsibility of the local minister to his congregation’s members.

Additionally, the Baptist message emphasized the importance of spiritual growth through fellowship with fellow believers, nurturing the idea of the local congregation as a support group. One Baptist observed, “Without fellowship with other children of God, they can rarely stand against the wiles of Satan.”¹³⁰ Outside of Sunday services, Baptists often met four or five times weekly to study the Bible together. These gatherings represented an extension of the Baptist teaching that the Christian family was the lifeblood of Baptist existence; a Baptist’s family not only included his immediate household but those in his local church.

In terms of providing support on a larger scale to local congregations, the central union assisted in a number of ways. Not only did the union aid congregations affected by natural disasters and the building of churches, the union also assembled information on legislature affecting the Baptists and assisted congregations in composing petitions and

¹²⁹ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 377.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 374.

appeals for the opening of schools and churches. After 1905, when Baptist groups received permission to publish, the union disseminated literature to local congregations.¹³¹ These measures served to let local congregations know that they were part of a larger spiritual movement throughout the Russian empire. Some congregations were particularly isolated with only twenty or thirty members and the union provided support by sending preachers and missionaries to them to edify and instruct. Literature from the union let Baptists know that through the Baptist World Alliance, their brethren stretched throughout the world to eight million believers. This boosted the feeling of a strong support system and boosted morale in times of persecution and encouraged believers in local congregations.

The creation of a local support system among Baptist congregations coupled with the autonomy of each independent church allowed for congregations to decide whether to enact legislation passed by the union. Writing in 1910, Pavlov remarked that “the decisions of our conference do not have legislative force for the congregations, and each congregation, being answerable to itself before God, can conduct its affairs as it considers best.”¹³² Therefore, as with the situation of organizing Sunday schools for children in the 1920s, when the union recommended to congregations that they instead instruct children privately inside their homes, many local congregations continued to organize Sunday schools until forcibly stopped by the Soviet state. While the central unions did provide advantages to the churches, the support system created within local congregations meant that communities were not dependent on the union. Because the law was often arbitrarily carried out in the tsarist and Soviet periods, each congregation decided what was

¹³¹ Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 264-265.

¹³² Vasilii Pavlov, “Besedi ‘Baptista’,” *Baptist* no. 12 (1910), 93.

appropriate for their members. The support Baptists enjoyed within their congregations, in addition to the independence they possessed in regulating the structure of their church served as a catalyst to dissent when faced with growing persecution from the Soviet state and increasing cooperation between the Soviet state and the central Baptist union.

Aggressive Evangelism Preventing Privatization of Belief

Aggressive missionary work and other forms of evangelism by Baptists was an early characteristic of Baptist culture recognized by the Orthodox Church and tsarist authorities in the late nineteenth century. Much of the persecution perpetrated against Baptist groups was as a result of their constant evangelizing. The nature of Baptist doctrine with its heavy emphasis on the Bible, particularly the call to “teach the nations” in the Gospels, stressed the importance of missionary work and proselytism on a daily basis. During the nineteenth century when converting an Orthodox believer was illegal, the Baptists refused to stop evangelizing because their faith dictated it as the duty and responsibility of every believer. In the early Soviet period, when religious propaganda was outlawed and the authorities demanded the all displays of religion be maintained inside homes or buildings leased for religious services, Baptists again refused to cease missionary work. Baptists believed that their faith commanded them to preach and convert; it was, therefore, impossible for them to privatize their faith.

Evangelism among Baptist groups in Russia commenced immediately after in the late nineteenth century. While early evangelism efforts took place chiefly among Molokan communities and other sectarian groups, gradually the Baptists expanded their missionary work to Orthodox believers also.¹³³ At the outset of the creation of the

¹³³ Breyfogle, “Heretics and Colonizers,” 342.

Russian Baptist Union in 1884, evangelism emerged as its top priority. During the first conference in 1884, the delegates split southern Russia into six districts to initiate missionary work. Indeed, the method of aggressive, itinerant preaching by Baptists is one of the most obvious examples of the Baptists' habit of acting free in an unfree society. Other sectarians and Orthodox missionaries stayed within a defined parish or area, but as one member of the tsarist state observed, Baptist preachers "consider so-called 'evangelistic' activity their chief purpose...and consider themselves free preachers not only among any group of sectarians but even in places with an exclusively Orthodox population." He continued by stating that their evangelistic work "contradicts the fundamental principle, applicable to all faiths in the empire, of the parish."¹³⁴

The militancy of the Baptists in converting others was such that they spoke to anyone they came in contact with about their faith. One Orthodox missionary D. Bogoliubov reported in *Peterburgskii Listok*,

...About three days ago, a woman took her seat by me in the tram-car, and at once began to speak to me about religion! The public in the car immediately directed their attention to our conversation. She was a sectant. Cases like this are not infrequent, and show how insistent they are. These voluntary and authorized propagandists of various sects—there is no counting them—are always seeking an opportunity to speak with whomsoever they may find, and succeed in gaining everywhere and at all times adherents to their beliefs."¹³⁵

The Baptists' certainty in the duty to evangelize was such that they openly defied authorities when accused of illegal proselytizing. At one Baptist meeting, when a policeman told the minister he did not have permission to preach, the speaker turned to the audience and asked, "Brothers, do you permit me?" The crowd responded, "yes."

¹³⁴ Quoted in Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution*, 73.

¹³⁵ Quoted in Robert Sloan Latimer, *With Christ in Russia* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), 83.

The speaker then turned to the officer and said, “I don’t need anything more, and I don’t recognize your authority.”¹³⁶ The Baptists encouraged all members to preach and stressed that ordination was not necessary to spread the faith. One Russian citizen named N. Bortovskii remarked, “...each member of a Stundist congregation considers himself an evangelist...and counts it his sacred duty to occupy himself with strenuous propaganda of his teaching everywhere.”¹³⁷ The Baptists’ emphasis on converting others, while staunchly based in biblical text, also stemmed from the Baptist belief in giving assistance to others out of concern and love for their fellow men. Baptist Vasili Andreev stated to an Orthodox missionary, “We have been enlightened with the light of truth—we do not want to leave others in the darkness.”¹³⁸ Statements such as this speak to the Baptist belief that the privatization of one’s faith was not only wrong but neglectful of one’s responsibility to God and man.

In the early Soviet period, the civil war provided the Baptists with an even greater opportunity to evangelize. In Samara, for example, the Baptists organized a special two week program of evangelism. The Baptists invited people to their prayer services, distributed religious literature, visited citizens door to door, visited work places and prisons, and orchestrated two public processions on the street preaching and singing hymns.¹³⁹ The efforts in Samara convey another important aspect of evangelism for the Baptists: the Baptists were adept at using conditions around them as an opportunity to spread their faith. One Baptist observed that the civil war in Russia “cast a gloomy

¹³⁶ Quoted in Coleman, *Russian Baptist and Spiritual Revolution*, 74.

¹³⁷ Quoted in Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 300-301. The term Stundist here is used to refer to all Baptist-like sects and its members.

¹³⁸ Quoted in Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 303.

¹³⁹ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 105-106.

shadow on people's souls.”¹⁴⁰ The Baptists used the despair around them to preach, and in Samara, at the end of the two weeks, forty new converts joined the Baptist community. For the Baptists, missionary work and individual evangelism of every believer was an obligation and a privilege. This tradition of aggressive proselytizing under any circumstances for Baptists proved as a strong influence to engage in dissent against the Soviet state when evangelism became illegal—just as their predecessors had done in the tsarist period. The Baptists' strong belief that evangelism was a central component in practicing their faith prevented them from privatizing it.

Western Concept of Church and State Separation

Part of the Baptists' initial support for the fall of the Russian monarchy stemmed from their advocacy for a more democratic government and, specifically, the separation of the church from the state. Support for church-state separation by the Baptists was logical given the harsh persecution and repression their members suffered at the hands of the state. Russian Baptists strongly resented excessive interference in church affairs and initially applauded the efforts of the Bolsheviks to separate church and state.

The Baptists supported the system of governments in the United Kingdom and the United States and specifically advocated for a written constitution, so as to prevent the arbitrary exercise of power by the state.¹⁴¹ One Baptist writer explained, “We Baptists can subordinate ourselves to any kind of government, but we live best under a more democratic kind of government...we came from the people and one with it in our popular

¹⁴⁰ Quoted in Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 105.

¹⁴¹ Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 312-313.

ideas and democratic goals.”¹⁴² The character of Baptist organization and structure followed from their belief in democracy in promoting equality, giving an equal vote in congresses, and attempting to respect the wishes of their members.

In 1901, a Russian Baptist minister wrote, “I and all Baptists—reject the union of church and state, from which flows the unthinking persecution and oppression for the faith. We believe that faith does not need the protection of the government and must not be hampered in its revelation.”¹⁴³ Baptist leader Dei Mazaev stated, “...We do not desire freedom to unite someone to our fellowship against his will; on the contrary, that has been practiced too extensively...by the state church, and we have desired and prayed to God that that evil would soon end.”¹⁴⁴ Part of the reason for the Baptists’ views on church-state separation developed from their own natural separation of the sacred order and the secular order. From the beginning of the movement’s emergence in Russia, the Baptists maintained political neutrality and viewed the government as “the primary condition for the securing of a quiet and peaceful life” that was necessary for them to preach their message.¹⁴⁵

The rejection of mandatory registration of congregations under the monarchy was based on the Baptist belief that legalization was a carnal matter that allowed the state too much control and relieved the congregations of too much autonomy. During the early Soviet period, the Baptists again rejected the proposed system of church registration with the state. They claimed that the process violated the principle of church-state separation,

¹⁴² Quoted in Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 310-311.

¹⁴³ Quoted in Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 315.

¹⁴⁴ Quoted in Nesdoly, “Evangelical Sectarianism,” 315.

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 506.

because the government threatened communities with dissolution, arrest, and the confiscation of leased buildings, as well as requiring detailed information about members and reserving the right to oversee administrative changes and approve ministers.¹⁴⁶ As the Soviet government sought to gain more control over religious life and intensify its interference in church affairs, the Baptists were forced to choose whether to resist as their legacy demonstrated or compromise—a choice, which ultimately split the movement.

Each of the five characteristics offered in this chapter created a legacy of dissent toward the state and a strong willingness to oppose state rule. The experience in methods of dissent, tremendous persecution, support of a local autonomous church community, aggressive conversion tactics, and insistence on the separation of church from state established within the Russian Baptist culture a natural suspicion of secular authority. The legacy of dissent Baptist culture nurtured in Russia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributed to the *Initsiativniki's* decision to dissent against the overbearing control of the Soviet authorities. The moral character and actions of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists in the later Soviet period developed out of their roots in the Baptist heritage. The legacy of dissent left to them by their predecessors contributed to the attitude the *Initsiativniki* exhibited toward the Soviet government after the newly formed All Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists decided to cooperate with the Soviet state. While many of the *Initsiativniki's* methods of dissent evolved and expanded during the rise of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union in the 1960s, the institution of dissent was firmly planted by its predecessors.

¹⁴⁶ Steeves, “Russian Baptist Union,” 554.

CHAPTER FOUR

Call to Activism: Orthodox Christian Dissidents and the Influence of the Human Rights Movement

“I am surprised that our Church and believers are considered persecuted. No one is persecuted for religious convictions in the Soviet Union,” stated Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galicia in 1976.¹ A proclamation rendered again and again by Russian Orthodox hierarchs by the early 1960s, the Russian Orthodox Church had reconciled itself to its new role in the post-World War II era. After World War II, Stalin employed the Church in a number of peace campaigns designed to slow the onset of the Cold War, which was quickly escalating due to his aggressive expansionist policies.² In the late 1940s, Stalin also attempted to use the Russian Orthodox leadership to unify the Uniate Church with Orthodoxy in order to quell Ukrainian nationalism and separatism.³ Increasingly, Orthodox sermons and prayers assumed a political nature, offering up prayers and praise for Soviet leaders. In order to keep the *Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate* open, the Church leadership virtually ceased reporting on church openings and ecclesiastical activities, and although Stalin kept the eight seminaries and two

¹ “Interview Given by Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galich to a Novosti Press Agency Correspondent,” *Journal of Moscow Patriarchate*, no. 5 (1976), 5.

² Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 2:310-313. Metropolitan Nikolai Yarushevich, one of the church leaders to meet with Stalin in 1943, served as the chief spokesman for Stalin’s peace campaigns beginning in 1948. Pospelovsky asserts that Stalin’s peace campaigns were motivated by the still inferior military power of the Soviet Union to the United States. At this point the Soviet Union still did not possess the technology of the atomic bomb.

³ Ibid, 306. Pospelovsky explains that because the Uniate Church operated under the ecclesiastical authority of the Vatican, which was beyond the scope of Stalin’s control and remained separate from Russian Orthodoxy, it posed a problem of anti-Soviet agitation and housed the potentiality of creating a second government in Western Ukraine that opposed the Soviet government.

academies open, the shortage of priests remained so dire that the training of new priests was hurried, sporadic, and of poor quality. In turn for the Church hierarchy's cooperation, Stalin slowed the level of persecution against the Orthodox Church.

Khrushchev's ascent to power, however, resulted in new restrictions against the Church. While Khrushchev commenced the closure of hundreds of churches, he also instituted several administrative changes to the Church's internal structure. Parish priests lost control of their parishes as they were handed over to an executive committee, meetings were forbidden unless granted permission by the local soviet, which often resulted in the suspension of parish meetings indefinitely; and all bookkeeping activities, including voluntary charities, were removed from the care of the parish priest and placed in the hands of the local executive committee.⁴ Additionally, Khrushchev wanted the Russian Orthodox Church to join the World Council of Churches and participate in the World Christian Peace Congress of 1961 in an attempt to demonstrate the freedom religious believers enjoyed in the Soviet Union. Indeed, one of the responsibilities the Church leadership was forced to accept was the continuous testimony that the Soviet authorities protected freedom of conscience amid claims of religious persecution. In 1977, the future Patriarch of Moscow Alexei II claimed "every citizen has the right to profess any religion or none at all. The fact that he is a member of this or that faith never affects his employment, promotion and things like that...The laws of this country forbid persecution of citizens for their religious beliefs."⁵ The Orthodox hierarchy's compliance to the Soviet state in providing false information concerning the situation of religious

⁴ Pospelovsky, *The Russian Church Under the Soviet Regime*, 2:336-337.

⁵ Quoted in Ellis, *Russian Orthodox Church*, 209.

believers propelled a number of Orthodox intellectuals into active dissent beginning in the 1950s.

The Orthodox dissent movement in the Soviet Union sprang to life alongside the Soviet human rights movement, both beginning slowly in the mid-1950s and gaining strength and momentum through the 1960s and 1970s. Russian Orthodoxy remained the dominant religion of Russian believers, including intellectuals, and many of the activists taking part in the early human rights movement were Orthodox believers themselves. This chapter seeks to explore the influence of the Soviet human rights movement on Orthodox dissent and Orthodox dissidents in the Soviet Union. I argue that the Soviet human rights movement significantly influenced the community—methods, thinking, and activities—of Orthodox dissidents in three distinct ways: providing an alternative support system through the intellectual connection between Orthodox dissidents and human rights activists, which encouraged vigor and solidarity despite differences, ecumenism, and rhetoric. These three characteristics came to embody Orthodox dissent. The influence of the human rights movement on Orthodox dissidents resulted from a number of elements, including an absence of dissent techniques in Orthodox tradition, the passivity of the Church hierarchy in a time of intense persecution against Orthodox believers, and the simultaneous emergence of the two movements of dissent. Before analyzing each of the three elements, it is necessary to briefly explain the origins of Soviet dissent and define the Soviet human rights movement.

Khrushchev and the Foundations of Soviet Dissent

Khrushchev's rise to power after Stalin's death in 1953 generated new opportunities and new challenges for Soviet citizens. In the last years of his life, Stalin

discontinued much of the religious persecution that marked so much of his early leadership. The Soviet Union still struggled to rebuild after the devastating loss suffered during World War II, and Khrushchev initiated a number of reforms to aid in revitalizing the country, including agricultural, educational, and scientific reforms. As a means of separating his new administration from Stalin's, Khrushchev delivered his "secret speech" in 1956, which attacked Stalin as a criminal, guilty of "grave abuse[s] of power" and generating an elaborate system of "insecurity, fear, and even desperation."⁶ The secret speech coupled with de-Stalinization and the "Thaw"⁷ that subsequently followed, allowed for an outtake of breath among citizens, and many of them seized the momentary relaxation in censorship and greater freedom to speak openly and honestly to others about their opinions. Reflecting on her initial reaction to the secret speech, Soviet dissident Ludmilla Alexeyeva wrote, "...Nikita Khrushchev shocked the delegates...and the entire nation—with the revelation that the deceased Great Leader was actually a criminal. The congress put an end to our lonely questioning of the Soviet system."⁸ University students took advantage of the new openness brought on by the Thaw to question their professors about the principles of Marxist-Leninism and the government's "mistakes" while intellectuals throughout the Soviet Union slowly established small gatherings around

⁶ Quoted in William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era*, (New York: Norton, 2003), 271-272.

⁷ The Thaw represented a brief period during Khrushchev's leadership where thousands of political prisoners were released, the policy of "peaceful coexistence" with other nations was ushered in, and Khrushchev allowed for a brief blossoming of the "arts."

⁸ Ludmilla Alexeyeva and Paul Goldberg, *The Thaw Generation: Coming of Age in the Post-Stalin Era* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990), 4.

kitchen tables to discuss poetry and politics.⁹ These fledgling meetings eventually formed the core of resistance known as the Soviet human rights movement.¹⁰

The Soviet human rights movement is best defined as a loose conglomeration of individuals publicly campaigning for change in an attempt to secure “civil and political rights for the future of mankind.”¹¹ While Soviet human rights activists did not always agree politically or philosophically, they were all committed to change through non-violence and supported basic human rights, including the freedom of movement, religious liberty, press, and assembly, for all groups. Indeed, the strength of the movement and key to its unity was its own refusal to manifest a specific political agenda. Physicist and human rights activist, Sergei Kovalev described the movement as:

act[ing] according to your conscience. That was the basis of the human rights movement of the 1960s-1980s. It was not a political platform—there was no such thing then. Only naïve people thought that we were engaged in politics. Political platforms were not the basis of our behavior, but rather moral incompatibility.¹²

Similarly, Larisa Bogoraz wrote in 1991 that the emphasis on elementary human rights “predetermined the non-political nature of the human rights movement.”¹³

The importance of the Soviet human rights movement stems from the simple fact that in a society of immense repression, a group of citizens joined together to question the

⁹ Dissident Ludmilla Alexeyeva provides a first hand account of her students attacking her, claiming that she lied to them about Stalin ruling the country as a great leader. She also writes that it was during the Thaw that she and other intellectuals “search[ed] for an alternative system of beliefs” to make their own. Alexeyeva and Goldberg, *The Thaw*, 4.

¹⁰ The importance of these early meetings are described in detail by scholar Philip Boobbyer in *Conscience, Dissent, and Reform in Soviet Russia*, which he explains that in the last Stalinist period, close friends formed circles to talk about various topics. Boobbyer terms these circles “micro-communities” and claims that they “represented a zone of private loyalty that the state could not always reach.”

¹¹ Chalidze, *To Defend These Rights*, 60.

¹² Lev Timofeev, ed., “Dissident s parlamentskim mandotom,” *Referendum, zhurnal nezavisimyykh mnenii: izbrannye materialy*, no. 35 (1990), 175.

¹³ Quoted in Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent, and Reform in Soviet Russia*, 76.

Soviet regime's authoritarianism and arbitrary persecution, and in a very public way advocated for change through nonviolence and the continued defense of basic human rights. The temporary openness brought about by the Thaw allowed many citizens to find legitimacy and strength in their ideas concerning the failure of and their own disillusionment with the Soviet system as they discovered like-minded individuals who held similar beliefs. Political opinions and personal philosophies were of secondary significance to the dissidents; they emphasized unity through a commitment to moral principles, such as justice, freedom, and conscience. They sought change through public activism, the promotion of *glasnost* (openness), and a call for the Soviet authorities to uphold the Soviet constitution. Soviet dissident and human rights activist Ludmilla Alexeyeva claims that the principles of the movement emerged from concern and empathy for "the little man on which the Russian classics are based."¹⁴

The Soviet human rights movement was established as a result of Stalin's death and Khrushchev's subsequent de-Stalinization, and it was perhaps natural that the movement's first efforts in finding its voice was in the realm of literature. The temporary relaxation in censorship and Khrushchev's encouragement of the arts assisted in this effort, and soon poetry, stories, and novels were published by writers attempting to "confront the reality of Soviet life."¹⁵ One of the earliest and most important was Vladimir Dudintsev's *Not By Bread Alone* (1956) followed by Boris Pasternak's *Doctor*

¹⁴ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 267. Alexeyeva claims that the ideas of the international human rights movement did not initially influence Soviet dissidents and intellectuals because they were poorly informed about it. Rather, Alexeyeva claims that the shock of the "secret speech" in affirming what many intellectuals already believed to be true combined with the cruelty and lawlessness of the Soviet system inspired Soviet dissidents and activists to demand constitutional observation by the government and an end to totalitarianism.

¹⁵ Rubenstein, *Soviet Dissidents*, 9.

Zhivago (1957), both of which sparked enormous debate.¹⁶ However, it was Alexander Solzhenitsyn's *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* (1962) that had the greatest lasting literary impact in the post-Stalin period. Thousands of Soviet citizens rushed to obtain a copy and Soviet publishing houses were flooded with stories detailing personal accounts of experiences in the prisons and camps during the Stalin period.¹⁷ Additionally, intellectuals soon to step into human rights activism launched underground publications such as Alexander Ginzburg's *Syntax*, which is believed to be the first *samizdat* (literally "self-published") publication in the post-Stalin era.¹⁸ Other examples of early *samizdat* literature included poems read at the Mayakovsky Square meetings in 1958 before such gatherings were prohibited. Other early *samizdat* journals include *Phoenix*, *Boomerang*, and *Cocktail*. The Mayakovsky Square readings were particularly critical in contributing to the blossoming of literary freedom and the formation of the Soviet human rights movement.¹⁹

While *samizdat* began with poetry, it quickly evolved to include memoirs, political essays, letters, and petitions. Emerging at a time when censorship of self-expression was lessened as a result of de-Stalinization, essays discussing domestic problems and the Soviet leadership were only natural. Bukovsky writes in his memoirs that early *samizdat* was about the "concrete freedom to create" and that it was through *samizdat* writings and the subsequent meetings set to discuss the works that prompted

¹⁶ Pasternak famously won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1958 but renounced the award under intense Soviet pressure and threats of forced emigration.

¹⁷ Rubenstein, *Soviet Dissidents*, 10-16.

¹⁸ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 13-14.

¹⁹ Vladimir Bukovsky, *To Build a Castle: My Life as a Dissenter*, (New York: Viking Press, 1979), 116-126. Bukovsky provides a thorough account of the origins of the Mayakovsky Square readings and the significance of the meetings for future Soviet dissidents.

many to join the rising human rights movement.²⁰ It seems only appropriate that as the Soviet human rights movement arose, *samizdat* functioned as the most significant instrument, not only in disseminating important information about human rights violations by the Soviet authorities and the movement's activities but also in connecting groups of dissidents. Yuri Galanskov's *Manifesto of Man* was one of the early *samizdat* works that influenced the thought of future Soviet activists. It was frequently read at the Mayakovsky Square meetings because it "expressed exactly what [the dissidents] felt and...lived by."²¹ Bukovsky claimed that it was indeed a manifesto of man and not a political manifesto; one of the work's most important verses states:

This is me,
calling to truth and revolt,
willing no more to serve,
I break your black tethers
woven of lies.
I don't want your bread
kneaded with tears.
And I'm falling and soaring,
half-delirious,
half-asleep...
And I feel
man
blooming in me.²²

The poem captures several themes later embodied by the Soviet human rights movement, including the ideas of an unyielding commitment to freedom, individuality, and openness and honesty. The elements found in *samizdat* literature in the late 1950s and early 1960s translated into the human rights movement's morals and thinking throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s.

²⁰ Bukovsky, *To Build a Castle*, 119.

²¹ Ibid, 119-120.

²² Ibid, 120.

Indeed, it was the arrest of two Soviet writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel in 1965, both of whom disseminated their writings in the Soviet Union through *samizdat*, that sparked intellectuals to public action against what they considered an attempt by the authorities to return to Stalinist tactics. Soviet writer Anatoly Yakobson maintained that the demonstration by intellectuals on behalf of Sinyavsky and Daniel was the “start of people’s self-liberation from the humiliation of fear, from connivance in evil.”²³ The Sinyavsky-Daniel arrests resulted in the first human rights public protest in the Soviet Union, which was attended by many who later joined the Soviet human rights movement such as Vladimir Bukovsky and Natalia Gorbanevskaya.

Support System through Intellectual Overlap and Good Deeds

The majority of Soviet citizens participating in the human rights movement were intellectuals—educated individuals working in or attending universities and research institutes. Khrushchev’s Secret Speech and de-Stalinization threw the legitimacy of the Soviet system into question and left many disillusioned, which subsequently created a desire to seek truth in other areas. For a significant number of the intelligentsia, the discovery of the truth entailed a harkening back to Russia’s past and an understanding of their own historical roots, which inevitably led them to the Russian Orthodox Church.²⁴ Whether one looks at Russian art, architecture, literature, or culture, the influence of Orthodoxy cannot be ignored. Human rights activists in the Soviet Union, while they often had no access to Western literature, read the works of Solzhenitsyn and Pasternak,

²³ Quoted in Rubenstein, *Soviet Dissidents*, 31-32.

²⁴ Beginning in the late 1950s, large numbers of the Russian intelligentsia began to enter the Russian Orthodox Church. This revival is known as the *Russkoye religioznoye vozrozhdeniye* (Russian religious renaissance). This revival of an interest in religion, particularly among young people, was recognized among all Christian groups in the Soviet Union.

both of whom advocated a return to Christianity.²⁵ Even after decades of atheist propaganda, human rights activist and Orthodox writer Anatoli Levitin²⁶ estimated in 1974 that the Soviet Union was comprised of over 40 million Orthodox believers.²⁷

Because the Soviet human rights movement included mostly intellectuals and the movement was rising in a time when more intellectuals were discovering their Russian Orthodox roots, that there was considerable overlap between the two groups. Some of the earliest human rights advocates in the Soviet Union were also Orthodox Christians and this significantly influenced their attitude toward both human rights and Orthodoxy. The intellectual connection between many Orthodox Christians and the human rights movement provided an innate support system for Orthodox dissidents who did not possess an organization or unified movement of their own.²⁸ In addition, because so many human rights activists in the Soviet Union were Orthodox Christians, the human rights movement publicized information and drew attention to Orthodox dissent and the

²⁵ During an interview conducted on March 28, 2014 at the Keston Center in Waco, Texas by the author with Orthodox dissident Alexander Ogorodnikov, he stated that Western literature was very difficult to find and often dissidents did not have regular access to it. As Ludmilla Alexeyeva also mentioned, a great deal of influence on the human rights dissidents came from traditional Russian novels, which championed the defense of the “ordinary Russian.”

²⁶ A note of clarification: when referring to Anatoli Levitin and his activities in the Soviet human rights movement, his birth name—Anatoli Levitin—is used. When referencing his written work, however, his pen name—Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov—is used.

²⁷ “The Church in the Soviet Union,” interview with Anatoli Levitin, *Russkaya Mysl*, December 5, 1974, 5. According to many scholars around this time, including Jane Ellis, 40 million is an accurate number of regularly attending worshippers; Jane Ellis estimated in the 1970s that the number of people who regarded themselves as Orthodox, including attending worshippers and non-attending worshippers, was as high as 50 million, roughly 15 percent of the population. Ellis, *Russian Orthodox Church*, 174.

²⁸ The exception to this within Orthodox dissent is the case of the All-Russian Social Christian Union for the Liberation of the People (VSKhSON), a small group of revolutionaries who planned to overthrow the Soviet government and install a regime in which the Russian Orthodox Church played a crucial role. The group organized in 1964 and were all arrested by the KGB in 1967. Igor Ogurtsov, the leader of the group, received twenty years in prisons and internal exile for his role. The group does not represent the values of the human rights activists presented in this dissertation because the group advocated violence and the forced overthrow of the Soviet government.

persecution of Orthodox believers early in the movement's activities. Because Russian Orthodox dissidents in the Soviet Union were without their own "legacy" of dissent, such as that which was present in the Russian Baptist tradition, the human rights movement provided support and assistance in their fight for religious freedom.

Literature produced by dissidents and activists already a part of the human rights movement connected Orthodox intellectuals to the movement, creating a natural system of support and sharing of ideas. Anatoli Marchenko's *My Testimony*, for example, heavily influenced Russian Orthodox priest Sergei Zheludkov. After reading Marchenko's book, an autobiographical account of his time in Soviet labor camps and prisons, Zheludkov wrote to a number of world religious leaders in order to publicize the persecution of political prisoners in the USSR and asked for all Christians to speak up in their defense.²⁹ Zheludkov became involved in other human rights activities when he voiced appreciation to individuals who protested on the behalf of Yuri Galanskov and Alexander Ginzburg, both Russian writers and poets, during their trial in 1968. Known as the "trial of the four," Galanskov and Ginzburg, were charged with writing and distributing *samizdat* literature, along with Alexander Dobrovolsky and Vera Lashkov, who were charged with assisting Galanskov and Ginzburg in creating *samizdat*. In a letter to Pavel Litvinov, a physicist and active dissident in the human rights movement, concerning the Ginzburg/Galanskov trial, Zheludkov remarked that "in defense of your friends, I have not heard the name of a single servant of the church. Allow me to associate myself in sincerest sympathy with your sorrow."³⁰ Zheludkov's choice of

²⁹ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 5, (December 31, 1968), accessed November 13, 2014. <http://www.memo.ru/history/diss/chr/>.

³⁰ Bourdeaux, *Patriarch and Prophets*, 339-340.

words is interesting. He speaks of associating Orthodoxy with the activities of the human rights activists, which suggests another important element of support that the human rights movement brought to Orthodox dissent—the “Us” vs. “Them” mentality.

Because Orthodox dissidents and activists in the human rights movement were both fighting for greater freedom, the movement provided a feeling of camaraderie and support for Orthodox intellectuals. They knew other like-minded individuals were working toward similar goals and they were not alone in their struggle. Orthodox dissidents realized that solidarity with other activists and dissidents was necessary in order to accomplish their goals. The support felt in belonging to a larger unified movement is manifested in many of the writings of Orthodox intellectuals beginning in the 1960s. Although many in the human rights movement were professed atheists, the “good deeds” they performed in defending freedom for all, including religious believers, garnered trust and admiration among Orthodox dissidents and led Orthodox intellectuals such as Anatoli Levitin, Dmitri Dudko, and Sergi Zheludkov to equate activists in the human rights movement as performing the work of Christians. For example, Sergei Zheludkov wrote to Pavil Litvinov:

I have heard that you are an atheist. That in no way qualifies my admiration...I am extremely glad to write to you that you yourself are a living proof of the truth of Christianity. Every Christian who hears about what you have said will...experience the presence and action of the Spirit of Christ among mankind. I hasten to establish a common language with you: if everywhere that I pronounce the name of *Christ*...you put the principle of spiritual *Beauty*...this will be sufficient for our practical unity. For Love, Freedom, Truth, Fearlessness, Loyalty are all names of our Lord, whom you honor without knowing it, and whom you have so marvelously proclaimed in your noble and brave declarations.³¹

³¹ Father Sergi Zheludkov, “Fr. Sergi Zheludkov writes to Pavel Litvinov,” in Bourdeaux, *Patriarch and Prophets*, 339-340.

Writing on behalf of Anatoly Marchenko and other political dissidents, Sergii Zheludkov equated the overall struggle for human rights with Christian conscience and Christian duty:

They [political dissidents] have merely sought to give effect to some of the human rights proclaimed back in 1948 by the United Nations. And these are human rights, which at the same time constitute a man's religious duty. A Christian is bound before God to be a whole man, a free man—free to think not to be untruthful...To persecute a person for exercising this freedom of personal peaceful beliefs, the freedom to express the truth, is Caesar attempting to take something that is God's. It is essentially a crime against humanity, against the free and sacred humanity bestowed upon him by God in Christ...The above-named Marchenko and other unknown representatives of the Russian intelligentsia are today suffering in the "severe regime" conditions on behalf of that Christian principle.³²

Anatoli Levitin, an Orthodox church writer, spoke up in defense of General Pyotr Grigorenko, a former Soviet army commander, writer, and human rights activist, and wrote in an essay that he saw a greater Christian spirit, not in the representatives of the Orthodox Church, but in what he termed "good Samaritans:" "lyudyakh, prishedshikh so storony" ("people from the outside").³³ In his essay "A Light in the Little Window," Levitin writes, "Are Pyotr Yakir, Pavel Litvinov, Larisa Bogoraz, Vladimir Bukovsky, Viktor Krasin, Alexander Ginzburg, Viktor Khaustov, Yuri Galanskov, Irina Belogorodskaya not good Samaritans?—people who have given their whole lives to others, for they have given everything to the people..."³⁴ It was human rights activists such as Grigorenko that "led Levitin [and others] to the wider problems of the struggle for democracy and humanity" in the Soviet Union and caused Orthodox dissidents to

³² Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, "Political Dissent in the Soviet Union," *Studies in Comparative Communism: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 3, no. 2 (April 1970), 95.

³³ *Chronicle of Current Events*, No. 8 (June 30, 1969), accessed November 13, 2014. <http://www.memo.ru/history/diss/chr/>.

³⁴ Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov, "A Light in the Little Window," 3. Archive file <SU/Ort/ 2 Levitin-Krasnov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

understand the necessity of the support system that the human rights movement offered. The “good deeds” of human rights activists produced for Orthodox dissidents the idea of solidarity, in which they found the support they needed to confront religious persecution and other human rights violations.

Indeed, as the human rights movement continued in the Soviet Union, Orthodox intellectuals and dissidents equated their struggle increasingly with the overall struggle for human rights. In a letter to Philip Potter of the World Council of Church in 1976, Lev Regelson, an Orthodox believer and physicist, and Gleb Yakunin wrote about the developing connection among Christians on the question of the “defense of human rights and the struggle against religious discrimination.”³⁵ Responding to an article by Soviet writer Boris Roschin, attacking four well-known Orthodox dissidents, including himself, Gleb Yakunin likened the article as symptomatic of the “current crack-down by the Soviet authorities on those fighting for human rights in the USSR.”³⁶ Additionally, Yakunin equated Orthodox dissidents with human rights activists in the Soviet Union, when he asked, “Would it not be simpler to carry out the arrests immediately, as was done with Ginzburg, Orlov, and Shcharansky?”³⁷ Orthodox dissident, human rights activist, and mathematician Igor Shafarevich equated the struggle for freedom with the concept of God and freedom in religion. In his essay, “Does Russia Have a Future?”

³⁵ Gleb Yakunin and Lev Regelson, “Letter to Dr. Philip Potter,” *Letters from Moscow: Religion and Human Rights in the USSR* (San Francisco: H.S. Dakin Company, 1978), 65.

³⁶ Yakunin and Regelson, “Press Conference at the Apartment of Dmitri Dudko,” *Letters from Moscow*, 85-87. The letter to which Yakunin responded was written 1977 and accused Gleb Yakunin, Alexander Ogorodnikov, Lev Regelson, and Dmitri Dudko of deceiving people in the West by feigning religious activity and falsely attacking Soviet authorities for persecuting religion and religious believers. The complete text of Roschin’s letter can be found in *Letters from Moscow: Religion and Human Rights in the USSR*.

³⁷ Yakunin and Regelson, “Press Conference,” *Letters from Moscow*, 85.

Shafarevich called on all citizens to fight for freedom, writing, “The road to freedom begins within ourselves...Once this movement [the movement for freedom] is established and broadly based, we shall gain a freedom that we cannot even begin to contemplate at this moment.”³⁸ Shafarevich argued that the success of the struggle for freedom depended on the resurrection of religion in Russia:

Nietzsche’s literary phrase “God is dead!” has become a reality in our country and by now the third generation is living in a terrifying world without God. Here, I would say, is the key to the whole question: it is the efforts applied in this sphere that will determine the life, death or resurrection of Russia. This most vital of all the fields of activity for our people will require hundreds of thousands of hands and heads (let us recall that there were three hundred thousand priests in Russia before the revolution)...Thus we may take the first and perhaps most previous steps toward freedom...If more than just a few individuals can rise to the pitch where they are ready to sacrifice themselves, souls will be cleansed and the soil prepared for religion to grow in.³⁹

The equation of the struggle for religious freedom with the larger struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union by Orthodox intellectuals points to the importance of the movement in providing unity and support for Orthodox dissidents.

The support system provided by the human rights movement was also meaningful for Orthodox dissidents in the physical and psychological support that it provided. Because the human rights movement championed all people in the Soviet Union fighting for freedom, activists often came to the aid of Orthodox dissidents. Andrei Sakharov epitomizes this type of support, not only for Orthodox dissenters, but all religious dissidents. Speaking about freedom of conscience in 1972, Sakharov stated, “...it is essential to encourage freedom of conscience...There should be a guarantee of the real separation of Church and State, and legal, material, and administrative guarantees of

³⁸ Igor Shafarevich, “Does Russia Have a Future?” in *From Under the Rubble* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, Inc., 1975), 287.

³⁹ Ibid, 290-292.

freedom of conscience.”⁴⁰ In 1971, during Anatoli Levitin’s trial Sakharov sent an appeal to Podgorniy, President of the USSR Supreme Soviet, stating, “I was present in court and am convinced that there has been no violation of the law in anything Levitin has done.”⁴¹ Other human rights activists in the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR appealed to the United Nations, Pope Paul VI, and the General Assembly of the Russian Orthodox Church describing Levitin as a “man of high morals” and his conviction as “another act of arbitrary tyranny by the authorities against dissenters, against believers, against fighters for Human Rights in our country.”⁴² In 1973, Sakharov sent a petition on behalf of Yevgeni Barabanov, an Orthodox intellectual and dissident arrested for distributing the *Chronicle of Current Events* and other human rights literature to the West.⁴³ In 1976, during his imprisonment Orthodox priest Vasili Romanyuk appealed to Andrei Sakharov for help and promised to continue his hunger strike until the authorities gave him a Bible.⁴⁴ The support offered to Orthodox dissidents in turn encouraged dissidents like Levitin to work with human rights activists in defending other religious believers and political prisoners. In 1974, during an interview, Levitin spoke about how he advised and encouraged Sakharov to appeal on

⁴⁰ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 26 (July 5, 1972), 270. In numerous essays, letters, petitions, and reports, Sakharov emphasizes the importance of freedom of conscience, even though he remained an atheist until his death.

⁴¹ *Russkaya Mysl*, September 11, 1971.

⁴² *Chronicle of Current Events*, no 20 (July 2, 1971), 236.

⁴³ Andrei Sakharov, “O Zayavleniya Yevgeniya Barabanova,” September 19, 1973. Archive file <SU/Ort 2 Barabanov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁴⁴ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 39 (March 12 1976), 188.

behalf of persecuted Baptist Georgi Vins.⁴⁵ Also in 1974, Levitin along with Sakharov and others sent an appeal to the United Nations pleading to allow the Crimean Tartars to return to their homeland.⁴⁶

Working within a larger movement of people aimed at defending all basic human rights also influenced many Orthodox intellectuals to look beyond their own cause for religious liberty and defend other basic human rights, as well. Orthodox priest Dmitri Dudko expressed solidarity with the larger cause for human rights in the Soviet Union when on December 10, 1975—Human Rights Day—he signed a collective statement by human rights activists on the state of human rights in the USSR. One month later in 1976, he signed a letter defending Sergei Kovalyov, a prominent Soviet human rights activists, convicted of participating in the publishing of the *Chronicle of Current Events* and the *Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania*.⁴⁷

One of the earliest Orthodox intellectuals to also champion basic human rights was Anatoli Levitin, who came to view his work with the human rights movement as his Christian duty. Levitin was educated as a secondary school teacher and after serving as a deacon in the Renovationist Church from 1942-1944, he reentered the Patriarchal Orthodox Church as a layman in 1944. In 1949, he was imprisoned for seven years and

⁴⁵ “Znachitel'noye Ozhivleniye Nezavisimoy Russkoy Obshchestvennosti,” *Posev*, October 1974, 6-7.

⁴⁶ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 31 (May 1, 1975), 159-160.

⁴⁷ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 252. Dissident Sergei Kovalyov worked as a prominent biologist at Moscow State University before resigning due to his work with the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights. The most comprehensive book about his life and his work with human rights in the Soviet Union and post-Soviet Russia is Emma Gilligan’s *Defending Human Rights in Russia: Sergei Kovalyov, Dissident and Human Rights Commissioner, 1969-2003* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

became a church writer after his release in 1956.⁴⁸ Levitin's activism commenced with the writing of several essays in conjunction with V.M. Shavrov titled *Essays on the History of the Religious Discord*. In 1963, Levitin penned an article defending monasticism in response to several attacks on the institution by Soviet writers. He also wrote articles defending individual Orthodox believers persecuted by the authorities. In 1968, he made his first foray into the broader human rights movement when he came to the defense of Yuri Galanskov and Alexander Ginzburg in an appeal highlighting the violations of freedom of speech and conscience in the Soviet Union. Alexander Ginzburg, also a devout Orthodox Christian, was well known in intellectual circles and produced some of the earliest and most important *samizdat* pieces in the 1950s and 1960s. Ginzburg's *The White Book* detailed the trial of the two dissident writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel. The book caused a significant stir in Soviet intellectual circles and was heavily circulated in *samizdat* and in the West. In 1974, Levitin and Zheludkov among others spoke up in defense of Vladimir Bukovsky after his arrest.⁴⁹

Soon in 1969, Levitin carried his activism further when he, along with other human rights activists including Tatyana Velikhanova, Natalya Gorbanevskaya, Viktor Krasin, and Pyotr Yakir, formed the first official human rights organization in the Soviet Union: the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR. At his trial in 1971, where he was accused of slandering the Soviet system, Levitin explained that "...the mission of Christianity consists of more than going to church. It consists of putting the behests of Christ into practice. Christ called upon us to defend all who are oppressed. That is why I defend people's rights, whether they be Pochayev monks,

⁴⁸ Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov, "Autobiography" in Bourdeaux, *Patriarch and Prophets*, 255-257.

⁴⁹ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 32 (January 1, 1976), 52.

Baptists or Crimean Tartars, and if convinced opponents of religion should some day be subjected to oppression, I shall defend them too...”⁵⁰ He became a recognized authority on Orthodox dissent and used his connections in the movement to raise awareness about religious persecution in the Soviet Union. The *samizdat* publication the *Chronicle of Current Events* regularly published summaries of his articles and reported updates on his activities.⁵¹ Levitin’s work with the human rights movement in the Soviet Union gave him a system of support, which led him to actively campaign against other human rights violations apart from the violation of religious freedom.

Other important Orthodox intellectuals and dissidents found support and solidarity in the human rights movement. Human rights activists Tatyana Velikanova and Natalya Gorbanevskaya, an Orthodox believer, worked on the *Chronicle of Current Events* at separate times and kept the publication going when the other was imprisoned. Velikanova assisted in compiling information from all branches of the human rights movement. Orthodox dissident Andrei Tverdokhlebov helped Sakharov found the Human Rights Committee in 1970. He became particularly concerned with prison and labor camp conditions for political prisoners. He wrote a report titled “On the Confinement Conditions of Prisoners” in order to raise awareness abroad and in the Soviet Union.⁵² In 1971, he worked with other human rights activists including Roy

⁵⁰ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 20 (September 1, 1971), 234-235.

⁵¹ Reports in the *Chronicle of Current Events* on Levitin’s activities and writings were numerous. In *Chronicle*, no. 1, a summarization of Levitin on the restriction of freedom of speech is provided. *Chronicle*, no. 3 summarizes an open letter written by Levitin in defense of General Grigorenko. *Chronicle*, no. 4 discusses Levitin’s involvement with other activists condemning the invasion of Czechoslovakia.

⁵² Andrei Tverdokhlebov, *Andrei Tverdokhlebov: v zashchitu prav cheloveka*, (Khronika Press, 1975,) 92-114.

Medvedev, Valery Chalidze, and Alexander Esenin-Volpin to compile a collection of documents concerning psychiatric repression in the Soviet Union.

The human rights movement acted as a home even for the larger than life figure Alexander Solzhenitsyn. Solzhenitsyn's importance in and support from the human rights movement was evident from the thousands of letters and petitions sent to the Soviet authorities after his forced emigration by dissidents from all branches of the movement. Orthodox intellectuals such as Anatoli Levitin, Gleb Yakunin, Yevgeni Barabanov, and Igor Shafarevich as well as other human rights activists such as Andrei Sakharov and Pavel Litvinov spoke out in defense of Solzhenitsyn, his work, and his importance for obtaining freedom in the Soviet Union. In the "Moscow Appeal" for Solzhenitsyn, the authors wrote, "The solidarity of people cannot be limited to words. It must be effective. In this lies our hope."⁵³ Solzhenitsyn's work within the human rights movement revolved around his belief that free speech and free press was essential for Russia to progress. In 1967, he wrote to the Soviet Writers' Congress demanding an end to "no longer tolerable oppression, in the form of censorship, which our literature has endured for decades."⁵⁴ Although Solzhenitsyn was forced to emigrate from Russia in 1974, his work with the human rights movement in his homeland continued when he chose fellow Orthodox intellectual and dissident Alexander Ginzburg to distribute the Solzhenitsyn Fund, which was set up to aid political prisoners in the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ Solzhenitsyn found overwhelming support in the human rights movement and once proclaimed that

⁵³ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 32 (July 17, 1974), 10-11.

⁵⁴ Leopold Labedz, ed., *Solzhenitsyn: A Documentary Record* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973), 64.

⁵⁵ Michael Bourdeaux, ed. "Peter Vins Rearrested," *Keston News Service*, no. 49 (1978), 1.

Sakharov and other human rights activists possessed the “indomitability of spirit which could protect mankind from destruction.”⁵⁶

For Orthodox intellectuals and dissidents in the Soviet Union, the human rights movement provided a system of support and solidarity that allowed them to thrive with other intellectuals, elevate their fight for religious freedom, and expand their passion for freedom into other areas of human rights. The human rights movement represented a home to Orthodox dissidents; the support they received coupled with the work they believed was so admirable among human rights activists led them to equate their own struggle with the broader movement for freedom in the Soviet Union.

Ecumenism

From its inception the Soviet human rights movement sought to defend the interests and rights of diverse groups of Soviet citizens; their crusade utilized solidarity in an attempt to secure basic human rights for all people in the Soviet Union. Many of the earliest human rights activists in the Soviet Union were also Orthodox intellectuals who were exposed to people with different political thoughts and interests. Solidarity was a key component of the movement. The choice to live as a dissident in the Soviet Union was a difficult one and therefore, the movement remained small. Without unity and a commitment to supporting the human rights of all people, the dissidents realized their cause would fail. The approach of change through unity that the human rights movement employed influenced Orthodox dissidents to unite with other religious dissidents in an effort to maximize their efforts in securing religious freedom. It was through the work of individual Orthodox intellectuals working within the larger human rights movement that

⁵⁶ Xenia Dennen, “The Dissident Movement and Soviet Christians,” 23. This article was provided to the author by Xenia Dennen in an email on July 23, 2014.

ecumenism developed into an important method for Orthodox dissidents in securing greater freedom of conscience.⁵⁷ As Orthodox intellectuals and dissidents increased their involvement in the human rights movement, they understood the need for religious believers of all faiths to unite.

Many Orthodox dissidents approached the cause of religious liberty in an ecumenical way because of the all-inclusive nature of the human rights movement. Human rights activists acquired information from and defended the rights of virtually every group of dissidents, including believers of all faiths in the Soviet Union. From the beginning, the persecution of citizens for their religious beliefs and practices struck a chord with many in the human rights movement. Sakharov, for example, believed that freedom of conscience was essential in order to maintain a just society. In 1975, Sakharov spoke up in defense of Vladimir Osipov, an Orthodox dissident and publisher of the *samizdat* journal *Veche*. Sakharov declared, “I do not share most of Osipov’s beliefs or the standpoint of the journal produced by him (which Osipov himself describes as nationalistic and Christian). But I am convinced that this kind of persecution for one’s beliefs is absolutely intolerable.”⁵⁸ In 1976, freedom of conscience was the first issue addressed by Sakharov in a letter to United States President Jimmy Carter. Sakharov asked, “Do you know the truth about the situation of religion in the USSR—the humiliation of official churches and the merciless repression (arrests; fines; religious parents deprived of their children; even murder, as in the case of the Baptist Biblenko) of

⁵⁷ Ecumenism discussed in this chapter is defined as a technique used by religious dissidents of different faiths, usually part of the larger Soviet human rights movement, working together for the greater good of securing greater religious freedom. While dissidents in the Soviet Union took advantage of international contacts and religious organizations abroad to raise awareness for their cause, the ecumenism discussed here entails domestic contact between interdenominational believers.

⁵⁸ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 37 (September 30, 1975), 7.

those sects—Baptists, Uniates, Pentecostals, the True Orthodox Church, and others—who seek independence of the government?”⁵⁹ One of the primary objectives of the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights, the earliest human rights group in the Soviet Union was the “restoration of religious freedom, including that of religious propaganda” for all believers.⁶⁰ On the first anniversary of the Initiative Group’s formation, its organization issued an open letter, stating that its members included “believers and nonbelievers, optimists and skeptics, those with and those without Communist views.”⁶¹

Human rights activists in the Soviet Union demonstrated the importance of defending religious liberty and believers in the collection of religious *samizdat* material and other information on religious believers. Tatyana Velikanova, for example, sought out religious believers of all faiths, especially Pentecostals and *Initsiativniki* Baptists as part of her cause against all human rights injustices.⁶² On March 29, 1971, Vladimir Bukovsky was arrested and searched. Soviet authorities found numerous documents in his possession including Anatoli Levitin’s “The Living Word” and material of the All-Russian Social Christian Union for the Liberation of the People.⁶³ Levitin’s essay “The Living Word” argues from a Christian perspective that “the living word is the word of the

⁵⁹ Andrei D. Sakharov, *Alarm and Hope* (London: Collins and Harvill Press, 1979), 46-47.

⁶⁰ Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, “Political Dissent in the Soviet Union,” 82. The Initiative Group included Orthodox intellectuals such as Anatoli Levitin, Tatyana Velikhanova, and Natalia Gorbanevskaya.

⁶¹ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 292.

⁶² *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 56 (April 30, 1980), 9-10.

⁶³ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 19 (April 30, 1971), 169.

struggle for liberty, equality, fraternity, and justice among people.”⁶⁴ In 1971, activists in the human rights movement started publishing information on the persecution of Catholic believers in Lithuania, and one year later, the Catholic Church in Lithuania established their own publication called the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*, an inspiration from the human rights movement’s own *Chronicle of Current Events*.

Dissident and human rights activists Valeri Chalidze appealed to the Presidium of the Lithuanian Supreme Soviet after the arrest of Roman Catholic priest Juozas Zdebskis in 1971, claiming that the only infringement on the law was the priest’s arrest.⁶⁵ After receiving a letter from a Jewish religious prisoner Joseph Mendelvich, Chalidze appealed on behalf of all religious believers when he wrote the USSR Minister of Internal Affairs, demanding that the constitutional guarantee of freedom to worship be upheld. In his appeal, he observed that “the ability to respect the beliefs and ethical standards of others is a fundamental mark of culture. It is doubtful whether convicts being educated will regard an administrator as a cultured man if he is incapable of recognizing the right (and religious obligation) of a Jew to wear a skull-cap...of a Christian to wear a cross.”⁶⁶

Early in 1977, during a search of Alexander Ginzburg’s home, personal correspondence and religious literature, particularly from the *Initiativniki* Baptists, was discovered, including the *Bulletin of the Council of Prisoner’s Relatives*, *Herald of Salvation*, and *Fraternal Leaflet*.⁶⁷ Ginzburg was one of the first human rights activists

⁶⁴ Quoted in *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 19 (April 30, 1971), 209.

⁶⁵ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 22 (November 10, 1971), 21.

⁶⁶ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 22 (November 10, 1971), 24.

⁶⁷ Moscow Helsinki Group, “Zayavleniye chlenov Obshchestvennoy gruppy sodeystviya vypolneniyu Khel'sinkskikh soglasheniy v SSSR po povodu obyskov, provedennykh 4–5 yanvarya 1977 g.

to regularly communicate with the *Initiativniki* Baptists and provide the *Chronicle* with information about their struggle, establishing a channel between the larger human rights movement and Baptist dissent. As a member of the Moscow Helsinki Group, which was established in 1976, he helped to compose documents protesting the removal of children from the families of Baptists and Pentecostals.⁶⁸ Orthodox dissident Andrei Tverdokhlebov was arrested in 1974 and during a search of his flat, authorities discovered issues of the *Chronicle of the Lithuanian Catholic Church*, the *Bulletin of the Council of Prisoner's Relatives of Evangelical-Christian Baptist Prisoners*, prisoner lists, and documents defending civil rights.⁶⁹ Soviet human rights activists seeking to help persecuted religious believers of all faiths facilitated communication and eroded feelings of animosity among religious groups.

Writer and reporter David Kowalewski found that cooperation between religious dissidents had developed in part through the growth of *samizdat* literature, “as well as solidarity felt by geographically separated believers.”⁷⁰ Ludmilla Alexeyeva noted that contact between various dissident groups commenced through the dissemination of the *Chronicle of Current Events*, which subsequently allowed groups to establish better connections.⁷¹

u chlenov Gruppy, doprosoy i drugikh repressiy” (January 7, 1977), accessed October 30, 2014. <http://www.mhg.ru/history/14AE131>.

⁶⁸ Moscow Helsinki Group, “Repressii protiv religioznykh semey” (June 17, 1976), accessed October 30, 2014. <http://www.mhg.ru/history/1458985>.

⁶⁹ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 34 (December 31, 1974), 26-27.

⁷⁰ David Kowalewski, “Protest For Religious Rights in the USSR: Characteristics and Consequences,” *Russian Review* 39, no. 4 (October 1980): 435.

⁷¹ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent: Contemporary Movements for National, Religious, and Human Rights*, 15-16.

Orthodox intellectual and dissident Dimitri Dudko, an Orthodox priest noted for holding a series of illegal discussions to answer religious and philosophical questions for Soviet youth, recognized the necessity of ecumenism in confronting the persecution that religious believers faced from the Soviet authorities. During one of his discussions, Dudko observed that “in the face of common danger, we must all unite...When people flaunt their allegiance to a given confession too much and don’t have love for their neighbor, they turn into ‘publicans and Pharisees,’ and even a non-believer is closer to God than such an ‘Orthodox.’”⁷² Dudko emphasized relating to other religious believers with “love,” not hostility. Dudko believed that through respecting other faiths, the Orthodox believer could learn from them. He encouraged ecumenical activity between believers as a “universal phenomenon” not to be reduced to conferences and meetings.⁷³

During an interview in 1974, Levitin applauded what he saw in Russia as “an authentic ecumenism in living religious practice. For decades Orthodox and sectarians (i.e. Protestants) suffered together in Beria’s camps, slept side by side in prison bunks, gulped the same prison soup out of the same rusty bowls. The old mistrust and bitterness is gone; rather there is mutual respect and sympathy.”⁷⁴ Speaking to the unity and growing ecumenism among participants in the human rights movement, Levitin confessed that he possessed,

...the misfortune never to be unmoved when I see people suffering. Whoever they may be—just people. Whether they are Soviet generals or elderly sectarians,

⁷² Dimitri Dudko, *Our Hope* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1977), 130.

⁷³ Dudko, *Our Hope*, 46-47.

⁷⁴ Janice A. Broun, “Russia’s Don Quixote,” *New Blackfriars* 55, no. 649 (June 1974): 277. Interestingly, Georgi Vins wrote in his autobiography that his father Peter Vins served his prison sentence with ten Orthodox priests in Svetlaya Bay in the early 1930s. According to Georgi, the priests behaved “very warmly and sympathetically” toward Peter and “got him a job as an orderly in the hospital.”

whether they are Orthodox priests or convinced atheists and Communists, I find any kind of human suffering intolerable...I believe that there are many such people in the world [who share my misfortune] and that, if they join hands together, they will help all those who are suffering for their convictions.⁷⁵

The unity displayed by activists in the human rights movement served as an example to many Orthodox dissidents. The fight for freedom of conscience by religious dissidents willing to die for their cause garnered admiration and respect among dissidents of every faith, regardless of their doctrinal differences. The fight for human rights in the Soviet Union was about freedom, not personal or political differences. In 1974, Levitin defended *Initsiativniki* Baptist Georgi Vins, calling for his release and declaring that if “Vins suffers for his convictions then he must be helped. He is an exceptionally brave and persistent man. I cannot agree with his views, for he is a Baptist, but I appreciate his activities...When I was in the prison camp with Baptists and Catholics, I took part in the arguments between denominations. They were passionate arguments—but afterwards we all broke bread together.”⁷⁶ Levitin’s words express the mounting significance that religious dissidents involved in the human rights movement placed on ecumenism. In 1978, Alexander Ogorodnikov, an Orthodox believer and dissident, included a report of the disruption of a Baptist meeting in Rostov by the KGB in his Orthodox journal *Obshchina* (*Community*).⁷⁷ Levitin knew Ogorodnikov well and after Ogorodnikov’s conversion to Russian Orthodoxy in 1973, Levitin became his godfather.⁷⁸ Additionally,

⁷⁵ Gerd R. von Doemming, “Appeals for Civil Rights Filmed by Soviet Dissidents,” *Radio Liberty Research*, September 21, 1971, 3. Archive file <Su/Ort 2 Levitin-Krasnov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁷⁶ “Demand this Man’s Release, Baptists are Urged,” *Baptist Times*, October 10, 1974, 7. Archive file < SU Ort 2 Levitin-Krasnov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁷⁷ Alexander Ogorodnikov and Vladimir Poresh, *Obshchina*, no. 2, 1978.

⁷⁸ Keston College, *A Desperate Cry: Alexander Ogorodnikov* (Keston College, 1986), 4.

after Levitin's emigration in 1974, he acted as the overseas representative of Ogorodnikov's group Christian Seminar.⁷⁹

Gleb Yakunin and the Path of Ecumenism

Gleb Yakunin, an Orthodox intellectual and dissident, came to epitomize the method of ecumenism among religious believers through his work with the human rights movement. Yakunin, born March 4, 1934 in Moscow, was the child of an old noble family. While at a forestry institute in Irkutsk, Yakunin began reading philosophy and religious writers such as Steiner, Berdyaev, Blavatsky, Soloviev, and Bulgakov, which piqued his interest in religion. Shortly afterwards, he converted to Russian Orthodoxy and decided to devote his life to the work of the Church. He was ordained a priest in 1962.⁸⁰ His work as a dissident began in 1965, when he and priest Nikolai Eshliman sent an open letter to the Patriarch Alexis of the Russian Orthodox Church. The letter delivered a scathing attack of the Church hierarchy for its subservience to the state and its continued compliance in allowing the state to interfere in Church life with the aim of destroying the Church. They accused the Patriarchate of allowing the "unlawful registration of baptisms and other sacraments," "closing of churches, monasteries, and church schools," "forceful estrangement of children from the Church," and "interference of 'secular officials' in the ordaining of priests."⁸¹ One month later, Yakunin and Eshliman sent a similar letter to Nikolai Podgorny, the Chairman of the Presidium,

⁷⁹ Ellis, *Russian Orthodox Church*, 384. Christian Seminar was a group of mostly Orthodox young people who met to discuss theological and philosophical issues of their faith, although at times Protestant believers also attended.

⁸⁰ Anatoli Levitin-Krasnov, "Father Gleb Yakunin and Lev Regelson," *Letters from Moscow*, 3.

⁸¹ Gleb Yakunin and Nikolai Eshliman, *A Cry of Despair from Moscow Churchmen* (New York: Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, 1966), 9-17.

Alexei Kosygin, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, and Roman Rudenko, the Attorney General of the USSR, accusing the government of “illegal registration of clergy,” “the illegal campaign of mass closing of church and monasteries,” “the unlawful registration of baptisms and other church rites,” “the violation of the principle of separation of church and state,” and “the illegal limitation of the number of members of a religious society to twenty.”⁸²

Yakunin equated the struggle for freedom of conscience with the larger Soviet human rights movement’s struggle for freedom and his work in both led him to adopt a more ecumenical approach to achieve religious liberty. Yakunin’s ideas and activities within the broader Soviet human rights movement and his thinking on ecumenism were shaped to a great extent by Alexander Men, an Orthodox priest, and Anatoli Levitin, as well as Levitin’s work in the human rights movement. Levitin, as mentioned above, strongly believed in the power of ecumenism in achieving greater freedom for religious believers. In the late 1960s, Yakunin frequently met with Levitin and other members of the emerging Soviet human rights movement.⁸³ At Levitin’s trial in 1971, Yakunin testified as a witness on Levitin’s behalf and defended Levitin’s written work, claiming that he found no slanderous statements against the Soviet state.⁸⁴

Alexander Men, who was not directly involved in the human rights movement, also encouraged the Orthodox community to engage and work with other denominations. During his time at the Institute in Irkutsk, Yakunin shared a room with Alexander Men

⁸² Yakunin and Eshliman, *A Cry of Despair from Moscow Churchmen*, 42-53.

⁸³ “Anatoli Levitin,” *The Tablet*, October 19, 1974. Archive file <SU Ort 2 Levitin-Krasnov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁸⁴ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 20 (July 2, 1971), 234-235.

and in the late 1950s, Yakunin, Men, Dudko, Eshliman, and Levitin met together to discuss religious issues in the Church, including the submission of the Church hierarchy to the state.⁸⁵ Men helped Yakunin and Eshliman craft the infamous 1965 letter to the Moscow Patriarch, but at the last minute, he took the advice of Bishop Ermogen and decided against signing his name to it. Speaking of Yakunin, Men praised him, asserting, “He is our army, whereas I’m just a partisan detachment.”⁸⁶ While Orthodox dissidents such as Levitin and Yakunin confirmed their advocacy of ecumenism in *samizdat* essays and signing petitions while working within the larger human rights movement, Alexander Men did not sign petitions or actively participate in the human rights movement. Rather his advocacy of ecumenism is evident in his writings and lectures. Speaking in an interview once, Men demonstrated his advocacy of ecumenism by claiming that “every religion is a path towards God, a conjecture about God, a human approach to God.”⁸⁷ He continued saying, “In the twentieth century, for the first time a serious dialogue has started between the churches and between religions.”⁸⁸ Men argued that it was essential for Christians to open their minds “to all that is valuable in all Christian denominations and non-Christian beliefs,” citing the Gospel of John to illustrate his point.⁸⁹

Men and Yakunin both read the work of Christian philosophers Soloviev and Berdiaev. While Soloviev emphasized the shared unity of man in search for God, Berdiaev stressed freedom directly derived from a personal relationship with God and the

⁸⁵ Elizabeth Roberts and Ann Shukman, ed., *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century: The Life and Work of Alexander Men* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1996), 9-11.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 12.

⁸⁷ Ibid, *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century*, 32.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 66.

⁸⁹ Ibid, 71.

subsequent value given to each individual.⁹⁰ There is little doubt that his discussions with Men and these ideas of freedom and unity expressed in Soloviev and Berdyaev influenced Yakunin in his thinking on ecumenism and the greater concept of freedom as a basic human right for each individual. This early influence from Men and Levitin coupled with the influence of the activists in the human rights movement directed Yakunin to become one of the strongest champions of ecumenism in the Soviet period. Yakunin actively worked with the human rights movement, campaigning for individual freedoms he believed were bestowed upon man from God.⁹¹

Much of Yakunin's early work centered around religious freedom and specifically the Orthodox Church, but as the Soviet human rights movement gained further ground and Yakunin established relationships with human rights activists, he saw the need to defend all basic human freedoms and all faiths. Aside from testifying on behalf of Levitin in 1971, Yakunin participated in several small committees consisting of other Soviet human rights activists. In 1976, Yakunin served on a public committee created to write and send letters to various public and state organizations abroad on behalf of Pyotr Starchik, a man forcibly committed to a psychiatric institution. Other members of the committee included Alexander Ginzburg, Sergei Zheludkov, Lev Regelson, and Tatyana Velikhanova.⁹² Yakunin signed numerous documents created by the Moscow Helsinki Group, including a document examining the struggle for human rights in the Soviet

⁹⁰ Roberts and Shukman, *Christianity for the Twenty-First Century*, 24.

⁹¹ Yakunin and Eshliman, *A Cry of Despair from Moscow Churchmen*, 7. Among all religious dissidents, the phrase, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" is utilized continuously to illustrate their belief that the Soviet government had overstepped the boundary designed by God in which mankind has intrinsic value and certain freedoms, specifically religious freedom.

⁹² *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 43 (December 31, 1976), 43-44.

Union and Czechoslovakia ten years after the Soviet invasion in 1968.⁹³ The document called for human rights activists in Czechoslovakia to “withstand the test” (*vyderzhat’ ispytaniya*) and celebrated the similarities between the two movements struggling for freedom. The document concluded with a call to solidarity: “For your freedom and ours!” (“*Za vashu i nashu svobodu*”).

Most significantly, Yakunin’s work within the larger human rights movement influenced him to create the first truly ecumenical organization in the Soviet Union. Created after a suggestion from human rights activist Professor Yuri Orlov, Yakunin organized the Christian Committee for the Defense of Believer’s Rights in 1976.⁹⁴ The first organization of its kind in the Soviet Union, the group consisted of Gleb Yakunin, Varsonofi Khaibulin, and Viktor Kapitanchuk. Yakunin’s decision to undertake Orlov’s suggestion and make the organization ecumenical demonstrates the sense of solidarity and commitment to freedom for all epitomized by the Soviet human rights movement. The Christian Committee for the Defense of Believer’s Rights was an example of the new type of watchdog groups that sprung up in the aftermath of the Helsinki Accords in 1975. However, its ideals and techniques were crafted from the Soviet human rights movement. Even before the creation of the Christian Committee, Yakunin’s work with human rights was pushing him toward the defense of all faiths. In an appeal Yakunin and Lev Regelson sent to the delegates of the World Council of Churches at the Fifth Assembly in

⁹³ Moscow Helsinki Group, “Desyat’ let spustya” (August 16, 1978), accessed November 18, 2014. <http://www.mhg.ru/history/1555EF8>.

⁹⁴ Moscow Helsinki Group, “Zayavleniye chlenov” (January 7, 1977), accessed October 30, 2014. <http://www.mhg.ru/history/14AE131>. Moscow Helsinki Group, “Repressii protiv” (June 17, 1976), accessed October 30, 2014. <http://www.mhg.ru/history/1458985>. Orlov, like Ginzburg, also collected documents from various religious groups and often appealed on their behalf, especially as a member of the Moscow Helsinki Group. When Orlov was arrested in 1978, many believers petitioned for his release including Vladimir Shelkov, the leader of the unregistered Seventh-Day Adventists in Russia.

Nairobi, Kenya in 1975, they proclaimed, “We believe that it is proper to support confessors of other religions...we do not regard our suggestions as the only possible or as the only right ones. Pluralism in our modern life requires that each community apply its particular creative efforts in order to establish new forms of Christian life and new forms of ecumenical cooperation.”⁹⁵

Yakunin’s work in the human rights movement allowed him a greater understanding of the persecution facing religious believers of all faiths. In June 1976, as a precursor to the creation of the Christian Committee, Yakunin, along with Orthodox dissidents Dmitri Dudko, Lev Regelson, Igor Shafarevich, Yevgeni Barabanov, as well as representatives from the *Initsiativniki* Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, and the Catholic Church of Lithuania collectively wrote an appeal to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the World Council of Churches.⁹⁶ In March 1976, in a letter to Philip Potter, the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, Yakunin and Regelson addressed a number of issues plaguing religious believers in the Soviet Union, drawing particular attention to the plight of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists. When discussing the issue of registration, Yakunin and Regelson explained that “the main victims of the anti-religious law on registration were the *Initsiativniki* Baptists.”⁹⁷

Yakunin’s Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers’ Rights was not only aimed at gaining religious freedom for believers, but also sought to work on the behalf of

⁹⁵ Yakunin and Regelson, “Appeal to the Delegates of the 5th Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Nairobi, Kenya,” *Letters from Moscow*, 45-46.

⁹⁶ Ellis, *The Orthodox Church*, 369-372. According to Jane Ellis’ close study of the appeal, the tone of the document suggests that it was drafted by an Orthodox believer. Ellis writes, “This ecumenical venture, therefore, was most probably a venture by...Orthodox who reached out to members of other denominations.”

⁹⁷ Yakunin and Regelson, “Letter to Dr. Philip Potter, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches,” *Letters from Moscow*, 57.

believers whose basic human rights were violated by the state.⁹⁸ In the Committee's declaration, the members wrote, "As we acknowledge that any use of compulsion against people on the grounds that they are not Orthodox or belong to a different faith is contrary to the Christian spirit, we consider it our special duty to take the initiative in defending the religious freedom of all believers in our country, regardless of denomination."⁹⁹ The organization's purpose consisted of five aims: "to collect, study, and distribute information on the situation of religious believers in the USSR;" "to give legal advice to believers when their civil rights are infringed;" "to appeal to state institutions concerning the defense of believer's rights;" "to conduct research...to clarify the legal and factual position of religion in the USSR;" and "to assist in putting Soviet legislation on religion into practice."¹⁰⁰ The Committee wasted no time and by June 1977, they composed and sent a letter to General Secretary Brezhnev regarding the draft of the new Constitution. The Committee sought to explain that the changes to the Constitution troubled religious believers because "a believer cannot agree with the Constitutional legalization of compulsory godlessness for the whole of society...the preamble and Article 6 of the Draft set out the theses of the party program, which have now been elevated to the status of national law."¹⁰¹ Most interestingly, the Committee proposed legal changes in order to

⁹⁸ Gleb Yakunin, et. al., *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 3* (Moscow, 1976), 283.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 284.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 283.

¹⁰¹ Yakunin, et. al., Letter to Brezhnev, Chairman of the Constitutional Commission, *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 1* (Moscow: 1977), 23-27. In their appeal to Brezhnev, the Committee's concern over the proposed changes to the constitution revolves around the virtual elimination of any distinction between the Communist Party and the state itself. The Committee writes, "Thus, the borderlines between the party and the state are obliterated...and the Soviet citizen's passport becomes a communist's party card."

allow Soviet citizens to exercise the freedom of conscience that the Constitution promised.

Through various channels of communication and word of mouth by activists, the Christian Committee began receiving hundreds of letters and appeals from believers and congregations throughout the Soviet Union. Catholics, Adventists, Pentecostals, *Initsiativniki* Baptists, as well as non-Christian groups contacted the Christian Committee to detail their persecution and seek help. One of the earliest appeals the Committee received was from the Khailo family. In November 1977, a member of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists, Vladimir Pavlovich Khailo sent a letter to the Christian Committee asking for help in receiving permission to emigrate after three of his children were removed from the home and moved to various institutions and prisons. Khailo ended his letter, writing, “I appeal to all Christians, to all people to whom human rights are precious, to come to the defense of my family.”¹⁰² For some religious believers and churches, the Christian Committee functioned as an effective means in getting information published abroad and also of keeping fellow believers informed across the Soviet Union. The *Initsiativniki* Baptists utilized the Committee in this way, sending the Committee information gathered from their own organization the Council of Prisoners’ Relatives.¹⁰³ The All-Union Church of the True and Free Seventh Day Adventists also sent information about their

¹⁰² Kahilo Family, “Appeal,” *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 1* (Moscow: 1977), 122-123. In his letter, Khailo explains that his oldest son was arrested and imprisoned, whereas two of his other sons were moved to special schools because they received religious education at home, effectively denying Khailo of his parental rights.

¹⁰³ “Urgent Communication,” *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 2* (Moscow: 1977), 202-203. This communication from the *Initsiativniki* Baptists to the Committee was written on December 25, 1977 and discusses the increased persecution against members of their denomination as a result of the new Soviet Constitution. They list names of members arrested and literature seized. Interestingly, at the end of the letter, they ask the Committee to send the Council of Prisoners’ Relatives copies of petitions created so that they may sign “on behalf of all who now endure persecutions and sorrows.”

plight to the Committee. On March 20, 1978, the Committee received a letter from Rostislav Galetsky detailing a decree handed down by the Commission on Juvenile Affairs by which the Mikhel family was ordered to pay a fine of 30 rubles for keeping the children in the home out of school on Saturdays because of their religious convictions. Perhaps knowing one of the Christian Committee's members through previous work, Galetsky asked that the Committee send copies of the appeal to the *Chronicle of Current Events*, the press, and radio broadcasting stations.¹⁰⁴ A few months after creating the Christian Committee, Yakunin wrote a letter to Pope Paul VI, not only asking for the Catholic Church to defend persecuted Catholic believers in the Soviet Union, but also requesting the blessing of the Vatican for the success of the Christian Committee.¹⁰⁵

The Committee produced an astounding 417 documents, amounting to 2,891 pages, in only the first three years of its existence.¹⁰⁶ The group publicized the case of Iosif Begun, a Jew sentenced to two years imprisonment for teaching Hebrew and sent information to the *Chronicle of Current Events* calling attention to the Soviet Central Committee's continued resolutions to increase atheist education among the population. The Christian Committee noted that their research showed that despite the state's efforts, there was a continued increase in the influence of religion on the young and a decline in anti-religious sentiment among communists and Komsomol members.¹⁰⁷ The Committee

¹⁰⁴ Rostislav Galetsky, "A Chronicle: Nina Fedorovna Mikhel," *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 1* (Moscow: 1977), 23-27. Galetsky writes that in addition to receiving the fine, Nina Mikhel was in danger of losing her children because of the religious education they received at home.

¹⁰⁵ Gleb Yakunin, "Letter to Pope Paul VI," *Russkaya Mysl*, September 1, 1977, 5.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Bourdeaux, *Risen Indeed: Lessons of Faith in the USSR* (New York: St. Vladimir's Press, 1983), 22.

¹⁰⁷ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 45 (May 25, 1977), 306-307.

also raised awareness for human rights issues not necessarily associated with religion, such as Lev Regelson's letter to the participants of the Belgrade Conference in 1977 concerning forced labor, not only in the Soviet Union, but in other communist countries as well.¹⁰⁸ Additionally, Gleb Yakunin published information in a press release about Zvaid Gamsakhurdia, a Georgian human rights activist, dissident, and future president of post-Soviet Georgia, and asked "all those who cherish human rights...not to be indifferent to his fate."¹⁰⁹

The threat the Christian Committee posed to the Soviet state resulted in the eventual arrest of nearly all its members. In August 1979, Yakunin issued a radical statement suggesting that Orthodox believers establish unregistered, and therefore, illegal, parishes to function outside of state control. Yakunin argued that the unregistered parishes would create a parallel structure to the Moscow Patriarchate, which would result in less pressure on the Church.¹¹⁰ The success of unregistered Catholics and Protestants, particularly the *Initiativniki* Baptists, in the Soviet Union acted as an example to Yakunin. Following the publication of the statement, Yakunin was arrested on November 1, 1979, and after a four-day trial, he was sentenced on August 28, 1980, to

¹⁰⁸ Lev Regelson, "Appeal to the Participants of the Belgrade Conference," *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 1* (Moscow: 1977), 152-154.

¹⁰⁹ Yakunin, "Appeal," *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 4* (Moscow: 1978), 451.

¹¹⁰ Bourdeaux, *Risen Indeed: Lessons in Faith in the USSR*, 22-23. Yakunin was sentenced for anti-Soviet activity under Article 70 of the Soviet Criminal Code. Viktor Kapitanchuk, a member of the Christian Committee since its creation, was also arrested and testified against Yakunin during his trial after recanting his "harmful" activities. Lev Regelson, Yakunin's friend and fellow dissident, also testified against him after recanting his activities following his arrest. Interestingly, Regelson was released after his own trial, in view of his "sincere repentance" and stated to the Western press that he was "prepared to go to prison for the faith, but not for human rights." Following Yakunin's arrest, No. 54 of the *Chronicle of Current Events* listed several items confiscated from Yakunin's home including Baptist and Adventist correspondence and literature, the work of philosopher Soloviev and other Orthodox philosophy, and materials in connection with human rights cases, in particular the case of Vyacheslav Kondratevich Zaitsev, a Doctor of Philological Sciences, forcibly confined to a psychiatric hospital.

ten years—five served in prison and five served in internal exile. After Yakunin’s arrest, the Christian Committee’s activities diminished, but the organization did succeed in doing some work through Vadim Ivanovich Shcheglov, the secretary of the Committee.¹¹¹ Yakunin’s arrest and sentence provoked a strong reaction from Soviet human rights activists, particularly Sakharov, and religious dissidents of all faiths, securing Yakunin’s importance as a member of the human rights movement and an advocate of ecumenism. Particularly notable among the numerous statements and appeals written on Yakunin’s behalf following his arrest was a statement published by a group of Pentecostals. They praised Yakunin as playing “an active part in the struggle against violations of the rights of religious minorities in the Soviet Union. We wish to express our sincere gratitude to Father Gleb Yakunin for his invaluable work in dissipating the hostility which the atheistic state sows between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians.”¹¹² Yakunin and the Christian Committee’s commitment to not only publishing information about the persecution of religious believers, but also to call attention to human rights issues more broadly in the Soviet Union produced an effective organization created out of its members’ connection and relationship to the Soviet human rights movement. The human rights movement’s concern for the freedom of all Soviet citizens influenced the Christian Committee to open its arms to believers of all faiths, establishing a truly ecumenical organization, which promoted trust, unity, and support among persecuted believers. The network of communication produced through the human rights movement allowed the Christian Committee to reach believers across the

¹¹¹ Ellis, *Russian Orthodox Church*, 443-444.

¹¹² *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 55 (January 31, 1980), 10.

country and increase their effectiveness in the West and further champion the cause of human rights in the Soviet Union.

Rhetoric

A third aspect of Orthodox dissent shaped by the Soviet human rights movement was the use of similar rhetoric to provoke action, promote change, and champion the cause for basic human rights among Soviet citizens and the West. The language utilized by activists in the Soviet human rights movement was not typically political, but rather moral. The movement attempted to convey that the actions of the Soviet state were morally wrong, and therefore the language tended to transfer easily into the rhetoric of Orthodox dissidents. Here, two words/phrases frequently used by human rights activists and Orthodox dissidents in their appeals, literature, and slogans are explored: “human dignity” or “humanity” and “freedom.”

Although the use of the word “humanity” or phrase “human dignity” might seem like a common or expected term, activists in the human rights movement utilized the concept of humanity to elevate the struggle for human rights and create a powerful and emotional response to the persecution facing citizens in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the concept of their struggle as “human” and an attempt to protect “humanity” constructs an image of the need to unite mankind and resist the machine-like state, which threatens to destroy the soul and being of man. Soviet human rights activists utilized “humanity” in both a literal and metaphysical sense. Not only were they fighting for humanity physically, in their protests against arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, they were fighting for humanity abstractly, in that every man has a right to exist and think freely—that every man is born with an innate right to dignity.

Early in Soviet dissident literature, dissidents referred to their struggle as “human” and for “dignity.” In 1970, Sakharov, Leontovich, Turchin, and Chalidze compiled a report of “procedural violations” committed during the preliminary investigation and trial of General Grigorenko, including “unlawful physical impact on the defendant and treatment degrading to human dignity.”¹¹³ In 1971, eight Jewish dissidents renounced their Soviet citizenship and proclaimed, “We see the refusal of permission to emigrate as a trampling of human rights, an insult to our dignity, and an act of tyranny and lawlessness.”¹¹⁴ Speaking about the unity forged by their ordeal in their attempt to hijack a civilian aircraft to escape the Soviet Union, defendant Mark Dymshits stated at his trial, “We, the group of defendants, are people with differing characters...It is gratifying that even here [in the midst of the trial] we have not lost our humanity...”¹¹⁵ In an letter to President Nixon and Brezhnev in 1974, Sakharov wrote, “Facilitate international inspection of places of imprisonment in all countries, for it is there that human rights and the principles of humanity are most often violated.”¹¹⁶ In an appeal read in London at an Amnesty International gathering, Sakharov wrote, “I call on you to raise your voices in defense of prisoners of conscience. Their suffering, their courageous, nonviolent struggle for the noble principles of justice, openness, compassion, human and national dignity, and freedom of conscience, obligate us all not to forget them and to

¹¹³ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 12 (June 30, 1970), accessed October 17, 2014. <http://www.memo.ru/history/diss/chr/>.

¹¹⁴ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 17 (April 1, 1971), 92.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 57. Dymshits took part in the hijacking attempt because he claimed that he was unable to give his children a Jewish upbringing in the Soviet Union.

¹¹⁶ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 32 (July 17, 1974), 96.

obtain their release from the cruel clutch of the punitive apparatus.”¹¹⁷ Even Sakharov’s use of the word “apparatus” invokes an image of the Soviet state as a machine seeking to rob man of his basic dignity and humanity. In March 1974, Soviet dissident Sergei Pirogov dispatched an appeal to Podgorny proclaiming, “...in the name of humanity towards dissent and its manifestations, save me, by granting me a pardon, from a verdict which, through the mechanical working of the machine, could find me guilty of what I cannot be guilty because of my character and beliefs.”¹¹⁸ On what would have been dissident writer Yuri Galanskov’s thirty-fifth birthday, several human rights activists released a statement commemorating Galanskov’s work and “remind[ing] all who are alive to compassion that the present regime for political prisoners in the USSR is a well thought out system for the destruction of their health and for the mockery of human dignity.”¹¹⁹ The juxtaposition between the concept of human dignity and the concept of the state as an instrument for stripping mankind’s humanity was used often in human rights rhetoric as a way of elevating the cause for basic freedoms. Additionally, the frequent use of “humanity” and “human dignity” made their message moral, not political, appealing to many dissidents fighting for religious rights, such as the Orthodox.

“Human dignity” and “humanity” as rhetoric also appeared in the writings of many Orthodox dissidents working in the human rights movement. One of the earliest

¹¹⁷ Andrei Sakharov, *Alarm and Hope*, 36.

¹¹⁸ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 32 (July 17, 1974), 22. Pirogov was arrested in 1974 and charged with distributing *Khronika* and material containing anti-Soviet propaganda. His case was first publicized in *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 30 (December 31, 1973).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103-104. This statement was signed by human rights activists Leonid Borodin, Vladimir Osipov, Nikolai Ivanov, and others and called on the world public, Amnesty International, and the International Red Cross to the conditions that political prisoners in the USSR were confined to in prisons and labor camps. Yuri Galanskov was sentenced to seven years in a labor camp in 1968, after what became known as the “trial of the four.” Galanskov was one of the earliest participants in the Soviet human rights movement and authored or co-authored many early *samizdat* works including *The White Book* and *Phoenix*.

Orthodox dissidents and human rights activists to utilize on the concept of humanity and dignity was Anatoli Levitin. In 1969, in his essay “A Light in the Little Window,” Levitin wrote, “Freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of conscience, freedom of civic action...all these freedoms elevate human dignity...We are raising our standard in a fight for humanity...We are fighting for freedom, equality, and brotherhood between people. And if necessary we will die for this.”¹²⁰ By 1969, Levitin was heavily involved in the Soviet human rights movement and familiar with the writings and work of other human rights participants. His use of “we” denotes unity among those defending human rights and again the concept of “humanity” and “human dignity” promotes a moral message, not a political one.

Orthodox dissident Alexander Ogorodnikov also utilized the idea of “humanity” and “human dignity” in his writings to reference the struggle for human rights and religious freedom in the USSR. Ogorodnikov’s primary concern was the Orthodox Church and Orthodox believers, but in the “Declaration” of his journal *Obshchina*, he writes that the Christian Seminar participants “having turned aside the greedy hand of the state which has sought to grasp our souls...In defending the dignity of Mankind...we see how the aims of the Church correspond to the most profound aims of human hearts...”¹²¹ Ogorodnikov’s choice of words is noteworthy as he equates the defense for all human dignity, an “aim of the human heart,” with the aims of the Church. In other words, the goals of the Soviet human rights movement and the “faithful children of the Orthodox Church,” as Ogorodnikov referred to himself and others in his group, were the same. The

¹²⁰ Levitin-Krasnov, “A Light in the Little Window,” 8-11. Archive file <Su/Ort 2 Levitin-Krasnov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹²¹ Alexander Ogorodnikov and Vladimir Poresh, “Declaration of Seminar’s Principles,” *Obshchina*, no. 2, 1978.

“dignity” that Ogorodnikov and human rights activists were defending was just that—human and universal. Additionally, similar to the contrast created by human rights activists, Ogorodnikov associates the state with a lifeless mechanism resolved to steal the essence of man’s humanity—his dignity.

Gleb Yakunin also mimicked the rhetoric of the Soviet human rights movement, particularly in his later writings. For example, Yakunin’s earliest public appeals and open letters, written in 1965 to Podgorny, the Chairman of the Presidium, and to the Moscow Patriarch, are absent of references to “humanity” or “human dignity.” Yakunin focuses instead on the rights of believers to freedom of conscience. However, his increasing involvement with the Soviet human rights movement and its participants influenced his rhetoric. In the appeal sent to the delegates of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, Yakunin wrote, “We believe that it is proper to support...all fighters for freedom, human dignity, and the preservation of God’s image in man.”¹²² In a letter to David Hathaway, a British pastor responsible for bringing thousands of Bibles into Eastern Europe during the Cold War, Yakunin discusses the plight of Orthodox dissident and human rights activists Andrei Tverdokhlebov. Yakunin writes, Tverdokhlebov “has courageously and with great nobility of spirit raised his voice on the violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the USSR, when human dignity was grossly violated.”¹²³ Often playing on various forms of “human,” in the same letter, Yakunin praised the “confessors of humanism” and the “selfless fighters for

¹²² Yakunin and Regelson, “Letter to Dr. Philip Potter,” *Letters from Moscow*, 54.

¹²³ Yakunin and Regelson, “Letter to the Reverend David Hathaway,” *Letters from Moscow*, 69.

human dignity.”¹²⁴ In calling attention to the arrest and imprisonment of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Yakunin wrote that Gamsakhurdia embodied the “humanitarian ideals” of the human rights movement.¹²⁵ Writing in 1977 to the directors of Voice of America, BBC, and Deutsche Welle, Yakunin requested that the stations include Russian language programs of a “general humanitarian nature and religious ones for children...Such an innovation would fully correspond to the realization of Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...”¹²⁶ Yakunin’s use of “human dignity” and the continued references to humanitarianism and humanism point to a universal concern for mankind and mankind’s freedom. Yakunin frequently employs the concept of “humanity” and “human dignity” specifically with participants of the Human rights movement, referring to them as “fighters,” and as discussed previously, equated the struggle for freedom of conscience with the broader Soviet human rights movement.

Orthodox dissidents use of the concept of “humanity” and “human dignity” is similar to its use by activists in the Soviet human rights movement: moral, based on gaining concrete freedoms, unifying, and universal. Orthodox dissidents participating in the human rights movement did not employ the concept of “human dignity” in a religious or spiritual sense, even though they may have believed that dignity was a right bestowed by God. Indeed in his essay, “A Light in the Little Window,” Levitin refers to

¹²⁴ Yakunin, “Appeal to the Delegates of the 5th Assembly,” *Letters from Moscow*, 45.

¹²⁵ Yakunin, “Press Release,” *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 4* (Moscow: 1978), 346.

¹²⁶ Yakunin, et. al., “Open Letter,” *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 1*, November 11, 1977, 37-38.

“learn[ing] humanity” through the example of Alexander Ginzburg’s fiancé and her struggle to receive permission to visit him after his arrest.¹²⁷

Another word used by Orthodox dissidents taken from human rights activists in the Soviet Union is “freedom.” This seems only appropriate as the struggle undertaken by Orthodox dissidents and human rights activists was a fundamental struggle to attain freedoms denied by the Soviet authorities. However, from its inception, the Soviet human rights movement utilized “freedom” to symbolize a sense of pure existence. While human rights activists used “freedom” in the sense of legal rights, as in the freedom to worship, the freedom of expression, the freedom of press, and so on, “freedom” is often used suggest the simple liberty to exist and think without arbitrary repression and imprisonment. The concept of “freedom” in this way suggests a higher ideal than just basic concrete rights; it suggests the freedom of the mind, soul, and spirit. Human rights activists in the Soviet Union often spoke of the Soviet government attempting to imprison dissidents in order to “break” their spirit. Their willingness to endure arrest, exile, and imprisonment was for more than physical rights; the human rights movement was a struggle for man’s right to exist freely.

“Freedom” as a concept referring to the liberty to exist and think freely was used from the beginning in human rights rhetoric among activists in the Soviet Union. On August 25, 1968, a handful of Soviet citizens, many of them important figures in the Soviet human rights movement, including Natalya Gorbanevskaya, Pavel Litvinov, and Larissa Daniel, the wife of Soviet writer Yuli Daniel, gathered in Red Square at noon to protest the Soviet army’s invasion of Czechoslovakia. In Gorbanevskaya’s account of

¹²⁷ Levitin-Krasnov, “A Light in the Little Window,” 10. Archive file <Su/Ort 2 Levitin-Krasnov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

the events, she wrote most of the slogans used in the protest: “Long live free and independent Czechoslovakia” and “For your freedom and ours.”¹²⁸ Indeed, the concept of “freedom” as the right to exist and think permeated appeals, letters, and essays of human rights activists, and in a way, acted as the official word for the Soviet human rights movement. “Freedom” emerged as the most commonly used word in chants and slogans. High school students in Lithuania chanted “Freedom” and “Freedom for Lithuania” in 1972 as they marched out of respect for Romas Kalanta, a student who committed self-immolation in protest of the Soviets occupying Lithuania, to the city garden in Kaunas.¹²⁹ Dissidents and activists in the Soviet Union referred to Human Rights Day as “Freedom Day,” and often used December 10 as an opportunity to write to the Soviet authorities listing violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights committed by the state.¹³⁰ In 1972, in an open letter supporting Vladimir Bukovsky, the Initiative Group ended the appeal with “Freedom to Bukovsky!” After the arrest of human rights activist and Orthodox dissident Andrei Tverdokhlebov in 1976, slogans defending him appeared across Leningrad. One of the slogans declared, “You are Trying to Suffocate Freedom, but the Spirit of Man Knows No Chains!”¹³¹ In this way, “freedom” was used to signify emotion, unity, and the simple right to exist.

In September 1977, Sakharov sent an appeal to the “Parliaments of All Helsinki-Signatory States,” writing, “We are living through a period of history in which decisive

¹²⁸ Natalya Gorbanevskaya, *Red Square at Noon* (London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1972), 31-36.

¹²⁹ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 27 (October 15, 1972), 298.

¹³⁰ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 23 (January 5, 1972), 66.

¹³¹ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 42 (October 8, 1976), 174. Several artists and poets affiliated with groups advocating for the freedom of creativity and expression in the Soviet Union took credit for the slogans, but no conclusive evidence was found as to who created the slogans.

support of the principles of freedom of conscience, an open society, and the rights of man is an absolute necessity. The alternative is surrender to totalitarianism, the loss of all precious freedom, and political, economic, and moral degradation.”¹³² In a document created by the Moscow Helsinki Group in 1979 reporting on the arrests and subsequent convictions of several notable human rights activists including Alexander Ginzburg, Yuri Orlov, and Vladimir Slepak, the group urged “all who cherish freedom and independence of thought and expression to expand human rights activities...”¹³³ In 1974, in a letter to Brezhnev and President Nixon, Sakharov pleaded that the two world leaders, “facilitate...exchange of knowledge and promote...freedom...of thought in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights...”¹³⁴ For activists in the human rights movement, “freedom” was more than a generic word employed in advocacy for physical freedoms. “Freedom” represented the natural right that every man innately possesses and deserves to possess to think and exist without fear of oppression.

Orthodox dissidents involved in the human rights movement also came to employ the concept of “freedom” in a similar way—the liberty of thought and existence. It is perhaps because of their involvement in a broader struggle for the rights of mankind that Orthodox dissidents employed the concept of freedom in a more abstract and universal way. In Yakunin’s early writings, his concern is for the freedom of believers to worship without hindrance and interference from the state. In his open letters written in 1965 to the Moscow Patriarch and the Soviet authorities, the freedom of religion is the only right

¹³² Sakharov, *Alarm and Hope*, 156-159.

¹³³ Moscow Helsinki Group, “Presledovaniya grupp ‘Helsinki’” (February 1, 1979), accessed November 20, 2014. <http://www.mhg.ru/history/15D6302>.

¹³⁴ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 32 (July 17, 1974), 95.

discussed. However, as his involvement in the human rights movement grew, he developed an interest in the abstract ideal of “freedom” as utilized by human rights activists. Yakunin and Regelson’s appeal to the delegates of the Fifth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, they write, “One of the most horrible weapons in the struggle against freedom of thought and conscience is the compulsory detention of dissenters in psychiatric hospitals...”¹³⁵ Orthodox dissident Alexander Ogorodnikov wrote in his journal *Obshchina* that the Soviets sought to rob its citizens of “free thought” (“svobodnaya mysl’”).¹³⁶ In a letter to the youth in America, Christian Seminar participants proclaimed, “We are grateful to you for the spirit of liberation, which has filtered through the customs barrier and the infernal wailings of the radio-jammers.”¹³⁷ The reference to the “spirit of liberation” or freedom is again emotional, not a concrete freedom, but an ideal to live and think.

In a letter to the Belgrad Conference in 1977, Lev Regelson, writing on behalf of the Christian Committee discusses violations of society’s “moral foundations,” including “freedom of thought and creativity.”¹³⁸ Anatoli Levitin often utilized the concept of “freedom” in his writings as mankind’s liberty to think and exist. In an appeal to British citizens in 1976, Levitin wrote that he had “devoted his life to the struggle for freedom in his country and its renewal on the foundations of Christianity, humanism, and

¹³⁵ Yakunin and Regelson, “Appeal to the Delegates of the 5th Assembly,” *Letters from Moscow*, 45.

¹³⁶ Ogorodnikov, “The Missionary Duty,” *Obshchina*, no. 2, 1978.

¹³⁷ Keston College, *A Desperate Cry*, 8.

¹³⁸ Lev Regelson, *Dokumenty Khristianskoy Komiteta Oborony Prav Veruyushchikh v SSSR: Tom 1*, 152.

freedom.”¹³⁹ Later in this same statement, Levitin discusses concrete, individual rights jointly referring to these rights as “freedoms”—plural. His use of “freedom” in the singular form suggests an intangible ideal—the liberty to exist and think. In a plea appearing in the West, Orthodox dissident Yevgeni Barabanov, wrote, “...the normative cure for dissent is a monstrous social distortion, a crime against the very nature of man, against the right to think, speak, believe, and be free...”¹⁴⁰ Barabanov equates living free with the natural state of man. Using the concept of “freedom” in a more universal sense to represent mankind’s right to exist and think embodied the intangible ideal that Orthodox dissidents and human rights activists struggled to attain in the Soviet Union. While they certainly advocated for concrete, physical freedoms such as the freedom to publish, the freedom to assemble, and the freedom to worship, the Soviet human rights movement was a struggle for mankind’s right to exist and think uninhibited by a totalitarian regime.

Conclusion

The significant influence of the Soviet human rights movement on Orthodox methods of thought about dissent is demonstrated by three characteristics adopted by Orthodox dissenters: support, ecumenism, and rhetoric. Additionally, because so many human rights activists were also Orthodox believers, their involvement went beyond their concern for religious believers. The rights fought for and championed by human rights activists encouraged many Orthodox intellectuals and dissidents to help not only

¹³⁹ Levitin, “Appeal,” Archive file <SU/Ort 2 Levitin-Krasnov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁴⁰ Yevgeni Barabanov, “Statement,” Archive File <SU/ Ort 2 Barabanov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

believers of other faiths, but to campaign for other basic human freedoms denied by the Soviet state. The human rights movement's existence as a loose organization of people unified by an adherence to moral principles of liberty, rather than political agendas, created a committed strength and solidarity among its participants, including religious dissidents such as the Orthodox. The human rights movement's organization provided a support system for the Orthodox, its commitment to attaining basic human freedoms for all people encouraged ecumenism among the Orthodox, and its use of strong rhetoric created a common language and sense of unity in shared ideals.

CHAPTER FIVE

Networking Toward a Common Goal: the *Initsiativniki* Baptists and the Soviet Human Rights Movement

“The work of God has nothing to do with politics. I do not wish to criticize the government—only certain measures of the government,” declared Georgi Vins, a Baptist preacher and one of the leaders of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists, upon his arrival in the United States after his release from the Soviet gulag in 1979.¹ Vins’ statement characterizes the *Initsiativniki* Baptists’ mindset toward the Soviet government even as the group existed as one of the most persecuted religious bodies during the Soviet period. The *Initsiativniki* Baptists did not wish to involve themselves in political change and were almost exclusively interested in attaining religious liberty. Therefore, unlike many of their Orthodox counterparts, the *Initsiativniki* Baptist dissidents preferred not to work within the greater struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union. Despite their dissenting actions, many sought to live within the framework of the Soviet system. This did not mean, however, that the Soviet human rights movement was of no use to the *Initsiativniki* Baptists. Indeed, as the Soviet human rights movement grew, the *Initsiativniki* Baptists forged connections to its members and utilized those connections to effect greater awareness of their persecution and struggle for religious freedom. They recognized the importance of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union, and they appreciated the movement’s efforts to instigate change and halt arbitrary repression by the state.

¹ Throughout this chapter, the terms “Baptist,” “Baptists,” “dissenting Baptists,” and “Baptist dissidents” refer to the group of believers known as the *Initsiativniki* Baptists, unless otherwise noted. Baptist believers in the Soviet Union not affiliated with the *Initsiativniki* Baptists are referred to here as “Registered Baptists.”

I argue that the Soviet human rights movement did not significantly influence the dissent techniques of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists, although the human rights movement was important to the reform Baptists. However, the tradition of dissent in their own history, as presented in Chapter Three, acted as an example for the Baptist dissidents in the Soviet period. The legacy of dissent produced by their predecessors shaped the *Initsiativniki* Baptists' thinking toward the state, particularly as the Soviet state exerted greater control over religious bodies, and contributed significantly to their decision to split from the Registered Baptists. Nevertheless, for the dissenting Baptists, the Soviet human rights movement provided another way to draw attention to their struggle and lent justification to their cause. The loose organization of the human rights movement coupled with its interest in defending all basic human rights created fluid channels of communication allowing the dissenting Baptists to take advantage of the help offered through the movement while continuing to focus on their fight for religious freedom.

In attempting to understand the *Initsiativniki* Baptists' place within Soviet dissent and their contribution to the struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union, this chapter examines their methods of and approaches to dissent, as stemming from their history, and their association with the Soviet human rights movement. The work of Georgi Vins, one of the leaders of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists, provides much of the evidence in this chapter, as Vins is particularly useful in understanding the connection between Baptist dissent in the late tsarist period and Baptist dissent in the Brezhnev era. This chapter opens with a brief biography of Georgi Vins to provide context, as he came to epitomize the *Initsiativniki* Baptists' struggle against the state. The firm legacy of dissent in their past influenced the *Initsiativniki* Baptists' behavior toward the state in the Soviet Union, while

the Soviet human rights movement pulled the dissenting Baptists from their isolation, elevating their cause, and providing important connections and links to other believers and activists fighting for religious freedom in the Soviet Union.

Previously five characteristics were presented as emerging in Baptist culture in nineteenth century Russia, which contributed to the dissent methods of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists, including experience in dissent, persecution from the state, a strong support system through an autonomous local church community, aggressive conversion tactics, and a Western concept of church-state separation. This chapter explores how the *Initsiativniki* Baptists understood, employed, and developed these concepts to establish effective methods of dissent against the Soviet state. Additionally, links between the *Initsiativniki* and the Soviet human rights movement are discussed, as well as differences between the two, including differences in rhetoric and organization, an absence of the intellectual connection present among activists in the human rights movement, and a narrow focus on achieving religious liberty. It is also important to understand what led the reform Baptists to split from the Registered Baptists and the AUCECB leadership, because the split represented the reform Baptists' initial activities of dissent.

Georgi Vins

Georgi Petrovich Vins was born in 1928 in Siberia to Peter and Lidia Vins. Peter, born in 1898 in Samosa, Russia, traveled to the United States in 1917 shortly after the Bolshevik Revolution to pursue a theological education. Peter first attended the Colgate Rochester Divinity School in Rochester, New York, and then the Southern Baptist

Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, from 1919 to 1922.² Returning to Russia in 1922, Peter traveled to Siberia, working as a missionary in an attempt to expand the Baptist movement in the Soviet Union. In 1930, the Soviet government began pressuring prominent religious leaders and all church groups to cooperate with the state, including religious sects not previously persecuted by the authorities. Peter Vins' missionary work and refusal to cooperate with the secret police resulted in his arrest in 1930.³ Peter was released from prison in 1933 but was rearrested in 1937. Convicted by a troika, Peter was sentenced to ten years in a labor camp without the right of correspondence.⁴ He died on December 27, 1943; he was forty-five years old.⁵ Peter's influence on Georgi and his future activities in the *Initiativniki* is evident through the numerous letters, poems, and sermons of his father's that Georgi preserved.

During his father's imprisonment, Vins and his mother Lidia moved to the Ukraine where Georgi attended school, receiving high marks in his classes and eventually earning degrees in engineering and economics.⁶ Initially, Vins held a job as an engineer and worked in the Kiev Baptist Church part time and only as a layman. He supported the

² According to The Samizdat Group, a group founded in Dallas, Texas in the 1970s and sponsored by The Trinity Foundation, records show that Peter Vins studied at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary until 1922, when he left for unknown reasons and returned to Russia without receiving ordination. The Samizdat Group, "Georgi Vins: A Profile," 4-5. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

³ Georgi Vins, *Prisoner of Conscience*, (Elgin, Illinois: David & Cook Publishing, Co., 1979), 36-37.

⁴ Troika, meaning group of three in Russian, referred to a three man board of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD), which possessed the power to convict and sentence "socially dangerous" citizens without a trial. Troikas were prohibited in 1953. Vins, *Prisoner of Conscience*, 60.

⁵ Georgi's mother Lidia petitioned the Soviet government in the 1960s to reopen her husband's case. The Omsk regional court rehabilitated Peter Vins in late 1963 due to the absence of the *corpus delicti*, body of crime. Vins, *Prisoner of Conscience*, 60.

⁶ Bourdeaux, "Georgi Vins: A Twentieth-Century Martyr for his Faith," 2. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB) until A. L. Andreyev, senior presbyter of the Kiev Baptist Church, attempted to justify the new restrictions placed on AUCECB churches established by Khrushchev in 1959.⁷ The clash between Andreyev and Vins led to Vins taking up religious work full time, and he moved into direct conflict with the AUCECB as he began to participate heavily in the reform Baptist movement. In 1962 when Alexei Prokofiev, one of the initial leaders of the *Initiativniki*, was arrested, Vins joined Gennadi Kryuchkov as a prominent leader in the reform movement. Vins was instrumental in the reform Baptists' split from the AUCECB.

Vins was first arrested in 1966 after a Baptist demonstration in Moscow and sentenced to prison at the Anyusha corrective labor camp in the Ural Mountains. He was charged with the "organization of systematic teaching of religion to minors."⁸ Released in May 1969, Vins was rearrested in early 1970 and sentenced to one year of factory work for failing to find employment, although he had previously requested work as a full time minister. Vins left factory work in September 1970 and went into hiding in order to pursue ministry full-time. He was discovered by the authorities and arrested in Novosibirsk a third time in March 1974.⁹ Charged under Articles 138, 187, and 209 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code, Vins requested representation by Alf Haerem, a Norwegian lawyer and Christian believer willing to defend Vins.¹⁰ His request was denied and after

⁷ The Samizdat Group, "Georgi Vins: A Profile," 3. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁸ Quoted in The Samizdat Group, "Georgi Vins: A Profile," iii. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁹ Georgi Vins, *Three Generations of Suffering* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979), 19.

¹⁰ A full explanation of Articles 138, 187, and 209 can be found in Vins' autobiography *Three Generations of Suffering*. The articles are equivalent to Articles 142, 190, 227 of the Russian Criminal Code, respectively. Briefly, the articles respectively state: "Violation of the laws on the separation of the

the resignation of his Soviet appointed attorney, Vins refused to take part in the trial, as he regarded the court incompetent.¹¹ After a five-day trial, Vins was convicted on January 31, 1975. He was sentenced to five years imprisonment in a labor camp plus five years of internal exile following his release from prison.¹² On March 31, 1979, Vins was released from the camp and eventually transported back to Moscow. A Soviet official informed Vins that his “hostile anti-Soviet” activities had resulted in the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet stripping him of his Soviet citizenship.¹³ In reality, Vins, along with four other Soviet dissidents, was traded by the Soviet government in exchange for two Soviet spies in the custody of the United States government.¹⁴ Though not the most well known of the five, Vins had received a great deal of support from the Western public and Western governments, specifically England and the United States. Once in the United States, Vins continued his work for Baptists and other believers persecuted for their faith

church from the state and of the school from the church;” “circulation of deliberately false fabrications which defame the Soviet state and social system;” and “infringement of persons and rights of citizens under the guise of performance of religious rituals.” Specific charges against Vins are found in his autobiography. These charges include, for example, Vins’ assisting in the production of *Bratskii Listok* and his activities as the secretary of an “illegal” church organization, the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists (CCECB.)

¹¹ Vins, *Three Generations*, 20-21. The court appointed attorney Luzhenko acquiesced to Vins’ request to withdraw from the case. Vins’ argued that the case dealt with specific aspects of the *Initsiativniki* and because Luzhenko was a non-believer, he was incapable of providing adequate defense.

¹² Bourdeaux, “Georgi Vins,” 3. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University. Bourdeaux points out in this article concerning Vins that while the Russian Criminal Code allowed for a maximum punishment of five years imprisonment *or* internal exile for the same amount of time, the Ukrainian Criminal Code allowed courts to sentence offenders to five years imprisonment plus five years of internal exile, which, of course, ensured problematic citizens were away for a lengthier amount of time.

¹³ Quoted in Georgi Vins, *Three Generations*, 12.

¹⁴ The two Soviet spies Rudolf Chernyayev and Valdik Enger were convicted and sentenced to fifty years imprisonment for attempting to purchase American military information while under the employment of the United Nations secretariat. Vins was traded along with Alexander Ginzburg, Valentyn Moroz, Mark Dymshits, and Edward Kuznetsov were all Soviet dissidents serving prison sentences for various offenses and were each considered high-profile dissidents.

in the Soviet Union. In late 1979, Vins announced that the *Initsiativniki*'s administrative council—the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists' (CCECB)—had decided that he was to serve as the organization's representative abroad.¹⁵ Settling in Elkhart, Indiana, with his family, Vins founded Russian Gospel Ministries International, Inc., a small organization that published and distributed Christian literature abroad, provided humanitarian aid, and assisted in building churches and prayer houses, mostly in the Soviet Union.¹⁶ Vins remains one of the most important religious dissidents of the Soviet era, and his awareness of the Baptist legacy in Russia led to his work in the *Initsiativniki* movement.

Baptist Schism, the Emergence of the Initsiativniki, and First Foray into Dissent

As the Soviet state sought to reign in the freedoms enjoyed by many religious sects throughout the 1920s, the Baptist and Evangelical Christian churches suffered greatly at the hands of the authorities. Ivan Prokhanov, the founder of the All Russian Union of Evangelical Christians, was not able to return to the Soviet Union following a trip to Canada in 1928 to attend the World Baptist Congress, a Bible school established in Moscow was forced to shut down after operating for only four years, both the Baptist Union and the Union of Evangelical Christians were liquidated in 1929 (although both

¹⁵ "Evangelical Christians and Baptists establish their representation abroad," *Informationsdienst G2W*, No. 19, October 1979, 7. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University. In October 1979, when Vins announced the CCECB's decision that he would act as the organization's representative abroad, Vins estimated that the reform Baptists were composed of about 100,000 baptized members.

¹⁶ Vins' family joined him in the United States six weeks after his arrival. He died on January 11, 1998 at the age of sixty-nine from an inoperable brain tumor. He joined the First Baptist Church in Elkhart, but Vins continued preaching at meetings and conferences throughout the United States and Europe. In 1990, he was able to visit Russia and preach after Gorbachev worked to lift restrictions on his travel. Russian Gospel Ministries eventually merged with East European Ministries, now called Frontline Missions International. (<http://www.bpnews.net/1699/russian-exile-georgi-vins-dies-of-brain-tumor-at-69>) (http://www.frontlinemissions.info/?page_id=15).

functioned in unofficial terms), and most of the leadership for both unions was arrested. Nearly all of the Baptist churches in Leningrad and Moscow were closed and confiscated, while local ministers and presbyters were arrested and imprisoned.¹⁷

The new attack launched against sects and religious organizations emerged from the enactment of the 1929 Law on Religious Associations. It established the requirement of all religious societies to “register with the appropriate administrative department” if it was to function legally. Additionally, religious societies were not permitted to “provide material support for their members; organize either special children’s, young people’s, women’s and other meetings or general biblical, literary...or religious education meetings, groups...or organize trips...open libraries...or organize medical help.”¹⁸ In July 1929, Soviet authorities altered the constitution after claiming that Orthodox churchmen and sectarians utilized the right of religious propaganda guaranteed in the 1918 Constitution to sow seeds of discord and promote anti-Soviet ideas and create agitation toward the Soviet state among workers. V. Borisov, a correspondent for *Ural’skii rabochii* claimed that sectarians and clergymen quoted the Bible to prove that “the collective farm is godless,” illegally preached to workers during work hours, and in one instance, called a believers’ meeting to purposefully disrupt an election meeting by “threatening Divine retribution on those who did not turn up.”¹⁹ One atheist writer claimed the “sectarians engage especially actively” in trying to interfere in lectures and organized meetings.²⁰ Therefore, in an effort to halt “sabotage by churchmen and

¹⁷ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 47-48.

¹⁸ Acton and Stableford, ed., *The Soviet Union: Vol. I*, 391-393.

¹⁹ Ibid 394.

²⁰ *Agitator* no.14, 1966, 41.

sectarians,” a new amendment to the constitution concerning religion read, “To guarantee real freedom of conscience for the working people the Church is separated from the state and schools from the Church, but freedom of religious confession and of anti-religious propaganda remains for all citizens.” Previously the constitution declared, “To guarantee genuine freedom of conscience...the Church is separated from the state and the schools from the Church, but freedom of religious and anti-religious propaganda is recognized for all citizens.”²¹ Therefore, the 1929 law removed the right for religious believers to engage in religious propaganda. The 1929 Law on Religious Associations effectively limited all religious activity to worship within the building provided to registered religious bodies.

The Stalinist purges and persecution against religion decreased the tension between religious believers formally separated by the two Baptist unions, and during World War II in 1944, the Evangelical Christians formed a union with the Baptists called the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUCECB). In 1945, Pentecostals joined the new union, in an attempt to exist legally.²² In 1954, *Bratskii Vestnik*, the official publication of the AUCECB, estimated that the Soviet Union was comprised of approximately three million Evangelical Christian Baptists, including Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and Pentecostals within 5400 religious communities.²³ However, the AUCECB did not remain unified for long, particularly after Nikita Khrushchev assumed power and launched a campaign against religion in 1959. From the

²¹ Acton and Stableford, ed., *The Soviet Union: Volume I*, 394.

²² Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 93-95.

²³ Iakov Zhidkov, “Prebyvaniye Delegatsii Vsemirnogo Soyuza Baptistov v SSSR,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, accessed January 6, 2015. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/122/2157/.

outset, the AUCECB was plagued by schisms and internal conflict among members over differences concerning worship and religious practices. Some of the earliest problems revolved around issues with Pentecostals and their emphasis on healing and glossolalia. In the late 1940s, Iakov Zhidkov, the Chairman of the AUCECB, and Alexander Karev, General Secretary of the AUCECB, issued a number of instructive letters to presbyters and ministers urging the suppression of the “emotional aspects of Pentecostalism.”²⁴ Although Pentecostals joined in 1945, the majority left the AUCECB within a year, but the major conflicts within the AUCECB began after Stalin’s death.²⁵

In December 1959, after the AUCECB’s acceptance of the “New Statutes,” handed down during renewed pressure against religious organizations by the Khrushchev administration, the level of interference in the affairs of the AUCECB by the Soviet state intensified.²⁶ Even before the “New Statutes,” there was concern by believers over the growing cooperation of prominent Baptist leaders with the Soviet authorities. Gennadi Kryuchkov, one of the earliest *Initiativniki* leaders, claimed that many Baptist ministers and leaders arrested in the 1930s were released early in the 1940s after they agreed to collaborate with the authorities.²⁷ The release of these religious leaders coincided with

²⁴ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 62-63. Sawatsky notes that in the August Agreement, which listed the terms of the union among the groups, signed in 1945, Pentecostals were forced to agree not to practice glossolalia in general meetings and to abstain from foot washing during communion. The main advantage for the Pentecostals in joining the union was legal recognition, but it also produced less competition among evangelical groups.

²⁵ Ibid, 93-94. Sawatsky states that about 25,000 Pentecostals joined the union in 1945, including Pentecostals in the Ukraine and Belorussia. However, the AUCECB’s indifference to Pentecostal aspects of worship prompted most to leave by 1948.

²⁶ The “New Statutes” are published in full in Michael Bourdeaux’s *Religious Ferment in Russia*. The statutes were eventually adopted by the AUCECB as its new constitution in 1963, which is published in full in *Bratskii Vestnik*, No. 6, 1963. http://www.mbcchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/129/2317/.

²⁷ Gennadi Kryuchkov and A.A. Shalashov, “Committee for Convening an All-Union ECB Congress,” 1-11. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

the state's creation of the Council for the Affairs of Religious Cults (CARC), which was established in July 1944 and created to handle communication between the Soviet state and all churches but the Russian Orthodox Church.²⁸ The creation of CARC and its Orthodox counterpart, the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC), represented an important transition in Soviet policy on religion to favor loyal churches.²⁹ The Soviet state clearly demonstrated favoritism by registering only Baptist churches within the AUCECB. Bohdan R. Bociurkiw argues that CARC and CAROC “represented an institutional extension of the long-established secret police department for churchmen and sectarians.”³⁰ A few months after the creation of CARC, the AUCECB was established.

Increasingly, the AUCECB assumed a role similar to that of the Russian Orthodox Church for the Soviet state in that they served as ambassadors abroad in claiming that accounts of religious persecution by the state were entirely falsified and attended religious conferences in the West to promote Soviet interests. In 1947, Zhidkov claimed that Evangelical Christian-Baptists had “full freedom, not only for their worship but also to conduct the necessary activities, which covers all aspects of our religious life. There are people outside the Soviet Union, who tell all sorts of stories...such people are malicious slanderers...”³¹ Later that same year, Zhidkov proclaimed, “God not only

²⁸ The Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church (CAROC) served as the agency to handle issues between the Soviet state and the Russian Orthodox Church. It was created in October 1943. Eventually CAROC and CARC were merged to create the Council for Religious Affairs, established in 1965 to handle all religious activity with the state.

²⁹ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 59.

³⁰ Bohdan R. Bociurkiw, “Church-State Relations in the USSR,” *Survey* (January 1968), 21.

³¹ Iakov I. Zhidkov, “Nash Otchet,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 1, (1947), accessed January 13, 2015. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1624/.

established but also strengthened the Soviet state. As a result, the Soviet land became the chief of all freedom-loving people in its unceasing struggle for peace, for social and political justice.”³² In June 1961, representatives of the AUCECB received permission from the state to attend the Christian Peace Congress in Prague along with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, most notably Archbishop Nikodim (Rotov).³³ Representatives from churches all over the world attended the Congress, including members of the World Council of Churches, which explains Khrushchev’s decision to allow the participation of certain churches in the Soviet Union. The overall theme of the congress was world peace, which coincided with Khrushchev’s policy of “peaceful coexistence.”³⁴ Walter Sawatsky notes that by attending conferences focusing on peace initiatives, the AUCECB helped “prevent any serious criticism of Russian foreign policy” and with such success that the “Baptist World Alliance and the World Council of Churches did not become leaders of public opinion to force changes toward greater liberty in the Soviet Union.”³⁵

With greater frequency, the AUCECB praised the Soviet government’s proposals to disarm nuclear weapons and cease the testing of nuclear weapons in an effort to

³² Iakov I. Zhidkov, “Nash Otchet,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 1 (1947), accessed January 31, 2015. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/114/1624/.

³³ The AUCECB wrote about the Christian Peace Congress in their journal *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 4, 1961, accessed January 31, 2015. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/127/2277/.

³⁴ Khrushchev initiated the policy of “peaceful coexistence” in 1956 at the 20th Congress of the CPSU in an attempt to lessen tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States. Khrushchev, himself, attended numerous peace conferences abroad to promote the policy in addition to using various organizations in the Soviet Union to also promote “peaceful coexistence.”

³⁵ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 384.

achieve “lasting peace on earth” in issues of *Bratskii Vestnik*.³⁶ As part of their “Christmas Challenge” to believers in 1961, asking that members raise their voices to promote peace, the AUCECB stated that “the voices of the modern Napoleon and Hitler must be brought to silence through...the champions of peace and peaceful coexistence...The Soviet government, through its leader Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, pointed out to all of humanity the surest and shortest way to achieve a lasting and sustainable world: it is a complete and general disarmament...”³⁷ Coupled with internal issues surfacing in the late 1950s, the increasing cooperation with the state by the AUCECB provoked many inside the union to question its leadership. The adoption of the “New Statutes” and the subsequent “Letter of Instructions” proved the final cause in breaking up the AUCECB, and developed into a cohesive movement for reform.

Initially, the *Initiativniki* Baptists sought a rewriting of the “New Statutes” imposed on churches in the AUCECB in an effort to ensure the separation of church and state guaranteed by the Soviet constitution and quell increasing interference from the state. The Baptist reformers revised the “New Statutes” in such a manner as to remove all possibilities for intervention in church affairs by the state. For example, originally Article 3 stated, “In order to carry out the business of the ECB Church in the USSR, a central supervising body (has been created)—the AUCECB.”³⁸ The reformers saw the statement as deliberately ambiguous and liable to allow state interference, because it was unclear as to how the supervising body was selected. The reformers revised the

³⁶ D. M., “Opasnost’ Grozyashchnaya Chelovechestvu,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 4 (1961), accessed January 11, 2015. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/127/2277/.

³⁷ Iakov I. Zhidkov, “Nasha Novogodnyaya Zadacha,” *Bratskii Vestnik*, no. 1 (1961), accessed January 11, 2015. http://www.mbchurch.ru/publications/brotherly_journal/127/2274/.

³⁸ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 190. The phrase in parenthesis indicates a phrase that the reformers wanted removed for clarity.

statement to read, “In order to carry out the business of the ECB Church in the USSR, (the congress elects) a central supervising body—the AUCECB.”³⁹ The “New Statutes” were adopted by the AUCECB in 1959 during a plenum, in which AUCECB Chairman Zhidkov confessed that “people adhering to other ideologies” were concerned with the growth of Baptist communities in recent years.⁴⁰ Issued shortly after the “New Statutes” was a “Letter of Instructions” directing presbyters and other AUCECB leaders and ministers not to “allow digressions which tend to become appeals,” to cease “zealous proselytization,” make an effort “to reduce the baptism of young people between the age of eighteen and thirty” and to stop children from attending services.⁴¹ Additionally, the “Letter of Instructions” stated that the “senior presbyter must remember that at present the main task of divine services is *not* the enlistment of new members; the duty of the senior presbyter is to check unhealthy missionary tendencies.”⁴²

Shortly after the adoption of the “New Statutes,” a group of concerned Baptists formed the *Initiativnaya gruppa* (Action group) and lobbied for an extraordinary congress to discuss the “New Statutes,” which they believed “disobeyed the commandment of Christ.”⁴³ First led by Alexei F. Prokofiev and Gennadi K. Kryuchkov the state referred to them as *Prokofievtsy* (Prokofievites).⁴⁴ Later they became known as

³⁹ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 190. The phrase in parenthesis indicates the phrase the reformers wanted added to the original statement.

⁴⁰ Evangelical Christian Baptist Union, *Istoriya evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov v SSSR* (Moscow: Iedanie Vsesoiunenogo Soveta Evangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov, 1989), 240.

⁴¹ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 2-3 (February-March, 1965), 3.

⁴² George Bailey, *The Reporter* (New York), July 16, 1964, 28. Bailey visited the AUCECB Baptist church in Moscow in 1964 where he was shown the complete text of the “Letter of Instructions.”

⁴³ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 2-3 (February-March, 1965), 3.

⁴⁴ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 21.

the *Initsiativniki*, a shortened form of *Initsiativnaya gruppа*. Together the *Initsiativniki* and Pure Baptists, who joined them, amounted to about five percent of the total membership of the AUCECB.⁴⁵ While attempting to convene an extraordinary congress, participants of the action group formed an “Organizing Committee” and set about developing a program, in which they rejected the “New Statutes” and “Letter of Instructions” and requested that Evangelical Christian and Baptist (ECB) communities “transmit directly to the Organizing Committee lists of those churchmen who...should be excommunicated.”⁴⁶ Four months later, in June 1962, at an “Enlarged Conference,” the Organizing Committee excommunicated twenty-seven members of the AUCECB leadership for spreading “false teaching,” and declared their intention to assume “leadership of the ECB Church in the USSR...until the congress” and deemed the convening of any congress “without the participation of the Organizing Committee...invalid.”⁴⁷

In October 1963, the AUCECB received permission from the state to hold an all-union ECB congress in Moscow, in which they adopted the “New Statutes,” with minor revisions, as their new constitution. Of the 255 delegates present, none were from the *Initsiativniki* group; as the reformers noted, “When the great majority of the original members of the Organizing Committee were imprisoned [*lishena svobody*] you called a

⁴⁵ Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2007), 65.

⁴⁶ The Organizing Committee met on February 25, 1962 to decide on a program of action. The program was titled “Communication on the Formation of the Organizing Committee of the Evangelical Christian and Baptist Church in the USSR and is published in Bourdeaux’s *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 34-37.

⁴⁷ Michael Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 42-46. The proceedings of the *Initsiativniki* Baptists’ excommunication of the AUCECB’s leaders were held on June 23, 1962.

pseudo-congress....”⁴⁸ After the 1963 Congress, relations between the reformers and the AUCECB deteriorated quickly and in September 1965, the dissenting Baptists officially formed the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists (CCECB).

The *Initsiativniki*’s decision to formally split from the AUCECB was the group’s initial move into open dissent, which stemmed from three elements cultivated in Russian Baptist culture during the tsarist period—advocacy of church-state separation, importance of autonomous local churches, and aggressive evangelism preventing privatization of belief. Each area of contention between the *Initsiativniki* and the AUCECB arose over the fundamental question of the state’s interference in church affairs. In the eyes of the reformers, the increasing interference by the state violated the basic principles established by their predecessors. Peter Vins, the father of Georgi Vins, identified seven fundamental principles of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists, which stemmed from the Russian Baptist movement’s origins in 1867, including:

Holy Scripture is the only rule and guide in all matters and questions of faith and life. It follows from this that the preaching of the Gospel or witnessing to Christ is the chief task and the fundamental mission of the Church; absolute freedom of conscience; the independence of each separate, local church; separation of church and state.⁴⁹

In an early issue of *Bratskii Listok*, the reform Baptists accused the AUCECB leadership of excluding three of the most important Evangelical and Baptist principles:

“independence of the local church,” “preaching the Gospel or bearing witness of Christ as the main task and basic calling of the church” and “the separation of church and state.”⁵⁰

⁴⁸ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 2-3 (February-March, 1965), 4.

⁴⁹ Georgi Vins, *Three Generations*, 103. Scholar Paul D. Steeves notes in *The Russian Baptist Union, 1917-1935* that the “Russian Baptists’ ecclesiology” as identified by Peter Vins “was the same as that of Baptists in the West.”

⁵⁰ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 2-3 (February-March, 1965), 4-5.

The reformers equated the AUCECB's collaboration with the authorities as the destruction of the church-state separation principle, the requirement of churches to register with the state in order to function as halting local church autonomy, and growing limitations on which individuals were permitted to attend services, Bible classes, and accept baptism as interference with their main tasks, which were evangelism and conversion.

The earliest contributing factor in the split between the *Initsiativniki* and the AUCECB was the issue of the AUCECB's violation of the separation of church and state (*otdyelenii tserkvii i gosudartsva*) by cooperating with the Soviet authorities. The *Initsiativniki* claimed, "At present the official part of the church under the AUCECB (the registered congregations) is under the complete illegal and unjust direction and control of the state authorities," therefore effectively severing the guarantee of church-state separation in the Soviet Constitution.⁵¹ In an interview in 1979, Georgi Vins referenced the Bible, recalling, "...what did Christ answer? 'You shall worship the Lord your God...only...' That means there can be no cooperation between the church and the state."⁵² The reform Baptists called the AUCECB's cooperation with the state "sinning" and "pander[ing] to atheism and the world."⁵³ The reformers pointed to examples in their own history for the rationalization of their split from the AUCECB and the importance of church-state separation for Baptist culture in Russia.

⁵¹ Kryuchkov and Shalashov, "Committee for Convening an All-Union ECB Congress," 1-11. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁵² John Kohan, "Georgi Vins," *Times News Service*, July 17, 1979, 3-4. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University

⁵³ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 2-3 (February-March, 1965), 3.

Vins and other reform Baptists were keenly aware of the legacy left for them by their predecessors, and they often referenced past Russian Baptist ministers and believers who influenced their dissent against the state and the AUCECB. Detailing the work of Nikolai Odintsov, a Russian Baptist minister ordained in 1909 and working mostly in Moscow, Vins wrote, “For the generation of young people who came into the church in the war years and in the first years after the war, Nikolai Odintsov and his comrades in the ministry were examples to be imitated.”⁵⁴ Vins praised Odintsov that under severe pressure, he “struck no bargains with atheism [the state].”⁵⁵ Reflecting on the importance of church-state separation, Odintsov wrote in a letter, “It was a wise decision, judicious in the highest decree, which led to the...1918 ‘On the separation of the Church from the State and of the School from the Church.’” He warned believers, “With the help of the apostates, atheism will lead its faithful people into bodies for the control of church affairs...”⁵⁶

Indeed, the *Initsiativniki* believed that the dissolution of church-state separation would inevitably lead to the destruction of not only all Evangelical Christian and Baptist principles, but the destruction of the church as well. Referencing the constitution of the Evangelical Christian Union in the early Soviet period, the *Initsiativniki* wrote the Presidium of the AUCECB, “It is enough merely to point to one of the seven Evangelical Christian and Baptist principles, by destroying one leads to destroying all the others. The principle is: the separation (independence) of church and state...The teaching of the

⁵⁴ Vins, *Three Generations*, 106. Nikolai Odintsov traveled extensively around the Caucasus, the Far East, and St. Petersburg. He actively participated in the publishing of Christian journals, pamphlets and books and worked at the Moscow Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church. He was arrested by the Soviet authorities in 1933 and died in the camps.

⁵⁵ Ibid, 109.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 112-117.

Evangelical Christians and Baptists demands the complete separation of the church from the state.”⁵⁷ Walter Sawatsky notes that the reformers “primary initial emphasis was an appeal to the church [AUCECB leadership] to separate itself from the state and return to its historical roots.”⁵⁸ The separation of church and state as an element of early Russian Baptist culture led the *Initsiativniki* into open rebellion with the AUCECB.

A second issue for the *Initsiativniki* with the AUCECB was the lack of autonomy granted to local church communities in the “New Statutes.” Rudolf L. Tokes explained that “given the traditionally loose organization of the Baptist Church prior to 1944, there is little doubt that [the New Statutes] ran counter to its fundamentalist, democratic spirit.”⁵⁹ When revising the “New Statutes,” the reform Baptists changed a number of articles in an attempt to give local communities more freedom in governing their own affairs. Article 26 of the Statutes read, “Only persons who (are of age and who have gone through a trial period of not less than 2-3 years) may be members of the ECB churches.”⁶⁰ Article 26 as revised by the *Initsiativniki* stated, “Only persons who (have received water baptism on profess of their faith and have been accepted by the church) may be members of the ECB churches.”⁶¹ In Article 24, which read, “Senior presbyters have to report to the AUCECB,” the reformers wanted “have to” removed, and in Article 23, which read, “Senior presbyters are appointed, removed, or transferred by the

⁵⁷ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 2-3 (February-March, 1965), 2. Note: Parentheses are part of the original text and not added by the author.

⁵⁸ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 179.

⁵⁹ Tokes, *Dissent in the USSR*, 209.

⁶⁰ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 202. Again the phrase in parenthesis indicates what the reformers wanted removed.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* The phrase in parenthesis denotes what the reformers wanted added to the article.

AUCECB only,” the reformers wanted “by the AUCECB only” removed.⁶² Each of the proposed revisions of Articles 23, 24, and 26 by the *Initsiativniki* dealt with the issue of autonomy.

The Organizing Committee emphasized the importance of autonomy by encouraging local communities to reach decisions based on each community’s needs. When writing to ECB churches in 1962, Kryuchkov and other leaders in the reform movement urged “local churches themselves to carry out excommunication of local presbyters and ministers.”⁶³ In assuming the role as the central leadership for ECB churches, the Organizing Committee stated that this role was accepted only after individual local churches sent correspondence recognizing the Organizing Committee as its “sole central leadership.”⁶⁴

Sawatsky remarks that “independence of the local congregation has been very important in Baptist circles generally, best illustrated in the relative weakness of a Baptist union,” but “the AUCECB...had clearly usurped extensive powers away from the local churches” following the post-war period.⁶⁵ The AUCECB leadership in Moscow began appointing local senior presbyters to congregations. In 1966 during the AUCECB Congress, the process was finally changed, giving local churches the right to elect senior presbyters, which was perhaps a result of opposition from the *Initsiativniki* on the loss of autonomy. Although the AUCECB maintained that they observed the autonomy of local churches, the “AUCECB maintain[ed] a leadership structure much more authoritative

⁶² Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 200.

⁶³ Gennadi Kryuchkov, et. al., “Proceedings No. 7 of the Enlarged Conference of the Organizing Committee” published in Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 42-46.

⁶⁴ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 45.

⁶⁵ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 348.

than its counterparts elsewhere.”⁶⁶ In 1948, AUCECB chairman Zhidkov admitted that while “we cannot force anyone to accept and observe the statutes of the union...those believers who do not wish to subordinate themselves to the statute, naturally cannot have a place among the members of the congregations of the Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists.”⁶⁷

As early as March 1962, the Organizing Committee drew attention to the AUCECB’s violation of the principle of autonomy valued by Russian Baptist churches. They denounced the AUCECB’s attempt to force local congregations to accept the “New Statutes,” stating that the “New Statutes” and “Letter of Instruction” were “anti-evangelical” and “not confirmed by the church.”⁶⁸ Furthermore, the dissenting Baptists rejected the AUCECB because “the AUCECB has not been elected by the local ECB churches, has not been authorized by them and does not represent them...and has abolished the rights of local churches to self-determination.”⁶⁹ Later after the formation of the CCECB, the *Initiativniki* encouraged unregistered communities seeking registration to ensure that all major decisions were made by each local church.⁷⁰ The reform Baptists recognized the importance of autonomy in the history of their church and rejected the AUCECB’s attempt to centralize the structure of the church, creating a hierarchical system from which changes to church affairs were imposed and required.

⁶⁶ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 348.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 178.

⁶⁸ Organizing Committee, “Communication on the Formation of the Organizing Committee of the Evangelical Christian And Baptist Church in the USSR,” published in Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 34-37.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II*, 348.

Increasing limitations on evangelism and conversion was the third issue that contributed to the split between the *Initsiativniki* and the AUCECB. While restrictions were originally placed on religious communities and sects under Stalin's 1929 Law on Religious Associations enactment, legally removing the ability for believers to engage in religious propaganda, the AUCECB's adoption of the "New Statutes" placed greater restrictions within church communities, including discouraging youth from attending worship services, attempts to reduce the baptism of people between eighteen to thirty, and encouragement of members not to engage in missionary work. Religious education for children, outside of the home, and the baptism of any person under the age of eighteen was prohibited by the Soviet government before the adoption of "New Statutes" by the AUCECB.⁷¹ However, the AUCECB's acceptance of further restrictions on children participating in worship and encouragement from the AUCECB leadership for members not to participate in evangelistic work, confirmed in the minds of the reform Baptists the increasing level of interference in church affairs by the state and the state's intention to "disintegrate and liquidate the church from within."⁷²

The *Initsiativniki* regarded conversion and missionary work as the church's primary function, not only because of biblical mandate but also because of Baptist heritage. The *Initsiativniki* wrote to the AUCECB in 1965 saying:

In your constitution adopted in 1963, there is no mention of the most important point: for what purpose the ECB Union was created and what its aims are. For you (the AUCECB) have rejected the basic purpose of the church's presence on earth, which was always set out in the opening paragraphs of the constitutions of both the Evangelical and Baptist Unions: The Union of Evangelical Christians has

⁷¹ *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas* XIII, 13, nos. 10-12 (October-December, 1974), 75-76.

⁷² Gennadi Kryuchkov and A.A. Shalashov, "Committee For Convening an All-Union ECB Congress," 1-11. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

as its aim the task of spreading the gospel...And again: The Union of Baptists...strives to fulfill the tasks laid by the Lord upon his disciples, namely taking the gospel...to all people...⁷³

Demonstrating the importance of evangelism in their heritage, the reform Baptists referenced the constitutions of the Evangelical Christian Union and the Baptist Union in the 1930s, which they stated were both based “on the commandments of Christ ‘Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...’”⁷⁴ The *Initsiativniki* connected the AUCECB’s acceptance of the secular authority of the state with its destruction of the most important Baptist principle—evangelism. In an early publication of *Bratskii Listok*, the Baptist reformers accuse the Presidium of the AUCECB of having, “destroyed the principle of the church’s independence” and “all the remaining Evangelical and Baptist principles” including the “basic task and calling of the church...preaching the gospel or witnessing for Christ.”⁷⁵ Ultimately, the *Initsiativniki* split from the AUCECB to create their own union as a result of the AUCECB’s deepening relationship with the Soviet government, which the reformers believed threatened the autonomy of the church, eliminated the primary function of the church, and created an illegal union between the church and the state. The *Initsiativniki* applied examples set by their predecessors concerning the Baptist church’s understanding of autonomy, church-state separation, and evangelism, creating a rift between the reformers and the AUCECB and moving the reformers into open dissent with the Soviet state.

⁷³ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 2-3 (February-March, 1965), 4-5.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 2-3.

Legacy Moves Reformers into Open Dissent with the State

The reform Baptists never intended open rebellion against the Soviet authorities or the government, but the increasing restrictions placed on religious freedom and religious believers by the state pushed the *Initsiativniki* into active dissent against the state. The *Initsiativniki* employed four methods of active dissent in dealing with the state: a willingness to disobey the law and the refusal to halt activity prohibited by the state, including public evangelizing and preaching, teaching children, and organizing religious meetings in private homes, the creation of a close-knit organization to establish support for local churches, petitions to state authorities and international organizations employing legalism and constitutional awareness, and the publication of *samizdat* literature to disseminate important information and garner attention of their plight. Each dissent method utilized by the *Initsiativniki* was influenced from their own legacy of dissent represented by the five characteristics presented in Chapter Three.

Willingness to Disobey the Law and Halt Illegal Behavior

Baptists in Russia possessed a strong legacy of knowingly and willingly disobeying laws they believed interfered with the requirements of their faith. This legacy continued with the *Initsiativniki*. Missionary activity, public evangelism of any kind, baptizing the youth, and organizing Sunday schools for the youth were all illegal in the Soviet Union, yet the reform Baptists refused to cease any of these activities, knowing that they risked arrest, trial, and prison at the hands of the state. Reform Baptist leaders, as well as the laity, encouraged one another to carry out what they considered their primary task as Christians, regardless of persecution. Georgi Vins, for example, reprinted old sermons and letters from past Russian Baptist ministers for believers in his church,

which emphasized the duty of members to evangelize, regardless of persecution. In one letter from Georgi Shipkov to Vins' father Peter, Shipkov writes, "...there is another urgent, unremitting principle, 'Let him who is taught the word share all good things with him who teaches'...and we have taken it into our heads to put it into practice, although not to the measure we would wish, but to the measure that is possible for us—the minimum.”⁷⁶

The Russian Baptists' continued willingness to disobey the law, which stretched back to the nineteenth century, often incurred persecution at the hands of the state. The Baptists interpreted persecution as a logical consequence of their actions, and indeed, embraced persecution as necessary to the development of their faith. Although the concept of persecution as a necessity for true faith may appear as a Russian Orthodox concept, Russian Baptists drew a parallel between the persecution they suffered to the persecution early Christians in the Roman period suffered, and therefore, attached a special significance to persecution and suffering. In a letter written by Odintsov and reprinted by Vins, Odintsov called attention to the “martyrdom of the apostolic church of the first centuries” when “Christians were driven out of their homes because they gathered for prayer...Christians were whipped, stoned, dragged along the ground,” but the “true Christians” continued to gather for prayer and “went out to preach the Word of God from the catacombs, hovels, and forests.” Odintsov continues, “This song is sung by many people on all the continents of earth in our own times.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Vins, *Three Generations*, 160.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 116-117.

Indeed, the legacy of persecution in the Baptists' willingness to disobey the law, particularly in their persistent evangelistic work, is seen in numerous appeals and petitions by the *Initsiativniki*. Writing to Khrushchev in August 1963, Kryuchkov and A. A. Shalashov noted, "...it is well known that the history of the ECB Church in Russia, except for a short period of time, has been a history of a people doomed to life-long suffering, a history of camps and imprisonments affecting fathers, children and grandchildren. It is a sad and thorny road...However, it is not our desire to rid ourselves of persecution which compels us to address you."⁷⁸ Kryuchkov and Shalashov observed that "persecutions are not detrimental to the future of the true church."⁷⁹ In an appeal to Brezhnev, Vins and Kryuchkov called persecution hereditary—"our grandfathers were persecuted, our fathers were persecuted; now we ourselves are persecuted and oppressed, and our children are suffering oppression and deprivations."⁸⁰ After his arrival to the United States, Vins explained that "prison [was] good for a Christian" in that "it strengthened his faith. If there were no prisoners in the Soviet Union today, there would be no church."⁸¹ Through their words and actions, the *Initsiativniki* perceived persecution as part of their heritage and as necessary to strengthening individual faith and the church.

⁷⁸ Kryuchkov and Shalashov, Document "Committee for Convening An All-Union ECB Congress," 1-11. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Georgi Vins, "Appeal to Brezhnev, President of the Commission on the Constitution at the time," published in Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 105-112.

⁸¹ John Bloom, "Let My People Pray," *Texas Monthly* (August 1979), 110. Archive file <SU/Ini Vins 8/2 Arrival>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

The reform Baptists were aware, through personal contact, letters, and stories, of the state persecution their predecessors endured for their missionary work. In an appeal by the reform Baptists to UN General Secretary U Thant, they declared, “There is a limit to obeying human authority. We have very many Biblical, Evangelical, and historical examples where the true servants of God did not allow any human authority to deprive them of their right to fulfill the will of God.”⁸² Two months later, in another appeal to U Thant, the reformers observed that their “church history [was] one of constant oppressions and persecutions. Our older people were formerly the children of prisoners, then wives, sisters, and brothers of prisoners, now they are mothers and fathers of prisoners.”⁸³

The reformers particularly believed persecution was inevitable in carrying out what they considered their primary task—evangelism. In a pamphlet published in 1918 by Shipkov and republished by Georgi Vins later, Shipkov proclaimed, “Christians have before them a race which must be run, a race of service and suffering...”⁸⁴ In the *Initiativniki* samizdat journal *Bratskii Listok*, members were encouraged to evangelize and preach, whether returning from prison or still serving sentences: “We hail all who have been freed from prison to resume their work in the church of God and those beloved brothers and sisters who continue to fulfill His mission in prison... We will never see some of the prisoners here on Earth... They have given their lives for the work of the

⁸² Council of Prisoners’ Relatives, “Baptist Appeal to World Opinion for the Defense Against Persecution” (June 1967), 6. Archive file <SU/Ini 6/1969 Samizdat>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁸³ Council of Prisoners’ Relatives, “Appeal to U Thant” (August 1967), 1. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁸⁴ Vins, *Prisoner of Conscience*, 176.

Gospel...”⁸⁵ Speaking to an American journalist after his arrival in the United States, Georgi Vins remarked, “Often special youth gatherings are held, when one or two thousand young people...gather in the woods...this often provokes raids from the Internal Security forces and police...Our youth carries on a very active witness to Christ. We pastors and church workers of the Council of Churches do everything to encourage this.” Vins went on to compare the CCECB with the AUCECB, lamenting that the AUCECB leadership “continually admonishes the young to avoid this. They want to restrain them from such open witness to Christ...”⁸⁶ Despite ever-present chances of persecution and arrest by the Soviet authorities, the *Initiativniki* regarded “spreading the Gospel” as their primary Christian duty.

The duty of evangelism led the *Initiativniki* to disobey Soviet law in, at times, daring ways. One Soviet citizen wrote to V. Grigor'yev, the editor of *Vyshka* (*Tower*), a Soviet journal in Azerbaijan, about one of the men working with him as a sanitation technician. The writer lamented that “at every lunch break or at any spare moment he starts telling us about his faith. He’s a Baptist. We’ve tried to set him straight, but its no use.”⁸⁷ On January 31, 1961, reform Baptist Aida Skripnikova, was arrested for standing in Nevsky Prospekt in Leningrad and distributing a postcard containing a religious

⁸⁵ *Bratskii Listok*, no. 7 (July 1965), 2.

⁸⁶ John Kohan, “Georgi Vins,” *Times News Service* (July 17, 1979), 3-4. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

⁸⁷ V. Grigor'yev, “Mir i antimir baptistskoy : na anti- religioznym voprosam,” *Vyshka* (January 20, 1970). Archive file <SU/Ini General (1970-)>, Keston Center, Baylor University. This article by an atheist Soviet journalist is particularly humorous as he writes to his readers about the dangers of sectarianism. Interestingly, he writes, “In socialist reality, when many of the Baptists have personally experienced the humaneness of our laws and are enjoying the blessings bestowed them as citizens...Baptists are changing their views.”

message.⁸⁸ One Soviet citizen described an incident on a train where several citizens observed Soviet youth singing religious songs: “One of the passengers remarked that the singers were schismatic Baptists. I should add that before this occasion I had twice witnessed such scenes on a train...In order to kindle fanaticism among the section of believers whom they have deceived, they even organize demonstrations outside in the open air and in public places...”⁸⁹ A group of Baptists described a public meeting they participated in on November 7-8, 1965 as “a great and blessed open-air meeting...Forty-seven young people were converted...”⁹⁰ Soviet human rights activist Ludmilla Alexeyeva noted that the CCECB Baptists “ignor[ed] government prohibitions...organiz[ing] religious prayer meetings on religious holidays in the major cities of Rostov and Odessa” and “as a whole now have the largest following of all Protestant religions in the USSR.”⁹¹ Speaking about the early Soviet period, Georgi Vins praised God for giving “His Church the strength to defend the work of evangelism” and happily remarked that the CCECB was now responsible for bringing a “spiritual awakening” to the Russian people.⁹²

Michael Bourdeaux notes that teaching children in preparation for conversion was one of the most important parts of the reform Baptists’ program from the beginning, which the Soviet press devoted special attention to condemning.⁹³ Teaching Soviet youth

⁸⁸ Michael Bourdeaux and Xenia Howard-Johnston, *Aida of Leningrad*, 22.

⁸⁹ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 132-133.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 133-134. .

⁹¹ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 206.

⁹² Vins, *Prisoner of Conscience*, 125.

⁹³ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 126.

was considered especially problematic by the authorities. In 1966 alone, the Soviet press wrote seventeen articles about the new illegal religious sect, the *Initsiativniki*. Each article discusses the reformers' habits of evangelism and this aspect of their movement is mentioned more frequently than any other.⁹⁴ John Anderson writes that regardless of the state's policy concerning the religious education of children and the persecution the believers endured as a result, the *Initsiativniki* "continued to work with children and carry out evangelistic work."⁹⁵ Orthodox dissident Gleb Yakunin remarked that the reform Baptists "have been preaching openly for many years...and no amount of persecution can stop them."⁹⁶ One reform Baptist, arrested for numerous offenses including possessing anti-Soviet literature, preaching, attending illegal worship services, and teaching children, was asked by the state prosecutor, "To gather illegally, give children religious dope, violate public order, is in your opinion legal?"⁹⁷ The Baptist Ivan Baranyuk, responded, "I am a Christian, and the Word of God is my guidance in everything, and divine commandments are above human guidance when it comes to faith." The prosecutor again inquired about teaching children, "Why are you pulling into your gatherings youth and children, defiling their souls with dope?" Baranyuk answered, "We haven't defiled anyone. We have the most well behaved children whom we teach according to the Word of God..."⁹⁸ The public demonstrations, open-air gatherings, and evangelism to Soviet

⁹⁴ Ibid, 126-127.

⁹⁵ Anderson, *Religion, State, and Politics*, 65.

⁹⁶ Pushkarev, Rusak, and Yakunin, *Christianity and Government in Russia and the Soviet Union*, 138.

⁹⁷ CPR Bulletin, no. 2, (1971), 19-21. The defendant Ivan Baranyuk was charged under Articles 138 and 209 of the Ukrainian Criminal Code.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

citizens were not deliberate forms of dissent by the *Initsiativniki*. Rather in the view of the reformers, the tradition of the Baptist faith in Russia inspired their activities; they considered evangelism a requirement of their faith. However, because the state authorities prohibited their activities and the reformers continued to organize and participate in evangelism, openly refusing to halt their activity, it became active, public dissent.

Creation of the Council of Prisoners' Relatives

In addition to the *Initsiativniki's* willingness to disobey Soviet law, the reform Baptists also established one of the earliest human rights organizations in the Soviet Union. The Council of Prisoners' Relatives (CPR) was devoted entirely to publishing information about Baptists arrested and imprisoned for their religious work, writing appeals to the Soviet government as well as international organizations seeking help for persecuted believers, and providing physical and emotional support to the families of believers imprisoned. Speaking at a conference in Paderborn, Germany in 1979, Lidia called attention to the extreme persecution suffered by Soviet believers in the 1930s "when many fellow-believers were taken away, children were literally thrown out onto the street and prisoners began a long road of suffering...Now in the 1960s, God heard the prayers and tears of the orphans..."⁹⁹ Georgi Vins remembered that after his father's arrest in the 1930s, "no one was able to help us."¹⁰⁰ The persecution inflicted on

⁹⁹ Notes written by Peter Dyck and Walter Sawatsky, "European Mission Representatives Meet with Georgi Vins," September 29, 1979, 4-5. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 1-2.

religious believers in the 1930s was the primary reason for the organization of the Council of Prisoners' Relatives.

The CPR was developed in 1963-1964 by Lidia Vins, Georgi Vin's mother. The creation of the CPR allowed for every reform Baptist family with an imprisoned family member to receive regular aid equivalent to the salary of a worker.¹⁰¹ Lidia met with wives and mothers of prisoners and they decided to organize with the goal of "notifying other believers and the government" of religious persecution and supporting the families of imprisoned believers.¹⁰² In early 1964, the CPR wrote a report, which outlined the organization's agenda, objectives, and tasks. The agenda included the "collection and specification of information concerning ECB prisoners," "establish[ing] for what reason and on what charges [believers] have been sentenced," and "petitioning the government for the review of all court cases...with the purpose of setting [ECB believers] free and fully rehabilitating them."¹⁰³ The CPR met physical needs such as hunger, clothes for children to attend school, and adequate bedding. In addition, the CPR was responsible for hundreds of appeals to the Soviet government. Ultimately, the CPR contacted U Thant in June 1967 with an appeal for help. In a lengthy eight-page document, the CPR detailed the persecution of CCECB members including slander against religious believers by the state, arrest and imprisonment for attending prayer meetings, and the inhumaneness of Soviet law according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Dyck and Sawatsky, "European Mission," 3.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ "Report on the activities of the All-Union Conference of ECB Prisoners' Relatives," February 23, 1964, 1-6. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁰⁴ Council of Prisoners' Relatives, "Baptist Appeal to World Opinion For Defense Against Persecution" (June 1967), 1-8. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 1969 Samizdat>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

In addition to providing financial, physical, and emotional support, the CPR published lists of reform Baptists imprisoned. The CPR provided the West and later the Soviet human rights movement with accurate numbers of imprisoned believers and lists of the offenses, with which they were charged.¹⁰⁵ The prisoner lists were one of the most important aspects of the CPR. Additionally, the CPR established one of the earliest religious *samizdat* journals—the *Bulletin of the Council of Prisoners' Relatives*. Started in 1971, the publication provided detailed prisoner lists, information about appeals and arrests, and in many instances transcripts from trials when CPR members were permitted by the state authorities to attend.

The Soviet authorities were unable to halt the activities of the CPR because the organization was so close-knit. The problem for the state was that when one member of the CPR was arrested, another member assumed the former duties of the member arrested. Perhaps, the most impressive element of the CPR was its organizational structure and remarkable ability to amass large quantities of information from all over the Soviet Union.

This unprecedented organization originated in the history of the Baptists in Russia and evolved in the 1960s with the reform Baptists.¹⁰⁶ The autonomy of local congregations established in early Russian Baptist culture nurtured a sense of trust and community and a support system among fellow believers. In turn, the administrative unions subsequently created allowed for communication between congregations, and preachers, such as Peter Vins, often worked itinerantly, establishing connections between

¹⁰⁵ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 210-213.

¹⁰⁶ Rudolf L. Tokes called the Council of Prisoners' Relatives the "first such group actively promoting civil rights in the communist world." Tokes, *Dissent in the USSR*, 211-212.

congregations. Another reform Baptist P.D. Belenki traveled through the North Caucasus and Donets Basin with his job as an engineer. As he traveled, he preached to various *Initsiativniki* communities.¹⁰⁷

The decision to split with the AUCECB strengthened the reform Baptist community. Writing about the *Initsiativniki*, Bourdeaux observed that “the close contact that these congregations keep with each other is an expression of personal concern and sympathy for others...”¹⁰⁸ The CPR existed as a support group for *Initsiativniki* believers, reminiscent of the support fostered in early Russian Baptist culture. Emphasizing the equality and importance of each member in each local church, the CPR functioned as a branch of the CCECB, operating as the CCECB’s center in spreading information.

Together the CPR and the CCECB assumed a role similar to the early Russian Baptist Union and the Evangelical Christian Union; the CPR provided communication among churches and offered physical, emotional, and spiritual support while the CCECB offered administrative support, organized congresses, and oversaw doctrinal adherence. The tradition of autonomy by local churches was maintained after the formation of the CCECB, and the CPR strengthened the support group nourished in Russian Baptist culture. The CPR established communication among local churches and the nature of the organization’s work nurtured solidarity among believers. In a 1964 appeal by the CPR, the group called on the reformers to “share in suffering” writing “if there is someone else

¹⁰⁷ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 134-135. Belenki, referred to in the Soviet press as an active member in the “illegal Baptist group,” was arrested for his preaching activity and admitted to giving readings at different church communities. The press chastised Belenki for combining his work with “anti-social activity.”

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 135.

who is in a similar situation to ours, having brothers, husbands, or sons imprisoned for the word of God, let us know about them and we shall notify the church.”¹⁰⁹ Informing believers in reform Baptist communities to new religious prisoners, the CPR members requested that they “not neglect [God’s] prisoners in your prayers.”¹¹⁰ As early as 1964, the CPR received hundreds of reports from local churches; the local reports enabled the CPR to conclude that between 1961 and February 1964, 155 ECB believers were arrested and sentenced, four died during the investigation of their case, and the number of dependents in the prisoners’ families was 297, of which 228 were children.¹¹¹ The CPR kept in contact with local churches through *samizdat* and regularly requested updates and supplementary information on prisoners as well as persecution against believers by the Soviet authorities.

Additionally, local churches sent the CPR copies of appeals to the Soviet authorities, as well as information on illegal searches, fines, and the confiscation of religious literature, because the CPR compiled the information quickly and sent it abroad. The reformers knew that the West was more likely to provide aid and support if there were numerous examples of persecution from believers and churches across the USSR, rather than individual congregations attempting to send information abroad. For example, in August 1967, in the CPR’s second appeal to the United Nations, the group provided over thirty pages of evidence of persecution of reform Baptists throughout the

¹⁰⁹ Govorun, Yastrebova, Rudneva, “Appeal of the participants of the All-Union Conference of ECB Prisoners’ Relatives in the USSR,” *Communist Exploitation of Religion*, 30-31. [http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b643027;view=1up;seq=36](http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b643027;view=1up;seq=36).

¹¹⁰ Council of Prisoners’ Relatives, “Appeal,” *Communist Exploitation of Religion* (July 5, 1964), 39, accessed February 2, 2015. [http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b643027;view=1up;seq=36](http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b643027;view=1up;seq=36).

¹¹¹ “Report on the activities of the All-Union Conference of ECB Prisoners’ Relatives,” *Communist Exploitation of Religion* (February 23, 1964), 31-33, accessed February 2, 2015. [http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b643027;view=1up;seq=36](http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b643027;view=1up;seq=36).

USSR, including verdicts of trials, camp conditions, and detailed information on dozens of believers.¹¹² In this way, the CPR acted as a unifying organization for the *Initsiativniki*, providing a support system while allowing congregations to maintain their autonomy. Mirroring the support system created among independent congregations and the early Baptist unions, the CPR combined with the CCECB provided the *Initsiativniki* congregations in the Soviet Union with a side support system, offering spiritual and physical support, keeping congregations abreast of appeals and petitions to the state and the West, and establishing an organization that fostered trust and solidarity among the reform Baptists.

Tradition of Legalism and Constitutional Awareness

In addition to utilizing a strong support system fostered in early Russian Baptist culture, the *Initsiativniki* also applied the early Russian Baptist method of using the law to appeal to the state for religious freedom.¹¹³ Rudolf L. Tokes examined the struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union and found that two “crucial components of the civil rights movement” began with the Baptists, one of which was “the constitutional and legal analysis of the religious question.”¹¹⁴ Michael Bourdeaux remarked that the “legal grasp” of the *Initsiativniki* was “most impressive.”¹¹⁵ The *Initsiativniki*’s use of legalism, however, and attention to the Soviet constitution as a way to demonstrate the illegality of

¹¹² Council of Prisoners’ Relatives, “Appeal to U Thant,” (August 1967), 8-40. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹¹³ See Chapter Three for specific examples of petitions and appeals written by Russian Baptists in the early twentieth century.

¹¹⁴ Tokes, *Dissent in the USSR*, 212. The other crucial component according to Tokes was “the spontaneous organization of an interest group from below to work actively toward a civil rights end,” which was of course the Council of Prisoners’ Relatives.

¹¹⁵ Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 185.

actions taken by the state originated from their own history and their predecessors' understanding and use of Russian laws, particularly in the early twentieth century and immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution, as they attempted to ensure the freedom of conscience guaranteed by the government. The *Initsiativniki* employed this method from the beginning of their movement in the 1960s. Indeed, in preserved camp letters and sermons written by early Russian Baptist leaders, the Soviet state's disregard for their own laws is often discussed. In a letter written while serving a sentence in the 1930s, Nikolai Odintsov writes,

The legislator who published the resolution on religious associations [1929 Law] was so eager to begin a cruel repression of religion that he did not even see the contradiction between this resolution and Lenin's decree of January 23, 1918 and Article Thirteen of the 1918 Constitution. If the Decree and Article Thirteen of the Constitution granted believers a church independent of the state and the freedom to spread their faith, then the resolution had contrary aims: specifically, to put the church in a position of complete dependence on the atheist state, to which would be granted the absolute right of depriving believers of freedom of conscience.¹¹⁶

The early Russian Baptists' grasp of the law and their ability to interpret the law to point out contradictions and indiscretions committed by the state evolved into one of the most important weapons for the *Initsiativniki* when appealing to the Soviet government and governments abroad. The tradition of constitutional awareness inherited by the reform Baptists was especially condemning for the Soviet government after the enactment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948, which the reformers relied upon to demonstrate violations of religious freedom in the Soviet Union.

Additionally, one can observe similarities in appeals composed by Russian Baptists in the late tsarist and early Soviet periods and appeals and petitions composed by the reform Baptists. For example, in an appeal sent by Russian Baptists in 1910

¹¹⁶ "A Letter from Odintsov in Prison," published in Vins, *Three Generations*, 112-116.

concerning a 1906 law enacted in order to limit the evangelistic activity of Protestant sects, the Baptists reference the violation of the government's guarantee of freedom of conscience in the 1905 Edict of Toleration, propose amendments to the law, and discuss persecution of their church communities by local authorities. Comparably, in one of the earliest appeals by the *Initsiativniki* in 1965 to Leonid Brezhnev, who at the time was acting chairman of the commission for drafting a new constitution, Vins and Kryuchkov quote the 1918 Soviet Constitution's guarantee of freedom of conscience and separation of church and state, discuss current and past persecution of Baptist believers, and recommend changes for the new Soviet Constitution. Apart from using Soviet law, Vins and Kryuchkov cite the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which they note was signed by the Soviet government in 1948. The petition observed that the amendments to the Soviet constitution adopted in 1929 and 1936 on church-state separation violated the guarantee of freedom of conscience set forth by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.¹¹⁷ Further, they used the writings of Lenin to further validate their appeal, citing his pamphlet "On Rural Poverty:" "Everyone should have the right not only to believe what he likes but also to propagate whatever faith he likes...this is a matter of conscience and no one has the right to interfere."¹¹⁸ The reformers recommended in their appeal to Brezhnev that the new Soviet constitution include an "article that will guarantee for citizens true freedom of conscience" as well as the repeal

¹¹⁷ The article on church-state separation in the Soviet Constitution was ultimately amended again in 1936 following the 1929 alteration. The 1936 amendment read, "In order to guarantee freedom of conscience for all citizens, the church in the USSR has been separated from the state and the school from the church. The freedom to hold religious services and the freedom of anti-religious propaganda is acknowledged to all citizens." The 1936 amendment further restricted religious believers and effectively established worship inside an approved building the only legal means of religious activity.

¹¹⁸ Vins and Kryuchkov, "To the president of the Commission on the Constitution, Comrade L.I. Brezhnev," published in Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 105-113.

of Stalin's 1929 Law on Religious Associations and the re-establishment of the decree "concerning the separation of church and state."¹¹⁹

Constitutional and legal awareness in Russian Baptist culture ultimately moved the *Initiativniki* to reach out to international organizations, such as the United Nations. Attention to human rights by the United Nations prompted the reform Baptists to contact the organization for the first time in 1967 after repeated appeals and petitions to the Soviet authorities went unanswered. In August 1967, the CPR sent a second letter to U Thant. Familiarizing themselves with laws created to pledge basic human freedoms to citizens throughout the world, the CPR's second appeal cited not only Soviet law but extensively quoted from the UN's Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The CPR explained that the Soviet government's requirement of church communities to register violated Articles 18 and 20 of the Declaration on Human Rights, as did the 1929 Law on Religious Associations. The August 1967 appeal by the CPR consisted of over eight pages detailing specific violations of certain articles passed by either the UN or the Soviet government, including violations on registration, religious propaganda, assembly of a group for worship, the freedom to hold opinions without interference, the right to teach religion privately to citizens, and the religious education of children.¹²⁰ Each of these issues was previously addressed in appeals and petitions by Baptists in the early Soviet period, particularly the issue of theological education for children and registration, and the CPR noted that although "freedom of religion has been openly proclaimed" in the Soviet Union, "for more than forty years [the Baptists] have not been able to benefit from

¹¹⁹ Vins and Kryuchkov, "To the president of the Commission on the Constitution," published in Bourdeaux, *Religious Ferment in Russia*, 105-113.

¹²⁰ Council of Prisoners' Relatives, "Appeal to U Thant." (August 1967), 3. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

it.”¹²¹ Creating petitions and appeals citing the Soviet constitution and internationally recognized standards of law by the *Initsiativniki* continued a tradition firmly established in early Russian Baptist culture. The use of the law by the Baptists not only called attention to the lawfulness of freedom of conscience in their own country, but also structured their appeals within the framework of the Soviet Constitution, in an attempt to prevent claims of anti-Soviet activity by the state.

Samizdat Journals and the Publication of Facts

In addition to the influence of constitutional awareness from early Russian Baptist culture, the *Initsiativniki* also adopted the use of journals and other publications to report facts of persecution, deliver religious messages for spiritual support, and provide updates on prisoners and their conditions. Early Russian Baptist journals allowed the *Initsiativniki* to gain a more complete picture of their own culture. As with many Baptist publications in the late tsarist and early Soviet period, the literature the *Initsiativniki* published was illegal. Some of the earliest publications of the reform Baptists were past sermons, poems, and other information from Baptists in the early Soviet period.

Alexandra Mozgova, who began work with the Russian Baptist Union in 1926 and continued in Baptist missionary work in Russia until her death in 1972, was instrumental in establishing the reform Baptists’ first journal *Vestnik Spaseniia (Herald of Salvation)* in 1964. According to Georgi Vins, “she carefully preserved a whole series of unique manuscripts of articles and poetry written by evangelical laborers of past years and

¹²¹ Council of Prisoners’ Relatives, “Appeal to U Thant.” (August 1967), 3. Archive file <SU/Ini 6 up til 1966>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

subsequently handed them over to the Council of Churches” for use in *Vestnik Spaseniia*, which focused on spiritual encouragement and instruction for believers.¹²²

The *Initsiativniki*’s primary samizdat publication was *Bratskii Listok* (*Fraternal Leaflet*), established in 1965, which took its name from the 1906 journal established by Ivan Prokhanov, as a supplementary work to *Khristianin* (*Christian*). The name of the journal *Khristianin* was subsequently used by the *Initsiativniki* as the name for illegal publishing houses throughout the USSR for the publication of the reformers’ journals, including *Bratskii Listok* and the *Bulletin of the Council of Prisoners’ Relatives*. As in the journals of the early Russian Baptists, the *Initsiativniki* published journals containing information on appeals, persecution by the state and local authorities, and pertinent state legislation. A report in the *Chronicle of Current Events* described how the authorities seized one of the *Initsiativniki* publishing houses, which contained nine tons of paper, all donated by believers, and 15,000 copies of the Gospels.¹²³ From the beginning of the *Initsiativniki* movement to 1974, the reform Baptists produced over 200,000 pieces of literature in Russian, German, Ukrainian, and other languages.¹²⁴ By 1983, the *Initsiativniki* printing presses were responsible for the publishing of over half a million Bibles and hymnals in various languages.¹²⁵ Tokes observed that the reform Baptists produced the largest amount of samizdat material among religious groups in the Soviet Union, citing the Russian Baptists’ historic precedent for organization as a contributing

¹²² Vins, *Three Generations*, 200-202.

¹²³ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 34 (December 31, 1974), 55. It was later reported by the *Chronicle*, No. 38 that the authorities moved the man-made printing press to a museum of criminology in Riga, Latvia.

¹²⁴ John Kohan, “Georgi Vins,” *Times News Service* (July 17, 1979), 6. Archive file <SU/Ini 8-2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹²⁵ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 211.

factor.¹²⁶ The sheer amount of paper contained within one reform Baptist publishing house speaks to the Baptists' ability to organize members but also demonstrates the importance the Baptists placed on publishing information for their membership, as a means to inform believers.

The Initsiativniki Role in the Soviet Human Rights Movement

The role of the *Initsiativniki* within the larger struggle for human rights in the Soviet Union was almost entirely relegated to their efforts in attaining religious liberty for believers in the Soviet Union. The reform Baptists, in the same attitude as their predecessors, did not wish to involve themselves in political dissent or in the Soviet human rights movement outside of the issue of freedom of conscience. Georgi Vins exemplified this mindset. When released from prison and moved to the United States in 1979, he refused to participate in a joint statement with his fellow dissidents, because he did not want to criticize the Soviet government. Indeed, the *Initsiativniki* rarely worked within the Soviet human rights movement, and there was little influence from the human rights movement in the Soviet Union on the reformers. Peter Reddaway observes that the reform Baptists “developed their modus operandi in the early 1960s, about seven years before the human rights movement even existed.”¹²⁷ Rather, dissent methods utilized by the *Initsiativniki* were influenced by their own legacy of dissent cultivated in early Russian Baptist culture. When examining activists in the Soviet human rights movement and members of the *Initsiativniki*, striking differences appear in rhetoric, goals, and education.

¹²⁶ Tolkes, *Dissent in the USSR*, 195-200.

¹²⁷ Peter Reddaway, e-mail message to author, August 11, 2014.

Contact between the reform Baptists and the Soviet human rights movement began in the early 1970s, revolving around the creation of the *Chronicle of Current Events* and the founding of the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights. Ludmilla Alexeyeva reflects that the first statement by the Soviet human rights movement on the *Initsiativniki* was in 1974 when the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights appealed to international citizens on behalf of Georgi Vins.¹²⁸ The Soviet human rights movement only began to regularly receive information on the *Initsiativniki* after 1974 when the *Chronicle of Current Events* received the *Bulletin of the Council of Prisoners' Relatives*.¹²⁹

Because the reform Baptists' main concern was freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union, the language they utilized differed significantly from that of the Soviet human rights movement and Russian Orthodox dissidents. The *Initsiativniki* did not adopt similar phrases used by Soviet human rights activists. They never spoke of their struggle for religious freedom as a "duty" or as a cause for "human dignity," as was so prevalent in the appeals, letters, and petitions of the Soviet human rights movement. Certainly, the *Initsiativniki* considered evangelism and other church work part of their religious duty, but they utilized spiritual, emotional, and biblical language to validate their activities and did not understand their activities as part of a larger struggle for human rights. Rather the *Initsiativniki's* appeals and writings were filled with verses from the Bible. They rarely referenced secular writings or poets. Instead, they relied on the Bible and other religious writings, as well as the law when composing petitions.

¹²⁸ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 213.

¹²⁹ Ibid. As discussed in Chapter Four, Alexander Ginsburg, in particular, forged a network with the reform Baptists and often received the *Bulletin* from its members; it is quite possible that the *Chronicle* was supplied with the *Bulletin* from Ginsburg.

In Lidia Vins' defense speech before a Soviet court at her trial in February 1971, she explained that "the church is separated from the state. The church must have one head, as we understand it—Christ, He who came down to earth and will come a second time..."¹³⁰ In another defense speech by reform Baptist N. P. Matyukhina, she declared that "Christ says, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you...' To suffer for Christ is not fearsome, But it is glory and honor to those who are persecuted in this world. He offers the news of salvation. Amen."¹³¹ Speaking at a meeting in 1979, Georgi Vins remarked, "The Gospel is a force that no government can defeat and no prison can silence."¹³² Similarly, Vins explained that his "brotherhood in Russia is committed to bearing the witness of Christ. That is our primary task. No prisons, no labor camps, no fines, no deprivations can erase that which Christ has placed in our hearts."¹³³ Reform Baptists employed more emotional rhetoric than of those in the Soviet human rights movement, even in comparison to Orthodox dissidents such as Gleb Yakunin.¹³⁴

Further, the reform Baptists did not adopt the same goals as the Soviet human rights movement, and yet they played an important role in it. The human rights movement was structured to include dissidents of all types, including religious dissidents. While many Orthodox dissidents took part in other human rights causes such as the right to emigrate, assemble peacefully, and write and publish without censorship, the

¹³⁰ Vins, *Three Generations*, 93.

¹³¹ Michael Bourdeaux, "Baptists in Russia," *America* (February 3, 1968), 145. Archive file, SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹³² John Bloom, "Let My People Pray," *Texas Monthly*, August 1979, 115. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹³³ John Kohan, "Georgi Vins," *Times News Service*, July 17, 1979, 11. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹³⁴ An analysis of rhetoric used by Yakunin is in Chapter Four.

Initsiativniki Baptists did not wander into other human rights causes. They worked firmly within their campaign to achieve the right to worship free of persecution. This element of Baptist dissent was no doubt partly due to the difference in education between activists in the Soviet human rights movement and the majority of reform Baptists.

While some leaders of the *Initsiativniki* possessed a higher level of education, such as a degree from a technical college, such as Georgi Vins and Gennadi Kryuchkov, most Baptist activists were less educated and were certainly not part of the Soviet intelligentsia. Tokes noted that most often “those who have chosen to dissent are among the better educated.”¹³⁵ Baptists often possessed less education than other Soviet citizens because their faith required them to proclaim their membership in the Baptist church. Because of their activities in a sect, they had little access to a university education. Most reform Baptists held only a secondary education and earned their living by physical labor.¹³⁶ Indeed, none of the broader human rights groups founded in the Soviet Union, such as the Moscow Helsinki Group or the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in the USSR contained a reform Baptist member. One exception to this appears to be Georgi Vins’ son, Peter, who joined the Ukrainian Helsinki Group in 1977 after the arrest of Nikolai Rudenko, a literary dissident and fellow member of the Ukrainian Helsinki Group.¹³⁷

Additionally, many reform Baptists worked only for the cause of religious freedom because they considered the Soviet human rights movement political and

¹³⁵ Tokes, *Dissent in the USSR*, 201.

¹³⁶ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 209. Vins noted that some younger citizens among their group obtained a technical education. Interestingly, Alexeyeva notes that despite their lack of a high education, the reform Baptists’ legal competence was “higher than that of the educated segment of the population.”

¹³⁷ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 44 (March 16, 1977), 115.

possessed no desire to engage in political activities. When referred to as dissidents by the West, Georgi Vins declined this description, which he believed carried political connotations.¹³⁸ Just as the *Initsiativniki* desired for the state not to interfere in church matters, the reformers did not desire to involve themselves in state matters. The *Initsiativniki* sought to work within the framework of the law as much as possible while still practicing their faith.

Indeed, in CPR samizdat literature as well as various interviews given by Vins, the reformers claimed to bear no resentment toward the Soviet government and encouraged fellow believers to pray for the authorities. In 1964, the CPR told members that while “a feeling of hostility...might appear” it was “essential to remind all the faithful that they should not admit a feeling of hostility towards oppressors and should pray for those accusing and persecuting them.”¹³⁹ Vins summed up the reform Baptists’ understanding of civil authority and their decision to dissent in this way: “In accordance with biblical teaching, we believe that every authority is ultimately from God and that we are obliged to submit ourselves to such authority on all civil matters. To work. To pay taxes. To show respect to the government. But when it is a question of faith, then we submit ourselves to God alone.”¹⁴⁰

Even in the matter of the registration of local church communities, the reformers did not object. Rather, they objected to the requirements necessary to obtain registration

¹³⁸ Roger Day and John Capon, “Who Freed Georgi Vins?” *Crusade*, June 1979, 34. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹³⁹ “Report on the activities of the All-Union Conference of ECB Prisoners’ Relatives,” *Communist Exploitation of Religion* (February 23, 1964,) 32, accessed February 3, 2015. [http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.\\$b643027;view=1up;seq=36](http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b643027;view=1up;seq=36).

¹⁴⁰ “Submission to God Alone,” *Time* (May 21, 1979), 83. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

by the state. Vins stated, “We consider that we too should be registered. The Council of Churches has asked the state many times to register our churches.”¹⁴¹ While the *Iniatsivniki* were willing to register their communities, they resisted the state’s interference in church affairs, and therefore, their churches never received registration. Further explaining the reform Baptists’ understanding of registration, Vins remarked, “It’s not for the authorities to say that [a child] should be given porridge or apple juice. That’s none of their business. We think the same principle applies to the registration of churches. We agree to registration...the people gathered here are religious, they read the Bible, pray...But as to who will preach or whom we should baptize, that is strictly our business.”¹⁴² Ultimately, the reform Baptists engaged in methods of dissent only in cases preventing them from carrying out what they considered their Christian responsibility; freedom of conscience remained their primary objective in relationship to the state.

Despite the reformers’ hesitation in participating in other human rights causes, the *Iniatsivniki* approved of the work that the Soviet human rights movement carried out, particularly with regard to freedom of religion. The reform Baptists made contact with human rights activists and afterward took active advantage of the aid the movement provided in drawing attention to their cause. Following the early contact between the two groups in 1974, the reformers immediately sent appeals and petitions to the Moscow Helsinki Group in 1976 over concerns about the removal of their parental rights by the authorities. Soon after, the Moscow Helsinki Group issued a statement in their document no. 5 “On the Persecution of Religious Families,” in which the Group detailed specific

¹⁴¹ “Submission to God Alone,” *Time* (May 21, 1979), 83. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁴² John Kohan, “Georgi Vins,” *Times News Service* (July 17, 1979,) 4. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

cases of children removed from religious families; the document was created June 17, 1976 and signed by human rights activists Yuri Orlov and Alexander Ginzburg.¹⁴³ The reformers also utilized Yakunin's Christian Committee for the Defense of Believers' Rights, sending dozens of petitions, appeals, and information on the persecution of believers in 1978 alone.

In addition to using human rights organizations to bring greater awareness to the struggle for religious freedom in the Soviet Union, the *Initsiativniki* were aware of the aid that many human rights activists gave on behalf of their group. Orthodox dissident Yevgeni Barabanov noted that the Baptists often turned to Andrei Sakharov, because they knew of appeals he had made their behalf.¹⁴⁴ Sakharov repeatedly petitioned to Western governments, the United Nations, and international religious organizations such as the World Council of Churches and the Baptist World Alliance on behalf of the reform Baptists, and specifically, on behalf of Georgi Vins.¹⁴⁵ Indeed, the only demonstration the *Initsiativniki* participated in on behalf of human rights was on December 5, 1976 (Constitution Day), where a few young Baptists in participation threw a bouquet of red carnations over the heads of the KGB to Andrei Sakharov in gratitude.¹⁴⁶

As the issue of human rights gained greater attention in the West, in part because of the work by activists in the Soviet Union calling attention to violations by the Soviet

¹⁴³ Moscow Helsinki Group, "Repressii protiv religioznykh semey" (June 17, 1976), accessed February 3, 2015. <http://www.mhg.ru/history/1458985>.

¹⁴⁴ "Evgeni Barabanov," *Radio Liberty Research* (May 13, 1974), 9. Archive file <SU/Ort 2 Barabanov>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁴⁵ Examples of appeals sent by Sakharov for the reform Baptists or Georgi Vins can be found in *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 44 (March 16, 1977), 191-192; *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 43 (December 31, 1976), 13; *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 33 (December 10, 1974), 113.

¹⁴⁶ Alexeyeva, *Soviet Dissent*, 213.

government, the *Initsiativniki* struggle for religious freedom gained more attention. By the 1970s, the *Initsiativniki* realized the impact that an appeal to the West had on the Soviet authorities and the importance that the broader Soviet human rights movement played in the struggle to achieve religious freedom for Soviet believers. Speaking to the importance of raising awareness and support in the West, Georgi Vins observed:

The more concern is shown in the West, the more the issue of freedom of worship is raised, the easier it is for Christians in the Soviet Union. If I am here today and others are here who have been active in national movements or the movement for Jewish emigration, it is only because someone raised their voice. If everyone had remained silent here, then we might...very well be dead.¹⁴⁷

Peter Vins remarked in 1978 that not only Baptists, but all prisoners of conscience were grateful to Alexander Ginzburg for his work toward achieving religious freedom in the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁸ Ultimately, the Soviet human rights movement increased the level of attention given to violations by the Soviet state and the hundreds of appeals sent by human rights activists in the Soviet Union aided in the release of Georgi Vins from prison in 1979.

Conclusion

While the *Initsiativniki* Baptists only campaigned for religious freedom, they existed as one of the most important dissident groups in the Soviet Union and were one of the Soviet human rights movement's most prolific *samizdat* publishers. Although most reform Baptists did not consider themselves members of the Soviet human rights movement, the loose organization of the movement coupled with its ability to garner significant awareness in the West enabled the Baptists to establish greater channels of

¹⁴⁷ John Kohan, "Georgi Vins," *Times News Service* (July 17, 1979), 9-10. Archive file <SU/Ini 8/2 Vins>, Keston Center, Baylor University.

¹⁴⁸ *Chronicle of Current Events*, no. 48 (March 14, 1978), 7.

communication abroad and to bring wider concern to their plight. Like their fellow Orthodox dissidents, they realized the importance of the human rights movement in the Soviet Union and the *Initsiativniki* took advantage of the groups created by human rights activists in order to increase the effectiveness of their campaign for religious freedom.

Although there were similarities between the methods used by the *Initsiativniki* and the Soviet human rights movement, the reform Baptists' methods originated from their legacy of dissent cultivated by Russian Baptists in the late tsarist and early Soviet periods. The tradition of autonomy, church-state separation, and aggressive evangelism in early Russian Baptist culture resulted in concern by some Baptists in the 1960s that the Soviet state was interfering illegally in church affairs, causing a split between the AUCECB and the reformers. In turn, a history of persecution and dissent acted as an example for the reformers and shaped their thinking toward civil authority.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

The gathering of a small group of people on December 5, 1965 calling on their government to respect the constitution was an unprecedented event in the Soviet Union. The first open demonstration against the Soviet government in Moscow since 1929, the peaceful protest resulted from clandestine meetings of friends discussing politics and current events combined with the temporary liberalization created by Khrushchev's de-Stalinization.¹ From this small gathering emerged the Soviet human rights movement. The movement represented a group of people working together to halt arbitrary repression by the Soviet state and defend the basic human rights of every citizen living in the Soviet Union's vast empire. Thinking about the motivations behind their activities and the creation of the movement, Soviet human rights activist Sergei Kovalev responded, "We realized it was shameful to remain silent."² Encompassing thousands of citizens, the movement built an immense network across the Soviet Union relying on *samizdat*, petitions, appeals, open letters, and contacts in the West, endeavoring to hold the Soviet government accountable for its human rights violations. As the movement gained momentum and the activists received hundreds of appeals from citizens for aid, they decided to establish the *Chronicle of Current Events*, the official publication of the movement and one of the earliest journals produced concerning human rights violations in the Soviet Union. Early in the movement the

¹ Quote from Vladimir Bukovsky, *They Chose Freedom*.

² Quote from Sergei Kovalev, *They Chose Freedom*.

activists decided that the *Chronicle* would “not give opinions, but provide information.”³

Promoting no political party or political agenda, the Soviet human rights movement struggled for moral justice with “freedom, conscience, and responsibility” as its “foundation.”⁴

Composed of some of the Soviet Union’s most gifted minds, such as Andrei Sakharov, Elena Bonner, Yuri Orlov, Igor Shafarevich, Tatyana Velikhanova, Alexander Ginzburg, Vladimir Bukovsky, and Alexander Esenin-Volpin, the Soviet human rights movement adopted constitutional awareness, legitimation from the West and international pacts such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the publication and dissemination of facts as its main methods of dissent. As the concern over human rights violations in the West grew, the Soviet activists’ work gained greater attention abroad and in the Soviet Union. The movement remained loosely organized, comprised of smaller movements including movements for national self-determination, freedom of emigration, deported peoples, economic and social justice, and religious liberty. Of these, religious dissent receives little attention in studies of human rights in the Soviet Union.

Religious dissenters in the Soviet Union working toward freedom of conscience contributed immensely to the Soviet human rights movement, not only in the amount of *samizdat* literature produced, but also in providing a more comprehensive understanding of Soviet society, as well as the varying motivations for different groups to participate in dissent against the state. While some religious dissidents participated more broadly in the human rights movement, other religious communities remained more separated from the

³ Quote from Natalya Gorbanevskaya, *They Chose Freedom*.

⁴ Ibid.

movement, campaigning strictly for religious freedom. Analyzing the differences between Russian Orthodox dissidents and the unregistered *Initsiativniki* Baptist dissidents provides a dynamic comparison and contributes to a greater understanding of the complexity of religious dissent in the Soviet human rights movement.

The historical relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist government established a distinctive attitude by the Church toward the state, which contributed to the Church's unpreparedness after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. A tradition of compliance and dependence on state institutions emerging from the Church's understanding of the concept of symphonia and Peter the Great's church reforms in the early 1700s left the Church lacking autonomy, intellectually stagnated, and distant from the laity. Functioning as a department of the state and forced to submit to an appointed Overprocurator, the Russian Orthodox hierarchy was prevented from directing internal church affairs and creating meaningful reforms in the Church. Existing as the state church of Russia through much of the tsarist period, the Church possessed no methods of dissent or experience in opposition to the state. Furthermore, the excessive entanglement between the Russian Orthodox Church and the tsarist government resulted in the Church's inability to understand the concept of church-state separation proclaimed in the new Soviet constitution under the Bolsheviks. Each of these elements coupled with the hostility of a new atheist government left the Russian Orthodox hierarchy ill-equipped to understand the Church's new role in Soviet society and to effectively fight against the persecution of the Church by the Soviets. Ultimately, without experience in opposition and a tradition of dependence on the state led the Russian Orthodox Church to cooperate

with the Soviet authorities in an attempt to reduce persecution and halt the government from eliminating the Church.

Increasingly, the Russian Orthodox Church operated as a spokesman abroad for the Soviet government claiming that rumors of religious persecution by the state were false, arguing that freedom of conscience existed for all citizens. Lacking a tradition of dissent in their history, Orthodox dissidents objecting to the Church's cooperation with the state and the continued persecution of Orthodox believers by the Soviet authorities were strongly influenced by the Soviet human rights movement. Orthodox dissent and the human rights movement in the Soviet Union emerged simultaneously and both gained ground in the 1960s. Without the support of the Orthodox hierarchy, many Orthodox dissidents forged connections with Soviet human rights activists. The Soviet human rights movement influenced Orthodox dissent in three major ways: the provision of an alternative support group brought on by the intellectual connection between Orthodox dissidents and human rights activists, the adoption of similar rhetoric to the human rights movement, and an increasing tendency toward ecumenism.

The historical relationship between Baptists in Russia and the tsarist state was, however, quite different from the Orthodox Church. Emerging in Russia in the mid to late 19th century, Baptist sects suffered persecution by state authorities and the surrounding population, pushing the groups to adopt various methods of dissent against the state. Petitions to the government and other legal measures, the dissemination of literature, sometimes illegal, detailing persecution, appeals to Western Baptist organizations, and the open willingness to disobey state law and continue illegal activities were all techniques used by early Russian Baptist groups as dissent. This legacy of

dissent in Russian Baptist culture coupled with aggressive conversion tactics requiring public evangelism and a strong advocacy for church-state separation and local church autonomy compelled a group of Baptists in the Soviet Union to separate from the state recognized AUCECB. Immediately following their split from the AUCECB in the early 1960s, the reform Baptists moved into open dissent with the Soviet authorities.

Unlike many of their Orthodox counterparts, the reform Baptists campaigned almost exclusively for the freedom of conscience in the Soviet Union. The reform Baptists used the human rights movement in the Soviet Union to spread greater awareness to their cause and admired many human rights activists, including Alexander Ginzburg and Andrei Sakharov. However, unlike Orthodox dissidents such as Gleb Yakunin, Lev Regelson, and Anatoli Levitin, who signed dozens of appeals protesting a range of human rights violations by the Soviet state from the freedom of press and speech to the right for citizens to emigrate, the *Initsiativniki* distanced themselves from broader human rights issues, because they did not wish to criticize the Soviet government. Both Orthodox dissidents and the reform Baptists viewed the West as a kind of legitimization for their cause for religious freedom and used the human rights movement in the Soviet Union to gain greater international attention.

Ultimately, in examining Orthodox dissent and dissent by the *Initsiativniki* in connection with the Soviet human rights movement, one finds a significant amount of influence on the dissent methods, thinking, and activities of Orthodox dissidents from the movement but very little influence from the movement on the dissent methods, thinking, and activities of the *Initsiativniki*. While the reform Baptists in the Soviet period drew upon the past legacy of dissent carried out by their predecessors, the Orthodox possessed

no such legacy. Furthermore, without the support of a church community or the Orthodox hierarchy, the Orthodox were forced to establish connections and find support elsewhere. Orthodox dissidents joined with the human rights movement, which provided solidarity and encouragement. Additionally, the intellectual connection between many Orthodox dissidents and Soviet human rights activists compelled many Orthodox dissenters to participate in other human rights issues outside of religious freedom. In contrast, the *Initsiativniki* existed as a close-knit community with local church members as a support system. While some of their leaders possessed a technical education, few were part of the Soviet intelligentsia and their focus remained almost solely on acquiring freedom of conscience.

The examination of the differences and similarities of Orthodox dissidents and reform Baptist dissidents in connection to the Soviet human rights movement provides only one piece of a larger puzzle concerning religious life in the Soviet Union. No analysis yet exists of the possible connections between the human rights movement and other religious denominations, including Lithuanian Catholics and Seventh Day Adventist dissidents, such as V. A. Shelkov. Preliminary examinations of the *Chronicle of Current Events* suggest a working relationship between Shelkov, a leader of the Adventist dissidents, and the Soviet human rights movement. Additionally, the connection with Orthodox dissidents to the human rights movement and their participation in calling attention in the West to a range of human rights violations by Soviet authorities begs the question of the role of religious dissent and religious opposition in the fall of the Soviet Union.

Finally, the importance of this study not only lies in understanding the connection between religious dissenters and the human rights movement during the Soviet period, but also provides a step to understanding the connection between dissent in the Soviet period and dissent in post-Soviet Russia. In looking at post-Soviet culture in Russia, there remains active dissent against the Russian state and the current response to dealing with dissidents by the Russian authorities and the response of the Soviet authorities have drawn increasing parallels. During his lecture at the Kennan Institute in 2011, Peter Reddaway explained that, “being a dissident in Russia today increasingly...look[s] like the situation of dissidents in the Soviet period.”⁵ Peter Vins, the son of Georgi Vins, faces persecution from the Russian government today. In 2007, agents from Russia’s Interior Ministry searched the Moscow office of Vins’ shipping company Vinlund, seized documents and computers, and beat three employees present.⁶ Gleb Yakunin and Ludmilla Alexeyeva both spoke out in defense of the punk rock group Pussy Riot in 2012 and drew comparisons to the treatment of dissidents by the Soviet state and the current Russian state.⁷ Pussy Riot’s protest in Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Savior places the issue of religion and the state squarely within the context of dissent and human rights

⁵ Amy Shannon Liedy, “The Evolution of Soviet Policies Toward Dissidents” (September 26, 2011), accessed February 15, 2015. <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/event/the-evolution-soviet-policies-towards-dissidents-0>.

⁶ Alexei Pankin, “A Worrisome Precedent for Persecution,” *The Moscow Times* (September 18, 2007), accessed February 15, 2015. <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/opinion/article/a-worrisome-precedent-for-persecution/194261.html>.

⁷ Interfax, “Russian human rights campaigners hopes for Pussy Riot members’ release,” *Russia Beyond the Headlines* (August 21, 2012), accessed February 15, 2015. http://rbth.com/articles/2012/08/01/russian_human_rights_campaigners_hopes_for_pussy_riot_members_release_16936.html. Cathy Young, “Remembering the Russian Priest who Fought the Orthodox Church” (December 28, 2014), accessed February 15, 2015. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/12/28/remembering-the-russian-priest-who-fought-the-orthodox-church.html>.

in Russia, a reminder that these concerns persist and demand attention. The Putin administration's reaction to the Pussy Riot event calls for a more complete understanding of the legacy of dissent in Russia's past and the role of human rights groups in fighting persecution by the Russian/Soviet state.

Furthermore, examining the Russian Orthodox Church's tradition of compliance to and excessive entanglement with the Russian state, which continued and arguably reached its height in the Soviet period, can perhaps aid in providing an explanation to the Russian Orthodox hierarchy's current relationship with the Putin administration in Russia. Orthodox dissidents such as Gleb Yakunin, who until his recent death in December 2014, remained critical of the close relationship created between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state after the Soviet collapse in 1991. Yakunin further criticized the new Russian law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" adopted in 1997, which he believed was a "restoration of Soviet religious policy."⁸ After publishing information detailing the extensive cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and the KGB in the Soviet period and continuing to speak out against human rights violations in Russia in the 1990s, Yakunin was excommunicated by the Russian Orthodox hierarchy for "anti-church activities," charges bearing a striking resemblance to charges lobbied against him by the Church in the Soviet period.⁹

⁸ Gleb Yakunin, "Declaration of the Committee for Defense of Freedom of Conscience regarding the Russian State Duma's adoption of the draft of the law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations" (March 6, 1997), accessed February 10, 2015.
<http://www2.stetson.edu/~psteeves/relnews/yakunin2006.html>.

⁹ Sophia Kishkovsky, "Gleb Yakunin, Russian priest and dissident, is dead at 80," *New York Times* (December 29, 2014), accessed February 15, 2015.
http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/30/world/europe/gleb-yakunin-russian-priest-and-dissident-is-dead-at-80.html?_r=0

Persistent criticism of the Putin administration by many Soviet human rights activists such as Yakunin, Alexeyeva, Yuri Orlov, and Vladimir Bukovsky, all of whom consider the administration a return to Soviet times, calls for a closer examination between human rights issues in the Soviet Union and the current Russian government.¹⁰ Additionally, the continuing concern over religion and the Russian Orthodox Church, the Russian state, and the persecution of dissidents in Russia makes this analysis of religious dissent and the Soviet human rights movement in the Soviet period valuable for future research in examining Russia in a post-Soviet world.

¹⁰ "Soviet-era Dissidents despise Putin," *The Washington Times* (November 13, 2004), accessed February 15, 2015. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2004/nov/13/20041113-111225-7336r/?page=all>. Carl Schreck, "Ex-Soviet Dissident Says Russia Won't Renew His Passport," *Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty* (February 16, 2015), accessed February 16, 2015. <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/26668589.html>.

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