

# Globethics Repository

The logo for Globethics, featuring the word "Globethics" in white, sans-serif font centered within a solid blue rectangular background.

## Vasilii Gurevich Pavlov and the early years of the baptist world alliance

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see <https://www.globethics.net>. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see <https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy>.

Item Type	Article
Authors	Popov, Vladimir
Publisher	Baptist Historical Society
Rights	Creative Commons Copyright (CC 2.5)
Download date	2026-06-23 16:33:55
Link to Item	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/153172">http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/153172</a>

## VASILII GUREVICH PAVLOV AND THE EARLY YEARS OF THE BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE\*

### INTRODUCTION

1994 marks 140 years since the birth and 70 years since the death of Vasilii Gurevich Pavlov (1854-1924), a co-founder of the Baptist movement in Russia. His ministry had a tremendous impact on Baptist congregations in Russia, Western Europe, and the Americas. Pavlov was well known among Christians in East and West as a missionary, a preacher, a theologian, a church historian, and a Christian journalist. Born in the Vorontsovka village near Tiflis, Caucasia, into the family of a Molokan-resettler (Molokans belong to a Protestant strand akin to Quakers), he joined a Baptist community in Tiflis at the age of sixteen. After one year of studies at J. G. Oncken's seminary in Hamburg, he became a missionary in the Caucasus and Russia and was severely persecuted by the official church and tzarist authorities for his vigorous gospel preaching. Repeatedly imprisoned, he was twice exiled to Orenburg where he was put under police surveillance. During his second exile, he lost his wife and three children.

From 1895 to 1901 Pavlov lived in the Romanian town of Tulcea, where he preached and campaigned for human rights, informing the world public about the persecution of non-orthodox Christians. He attended all the World and European Baptist congresses from 1905 to 1911. From 1907 to 1910, he was the editor-in-chief and publisher of the *Baptist Journal*. From 1913 to 1917, he edited the *Slovo Istiny* journal, where he published some of his basic writings: 'About the Holy', 'The Preacher and the Church', 'The Truth about Baptists', the 'Church and the State', and other articles. As he was fluent in many languages, he translated and published in Russian sermons by some of the outstanding evangelists, including Charles Spurgeon of Britain and Hitchcock of the United States.

### WORK IN TRANSCAUCASIA

When persecutions against unorthodox believers relented in Russia at the turn of the century, Pavlov was able to minister quite freely in Tiflis and beyond. He started travelling to other provinces to spread the Word of God. In February 1903, his itinerary included places where his ancestors had wandered. He noted in a diary:

I drove to the mounds in Topcea some 10 versts<sup>1</sup> away from Ivanovka, where my father had lived on coming from Russia and where the remains of my grandfather Grigory rest. Not a trace of them has remained. The cemetery was overgrown with vines, quince and bushes. Rice has begun to be cultivated on paddies nearby.

Pavlov visited Ivanovka, a mountain village founded by Russian settlers twenty years earlier. The villagers had belonged to various confessions but there had been no Baptists among them, but now Pavlov found a congregation of fifty-three Baptists. Prayer and preaching were full of fervour with sisters and brothers praying aloud together. Pavlov conducted services and talked to Sunday school pupils. He asked the Baku community minister, V. I. Ivanov, to travel to outlying hamlets with him. Thorny and tiresome was the road to the Novoivanovka, Novosaratovka, and Mikhailovka communities. Slush and stones wore out the horses and travellers, but heartening meetings with believers lifted their fatigue and strengthened them. Even the local Tartars, not put out by gospel services, would surround Pavlov, when he read them in Tartar Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

His return to Tiflis coincided with a reconciliatory gathering where an attempt was made to reunite the main congregation with a group led by Nikita Issajewitsch Voronin. Not all were sure that Voronin would stay in the main congregation long, but the search for peace encouraged the believers. Then, quite unexpectedly, Pavlov received a request from Alexander Stepanovich Prokhanov, who wished him to officiate at Prokhanov's wedding with Anastasia Titovna Fefelov. It seemed incredible for a Molokan to ask a Baptist for sanctification, but Pavlov was not bothered by such incongruity. The Prokhanov family was noted for piety and devotion to God. A Molokan leader in Tiflis and an extremely educated person, Prokhanov always sought contact with kindred confessions. At the same time an invitation came from Batumi for Pavlov to go to baptize a group of converts there.

But soon sorrow came his way: his father died on 17 July 1903. 'At 1 a.m., my father Gury Grigorievich Pavlov died', he wrote in his diary. 'All our family were at his bedside when he was dying. Gury's nephew, Abraham Grigorievich Pavlov, his wife and niece, Varvara Kuzminichna Kiryaeva, were also with him. The agony was not long. He remained conscious, and trusted in God with hope till the end of his life.' Many relatives and friends gathered for Gury Pavlov's funeral. His son Vasillii and Voronin preached. A month later, sad news came from Vorontsovka. The wife of Polikarp, Pavlov's late uncle, had died: death proved one of the best preachers at this time. After the funeral and the memorial service, more Vorontsovka dwellers turned to Christ. Till the late hours Pavlov talked to villagers about the immortal soul and the ways to know God.

Caucasian evangelical Christians had a good tradition of celebrating the Harvest Festival in the autumn with Christians of other faiths. Pavlov recalled how,

At brother Demakin's invitation, we arrived at Ali-Kugo of the Mozdok region, where the Baptists, Molokans, and Adventists scheduled a thanksgiving harvest festival for 1 October and invited many outsiders to it. Up to 300 people on carts drove to Pryanishnikov's farmstead in the morning for a general meeting. Piotr Grigorievich Demakin made the opening speech. I chose for my sermon Psalm 102 about gratitude. After the meeting, there was a dinner for all participants.

Such public worship was unfortunately not typical of their unity: the Tiflis church was always torn by dissent and division. The rift with Voronin was never fully healed. Pavlov made the following note on 26 July 1903: 'Voronin and his 10-men party broke away for good, and we decided to give them one fifth of the property - a total of 7 benches.'

Russian Baptists held congresses annually from 1902 to 1905, meeting to discuss ways of spreading the gospel across Russia and closing ranks with Christians of other denominations. Russia's gospel movement evolved in St Petersburg in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Lord Radstock<sup>2</sup> of Britain and the retired Guard Colonel, Count Pashkov, started preaching the Good News among the aristocracy in Russia's capital. In time the movement spread to many Russian provinces. Two representatives from the Petersburg evangelical congregation - V. I. Dolgoplov and G. M. Matveev - attended the Baptist congress in Rostov-on-Don in 1902. In 1903, Baptists and Evangelical Christians met illegally in Tsaritsin to choose an appropriate name for the movement that would be to everyone's liking. In 1904, Evangelical Christians from St Petersburg, Kiev, Konotop, and Sebastopol met in Rostov-on-Don and applied for entry to the Baptist Union on the condition that its former name be restored. At a congress in May 1905, the delegates decided to be called Evangelical Christians-Baptists, as both currents had wished. The death at the congress of N. I. Voronin struck a sad note amid the overall jubilation over the rapprochement between the two confessions.

#### BAPTIST WORLD ALLIANCE CONGRESS 1905

V. G. Pavlov's name was missing from the minutes of that Russian congress, nor was it in the list of the union delegates to the First Congress of the Baptist World Alliance in London, so he had to leave for London with a mandate from the Tiflis community alone. He met Ivanov and Dei Mazayev on the eve of the Congress's opening at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, where Thomas Spurgeon, son of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, was minister. Mazayev was accompanied by his daughters, Sofia and Olga, and his nieces, Margarita and Nadezhda. The guests were seated and given tea. Thomas Spurgeon and his wife joined them later on. Conversation between the Spurgeons and the Russian Christians-Baptists was easy and the guests felt very much at home. At an opening ceremony, Thomas Spurgeon introduced the participants. The German delegation included William Oncken, the son of the late J. G. Oncken, who spoke about the training of ministers in the Baptist seminary and about the publishing business. After reports by German brothers, the Baku pastor, Ivanov, shared some of his personal spiritual experiences. Listening to his recollections, the delegates' thoughts turned back to the apostolic times: police surveillance, five years of exile, thirty years of imprisonment - such were the milestones of Ivanov's ministry. He concluded, 'I thank my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and all western Christians for their prayers and the material support they gave us when we were in trouble.' Interpreting him was Wilhelm Fetler from Riga, a

student of Spurgeon's College.<sup>3</sup> The audience gave both rousing applause. 'At first, the expression of joy by clapping seemed strange to us,' Ivanov subsequently recalled, 'but when we got in closer touch with ordinary and candid brothers abroad, we realized that clapping was the most innocent expression of joy.'

There were a lot of extraordinary experiences for the Russians in London. The city, with a population of six million, looked very special on Sundays without the usual week-day hustle-and-bustle. People came home from church services with brightened-up faces. The parks and lanes were crowded, and gospel preachers called for salvation through Christ. As one delegate remarked, what they saw 'filled our hearts with joy and gratitude to the Lord for the freedom to spread the Good News. With sorrow did we have to remember our impoverished homeland, where no-one was allowed to witness to Christ.'

As a preacher, Charles Spurgeon was known far beyond England: no wonder many Congress participants longed to see the great evangelist's tomb. Early in the morning Pavlov, Mazayev, Ivanov, and Fetler met down in the hotel hall and went to the Norwood cemetery, where a Canadian preacher, one of Spurgeon's former pupils, awaited them. Unhurriedly he led them along the wide roadways lined with majestic tombs. Next to the cemetery chapel stood the high pedestal bearing the bust of Spurgeon, with a Bible in front of him showing this verse from the second epistle of the Apostle Paul to Timothy: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.' The brothers read that verse from the Scriptures in reverential silence. 'Dear friends', their accompanying brother said with emotion, 'he was a true servant of God, a vessel of heavenly glory; folk longed for his sermons. London's Crystal Palace gathered more than 23,000 people when Spurgeon preached there. Even now I remember the way he looked, his broad smile, and unoffending humour. He received that great wisdom from the Lord.' The brothers gently sang a thanksgiving hymn, with tears in their eyes. They prayed to God, asking Him to bless the spread of His Kingdom to the earth. Then they laid a wreath to gospel preachers at the tomb. An English religious journal reported the service at the Norwood cemetery, where Russian Baptists came to pay homage to one of the greatest preachers of all times. 'Although those who gathered had never seen or heard Spurgeon, he was not dead or forgotten. It seemed to them that the one whose name was on everybody's lips, even though no longer alive, was still talking to them. They sang and prayed... The visitors were representatives of Russia's Baptist Union; they came from over the mountains and seas, several thousand miles away, and felt it their duty to pay homage to the man, so dear to the Lord and God's people.'

The Congress opened on the evening of 28 June 1905. The huge 'Exeter Hall' was festively decorated with the national flags of the states that had sent representatives to the forum. A big map, hanging over the platform, was dotted with tiny white stars, showing Baptist churches in the various countries. When the

sounds of an anthem subsided, the Congress's Secretary, J. H. Shakespeare, addressed the audience. He said that what he saw was more like a dream than reality since it was hard to imagine that such a great idea, which had occurred to the honoured Dr Prestridge<sup>4</sup> about two years earlier could be feasible. He continued: 'Those present here represent some six million people, baptized in faith. They make up the world's largest protestant-evangelical community, which no doubt has had an enormous impact on Christianity', adding that it might be a surprise for many delegates to see so many Americans. Shakespeare declared, 'we, representatives of the largest Christian community, are called upon by Him to keep the symbolic rites of Christ in their original simplicity and are taught to carry out only what He commanded us to fulfil before His return'.

Delegates were invited to take seats on the central platform. When the brothers from Russia were introduced, the audience burst into applause. Ivanov, Mazayev, Uxkull, and Pavlov stood for quite some time, waiting for silence to set in. Pavlov was asked to make a speech. The request was unexpected and he hardly had any time to think over what he was going to say. He warned the audience:

I am very glad to see you, but I must tell you that I have never tried to speak English in public. Although I have not prepared a speech, I hope to do without an interpreter. If I speak pigeon language, I ask you in advance to forgive me. I now minister in Tiflis, Transcaucasia, and in Asia. Our work in Asia began thirty years ago. We built prayer houses but were persecuted, and I and many others were exiled to Siberia. When I returned from exile, police came and demanded that I would pledge not to preach any more. But I told them: I will not give you such a promise. Do you think I am scared? I am not and I am fully determined to go on preaching. My conscience did not let me do what police demanded from me, and I was exiled again for four years. I spent a total of eight years in exile, and when I was freed, I went to Romania and preached there. When the time came, I returned to Russia, and now I minister in Tiflis. We have gone through much suffering for Christ and have been persecuted as criminals. We have been exiled and stripped of all our rights. But we are glad that our position in Russia has become far better. We have been given more freedom, but we are not completely free yet. There are up to 20,000 Baptists in Russia, all baptized in one faith according to the Bible.

Pavlov's address aroused much interest in the Russian ministers. It was followed by a series of reports from Russian delegates, including Baron Waldemar Reinhold Alexander van Uxkull and Dei Ivanovich Mazayev, who spoke about the plight of Baptists in Russia. Mazayev said

The wide spread of the gospel has always evoked strong counteraction. Most of our best preachers were exiled, meetings were banned, but, thank God, that did not kill the fervour of God's children to serve God, and despite everything they continued their ministry for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Quite often no more than five to six people gathered at private

homes. They only came at night but police harassed them, never left them in peace so that visiting preachers would hide themselves under a bed or would escape through a window. Within a relatively brief spell, brothers experienced what the Church of Christ had gone through in its early existence. Many of them died in exile in Russia or abroad, having forgiven their oppressors.

Russia had always been something of a mystery for foreigners, so whenever a Russian delegate appeared on the rostrum, the audience were at once excited, trying to catch his every word and movement. The Russian preachers looked to many delegates like newly-arrived apostles of Christ. Even the secular press paid attention to them. One British weekly wrote:

Nothing was more impressive than the reports by Russians. There were four persons from Russia - tall, sturdy, long-bearded veterans. Mr Pavlov from Tiflis recalled in broken English how he and his friend Vasilii Ivanov had been exiled twice for their reluctance to give a written pledge not to preach. That handsome man looked like a saint with his beautiful eyes, and simple, gracious manners. He had been in thirty different prisons.

Local Baptists did all they could to enable the guests from Russia to learn as much as possible about English churches and their activities. The delegates visited an orphanage, founded by Spurgeon, where five hundred boys and girls were wonderfully looked after. They walked around a complex of small buildings, looking like family flats, and were amazed by the immaculate order everywhere. The children went out of their houses in groups to greet the delegates. They were cheerful and sang gospel songs. The Russian preachers wanted to see Hyde Park, one of London's major attractions. A meeting was scheduled there for Sunday night. Listeners sat down on the velvety green grass, and near the Reformers' Tree there was an elevated cart with a harmonium, a pulpit, and two benches. The unusual service was conducted by John Clifford. In intervals between speeches, black singers climbed up the improvised stage and, swinging lightly in rhythm, joyously sang psalms to praise the Lord.

The congress had its concluding session on 5 July. 'The choir of a thousand people was singing with mellow organ music in the background. Not only the choir but the entire audience of ten thousand people joined in chorus for the familiar refrain, 'And crown him Lord of all', resounding in the hall like a thunderstorm. I felt as in heaven', Pavlov wrote in his diary. Yet soon afterwards, when he visited Tulce on his way home, his high spirits gave way to sadness. He found the church where he had formerly ministered in utter neglect. Once there had been a Sunday school, and up to seventy gathered for services; now there was neither school nor church-goers. Even the central entrance to the prayer house was overgrown with weeds. It was distressing.

On 13 August, Pavlov arrived in Batumi. He was met at the harbour by the preacher, Babayev, and several newly converted soldiers, who had been preparing

to be baptized. They asked Pavlov to administer baptism. The sea was exceptionally calm that day. Lit by the bright sun, the young men entered the water and confessed their faith in Jesus Christ as their saviour. During the service, yet six more followed the example of the three converts. They asked God for forgiveness and wished to become church members. After their long travels, the Pavlovs returned to their home in Tiflis on 16 August 1905.

### BAPTIST CONVENTION 1911

In early March 1911, Baptists and Evangelical Christians in Russia received a message from the Baptist World Alliance President, John Clifford, announcing that a Baptist Convention would be held in the United States, 18-25 June 1911. Recollecting the past forums in London and Berlin, Clifford stressed the immense importance of a congress planned in America:

In several weeks, we will meet at a Baptist temple in Philadelphia . . . There is no doubt that we should not merely mark this momentous occasion but should make history. The convention time could be used to remember with gratitude how much our predecessors did for the Kingdom of God to rescue the fainting people, to spread the gospel, to assist the freedom of conscience, and to revive society.

As we mark three hundred years of our history, we must reassert our principles, pay tribute to our courageous pioneers and confessors, and show the forgetful world how much it owes to their devotion and courage. Over the years, we have spread Baptist communion worldwide. The ideas of Baptists are, in fact, universal; they are near to all nations since they are expressed in the living and effective Word of God. The world wants us to make this Word clearer. Our joint labour at a convention, where we will speak on behalf of many nations, empires, and republics, will accelerate the restoration of peace on Earth.

Having parted with relatives and friends, Pavlov and his wife, Alexandra Egorovna, left Odessa for a long journey. During a stop-over in Berlin, the Pavlovs visited the family of Carl Mashere, a Christian mission inspector in the Cameroons. It turned out that the host was out conducting studies at a Bible course, but his wife courteously received the guests from Russia, even though her children were down with scarlet fever. Having thanked the sister for her hospitality, the Pavlovs bade farewell. The following day they left the city. The Berlin-Vlissingen express-train carried them to the Channel. On the way to Westphalia, it slowed down and the travellers had a better view of the country out of the window. The outlook was rather grim - coal-mines, chimneys and buildings, blackened from smoke. The train then continued through forests. Sun-lit wood edges and dense groves flashed by rapidly. A massive granite stone on a mountain slope came into view. It was a monument to the legendary hero German,<sup>5</sup> famous for stopping Roman legions after they entered Germany. In the evening, conductors started shouting the names of small Dutch towns. The Netherlands were crossed in three hours. At Vlissingen,

the passengers smelled something burning. A carriage axle had caught fire, so the train was stopped, the damaged carriage was quickly uncoupled, and the passengers were transferred to the dining-car.

The Pavlovs boarded a ship at night; upon mooring at Queenborough in the Thames Estuary next morning, they found themselves within the authority of English customs officers. Two hours after their documents had been checked and the luggage had been inspected, they arrived in London by rail. The city was familiar to Pavlov from the 1905 Congress, so without much difficulty he found the Baptist Union headquarters. The Secretary, J. H. Shakespeare, was glad to meet him again. He told Pavlov that not all delegates had managed to get out of Russia freely. Fetler, for one, had faced many obstacles. As the missionary, C. T. Byford,<sup>6</sup> explained, accused of preaching among Orthodox Christians, Fetler had been required to deposit 5000 rubles surety. English brothers had helped him to raise that sum. Fetler had come with an elderly Christian lady, Yasnovsky, and they were both going to America. During their two weeks in London, the Pavlovs stayed with brother Philcox.

The British capital had a population of over seven million at the time. The London Baptist Association comprised 350 churches with a total membership of 50,000. The biggest prayer house, with seats for over three thousand, belonged to the church where Charles Spurgeon had preached. Visitors to London usually planned their time so that they could drop in there. When Pavlov and his wife entered the famous Metropolitan Tabernacle, a service was under way. The Sunday school was celebrating its anniversary with seven hundred young musicians and singers taking part. After the service, the Pavlovs went around the church and were most favourably impressed by its unpretentious but majestic style. Pavlov climbed the high rostrum from which Spurgeon had delivered sermons, which had gone round the world. Cabled to America, they had been carried in all the big newspapers. In London, leading publishers had felt it an honour to put out Spurgeon's sermons, which were sent to other countries too. At an evening service, the preacher, J. W. Ewing,<sup>7</sup> introduced Pavlov to the audience and he spoke about the hard lot of Baptists in Russia. 'Our movement can be compared to a river with lots of tributaries', he said. 'There are some differences and misunderstandings, but we try to find ways to keep the unity of spirit and peace.' Ewing addressed the young people: 'I want to tell you about something which is above all human comprehension. It is work to serve Christ', he began, 'to follow him, to transmute into His Image, and to make good. No gallant man of faith has ever felt disappointment in his service.' The meeting lasted until late at night. The young people sang, recited poetry, and asked questions.

There was a blessing in disguise for Pavlov at a session of the British Baptist Union. During a working conference, the door suddenly opened, and two familiar Russians walked in, Ivan Stepanovich Prokhanov and G. Matveev, both from St Petersburg. Although invited to the convention in Philadelphia, they were unable

to go there because they were pressed for time. London committee officials, with the Russian ministers, drew up plans to build a seminary and a sanatorium for European Baptists. Committee members prepared recommendations for the Baptist World Alliance and for the convention in Philadelphia. They recommended setting up a seminary and a sanatorium in Berlin, whilst it was anticipated that Hamburg's seminary would continue to provide for German Baptists living in Russia.

Pavlov and Prokhanov were eager to attend a Salvation Army meeting and were fortunate to see in Hyde Park amidst a crowd of speakers Salvation Army preachers, standing at a big placard fastened to the trees. The sign on the poster read: 'What's the good of conquering the whole world but harming your soul?' 'Understand and accept the love of Christ', a preacher shouted. 'Christ gave Himself to save the world. Love the Saviour. He died for our sins and wrongs.' There were representatives of many Protestant confessions preaching in Hyde Park and sermons were intermingled with political speeches. This mix of ideas was hard to grasp, but the visitors enjoyed the atmosphere of free speech.

While in London, Pavlov and Prokhanov took part in the work of a committee on evangelization in Russia. Prokhanov said in his address, 'On behalf of the Evangelical Christian Union, I express my profound sympathy with the ministry of our brother-Baptists. In relationships with kindred strands, our Union tries to follow this principle: unity on basics, freedom on secondary matters, and love on all issues.' After business sessions, Pavlov, Prokhanov, and Matveev usually hurried off to street meetings. One evening in Hyde Park, a daughter of William Booth, the Salvation Army's founder, participated in a service, reading a chapter from Peter's First Epistle and explained the most difficult verses. Brief speeches were made by other ministers. A brass band that played in intermissions between the sermons was quite an attraction for passers-by. Those touched by the gospel call stepped forward and without embarrassment kneeled down on the grass at the table where a preacher was standing.

Correspondents from a Christian journal wished to meet Pavlov. He gladly came to their editorial offices. They asked him lots of questions about the hardships of believers in Russia and about his own deprivations. Soon afterwards the journal published a brief biography of Pavlov with a photograph, penned by Charles Byford. Pavlov asked brother Philcox to accompany him to Spurgeon's Orphanage which he had first visited in 1905 and was delighted to return to. The atmosphere was as warm as in a family: instructors and pupils were like parents and children, everything rested on mutual trust and affection. The orphanage management cared about the children, advising that they should learn to do whatever would help their talents or abilities. Ewing invited Pavlov to a Sunday School lesson at his church at Rye Lane, Peckham: some four hundred children listened to the words of faith given by the guests. 'The earlier you learn to love the Lord, the better for you', Pavlov told the children. 'Life with God, service to Him will make you the happiest people on earth.' He was particularly excited to meet Thomas Spurgeon at the

Pastors' College. The great preacher's son cordially received the Russian Baptists. He had just resumed work after a long illness, so there were many visitors at the college that evening. Spurgeon spoke about the heavenly joy that stays with Christ's followers always in whatever they do. Participation in the communion at an evening service reinforced the spirit of unity between Christians from eastern and western countries.

Pentecost was celebrated in England on 23-24 May. There was much jubilation all over London. People strolled along the streets and in parks. Adults and children played football and other games on the open lawns. On holidays there were many preachers in the parks and streets of London. At a suitable place, they would set up a platform, place a pulpit and a harmonium on it and start an evangelistic service. Pavlov noted in his diary:

The English have got accustomed to all this, There is no such freedom in Germany or in our Russia, where religious gatherings under the open sky are forbidden. We admire the religious freedom in England. However, it should not be forgotten the price paid for it by the children of God. John Bunyan had to spend twelve years in prison for daring to preach the gospel without permission from a bishop. Perhaps, we shall also have to suffer a lot before we see complete freedom, when gospel preaching is not regarded as a criminal offence, subject to punishment.

Eventually the day came when brother Philcox parted with the Pavlovs at Waterloo station, from which they went to Southampton, where the ship *President Lincoln* was moored ready to sail for America. Aboard the ocean-going ship, the Pavlovs heard native Russian spoken and saw the dear faces of fellow country-men. Pavlov and his wife were immediately surrounded by the Stepanov brothers, Golyaev, Ivanov, Balikhin, and Kushnarev. Twenty-six Baptists from Russia were on their way to the convention. The *President Lincoln* weighed anchor at eleven o'clock in the evening on 25 May. Next morning, England's shores were still in sight. Gradually land and the last beacon disappeared from view, and the glassy surface of the water glistened in the sun. The calm cheered the voyagers up. Nearly half the second-class passengers were Russians. Each morning after breakfast Christians gathered for a service conducted in Russian and German. A Swedish missionary, Tieder, just back from Tibet, excitingly recalled the customs and traditions of the people there. Several days of placid sailing changed to gust and rain. Heavy rolling made many folk sea-sick. Services were cancelled because of the stormy weather, but resumed once it improved. Charles Byford sent a cable of greeting to the English delegates aboard the steamship *Ceramonia*, which was sailing three hundred miles behind *President Lincoln*. The British promptly replied with a cordial greeting. Then at last, tired by eleven days of travel, the seafarers saw the twinkling lights of the New York suburbs. The ship entered the mouth of the Hudson river and cast anchor at Staten Island.

After completing all the formalities, the Russians travelled to Grace Temple, the

biggest and most ornate Baptist church in Philadelphia. They lunched in a hall of the university that functioned on the church premises. The interior of that unique temple was really exquisite. The stained glass-windows showed various Christian symbols and portraits of some of the great men of faith. The soft seats were arranged in a semi-circle. The floors were covered with beautiful carpets. A new organ stood in the centre of the hall, its numerous pipes glittering. Both the church and university had been built with donations from believers, at Dr Russel Convel's initiative. During the civil war, General Convel had fought for the liberation of black Americans; subsequently, he had been a correspondent for major newspapers, and had then turned to work for Christ. A university leader, Convel preached to a big church: Grace Temple had always been full. Apart from services, various Christian conferences and conventions had been held there. In the evening, the Russians attended a meeting to discuss the possibility of admitting the so-called Free Baptists to the Baptist World Alliance. By tradition, the Americans met the guests with stormy applause. The Russians looked a bit embarrassed by such an unusual expression of joy, but later they got used to it.

On the eve of the convention, the Russian delegation attended a Slavic conference held in a Philadelphian Baptist church, where the preacher was Gustav Alf, a Polish missionary's son, engaged in evangelization among the Slavic nations. When he had visited Odessa two years earlier, he had preached the gospel there. What could be more pleasing than to meet old friends from over the ocean? Western Slavs asked Pavlov and Stepanov to speak about spiritual work in Russia. All who visit Philadelphia want to see its town hall. In the evening, greetings to participants in the Baptist Convention flashed on the façade of that distinguished building which was open to the city's guests. A group of Russian delegates sang a few gospel songs there. Outside a Russian Orthodox church nearby, Russian ministers conducted a brief service, which gathered a crowd.

The convention opened on 6 June: Grace Temple's hall was filled to capacity. The singing of hymns, the reading of the gospel, and the prayers made the delegates and guests feel as brothers and sisters in spirit. Philadelphia's Mayor Reyburn wished the great assembly of Baptists success and prosperity, observing that the Baptists in America enjoyed influence and respect. During a traditional roll-call, two ministers - Fetler and Golyaev - spoke on the Russian Baptist Union's behalf. Fetler gave a brief report on the spiritual awakening in St Petersburg: 'Our church has grown to three hundred members over the three years of its existence. At present, we are building a prayer house. But we are short of funds to complete the construction.' The Union's Chairman, Ilya Andreevich Golyaev, greeted the convention on behalf of the 50,000 Christians-Baptists in Russia with emotion: 'I have been serving at a church in the town of Balashov for twenty-one years now. Our church has one hundred members. It is very hard for me to express what I feel on seeing for the first time ever such a huge gathering of God's children.'

A speech by the Baptist World Alliance's President, John Clifford, was the

highlight of the second day of the convention. He focused on the nature and tasks of universal contact among believers, beginning:

Dear friends, We have gathered in the name of and by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are with the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit. We are united with millions of our brother Baptists scattered around the world. Never before have we felt our true unity. We breath the lively air, inspired by dedication to and dependence on God, by the faith in the power of the gospel, by the loyalty to the principles that bind us together. This is none other than God's house, the gate to heaven. The post, the press, the telegraph and telephone, the railway and sea transport have connected us physically. St Petersburg today is in Philadelphia, even though the brothers have arrived with great difficulties. The Swedes and Norwegians shake hands with New Zealanders. The French and Germans sense brotherhood in Christ. Our union is feasible.

After recalling the basic principles of Baptists about Christ's supremacy in spiritual and church life and about the Scriptures' highest authority, Clifford spoke about the renewal of the church through Protestantism:

Christianity is indebted for its existence to ineradicable Protestants. It would have stayed in the swaddle of Judaism, had God's spirit not directed the Apostle Peter to protest against legal constraints. Christianity would not have become the universal religion, if the Apostle Paul had not resisted the advocates of racial religious supremacy.

Lollards were Protestants, Jan Hus and John Wycliffe preached the gospel, which was held back through the official church's fault. Luther burned a papal bull, thereby showing how to save the truths proclaimed by the Reformation. It is our responsibility to preserve the invaluable gospel of Christ and add the spiritual enthusiasm of people to this capital. Perpetually vigorous believers often accomplish much more than men with encyclopedic knowledge but without the fire of faith and the power of love.

The best designed machine will stand still unless steam is let into it. The knowledge of gospel fundamentals would be useless without a dedicated effort to save people. Come and help us - that's the call reaching our ear from all over the world, especially from South East Europe. Communities of faith have sprung up in Hungary and Austria, in Moravia and Bulgaria, in Bohemia, Bosnia, and Russia. Although they are persecuted, they accept with gladness the pillage of their estates and courageously spread the fire of the gospel near and far. Humbly shall we assume responsibility for the guidance of the church in the future and go forward, each working at his place.

Pioneers never get good pay, but they do what is most needed. Do not wait for others. If we wait for others, we shall never get going ourselves. Down with fear. Be ready to take up the cross and shun the humiliation. Be true to Christ and His holy gospel. This way we shall be able to lead the world to light and to the glory of His redemptive love.

Clifford's passionate speech enraptured the audience. When he finished, the

delegates gave him a standing ovation. Clifford stood motionless, bending his grey-haired head in gratitude.

In their words of faith on the same day, Peters<sup>8</sup> and Robertson<sup>9</sup> focused on various theological themes. Peters claimed that the gospel was enough to save each man. Robertson observed the sad fact that people brought up in the historic churches found it hard to accept Baptist convictions, especially the denial of baptismal regeneration. On the third day of the convention, delegates received a tremendous spiritual uplift from a sermon by Thomas Phillips<sup>10</sup> of England. His subject was 'The Lord Gives Grace and Glory'. As Pavlov remarked, Phillips spoke 'with the inspiration of an orator, with the analysis of a philosopher, and with the imagination of a poet'. Christian ministry revives the world only when it receives grace from above. Phillips drew many apt comparisons and cited examples to prove his point:

The New Testament's Church has forged ahead with royal splendour. Its glory has proceeded from grace. The grace of Christ reawakened the Apostle Paul for life, and he planted the seeds of Christianity. Everything best in our contemporary life is rooted in the Reformation, which became possible thanks to the comprehension by Martin Luther of a doctrine on the full forgiveness of sins by grace. The light of gospel revival has dawned on two great lands. The Church's lofty mission is to make God's grace known to the needy world, and when the Church does so truly and worthily, then people flock into it like doves. For the Apostle Paul, a Christian is a new creature, a new kind of man different from the world as a lily is different from the nettle. This breed of people builds up the church all the time. We see new people in the Apostle Paul and the Apostle John, in Francis of Assisi, and in Spurgeon. The sons of grace are recognized always and everywhere. There can be no roses without fragrance, nor can there be forests without singing birds or God's grace without saints.

This inspiring meditation upon Christ's teaching filled the delegates with the spirit.

On its fourth day, the convention discussed the Slavic nations' spiritual needs. Words of greeting came from Hungarian, Slovak, and Czech brothers. 'In Hus's time, our ancestors sent missionaries to England', a Slovak delegate, G. Chapek, declared. 'Now, it is your turn to send missionaries to my country.' When F. B. Meyer, who chaired the session introduced Vasilli Gurevich Pavlov, the audience burst into applause. 'I have been given ten minutes to tell you about evangelization in Russia, a too brief spell to learn about the stupendous work carried out by Russian Christians-Baptists for more than forty years', Pavlov began. 'For this reason, I will limit myself to telling this great assembly only about my job in spreading the gospel among Russians. The Lord gave me the privilege of being one of the first heralds of the truth in our vast empire.' The hushed audience listened keenly to the Russian minister's simple story of the hardships and persecutions he had experienced in his ministry. That was the hard lot not only of Pavlov but of many other true followers of Christ in Russia. 'In many places, our brothers and

sisters in Christ have been beaten and have been barred from meeting. For instance, in Siberia, gunmen broke into a brother's house where a service was under way. They opened fire to disperse the crowd, and threatened the host', Pavlov said, recalling a case in the town of Batalpashinsk, the Kuban region, where trouble-makers disrupted the funeral of the preacher, Yurchenko, who had died in the wake of an attack on him during a sermon in a prayer house. Brothers had to carry his body fifteen miles away and bury it on Mamontov's estate.

Evangelization in Russia, in Pavlov's view, could be more successful, if their Baptist Union's basic needs were satisfied:

We need a seminary to educate preachers. We need prayer houses, but we lack funds to build them. Then, we need a book publishing society to print and distribute our confessional literature. The first step has been taken: we already have a functioning book publishing committee, and I am its secretary. Our country is a huge missionary field, comprising people from nominal Christians to Buddhists, mahometans, and pagans. We turn our eyes to our brothers over the ocean and in England that they might help us in our battle for the cause of Christ.

After Pavlov's address, J. H. Shakespeare introduced all the messengers from Russia to the assembly. They walked out onto the stage with dignity and lined up there. Pointing to these Russian brothers and sisters, Shakespeare declared:

We have read about our martyrs for faith in England - John Smyth and others. We wish we could look in their faces, but that is impossible. But we are glad to be able to look into the faces of contemporary sufferers for the faith. Here are representatives of a militant church. For the sake of Jesus Christ, they have endured beatings, imprisonment in dungeons, they have lost their estates and have survived separation from their wives and children. Many of them bear wounds for our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us learn from them how to endure anything for the gospel's sake. As we know that Christ's followers are predestined to suffer, we hope that the Russian government will realize that Baptists are totally harmless, that they are sober, hard-working, and peace-loving people.

On the same day, C. T. Byford and J. W. Ewing re-emphasized the need to set up a seminary for students from Russia in Europe and were enthusiastically supported by the delegates. When deacons walked around the hall to raise donations for the seminary, nearly everyone contributed: \$75,000 were raised for the blessed project. The local Christian press covered the convention sympathetically. Of the many touching scenes and experiences at the Baptist World Alliance convention, not a single one surpassed the testimony by the former Russian exiles to their faith, wrote one American Baptist journal. The hall was filled to capacity. By his emphatic speech, the preacher, J. H. Shakespeare, prepared the audience and then introduced these heroes and heroines one by one, with brief profiles, and Dr Clifford and Dr Meyer extended their hands to each of them. Their greeting was inspirational and

blessed.

After lunch, delegates visited Crozer's seminary. The founder, John Crozer, had donated \$800,000 in cash and property for Christian education. At an evening session, a new president of the Baptist World Alliance was elected - Dr Robert Stewart MacArthur.<sup>11</sup> All the delegates and guests stood when this respected elder greeted them. Yet another historic event took place at the end of that memorable day. At a request from Russia's Evangelical Christians, led by Prokhanov, their church was admitted to the Baptist World Alliance. Although Prokhanov himself was absent, he was elected a vice-president of the Alliance, while from Russia's Baptists, Ilya Andreewitch Golyaev was also nominated as a vice-president. Prokhanov and his assistants G. M. Matveev, F. F. Sheneman, and I. K. Verbitsky had taken part in the preparatory sessions, held in London on the eve of the convention. At those meetings, Prokhanov had outlined the Evangelical Christians' position on the unity issue. Although Evangelical Christians wanted to stay spiritually independent, they joyously accepted unity with all Christians baptized in faith, Prokhanov said. Evangelical Christians found this unity was possible thanks to the federal structure that made up the basis of the Baptist World Alliance, making it possible to combine unity and freedom. The newspaper *Morning Star*, which regularly updated its readers about events at the convention in Philadelphia, described the admittance of the Evangelical Christians to the Baptist World Alliance as a momentous occasion. 'From now on Russian Evangelical Christians will be part of the world fellowship of Christians baptized in faith equal with other Baptists since the Baptist World Alliance is a federal union', the newspaper wrote. This suggested that it should be possible and even necessary to set up in Russia a federal conjunctive committee as the First All-Russia Congress of Evangelical Christians had proposed. However, the leaders of Russia's Christians-Baptists were not happy with the World Alliance's decision to admit the Evangelical Christians.

At the closing sessions of the convention on Sunday, 12 June, words of faith came from American and English preachers. 'There is a turning point for European nations today', the English preacher, J. W. Ewing, declared. 'The Europeans are awakening from long lethargy at a time of spiritual and political tyranny. Calls are being made for political and confessional freedom, for good will and love for God. All over the world, lights are lit in the windows of friendly Baptist churches, carrying a ray of hope to many peoples.' American ministers familiarized convention guests with some church statistics in the United States. The number of Baptists there totalled some 5.38 million in 1911. Baptist churches were foremost among the Protestant congregations there, and Baptists in the USA ran some ten seminaries, three theological universities and colleges, and a number of other institutions of higher education. Baptists were united in two conventions: Southern and Northern. The Baptist World Alliance had a membership of 6.28 million in 1911.

Once the convention was over, official visits began. The Russian delegates

travelled to Washington for a meeting with the United States President, William Taft. On the way to the White House, the delegation dropped in on the Russian Embassy, where a deputy ambassador treated them with much respect and was keen to hear all their impressions. 'The press here writes a lot about the persecutions of Christians-Baptists in Russia', he said. 'Was it true that some of them had only been allowed to go to America on bail?' 'What we reported at the convention related by and large to the past', Pavlov replied, 'but even now persecutions have not stopped.' 'In fact, I am under investigation now,' Fetler added, 'for this reason, they let me go on bail of 5000 rubles. However, the newspapers clearly put on too much paint and exaggerated what we said. As Christians, we bear no malice against the powers that be and are ready to pray for their spiritual enlightenment and wisdom.' At the White House an officer accompanied them to the staircase that led to the presidential suite. There were about a thousand people in the banqueting hall. President Taft first received Dr Clifford and Dr Meyer. Then the Russians approached Taft one after another. Each named himself to an aide who stood near the President, repeating their names for him. Taft greeted every one of them with a dazzling smile and firm hand-shake. The guests were shown around the Capitol building and the public library on that extremely hot day in Washington. They spent only one day in the US capital and then left for New York. There the Pavlovs parted with the Russian brothers and went to Toronto, where they had been invited by the brother, I. A. Kolesnikov. They then stopped in Buffalo and stayed with a pastor Miller for a week-end. Pavlov went to a local church and met with Slavic missionaries there. His report was listened to with interest. He worked for a week at the Seamen's Temple, which united English, Russian, and Latvian communities, taking part in meetings and preaching for the homeless. There were conversions among the motley audience: ardently the converts bore witness to Christ and pledged themselves to Him.

On 9 July, Pavlov left hospitable America. The journey back home proceeded calmly. One thing was bad: there had been no announcement of public worship. One day, a neatly dressed pastor-like gentleman came up to the Pavlovs and said, 'Would you like to go to a service?' 'Oh, yes. We were just talking about that', the Pavlovs replied eagerly. There turned out to be a special hall for Christian assemblies aboard the ship. The gentleman introduced himself as Friedrich Blecher, Secretary of the German Union of Young Christian Activists. Pavlov recognized in him a true Christian. They agreed to conduct services in turn, and this made the long voyage more pleasing. They hardly noticed time passing. The ship anchored off England and France, and then, on 20 July, after eleven days of travel, it entered the Cuxhaven harbour near Hamburg. There Pavlov met his German friends from the past. He recalled Johann Oncken, from whom he had learned the basics of theology and who had ordained him as a missionary. The Pavlovs spent a couple of days in Hamburg. On 24 July, they were back in Odessa, strolling along the familiar, boisterous streets.

## NOTES

\* This article is translated from part of a biography of V. G. Pavlov published in serial form in the Russian Baptist journal, *Братский Вестник*. All quotations are translations back to English from the Russian.

- 1 A verst is a distance rather less than a kilometre.
- 2 Granville Augustus William Waldegrave, third Baron Radstock (1833-1913), was converted while serving in the Crimean War. A Plymouth Brother, he was active as an evangelist among the aristocracy at St Petersburg.
- 3 Fetler was the son of a Latvian Baptist pioneer, who after his training at Spurgeon's College hoped to go the China as a missionary, but was persuaded to undertake the pastorate of a small Lettish church in St Petersburg. As an evangelist he could draw large crowds. E. A. Payne, *Out of Great Tribulation*, 1974, p.21.
- 4 Dr J. N. Prestridge of Kentucky, editor of the *Baptist Argus*, later to become the *Baptist World*.
- 5 Arminius (c.18 BC - AD 17), chief of the Cherusci, had Roman citizenship and had served in the Roman auxiliary forces, but from AD 9 he led the struggle against the Roman invasion of Germany, destroying three Roman legions in the

Teutoburgian Forest.

- 6 C. T. Byford (1872-1948) was born in the USA of British parents but grew up in London. After spells in Australia and with the China Inland Mission he held three pastorates in England before spending four years from 1910 as Continental Commissioner of the Baptist World Alliance, seeking to help churches oppressed by majority churches and secular authorities. He was the first Central Area Superintendent, 1915-20. See E. A. Payne, *Out of Great Tribulation: Baptists in the USSR*, 1974, p.20f, and *The Baptist Union: A Short History*, 1958, p.263.
- 7 Baptist Union President in 1912 and the first Metropolitan Superintendent, 1915-34.
- 8 We have been unable to trace anyone of this name in the official records - Eda.
- 9 Professor A. T. Robertson of the Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.
- 10 Actually a Welshman, Phillips was minister of Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church 1905-28. After this powerful address, he was nicknamed 'Grace and Glory Phillips'.
- 11 The confidant of US presidents, MacArthur was for many years the pastor of Calvary Baptist Church, New York.

**VLADIMIR POPOV**, *Christian journalist*

translated by **ALEXANDER ZACHAROV**, *a member of V. G. Pavlov's family.*

\* \* \* \* \*

### TRADITION AND REVOLUTION

#### Politics, Literature and Religion in John Bunyan's England

The International John Bunyan Society will hold its first North American conference at the University of Alberta Campus and the Banff Centre for the Fine Arts from 28 September to 1 October 1995. The deadline for papers is 15 March 1995. This will be an interdisciplinary gathering of scholars from departments of History, English and Religious Studies, providing a forum for an exchange of information. The focus of these discussions will be the unique tension between traditional and revolutionary forces in Bunyan's England. Papers that address *either* Bunyan's life, faith or literature directly *or* other literary, historical, political or theological concerns from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries will be welcomed. Please send two copies of 10-page papers to David Gay, The Department of English, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB, T6G 2E5, Canada. For further information contact Greg Randall (conference/society), North American Baptist College, 11525-23 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T6J 4T3, Canada, or through e-mail, [grandall@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca](mailto:grandall@gpu.srv.ualberta.ca); or Arlette Zinck (conference), The Department of English, The University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB T6G 2E5, Canada.