

# **Changing Mentalities: Inter-Relationships between Mennonites and Slavic Evangelicals in Siberia and Central Asia**

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This paper draws attention to mentalities that change over time. It is an effort to point out how much the dramatic history of the Soviet Union in the twentieth century has left behind a legacy that affects thinking. Yet throughout the Soviet era (as well as before and since) regional contexts differed greatly. It was never true, for example, that Russian Orthodoxy predominated everywhere. To make sense of Russian Orthodox history, requires mapping its growth and development from initial beginnings around the Black Sea, to Kievan Rus, to Muscovy and St. Petersburg. By 1800 already, the Russian Empire was sufficiently multi-confessional to affect imperial policy. Similarly, the Mennonite presence inside that territory, or the presence of what here are designated Slavic Evangelicals (even if Latvian, Armenian or Georgian) had its own changing map. Thus for example, the character

of these religious groups in Novo Rossiia (New Russia as it was known, now as southeastern Ukraine) was affected by specific types of state administrative structures, and by linkages to western Europe which differed when such religious groups later settled in western Siberia. The examples of difference are too many to list here, but the Mennonite reader may think of the differences in way of life, religious practices and ties to neighboring ethnic groups by recalling the unique histories of colonies along the Volga (1860ff), Orenburg region (1890ff), around Omsk (1907ff) and Slavgorod (1910ff).

Elsewhere I have proposed a “post-Gulag theology” for thinking about the theological meaning of the Russian Mennonite story, not only for Russian Mennonites, but as a helpful thought paradigm for Anabaptist-Mennonites around the world.<sup>1</sup> The intent here is not to construct a detailed story of the Mennonite and Slavic Evangelical experience in Siberia during the twentieth century, since much has already been written. Yet many more archival resources need to be examined and discussed before one can hope to tell a more definitive history. Rather, by drawing attention to mentality changes, I am seeking to highlight more than the Gulag factor of that earlier article in order to help us grasp essential elements of that larger Evangelical and Christian story that merits its own categories.

The elements chosen to highlight here could be described as several recurring themes and specific religious emphases, where standard words such as worship, revival or family life can only evoke a sense of content upon describing its character and color in specific contexts and times. Official authorities tended to resist the emergence of the Evangelical traditions as strange and undesired western imports. Specifically, the German Mennonite colonists were importing western Reformation era Christianity to an Orthodox world, and proselytizing among Orthodox people. What that foreign import charge meant around 1800, or in the 1860s, or during the first decade of Soviet power was not uniform. Among the reasons why the Russian Mennonite communities as a western Christian expression have changed over time is due to their isolation from close contacts with fellow believers around the world (especially between 1930 and 1989), and due to unusually close integration with Soviet Evangelicals. Secondly, by transferring a cultural code word often used for American history, namely the image of a melting pot of cultures, to the experiences of Christians of all stripes within the Soviet Union, I seek to indicate how the Soviet melting pot experience reshaped the Evangelical communities, the specific focus here. The third cultural feature is the more subtle impact of a Slavic spirituality, here not really developed, but merely noted as a necessary backdrop. It is the counter argument to the western import theme, by illustrating the obvious point that the entire religious

dissident tradition claimed a common seed bed with Orthodoxy, all of them celebrating the Millennium of Christianity in 1988 as common heritage.

Finally, by highlighting common themes from a series of recent books about Mennonites and Evangelical Baptists in Siberia and parts of central Asia, we gain a sense of the content of their faith mentality after so many decades of living in settings of aggressive political and social hostility to Christianity. The most striking themes used to depict the mentality involve frequent references to migration and new beginnings, frequent times of persecution and times of revival, shifts from worship in secret and under modest circumstances to public missionary initiatives, and hovering throughout as alternative option, the emigration option.

Before turning to the Siberian setting more specifically, we should note that new historiography on the Evangelicals across the former Soviet Union as a whole has been generating alternative ways of interpreting the history. What follows below pre-supposes its general contours, while implicitly saying that Moscow-, St. Petersburg- or Kiev-driven sources need to be supplemented by what we are learning about Evangelical history in Siberia. Briefly stated with select examples, it is nevertheless striking to observe how naturally the German Baptists and Russian Mennonites are integrated into that history. This was already the case in the official history of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), published in 1989.<sup>2</sup> It was produced under Soviet conditions, so that “integration” was more easily ignored as necessitated by political conditions. Not so a series of conferences held annually at Donetsk Christian University (2007-10) titled “Remembering the Whole Story (*Pomnyi ves put'*)” which focused on the Evangelical Christian Baptist traditions, yet where Mennonites were frequently referred to as if part of the tradition. Similarly, some of the presenters at a historical-theological conference to celebrate the 140<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Evangelical Christian Baptist Union kept noting the many times of inter-action, or reciprocal influence.<sup>3</sup>

This contrasts with a long established Mennonite tendency to tell a Russian Mennonite story, heavy on achievements in agriculture and related industries to demonstrate the worthy contribution the minority ethnic-confessional community made to Russian developments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>4</sup> The spiritual/religious dimension has been told as a separate story, including the separation into two traditions (denominations in an American sense): Brethren and Churchly (Tserkovnyi) Mennonites.<sup>5</sup> The continuous history of the Russian Mennonites, as church tradition and as people, during its second Russian century (1889-1989) is less well known, especially in English speaking circles. Monographs in German and Russian provide

a fuller picture, as well as numerous articles in journals (mostly in English until recently) on parts of that story, but it has not shaped global Mennonite theologizing.<sup>6</sup>

That is particularly troubling to me when thinking as a theologian, since the theological reshaping Russian Mennonites underwent during their second century seems a more suitable paradigm for self-understanding among Mennonites around the world, than does the rather thin “core values” framework, now widely used in the Mennonite World Conference network.<sup>7</sup> It seeks to extrapolate foundational ideas from the beginnings in the sixteenth century, drawn mostly from a Swiss/south German context.<sup>8</sup> That context differed from the larger Anabaptist movement in the Low Countries, which is the primary historic tradition of the Russian Mennonites. Some of the reasons for that tendency to overlook the northern Anabaptist tradition, and the resistance to think through a now five hundred year history of changing contexts and theological adaptations, has more to do with an American culture of “historical amnesia,” which is the current context for the shaping of the Mennonite theological discourse.

### **Mennonite and Slavic Evangelicals as Religious Modernizers**

It is when we ponder the broad social and religious trajectories of five hundred years, specifically the modernity project, that key elements of the inter-relationships between Mennonites and Slavic Evangelicals, and their significance for Russian religious history in general, come into clearer focus. The Mennonites who survived the early persecution years of the Reformation, especially those in Flemish regions, entered into a tradition of migration for the sake of survival, both economic and religious survival. Even the Russian Mennonite experience of the last century was a pilgrim story, following the advancing frontiers of settlement, then came more moving, thanks to deportation and other involuntary migrations.

Hence the trail of developing skills in reclaiming land, and the inventions/production of tools for modernized agriculture, has been and remains a constant setting for developing the character of a free church tradition. The religious features and the social-economic characteristics were intertwined. For example, Bonch-Bruевич was only one of the more prominent and influential observers among Marxist revolutionaries to value the industrious, moral qualities of sectarian villages (including Mennonites) and to seek to utilize them for the grand Bolshevik project, only to discover that efforts to free them from their religious superstitions undercut the foundations of their social character. A fascinating article by Alexander Klibanov,

Bonch-Bruevich's most prominent successor as Soviet authority on sectarians, argued for the persistent reality that "the philosopher's stone of spiritual Christianity" (his persistent phrase) was "the spiritual freedom of the believer." The sectarians' strong work ethic that so impressed all who noticed it was "based on the affirmation of the intrinsic value of the believer."<sup>9</sup>

Economic and social concerns were very important from the beginning of the various Anabaptist movements of the sixteenth century, as Arnold Snyder has stressed in his widely cited *Anabaptist History and Theology*.<sup>10</sup> The shape such social concerns took was determined by the contexts within which the migrating church communities found themselves. The organized mutual aid of the Dutch Mennonites was a practical response to assisting the persecuted Anabaptists of Switzerland. They assisted them with travel money and organization to provide trans-Atlantic travel, while also engaging in legal advocacy for them because neither activity was protected by law at the time. Similarly, an internal system of aid to widows and orphans, also a form of mutual aid which was begun in Prussia, was developed more extensively in Russia because governmental or feudal forms of protection were unavailable to Mennonites as a sect. The need to establish practical structures for communication between widely separated Mennonite settlements in order to sustain some form of cohesion and mutual assistance, e.g. in purchasing land for daughter colonies, can also be seen as a form of path finding for the free church way of functioning.

In her recent history of the Russian Baptists between 1905 and 1929, Heather Coleman points out that Slavic Evangelicals had caught the attention of the informed public, the intelligentsia admiring their democratic skills, and the tsarist government fearing those skills.<sup>11</sup> Those Slavic Evangelicals soon found themselves in forced migrations and their leaders sent to prison and exile in Siberia. There were also Russian and Ukrainian families of Baptists or Evangelical Christians coming to eastern Russia in the Ural Mountain region in the hope of less harassment by Orthodox mission staff. They then moved on to Siberia for greater freedoms. Like the Mennonites, they were seeking out locales to which the reach of central government had not yet come, so that greater reliance on self-managed institutions caused their democratic ways to be noticed. A key argument that Klibanov stressed, as have many others, was that Siberia had functioned as a place of refuge for Russia's religious dissidents over the centuries, the most prominent being the Old Believers.<sup>12</sup>

## Mentality Shifts in Stages

With our focus here on Siberia and central Asia, which was initially combined under a rather loose Siberian governmental administration, it may be helpful to think in terms of some conceptual shifts taking place in stages. For Mennonites, there was a necessary conceptual shift after 1865 when colony and congregation were no longer integrated. The state recognition of the Mennonite Brethren necessitated a separating out of the specifically churchly issues from those of daily colony life. The colonies in Omsk, or similar forms of contiguous settlement in Slavgorod, or the settlers in the Altai in general were less exclusively Mennonite, yet mutual assistance among Mennonites was still an expectation, and worship life was organized by denomination, though in the twentieth century inter-Mennonite religious structures (an All-Russia Conference of Mennonites) for common action toward the authorities was restored. There was also a related conceptual shift as gradually Mennonites made their living outside agriculture. With the breakup of the colonies in favor of collective farms and state farms, Mennonites also began urbanizing. This was particularly true following the end of the *Spetskomandantura* in 1956, when the survivors of the deportations, repatriations and the Gulag sought work where they could, usually in factories in cities. Increasingly the communal bond was primarily the religious fellowship, legal or non-legal, which functioned as social network.

Since it was legally impossible to reorganize established Mennonite denominations after World War II, being limited to registering a mere handful of congregations as local and autonomous societies after 1967 until 1988 when immigration fever caught all Mennonites; Mennonites remaining in the Soviet Union found themselves relying on the Slavic Evangelicals whom they had earlier assisted during their illegal existence. The form that mental adjustment took, was to organize German-speaking sub-groups as part of officially recognized united Evangelical Christian Baptist congregations. In places the pragmatic arrangements to fit into Soviet demands were the primary feature, in other places common experiences of suffering for the basics of the faith had resulted in culturally integrated congregations, all now speaking the dominant language, namely Russian.

Although this paper will not develop the broad arguments, it is nevertheless essential to keep in mind the broad features of the modernity project, and to take note of which religious communities seemed more adept at negotiating the ensuing centuries. Recent writing on the Reformation era has drawn attention to ways in which the Reformed (Calvinist) tradition, starting already in its second generation, turned out to be more influential than did Lutheranism.<sup>13</sup> In general terms,

this includes what Max Weber observed, when arguing his thesis for the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. My point here is to draw attention to the fact that the Anabaptist traditions emerged in areas where the emerging Reformed (Calvinist) tradition was finding its way. Anabaptists demanded more rigorous communal disciplines, greater distancing from state or civil authority interference than did the Reformed, but nevertheless, both theologies took lived ethics seriously. Since the Baptists celebrated their 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2009, it is worth noting that their first leaders had associated with Dutch Mennonites before returning to England, and drew their converts and theology from the increasingly more prominent Calvinists in Britain. That affinity to the Reformed traditions, both for Mennonites and Baptists, helps account for Mennonites' close affinity to Moravian Brethren settlements. Parts of its Hussite tradition also adopted the *Confessio Helvetica* in the sixteenth century; key leaders of the twentieth century Russian Baptist Union (of which a large wing of the Mennonites became a part) declared their historic theological ties to the Hussites, a Slavic-Germanic mix. Those are among the longer linkages that enable one to notice the commonalities Mennonites and Slavic Baptists discovered during the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup>

When considering the twentieth century of Siberian history, several distinctive developments force a modification of the advancing frontier thesis, compared to the westward move across USA at the same time, even though the steady process of establishing agricultural settlements eastward, must be kept in mind. The settlement process involved the steady expansion of the tsarist governing system until 1917; it was a centralized approach to imperial rule not as suited to settling the frontier as were the democratic and localized government forms that developed in USA. The point was imperial dominance, but the approach involved incorporating local tribal groups and ethnic minorities, whereas in USA the native population was largely cleared out as the settlers moved westward. A key factor for this was the missionary approach of the Russian Orthodox Church, which was much more open to allowing cultural adaptation as natives were converted to some form of Orthodoxy.<sup>15</sup> But with the Russian Revolution, came the all out attack on the structures of Orthodoxy, which included ending its missionary relationships. Thus with the onset of the massive industrialization of western Siberia continuing past Lake Baikal, an industrial working class began to constitute the major demographic shift; the series of Soviet five year plans involved large movements of people. The industrial cities that emerged, or that transformed grain elevator towns into manufacturing centers, did not include the presence of multiple Orthodox churches. Instead what emerged was what Sergei Filatov has referred to as the Atheist belt, a citizenry living with religious amnesia.<sup>16</sup>

Two observations are relevant for our purposes. It turned out that the sectarians, including the Slavic Evangelicals, but also the Mennonites, were more resilient in the face of systematic destruction of a hierarchical church structure, since their structures were democratic and not dependent on state support. Given the many involuntary migrations that served to make the Stalinist industrial explosion a success, the new population can readily be described as the disinherited, who have often been the seed bed for sectarian growth.

Throughout the twentieth century, the region around Omsk and extending to neighboring northern Kazakhstan, was an unusually active center for Slavic Evangelicalism. The dispersion of the sectarian leaders to Siberia helps account for this, others came more voluntarily on the grounds that there was more opportunity, both for making a living in agriculture and related businesses, and to exist in a region less dominated by Orthodoxy. Several individual careers illustrate the phenomenon. Although the first president of the Russian Baptist Union when it formed in 1886 was a Mennonite named Johann Wieler, its importance is easily over-stated. It was the fostering of inter-Evangelical relationships by means of organized church unions, and through periodic gatherings of leaders for consultations, that were the major contributions of the German speaking Mennonites and Baptists to Evangelical formation and growth.<sup>17</sup> For developments in eastern Russia, Siberia and parts of central Asia, the Mazaev and Vins families can serve to illustrate reciprocal influences between Evangelicals and Mennonites.

Dei Mazaev became president of the union. He had a strong belief in structure and organization, and is often described as a Baptist pope given the way he directed fellow delegates when meeting for consultation with Evangelical Christians, Molokany and western Mennonites and Baptists. His brother Gavriil is remembered more for his long term leadership in Kazakhstan and Siberia. Gavriil and Dei's father was a Molokan leader, who discouraged their new found enthusiasm for the aggressive evangelism and organizing of Slavic Baptists, so it is likely they sensed a need to show their difference from Molokan forms of Christianity which they considered in need of renewal, somewhat like Mennonite Brethren in some regions who were actively dismissive of the "old" Mennonites, the Kirchengemeinden. It is more obvious, when observing what was happening from a comparative and scholarly perspective, that the Mazaevs and the Brethren were modernizers. For the Mennonite Brethren, this was expressed in a polity that was more democratic, abandoning the role of the Aeltester (a bishop or overseer) in favor of ordained ministers, the many active evangelists not necessarily ordained, and the expectations that all believers, males in particular, be committed to the priesthood of all believers. In the



Slavic Baptist case, some rejected the Orthodox hierarchical structure while others, like the Mazaevs, nevertheless thought in management terms, efficient outreach and systematic building up of church unions. Striking in Ivan Dik's survey of Evangelicals in Kazakhstan is how frequently Gavriil Mazaev was credited with leading not only a central urban church but the growing network of village congregations through crises.<sup>18</sup>

The other illustration from the Omsk region, eventually also the Siberian Union of Baptists, concerns the leadership role of Peter J. Vins. Raised in the Mennonite community from the Ukraine that began Mennonite settlements in Omsk first forming churches in 1907, Vins became involved in evangelism among neighboring Slavic communities. He was able to attend the German Baptist theological seminary in Rochester, New York. On his return, now certain of Baptist theology (and less concerned about conscientious objection to military service, one might add) he returned with a heightened sense of mission. He began in the Far East where he helped organize a group of churches into a union. He then returned to his fellow brethren in western Siberia where he became a leader in the Omsk region. Then he became leader in the Siberian Union, and in turn influenced the struggles for the proper approach to church building and evangelistic outreach at national congresses held in St. Petersburg and Moscow.<sup>19</sup> Sharing financially supported evangelists who could be Evangelical Christians, Baptists or Mennonites, was a visible form of the active inter-relationship between Slavic Evangelicals and Mennonites in western Siberia during the "golden age" of expansive growth.<sup>20</sup> They also cooperated in literature distribution, turning the Mennonite Raduga Press, with its branch in St. Petersburg officially led by the Evangelical Christian leader Ivan Prokhanov, into a publishing house for all Evangelicals.<sup>21</sup>

Generally speaking, the Reformation traditions (Reformed, Anabaptist, Baptist and Hussite) reflected a primary feature of modernity, namely a rejection of a Christendom mentality, avoiding a dependence on the state, especially where they existed as minority churches. Yet they were not spiritual escapists, but sustained a lively emphasis on social ethics and on a social vision. These Reformation traditions when responding to the renewal impulses of Pietism, were more noticeably concerned for personal and social ethics. In fact this social role of the protestantizing sect has been their major contribution to the modernization processes of Russia, in particular in Siberia and central Asia. In religious terms, these traditions expected their voluntary adherents to adopt a moral life style that indicated they were already living within the Kingdom of God, as Jesus had announced it. They expected an eschatological coming of the kingdom in its fullness in the

future, but were not, as a general rule, millennial escapists into a pure spirituality. Wherever the Mennonites or Moravians settled, they were quick to establish schools and to organize social/economic relations within their communities. The new Slavic Evangelical communities also settling Siberia stressed moral living, using magazines and similar didactic literature to maintain contacts across large territories. The Bible, a primary source of reading, was viewed as a source for teaching how to live. Bible studies or teaching were applied to issues of building good communities.

### **Inter-Relationships between Mennonites and Evangelicals: Four Themes**

The following analysis of the inter-relationships between Mennonites and Slavic Evangelicals (free churches of a democratic orientation) proceeds along four areas of inquiry, although the actual presentation is less thematically structured. The themes are: 1) The interpretation of Slavic Evangelical free church beginnings and development during the tsarist and Soviet periods by recent scholars; 2) To describe the period of severe repression (from approximately 1930-1953) that one memoirist described as a boiling cauldron, in effect functioning as “melting pot” for the varieties of Evangelicals who were sovietized in a specific way, i.e. becoming more attune to their central values and less interested in fostering denominational distinctions;<sup>22</sup> 3) Although much of the early, albeit sparse, data about suffering and martyrdom conveyed a distinct quality of piety, it is the richer source material now becoming available from archival collections and from oral history gathering, that heightens the experiential distinctiveness that represents a common spiritual treasure of the Slavic people; 4) Recent histories by insiders of the Mennonite and Evangelical communities in western Siberia and Kazakhstan which reflect common themes. The desire to be understood as fully part of the broader Evangelical movement is most explicit in Peter Epp’s detailed history of the Omsk Brotherhood.<sup>23</sup>

One troubling thread in twentieth century Slavic Evangelical history, was the repeated charge that Evangelicals were a western import, the product of mission efforts by Mennonite and German Baptist colonists. The charge surfaced in the 1870s and 1880s when local tsarist officials and Orthodox clerics, according to archival reports, accused them of being Anabaptists, a way of smearing them as revolutionaries. That included the charge of being pacifist. Pacifism has often been a feature of popular Bible movements; it is pretty hard to miss the explicit rejection of violence and the affirmation of a love ethic, even love of enemy, when reading the Gospels with the intent of

responding in obedience to Jesus. Historically in subsequent phases of development, such Bible movements have modified their pacifism under pressure to conform to patriotic demands, or by adopting dispensational theology they have applied the hard sayings of Jesus to a future age. The charge of western loyalty re-surfaced in the early revolutionary years when the major Evangelical movements were seeking the right of conscientious objection to military service, as did the Mennonites and Tolstoyans (at this time from service in the Red Army).<sup>24</sup> With the new post-communist era after 1991, once again the press has begun speaking of dangerous elements from the West. One widely read academic who had consciously chosen to convert and join the Russian Evangelical Christian Baptist Union published several books, and wrote numerous journal articles in defense of Protestants.<sup>25</sup> His intent was to show them as fully rooted in a Slavic context and as contributing to the desirable new culture. He also argued that their international links would not so much harm Russia as bring expanded relationships with like-minded Evangelicals from the West who wish Russia a positive future.

The sorting out process that began around 1990 proved to be a complication. Given legislation in the United States dating from the Reagan administration, it became easy for Evangelicals claiming religious persecution to get visas to settle in USA. The western Ukraine which had a higher percentage of practicing believers due to it having been outside the Soviet Union till World War II, now experienced a higher percentage of out-migration. This included many Ukrainians in Siberia and Central Asia who had been deported there in the 1930s and 1940s. Secondly, the Mennonites who had tried in vain to emigrate to Germany since the first easing of restrictions on the Spetskomandantur regime in 1955, caught immigration fever. Between 1987 and 1993 virtually all Mennonite origin people, numbering well over 100,000, moved to Germany. Since this has been described elsewhere,<sup>26</sup> the point here is to note the impact. The fear that this would be only a short lived period of religious freedom drove the immigration fever, and by 2010 there are enough indicators, especially with reference to central Asia and some areas of Russia, that restrictions and even persecution have returned. But this out migration was a problem for the new golden age many Evangelicals were anticipating after 1990. It tended to confirm the charge that Evangelicals relied on the West. Above all, it decimated the churches of leaders and key lay activists. The immigrants, however, soon attempted to be the main supporters from the West—financially and by sending missionaries—but that was different than being integrated together.

*Evangelical Piety Shaped in an Orthodox Context*

Also of interest when drawing conclusions from a critical reading of the recent literature, is the degree to which Slavic forms of piety, deeply rooted in the long Orthodox tradition, are evident within the Evangelical traditions, whether Russian or German, Mennonite or Baptist, more conformist to societal norms (as Soviet atheist scholarship described the official AUCECB in the late 1970s) or persistently nonconformist (such as the Reform Baptists who refused to register their congregations).<sup>27</sup> Konstantin Prokhorov of Omsk, now completing a dissertation on the topic, has demonstrated convincingly that positive influence from Orthodoxy on the Evangelicals is unmistakable.<sup>28</sup> Among the themes he examined, the appropriation of iconography is not one of them, although Evangelical scholars have begun to understand the theology of icons. Many observers have drawn attention to the fact that the Holy Spirit plays a greater role in their worship and theology than is true of their counterparts in the West, but not in the individualized way associated with Pentecostalism. Rather, in the ecclesial way stressed by Orthodoxy. Orthodox mysticism has been learned by Evangelicals the way the Russian Orthodox learned it, from the early Patristic writings long available in Russian translation. Prokhorov does draw attention to the style in which the lives of some of the martyred saints, even those of the strictly separatist Council of Churches of ECB, have been repeatedly presented in a hagiographic genre, including miracles.

*Global Isolation and Theological Difference*

Russian Mennonites became isolated from fellow Mennonites after 1930. One reason was that the Stalinist purges and persecutions closed the USSR off from contacts abroad. Christians who tried to maintain letter contact were charged with foreign collusion, attempting to betray the Soviet Union, and soon relatives and friends were forced to find very indirect ways of maintaining contact, in order not to compromise the lives of Soviet sisters and brothers. Even with the very minimal resumption of ecumenical ties after 1955, state pressures on church leaders, and state officials' explicit warnings to foreign church representatives not to interfere, were repeated as late as 1988. The Russian Mennonites were also prevented from forming church unions, although by the early 1980s, Mennonite Brethren and Kirchliche leaders in central Asia, sometimes together with those in western Siberia, were having informal fellowship meetings on a quarterly basis.

The isolation was rooted more deeply however. It was in the twentieth century that American Mennonite denominations replaced

the Russian Mennonites as the global leaders of the Mennonites. Largely following emerging business models, the larger denominations such as the Mennonite Church (Old), the General Conference Mennonites, the Mennonite Brethren and the Brethren in Christ, had developed highly professionalized structures by 1950, including mission boards overseeing the growth of related denominations in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Its trained professionals were the graduates of numerous colleges and several seminaries. Some of those Mennonite communities had spent over two hundred years adapting to the American culture, with its key elements of religious freedom for all, and to a Protestant culture, increasingly shaped by revivalist free churches. The Russian Mennonite immigrants to America, large organized waves of them migrating in the mid 1870s (18,000), 1920s (23,000) and the less organized refugees to Canada and south America after World War II (6-9,000) needed time to settle and acculturate before they could relate more aggressively to the isolated Mennonites of the Soviet Union. Their common service agency, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), had been formed in 1920 in response to appeals for aid from Russian Mennonites who shared the post revolutionary famine with their neighbors. Indeed, MCC has always been influenced by an “east/west” concern when developing its programs, until the end of the Soviet Union. MCC however, was unable to build on its early involvement in development in the USSR (1923-28) and the organization was declining, when the challenges of post war rebuilding of western Europe and refugee resettlement gave MCC its focus. That focus soon turned to Paraguay and nearby Latin American countries, then shifted to agricultural and social development programs in those countries of the southern hemisphere more linked to the western side of the Cold War.

When at the end of 2000, a Mennonite church paper published a list of the twenty most significant leaders. None of them were from Russia, except Peter and Elfrieda Dyck, MCC workers helping refugees to new homes in Paraguay and Canada who were named symbolically. The attempts at regaining contact with Russian Mennonites were slow, and Peter Dyck’s career reflected some of that. It began with joining a Baptist World Alliance delegation (1956) to the USSR, and seeking to contact existing Mennonite leaders. Details have been recounted elsewhere, but it was not till 1988 that a specifically Mennonite delegation, as part of extending Millennium celebrations to the non-Orthodox, was able to visit closed regions like Tokmak in Kyrgyzstan and Orenburg. By then the immigration fever had started, and signals from state officials to the delegation to encourage the formation of a Mennonite union of churches were really a government effort to slow the exodus of valued workers.<sup>29</sup>

There was a still deeper source of isolation that became more self-conscious with the explosion of new theological schools across the former Soviet Union; colleges, seminaries and universities. From the earlier emigrants of the 1970s (Baptist and Mennonite) a number of young persons had completed graduate theological training. Some of these formed Logos Mission to foster their own program of theological education by extension, after attempts at cooperation with one branch of the Slavic Gospel Association, which pushed dispensationalism, had foundered. In 2010 St. Petersburg Christian University marked its twentieth anniversary since those early Logos beginnings. Mennonite Brethren in Canada, USA, and Germany have been major supporters, but soon after its founding, the University was also formally adopted as a recognized school for pastors by the Russian Baptist Union. That strategic arrangement illustrates the recognition of the need to make a school accountable to its local constituency, and not an instrument for importing a theology. The latter feature was characteristic of many of the schools that emerged. Within a decade, the lines between Arminian and Reformed theology had been drawn, with eager graduates who thought they had got it right from visiting western guest professors often falling victim to local experienced leaders who knew their longer theological tradition. It is in this context that the affinity between the Russian Mennonite tradition from Germany and America and the Slavic Evangelicals has become more evident, in contrast to a heightened sense of cultural and theological difference to Baptists in America, and even to those in Britain and central Europe.

### *Spirituality from Persecution and Martyrdom in the Twentieth Century*

Since 2001, especially through the constant encouragement of Viktor Fast, formerly of Karaganda, Kazakhstan, now of Frankenthal, Germany, a series of books has appeared to tell the history of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and Mennonites in Siberia and Kazakhstan.<sup>30</sup> All the volumes are filled with short biographical sketches, photographs and copies of documents. Some were able to draw on state archives more recently available so that the perspectives of government authorities come through. In other cases, the documentary base relies more heavily on personal papers collected from church leaders and participants, and oral history materials. None of the authors were formally trained as historians, but they convey a scrupulous commitment to factual accuracy and thoroughness. Each volume merits careful perusal to obtain a sense of the richness of the material. Together they represent a major effort inspired in particular by Mennonites who have only recently immigrated to Germany or who

are still living in their regions, and who want to utilize a fuller sense of their lived history than was possible while living it.

Compared to histories of denominations or regional groups of churches elsewhere in the world, there are themes appearing in each volume that convey the distinctive features of Siberian and central Asian Evangelical history. Ivan Dik's book, a broad survey of developments in Kazakhstan, has an additional distinctive feature in that the opening chapters bring together the history of ancient Christianity present in central Asia from 750 to 1300. More is still being discovered from older sources in archives and museums, but the point the author seeks to make is clear: Christianity was attractive long before Islam came to dominate. All of the volumes start with frontier beginnings, settlers bringing with them their faith and practices. Soon after starting churches, the word "*probuzhdenie*" (revival) appears to indicate conversions among those already settled in the region.

The migration theme remains a constant. At first it refers to the deported Evangelical leaders, in the 1920s it refers to the "Kulaks" deported to the region, in the 1940s it refers to Germans (Baptists and Mennonites) deported to Kazakhstan. Then follow the movements of persons from the place where they served in the *Trud Armei* (Workers Army) to reunite with their extended families, and then it refers to persons moving to safer places in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan during the Khrushchev anti-religious campaign. Finally, the migration theme refers to those who left to go abroad. Schneider's book on the Aktiubinsk region ends with a chart covering many pages listing members who left either for Siberia, Germany or USA; the Siberian and Kazakhstan churches were always in flux.

Another persistent theme is the persecutions, the word *goneniia* appearing frequently in tables of contents. In the first book of the series, on Karaganda Oblast, separate chapters using personal files tell the story of the arrests, fines, and banning of presbyters, evangelists, youth workers and other activists of the Baptists and Mennonites respectively. Then follows a chapter on those who joined the churches after being freed from the Karaganda labor camp, another on believers seeking refuge in Karaganda from the Caucasus and Belarus. The revivals invariably followed the phases of persecution, sub-headings usually move from *goneniia* to *probuzhdeniia*. Such revivalism, however, evokes a sharper contrast between darkness and light than does the revival paradigm of American Evangelicalism since the days of Jonathan Edwards.

Much attention is given to what happened during the initial "golden years" of relative freedom after 1917. This serves as background context for the changes that began after the new freedoms in 1990. Each volume devotes chapters to worship and family life, youth work

and camps. All of them attach, either in an appendix or as parts of chapters, short biographies of their church fathers, leaders who shaped what happened. The most recent volume available to me, compiled by Sergei Ryzhenko, is less carefully written in terms of constructing an integrated narrative. Instead, the author/editor builds on previous short histories, memoirs from individuals, and a trove of materials from a regional plenipotentiary of the Council for Religious Affairs who kept careful and hostile records. To read his reports in light of what changed a decade or two later, and to compare it with the believers' reports of what happened, conveys two dramatically different ways of seeing the world until the Soviet project ended so abruptly.

Conveying such general histories—and the overwhelming number of personal stories of a faith tested—to a readership in North America, in western Europe, or in the “global south” strikes one as crucial but daunting.

#### *Inter-church Relationships that Existed and Those Unexplored*

The free churches, often called believers churches, have long been more suspicious of inter-church relationships, or ecumenism, than was true of the classic Protestant confessions which organized the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1948. Protestant missionaries encountered each other differently during the nineteenth century of mission around the globe which led to a contextual adjustment of confessional distinctiveness. Throughout the twentieth century the mission-driven ecumenical process of learning from each other's traditions appreciatively, necessitated becoming acquainted with Orthodoxy; the ecumenical Patriarch after all had addressed an appeal to all churches in 1920, to assist the Orthodox world threatened by Islam. During the period from 1960-90, the approved AUCECB branch of the Soviet Evangelicals (which included Evangelical Christians, Baptists, Mennonites and Pentecostals) together with the Orthodox, Baltic Lutherans and a few other traditions were expected to be active in the ecumenical movement. This turned out to be a time of rich learning for Soviet Evangelicals able to travel to international conferences, including getting to know Russian Orthodox representatives (with whom they sometimes shared motel rooms) as true believers. But its artificial use for Soviet state peace propaganda purposes caused wings of the AUCECB, especially in central Asia, to become even more suspicious of ecumenism, and to withdraw from such inter-church bodies after 1990.

In addition to the WCC linkage, Soviet Evangelicals also participated in the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) since its formation



in 1903. In the early 1980s, the AUCECB sent delegations to the periodic world Pentecostal Congress. Since Pentecostalism treats structures lightly, these were largely driven by exercises in fellowship so formal membership was not an issue. In 1978 for the first time, an AUCECB delegation (to which independent Mennonite Brethren and independent Kirchengemeinde representatives were added, as well as Mennonites who had joined the AUCECB after 1966) was able to attend a Mennonite World Conference in Wichita, Kansas. They attended as “observers.” A return delegation of MWC representatives in 1980 was treated like earlier BWA delegations had been, i.e. they were allowed to visit churches in open cities. By then too a joint Bible commentary translation project had been established by the BWA, MCC and the AUCECB. The European Baptist Union, after 1958, began including Soviet Baptists in its committees, often electing one AUCECB representative as vice-president.

Given the split within the Soviet Evangelical Christian Baptist communities since 1962, the Reformed Baptists (in Russian usually called *Sovet Tserkvei Ekhb*) sought membership in the BWA and European Baptist Union in order to have a platform from which to present its case for violations of religious rights. But those organizations were restricted by charter from accepting an additional denomination from a country unless the other union supported it. Soviet authorities prevented that, and as a result, the Reform Baptists ended up developing links with supporting missions that were strongly anti-communist, mostly through the accidental ways that their immigrants in Germany stumbled upon them. Their publicity on the behalf of Reform Baptists was a mixed blessing.

Although only briefly sketched here, it is necessary background for drawing attention to a major shift in relationships in the 1990s.<sup>31</sup> With the so-called opening of Russia to mission, there was a stream of mission and local church representatives from the West, in particular from USA, promising financial support in return for exclusive relationships. The ties and trust that had been gradually established with the BWA, and to a lesser extent with Pentecostals and Mennonites, were dropped rather precipitously. This coincided with a change in the primary leadership of the Baptist Unions, which had now become fifteen national unions, so that the previous leaders were dismissed as ecumenically compromised.<sup>32</sup> Most striking when seen from abroad, was an initiative stemming from the ECB Union in Kazakhstan (where Mennonites played a leading role) and supported by the Ukrainians, to withdraw from the WCC. After some years, most of the national unions were no longer in the BWA and were often in conflict with the European Baptist Union, because of the growing acceptance of women in leadership in west European Baptist communities. Why such a

strong anti-ecumenical spirit emerged from Kazakhstan is a question worth pondering, since the Orthodox were a minority community they did not need to worry about. One answer appears to be the personal ties key leaders had with western missions for whom their members were now working, specifically Licht im Osten Mission. In the previous decade it had experienced a shift in its supporting circle of churches who were now more suspicious of ecumenism, and stressed the casual ecclesiology associated with the Pietist tradition. Since then, the active ECB Unions in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and the Omsk Brotherhood have maintained working ties with a number of new mission groups whose leaders and supporting constituencies are Russian-speaking, i.e. they are first generation émigré organizations. They trust these organizations because they share much in common theologically. But as first generation émigré organizations, they are isolated from other church traditions in that immigrant groups normally need a generation to overcome their suspicion of ecumenism.

Mennonites who are now deeply integrated with ECB Unions in Central Asia and Siberia have not really changed theologically, and as a rule are warmly supported by fellow Mennonites who have immigrated to Germany. But from Russian Mennonite immigrant communities in Canada and Paraguay that have been gone longer, they have sensed an attitude that joining with the Baptists is a betrayal, and therefore they no longer have a place in Mennonite history. That of course reflects the parochialism of my fellow Mennonites in Canada and Paraguay, and of their failure to keep up with changing mentalities, to say nothing of American Mennonites whose interest is noticeably lower. Yet there are mentality shifts that the younger generation of Slavic Evangelical leaders are learning, especially those getting their advanced degrees in missiology, that remain unexplored in their churches. These have led to major paradigm shifts in thinking that will likely be extended as Russian Mennonites in a larger Slavic Evangelical world become less isolated.

The century and a half of Protestant mission around the globe proceeded without the confessional structures known from western Europe, but those missionary endeavors were limited by colonialism. Nevertheless, for many missionaries and the sending boards this forced a rethinking of central Christian convictions, and forced a greater self-awareness of the need to restore Christian unity around essential convictions. If the historiography of the Reformation divisions had centered around doctrinal differences, a mentality shift began to emerge through the ways in which Reformation-tradition mission churches in the southern hemisphere differed from each other, and from their mothering traditions, so that they drew much more attention to contextual factors for diversity. That included a broader awareness,

thanks often to anthropological and social studies, that Christianity takes root within a culture, i.e. it is expressed in appropriate structures and styles of leadership, it is rooted in language, and hence even the theological discourse works differently. In the central Asian Evangelical Unions, similar discoveries are being made as multi-linguistic and multi-cultural church unions are trying to work together.<sup>33</sup> This sets the stage for those experiences to become a mutual enrichment when shared with believers of like faith in the southern hemisphere or in nearby China.

Particularly different in the Siberian and central Asian experience, when compared to the southern hemisphere's deep sense of the world of spirits, of God, or of only being whole as a religious person, is the legacy of aggressive secularization or a negative atheism. Becoming Christian in post-Communist Russia turned out to be a slow and difficult process after the initial flurry of learning about Christianity and its Bible in the early 1990s. That is therefore the point of commonality, or put more modestly, the point of similarity, with Christians in western Europe and increasingly in North America. Through cultivating more, rather than less, inter-church relationships, the diverse members of a global Christianity will find their way and the ties that bind in the twenty first century.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Walter Sawatsky, "Historical Roots of a Post-Gulag Theology for Russian Mennonites," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LXXXVI, no. 2 (2002): 149-80.
- <sup>2</sup> *Istoriia Evangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov v SSSR*. [History of the Evangelical Christian-Baptists] (Moskva: Izd. Vsesoiuznogo soveta Evangel'i'skikh Khristian-Baptistov, 1989.) Part one presents an integrated history, followed in Part two by a more detailed treatment of national bodies and denominational unions within the united union.
- <sup>3</sup> The Donetsk papers have circulated in DVD or CD copies, a publication in Russian is projected for release in late 2010; the proceedings of the Moscow event of October 18-19, 2007 were published as: *Materialy Nauchno-bogoslovskoi konferentsii Rossiiskogo Soiuz Evangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov. "140 let rossiiskomu baptizmu. Proshloe, nastoiashchie, perspektivy."* [Proceedings of the academic-theological conference of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christian-Baptists, "140 Years of Russian Baptism. Past, Present and Future."] (Moskva: Rossiiskii Soiuz EkKhB, 2008.) Tatiana Nikol'skaia, with a doctorate in history from the European University in St. Petersburg, published the dissertation as: *Tatiana Nikol'skaia, Russkii protestantizm I gosudarstvennaia vlast; v 1905-1991 godakh*, [Russian Protestantism and State Power Between 1905-1991] (St. Petersburg: European University in St. Petersburg, 2009). This is a careful source-based history citing previously unknown data from many state archives. Andrei Puzynin, on the other hand, who completed his doctorate at the University of London, approached his material in order to tease out a common theological tradition. The published book is Andrey P. Puzynin, *The Tradition of the Gospel*

*Christians. A Study of their Identity and Theology During the Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Periods* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011).

- 4 The major works include David G. Rempel's book length article: "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia: A Sketch of Its Founding and Endurance, 1789-1919," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* LVIII (1974); James Urry, *None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789-1889* (Winnipeg MB: Hyperion Press, 1989). Urry published many invaluable essays thereafter as well as the book *Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood: Europe, Russia, Canada, 1525-1980* (Winnipeg MB: University of Manitoba Press, 2006) which is excellent and provocative, but also stays with the Mennonite story until the 1920s emigrations, then turns to continuities in Canada.
- 5 See the classic history of the first Russian Mennonite century, Peter M. Friesen, *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)*, trans. J. B. Toews, et. al. (Fresno CA: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978). The German original appearing in 1911. Friesen was respected for his effort at accurate and impartial treatment of all the Mennonite groups or traditions. There followed German language histories concentrating on the Mennonite Brethren. The still standard English official history, John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Hillsboro KS: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1975), is primarily a denominational history, focusing on the North American developments in its second part.
- 6 Worth noting among others is George K. Epp, *Geschichte der Mennoniten in Russland* (Lage: Logos Verlag, 1997, 1998), a two-volume history in German, the third volume on the twentieth century remains a gap; John Friesen, ed., *Mennonites in Russia, 1788-1988: Essays in Honour of Gerhard Lohrenz* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 1989) is the source I still assign for a Mennonite history class, because of its attention to two centuries of history. English speaking Mennonite theologians have tended to limit their historical reading to materials appearing in Herald Press, seldom drawing on the considerable volume of publications by Mennonite colleges and universities, or Mennonite scholarly journals, *Journal of Mennonite Studies* in particular.
- 7 For more detailed argument see Sawatsky, "Historical Roots."
- 8 See for example, C. Arnold Snyder, *From Anabaptist Seed: Exploring the Historical Center of Anabaptist Teachings and Practices* (Intercourse PA: Good Books, 2007), originally appearing in 1999 through Mennonite World Conference; Alfred Neufeld, *What We Believe Together: Exploring the "Shared Convictions" of Anabaptist-Related Churches* (Intercourse PA: Good Books, 2007). It may help to point out that there is a distinctly different thought paradigm widespread within the Swiss origin Mennonite communities' thinking in terms of faithfulness to an initial vision, articulated by Harold S. Bender and continuously reprinted as *The Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press, 1944) to which contemporary churches are to measure up. This is in contrast to the more widespread Dutch/Russian reference to "unsere glaubens Erbe" (our Mennonite heritage) which evokes a continuous story line, varying by context, implying also a more appreciative view of the impact of the Pietist renewal movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also evangelical and charismatic influences thereafter. In addition to Bender's themes of discipleship, community and peace, all Anabaptists had in common a strong christology and a missionary spirit, the difference was less a contrast between an ideal and the real, as it was an attempt to bring the reality toward the ideal.
- 9 Aleksandr I. Klibanov's article was found among the papers in his apartment after he died in 1993. Presented in English translation at a conference held in 1994 at St. Olaf College, Minnesota, it finally appeared in print as Aleksandr I. Klibanov, "The Work Ethic of Russian Old Believers and Spiritual Christians," in *Russia's Dissident Old Believers 1650-1950*, ed. Georg B. Michels and Robert L. Nichols

(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009, 97-119. The volume is No. XIX in the Minnesota Mediterranean and East European monograph series, appearing as a *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* Supplement. More so than in his earlier writings, Klibanov went out of his way to express sympathy to the sectarian tradition and described German colonists, spiritual Christians and Old Believers as showing common features necessary for building the good human society, but consistently thwarted by the ignorant prejudice of Tsarist and Soviet bureaucrats.

- <sup>10</sup> C. Arnold Snyder, *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener ON: Pandora Press, 1995), 225-52, 390-91; see also the summary remarks in C. Arnold Snyder, "The Birth and Evolution of Swiss Anabaptism, 1520-1530," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, LXXX, no. 4 (2006), 642-45, the most thoroughgoing review of research on Swiss Anabaptism currently available.
- <sup>11</sup> Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929*, Indiana-Michigan Series in Russian and East European Studies (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), states in her introduction and repeatedly illustrated thereafter.
- <sup>12</sup> Klibanov, "The Work Ethic," 97-8, 102, 108. The myth of Siberia as dreaded place of exile can also be over-stated, for the patterns of dissenter settlements included under-developed regions in the Caucasus, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, the Amur region in the Far East, as well as the "safe" regions of the Baltic republics, where religious minorities were less harassed than in central Russia.
- <sup>13</sup> Shown in detail for developments through 1750, by Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed. A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002).
- <sup>14</sup> A reader in Russia, familiar with sectarian history may not find this surprising, but in America, close relationships between Baptists and Mennonites are rare and not natural, the sense of shared history is absent.
- <sup>15</sup> As it applied to the Altai region in particular, the Orthodox mission approach is thoroughly examined in Andrei A. Znamenski, *Shamanism and Christianity. Native Encounters with Russian Orthodox Mission in Siberia and Alaska, 1820-1927* (Westport CN: Greenwood Press, 1999).
- <sup>16</sup> Sergei Filatov and Roman Lunkin, "Statistics on Religion in Russia: The Reality Behind the Figures," *Religion, State & Society* 34, no. 1 (2006): 33-50. Also of interest is the first section of essays on Christianity in Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, ed. *Religion and Politics in Russia: A Reader* (Armonk NY: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 2010).
- <sup>17</sup> See Wilhelm Kahle, *Evangelische Christen in Russland und Der Sowjetunion* (Wuppertal: Oncken Verlag, 1978), which remains the most thorough study of the inter-relationships. A Russian translation in typescript was included in Vol. 3 of the History of Euro-Asian Evangelical Movement. Primary Sources, CD available from Euro-Asian Accrediting Association, Odessa, Ukraine. See also Hans-Christian Diedrich, *Urspruenge und Anfaenge Des Russischen Freikirchentums*. Vol. 21 Quellen Und Studien Zur Orthodoxen Theologie, Fairy v. Lilienfeld, ed. (Erlangen: OIKONOMIA, 1985), with more detail on the Caucasus.
- <sup>18</sup> Viktor Dik, *Svet evangeliia v Kazakhstane. Istoriia vozveshcheniia evangeliia i rasprostraneniia obshchin baptistov i mennonitov v Kazakhstane (pervaia polovina XX veka)* [The Light of the Gospel in Kazakhstan. History of the Emergence of the Gospel and the Spread of Baptist and Mennonite Congregations (First Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century)] (Steinhagen: Samenkorn, 2003). 81ff, 310-12.
- <sup>19</sup> Vins after another arrest in 1934 died in the Gulag. His son Georgi, who grew up in the Ukraine where his Ukrainian mother had returned to her family to help her survive, became a major leader of the Reform Baptist movement in the 1960s. He was fully integrated into Evangelical Christian-Baptist ways of thinking, but remained aware of his many Mennonite relatives.

- <sup>20</sup> The golden age refers to the period 1917-29 as I discussed it in Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals Since World War II* (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press, 1981). For a more recent re-assessment see Konstantin Prokhorov, "The 'Golden Age' of the Soviet Baptists in the 1920s," in *Eastern European Baptist History: New Perspectives*, eds. Sharyl Corrado and Toivo Pilli, (Prague: International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 88-101.
- <sup>21</sup> There is now more detail in English on the role of Raduga Press for Mennonites, its role for the Evangelicals as a whole less so, in Abraham Friesen, *In Defense of Privilege : Russian Mennonites and the State before and During World War I*, Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought, 16 (Winnipeg MB: Kindred Productions, 2006).
- <sup>22</sup> There is an invaluable compilation of documents, in which Baptists and Mennonites appear interchangeably, plus the compiler's excellent eighty page historical survey in A. I. Savin, *Sovetskoe gosudarstvo i evangel'skie tserkvi Sibiri v 1920-1941gg. Dokumenty i materialy* (Novosibirsk: Posokh, 2004). I chose not to refer to it in detail since Savin also presented at the conference in Omsk where this paper was initially presented; Savin also handed me a further documentary collection (751 pages) with a particular focus on the emigration-repressions interrelationship for Mennonites in Siberia, 1920-1930. See A. I. Savin, ed., *Etnokonfessiiia v sovetskom gosudarstve. Mennoniti Sibiri v 1920-1930 gody: emigratsiia i repressii. Dokumenty i materialy* [Ethnoconfessions in the Soviet State: Siberian Mennonites in the 1920-30s: Emigration and Repressions. Documents and Materials.] (Novosibirsk: Posoph, 2009). At the end of his fifty five page introductory essay, Savin, calculating from the census data of 1939 which enumerated 8.9 million people in western Siberia, not quite half of whom were males, that, there were 6-7,000 Mennonite males living in the Altai region before the 1937-38 Great Terror, one third of whom were repressed, i.e. 2,200-2,400 men. That illustrates the valuable data offered *in extenso* for at least the western Siberian region.
- <sup>23</sup> Petr Epp, *100 Let pod krovom Vsevyshnego. Istoriia Omskikh obshchin EkHb i ikh ob'edineniia 1907-2007. [One Hundred Years under the Hand of the Almighty: History of the Omsk ECB Congregations and their Union, 1907-2007]* (Omsk-Steinhagen: Samen Korn, 2007). This work is 860 pages long.
- <sup>24</sup> For details, using Chertkov archives of the joint committee, see Walter Sawatsky, "Protestanty-Patsifisty v sovetskoii Rossii v mezhoennyi period," [Protestant Pacifists in Soviet Russia in the Inter-war Period] in *Dolgii put' rossiiskogo patsifizma* [The Long Way of Russian Pacifism], T. A. Pavlova, ed. (Moskva: Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk. Institut vseobshchei istorii, 1997), 262-84. (English digital version available from author).
- <sup>25</sup> Igor V. Podbrevskii, *Byt' Protestantom v Rossii*, [Being Protestant in Russia] (Moskva: Institut religii i prava, 1996); and his later essays, *Protestanty i drugie. Religioznaia publitsistika. Sbornik statei* [Protestants and Others: Religious Publications. Collected Essays.] (St. Petersburg: Mirt, 2000).
- <sup>26</sup> For example in C. J. Dyck, *Introduction to Mennonite History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Scottsdale PA: Herald Press), 1993, 191-94.
- <sup>27</sup> The reference is to two Evangelical-Christian Baptist Unions (Soiuz) who split in the early 1960s, as described in Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals*. Russian translation made in 1996 is available through the Euro-Asiatic Accrediting Association (Odessa) in CD format.
- <sup>28</sup> Konstantin Prokhorov, "Shared Roots of Russian Baptist and Russian Orthodox Spirituality" at a conference on Mission in Orthodox Contexts, Prague, February 12, 2009. His dissertation theme is: "The Russian Orthodox Influence on the Russian Baptist Life, 1960-1990: A Comparative Study of Theology, Liturgy, and Tradition."

- <sup>29</sup> Author's notes and recollections as a member of the delegation, which was technically sponsored by MCC.
- <sup>30</sup> In addition to Dik, *Svet evangeliia v Kazakhstane*, they are in order of appearance: Viktor Fast, *Ia s vami vo vse dni do skonchaniia veka. (Zhizn' veruiushchikh v Karagande) 1931-1946gg* [I am with you Always to the End of the Ages. (Believers' Lives in Karaganda) 1931-1968] (Steinhagen, Germany: Samen Korn, 2001); Viktor Fast and Jakov Penner, eds. *Wasserströme in der Einöde. Die Anfangsgeschichte der Mennoniten-Brüdergemeinde Karaganda 1956-1968* (Samen Korn, 2007); Ivan Schneider, *Evangel'skie obshchiny v Aktiubinskoi stepi..* [Evangelical Churches in the Aktiubinsk Steppe(630 pages)] (Steinhagen, Germany: Samen Korn, 2006); Petr Epp, *100 Let pod krovom Vsebyshnego. Istoriia Omskikh Obshchin EkHB i ikh ob'edineniia 1907-2007.* [100 Years under the Shadow of the Almighty: The History of the Omsk Churches of ECB and their Union 1907-2007 (860 pages)] (Omsk-Steinhagen: Samen Korn, 2007); Sergei Ryzhenko, *Stranniki my na zemle. Istoriia Petropavlovskoi obshchinny EkHB 1908-1988* [We were Wanderers in the Land: History of the Petropavlovsk ECB Churches 1908-1988] (Steinhagen, Germany: Samen Korn, 2008).
- <sup>31</sup> In English there is more detail in Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals* and Walter Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," in *Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 237-75, which updates developments till 1990.
- <sup>32</sup> For more detail see Walter Sawatsky, "The Re-Positioning of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and Sister Church Unions between 1980-2005," In *Eastern European Baptist History: New Perspectives*, eds. Sharyl Corrado and Toivo Pilli (Prague: International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2007), 187-209.
- <sup>33</sup> In both the ECB Unions of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in which key leaders of Mennonite origin have been fully integrated, new congregations had been started in local Asiatic languages (such as Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Kazakh and others) already preceding the massive out-migration of Germanic and Ukrainian origin members to Germany and USA respectively. Given the potentially fierce negative reactions from Islamic activists, these congregations were granted great autonomy to develop their own styles of worship, music, language and polity. At major missionary conferences organized by the two unions, at times jointly, spokespersons gave testimonials that can easily be described as teaching cultural anthropology for mission through praxis. One accessible resource for learning of these events is *Aquila*, quarterly magazine of Hilfskomitee Aquila, of Steinhagen (Bielefeld suburb) Germany, also the place of publication for Samen Korn Press. Each issue of 30-40 pages over the past two decades has included travel reports, and a historical/archival section titled "Auf den Spuren unserer Geschichte."