

Храм Благой Вести / Good News Temple (Gospel Temple)

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?

1 Corinthians 3:16 (KJV)

. . . ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

2 Corinthians 6:16 (KJV)

Preface

Years ago, I was told that I should write a history of the church that I attended as a youngster. However, I hesitated to write that history because I had left that church when I became an adult. There is a saying: “You can take the boy out of the country, but you can’t take the country out of the boy.” Let me rephrase that: “You can leave the church and the faith or belief system that you grew up with, but that church, faith, and belief system will never leave you.”

And so here I am, writing a story, and recounting a history that is woven into my soul like a tapestry of many stories and encounters that I have had over the years. Bear with me as I try to keep my personal opinions and views to a minimum and try to bring to light the kaleidoscopic and multifaceted “remembrance of things past.”

However, I should give a short biographical note about the author and compiler of the history of the Geary St. Evangelical Church-Russian Gospel Temple in San Francisco.

I was born a Christian. My father was an Evangelist of the Evangelical (Baptist-Pentecostal) movement that started in his home country of Ukraine. My mother converted from her German-Lutheran roots to become a “Believer”. I experienced the entire gamut of the Evangelical movement during my youth, including attending Bethany Bible College. Afterwards, I pursued a career in teaching, culminating in a teaching position in an Elementary-Middle School in Oregon, which included working with a Russian Old Believer community. But enough about me. Let’s get on with the subject at hand.

<https://wigowsky.com/PauU/LifeStory.pdf> (For those interested in my Life Story)

Back to the Beginning - - A Historical Perspective
Evangelical Christians-Baptists in Russia (before the 1960s)

<https://religare.ru/497910> (excerpts)

Historical background

Baptists and Evangelical Christians, as two independent movements, appeared in Russia in the second half of the 19th century. The former arose in the south of the Russian Empire, the latter in the north. Close in spirit and doctrine, they later merged into one union and began to be called Evangelical Christians-Baptists, as they are still called today. Today, this is one of the most powerful religious movements in Russia, whose adherents rightfully consider themselves to be original Russian Protestants.

Researchers identify two processes that initiated the emergence of this movement: the development of indigenous Russian religious movements of Protestant orientation and Western religious missionary work. These processes overlapped and gradually intertwined into a complex and intricate history of Russian Baptism (i.e. "Baptists").

The first heralds of the emergence of "Protestant" sentiments in Russian society were peasant sectarians. The Khlysts, Dukhobors, and Molokans, who are collectively called "spiritual Christians," existed in Russia since the 18th century. The evolution of spiritual Christianity into Baptism is primarily associated with the fate of the Molokans. The Molokans rejected the church hierarchy, monasticism, the veneration of icons, relics, and the cult of saints, worshiped God "in spirit and truth," professed the "ethics of good deeds," sought to build "the kingdom of God on earth," and created communes with common property. At the same time, unlike the Dukhobors, they recognized the dogma of the Trinity, the sacraments, and the Bible as the only source of Truth. . . .

After the creation of the Russian Bible Society in 1813, and the Society of Lovers of the Holy Scripture in 1863, a tradition of home, circle study of the Gospel appeared among the enlightened part of the Russian elite. It was this tradition that later, in the 1870s, the Pashkovites movement of evangelical Christians quickly spread in St. Petersburg. Many Bible circles subsequently became the basis for the creation of evangelical churches. . . .

The second third of the 19th century is the time when Ukrainian Stundism appeared among German Pietists, Mennonites, some Lutherans, and among ordinary Ukrainian peasants. The name Stundism comes from the German "stunde" ("hour"): it refers to the time devoted to reading and discussing the Scriptures. The first community of Ukrainian Stundists (pietistic direction) was created in the village of Osnova in Odessa district in the early 1860s. . . . At the meetings, they prayed with unlearned prayers, read the recently published synodal translation of the New Testament, and sang spiritual hymns. At first, the Stundists did not break with Orthodoxy, attended services, took communion and confessed, but very soon they moved away from it, which was facilitated, in particular, by the persecution of some Orthodox priests. . . .

Over time, the communities of Ukrainian and German Stundists came to the fundamental principles of the doctrine of modern Evangelical Christians-Baptists: rebirth through finding faith and repentance, baptism by faith, baptism by full immersion. . . .

In the 1880s and 1890s, Baptism spread throughout the country and from a Ukrainian-South Russian phenomenon turned into a phenomenon of all-Russian life. Communities emerged in the Volga region, Siberia, the Far East, Central Asia, Tambov region, and Moscow.

Around the same time, the teachings of the northern and southern currents began to take shape more clearly, and as a result, evangelical Christians and Baptists increasingly recognized themselves as different directions, although very close to each other in spirit.

In the same year of 1905, at a joint congress of Baptists and Evangelicals, a single name was adopted: "Evangelical Christians-Baptists". However, a complete unification did not occur then. Groups of Evangelical Christians separated from some Baptist communities (Odessa, Kyiv, Kharkov, Samara, Nikolaev). Petersburg, headed by Ivan Prokhanov, also remained independent. . . . Prokhanov believed that the Union should promote spiritual awakening in the Orthodox Church, establish connections between all manifestations of living spiritual life, and spread the idea of spiritual renewal on evangelical foundations among the Russian people. The Union included Christians of different denominations with different views who recognized the commonality of their spiritual tasks. However, the majority of Baptists did not recognize this Union, and they had an extremely negative attitude towards Prokhanov's activities. . . .

During the years of the First World War, such a specifically Russian phenomenon as Baptist pacifism was born. Baptists refused military service, and anti-war sentiments grew rapidly in communities. In this regard, some researchers note the ideological influence of Tolstoyanism on Baptists. Gradually, pacifism became the fundamental position of an increasing number of Baptists and evangelical Christians. . . .

In 1918, the first Baptist agricultural communities emerged, where the ideas of socialism were propagated, but "with faith in God and under the banner of Christ." . . .

In 1923, Prokhanov was arrested and forced to renounce pacifism. After that, he became an obedient puppet in the hands of the "religious curator" from the OGPU, E. Tuchkov. In 1923, on his initiative, the congress of evangelists adopted a resolution on the renunciation of pacifism and complete loyalty to the Soviet government. In 1926, the Congress of Baptists adopted similar decisions. . . .

Throughout the 1920s, there was a tense struggle among Baptists and Evangelical Christians between the "old" (those converted before the revolution) and "new" (those converted after the revolution) Baptists. The "new Baptists" were more inclined toward pacifism and less loyal to the authorities. Thanks to the support of the authorities, the "old Baptists" won. In addition, throughout the 1920s, Baptists and Evangelical Christians made unsuccessful attempts to unite. Despite this, the ideological differences between them grew ever greater. Baptists opposed the "secularization" of faith and called for following the "chosen path of personal salvation." Ivan Prokhanov's Evangelists hoped for a merger with the revolutionary

transformation of the country, hoping to inspire it with the spirit of the Gospel. Prokhanov welcomed "socialist construction and the revolutionary transformation of life." . . .

After 1929

"The Year of the Great Turning Point" was also a turning point in the relationship between Baptist and Evangelical communities and the Soviet government. From 1929 until the first years of the war, the communities experienced enormous pressure from the authorities, which was expressed in the restriction of their rights and activities, as well as mass repressions. . . .

By the mid-1930s, all evangelical and Baptist churches, except for the one mentioned above, ceased to exist legally. The elders were repressed and equated with "disenfranchised", and their buildings were confiscated. At that time, many communities began to master the practice of home "underground" meetings, which they attended in small groups, constantly changing the addresses of meetings. Illegal communities were also created in exile environments. The common years of hardship contributed to closer contact between Baptist and evangelical communities, whose rapprochement occurred at the level of personal relationships. Despite the persecution, the Baptist-evangelical faith did not disappear completely. This is confirmed, in particular, by the fact that 837 Baptists and evangelicals refused to be drafted into the army during World War II for religious reasons. . . .

In 1944, the authorities decided to create a legal and state-loyal association of all Protestants in the country. To do this, it was decided to forcibly unite Baptists and Evangelical Christians into one union. . . . The new organization was called the All-Union Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists - VSEKHiB.

Compiled by Daniil Shchipkov

Sources used:

History of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR. Moscow, 1989.

I.V. Podberezsky. Being a Protestant in Russia. Moscow, 1996.

Mitrokhin L.N. Baptism. History and Modernity. St. Petersburg, 1997.

For much of its history, the **Assemblies of God** officially opposed Christian participation in war and was listed by *The Pacifist Handbook* as America's third largest [peace church](#) in 1940.^[72] The official position of the church until 1967 encouraged Christian nonviolence: "We . . . are nevertheless constrained to declare we cannot conscientiously participate in war and armed resistance which involves the actual destruction of human life, since this is contrary to our view of the clear teachings of the inspired Word of God".^[73] Most of the founders and first generation members of the denomination held to this view, and it was presented as official teaching throughout World War I and World War II. The official [pacifist](#) position remained unchanged until 1967 when the denomination affirmed "the right of each member to choose whether to declare their position as a combatant, a noncombatant, or a conscientious objector".^[74] This was the culmination of a process begun

during World War I, when it was unpopular to hold antiwar views, in which AG adherents questioned their denomination's pacifist stance.^[75]

Peace churches are [Christian](#) churches, groups or communities advocating [Christian pacifism](#) (Jesus was a pacifist, “Blessed are the Peacemakers”) or Biblical nonresistance. See Tolstoy’s post-1905 works. (Wikipedia)