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Vasili Pavlov: A Russian Baptist Pioneer.

THE first Russian Baptist to achieve fame outside his own country was Vasili Pavlov. He was baptised in 1871, and from that time onwards his influence was felt through the expanding Baptist community. For more than half a century he laboured, and his activity ceased only with his death in 1924.

No man sums up in his personal service and suffering the story of the Russian Baptist movement so adequately as Pavlov. He came into it almost at the beginning. The date accepted as the birthday of the denomination in Russia is September 1st (August 20th), 1867, when Nikita Voronin was baptised. Voronin had belonged to the Molokans—a sect having some resemblance to the Quakers—but the study of the New Testament led him to adopt a point of view which he afterwards learned from a German settler in his district, Martin Kalweit, was identical with that of the Baptists. Kalweit baptised Voronin, and this earliest Russian convert at once displayed the evangelistic fervour that marks the great host of his successors. He gathered a small group of believers around him. In 1870 the sixteen-years-old Vasili Pavlov came under Voronin's influence and early in the following year was won for the young church, which before he joined it numbered about ten members. Another notable convert was secured at the same time—V. V. Ivanov-Klishnikov, whose after-career is in many respects parallel to that of Pavlov, and whose son (now an exile for conscience's sake) is honoured far beyond the limits of his own country.

Pavlov's intense zeal led him at once to set about preaching in Tiflis and the neighbouring villages. It is worth while to notice that his enthusiasm made full use of all cultural opportunities open to him. He shirked no rough work. In his youth we find him acting as shop-assistant, coachman, ploughman, baker, or commercial agent; but his earnings are devoted to the purchase of books, and his free hours to study. As a boy he had been happily encouraged. His father was a farmer; his mother belonged to a Russian officer-family. These pious and industrious people had been banished from Central Russia as Molokan dissenters from the Orthodox Church. To them Vasili

came as a Samuel. They had long been childless; his birth was an answer to prayer, and before his birth they had dedicated him to their Lord. It is therefore not surprising that he was able to read the Slavonic New Testament when only five years old. He early displayed unusual aptitude for languages, acquiring German by self-study and Hebrew at a Jewish school in Tiflis. Greek, Latin, Arabic, Turkish, several languages and dialects used in the Russian Empire, especially in Transcaucasia, and even Chinese, attracted him. Some he mastered; and eventually he secured more or less knowledge of about twenty-five languages. Nothing can be further from the truth than the idea that the Russian pioneers were ignorant fanatics; a few among them were men of remarkable scholarship, and the average Baptist preacher stood in Biblical and religious knowledge far above the general level of the priests of the State Church. No Baptist group in the world cherishes a simpler faith than the Russian, but none has set a higher value upon the training of the mind as an instrument in the service of God.

As members of the small Baptist church which had gathered in Tiflis about the merchant Voronin, Pavlov and his friend Ivanov-Klishnikov evangelised among the Molokans of Transcaucasia, and soon gave evidence of their power as preachers and winners of souls. A few country churches came into existence. In 1875 the Tiflis church resolved to send Pavlov to Hamburg to receive definite instruction from Oncken. He stayed only a year, but he won the confidence of the German pioneer, by whom he was ordained to the ministry. In the course of his return journey he was able to render a very great service to the cause. There had begun in Southern Russia shortly after the time of Voronin's baptism the Baptist-Stundist awakening, and by his direct contact with such leaders as Ratushny and Riaboshapka, Pavlov secured the understanding and fraternal co-operation which prepared the way for the founding in due time of a Russian Baptist Union. A period of comparative quiet followed. It lasted in his case ten years, during which Pavlov was able to undertake preaching journeys of ever increasing range, founding churches even in the interior of Russia. Before the end of this period, however, the steady growth of the Baptist and Stundist movements throughout the southern half of Russia had awakened the suspicion and hostility of the authorities.

The term "Stundist" covered a religious awakening of somewhat chaotic character. The Russian Baptists, owing in part to German influence, had come to cherish clear-cut ideas of doctrine and church organisation, and were gradually giving form and clarity to the "Stundist" groups. They meanwhile

repudiated the label "Stundist" when applied to themselves, on the ground that it covered not only healthy but also religiously anarchic elements to which they could give no countenance. While the leadership and organisation of the evangelical movement throughout Southern Russia were gradually passing into the hands of the Baptists, they and the Stundists became known to an evangelical group of more recent origin, having its centre in St. Petersburg and including as adherents influential members of the aristocracy. This group owed its existence largely to the English Lord Radstock; among its leaders were Colonel Pashkov and Count Korff, and it was popularly described by such names as "Radstockite" or "Pashkovite." Its general positions were at that time those held by Plymouth Brethren of the "open" section. In later years under the name of "Evangelical Christian" it became definitely Baptist, so that after the Revolution its leaders and the Baptist leaders signed a common declaration of faith and order, as a basis for an organic union which unhappily has not yet been achieved.

A conference of about a hundred representatives from south and north met in April, 1884, at St. Petersburg, in the house of Princess Lieven, and entered into brotherly fellowship, though they found that differences on the subject of baptism prevented complete co-operation. This conference provoked the authorities to action: several delegates were arrested and compelled to return home, and Pavlov's notes were seized. Pashkov and Korff were soon afterwards banished from Russia. It may be observed that although formal union with the "Pashkovites" was not attained, this same year, 1884, witnessed the founding of the All-Russian Baptist Union to complete the unifying work initiated by Pavlov in 1876.

The accession of Czar Alexander III. had given the signal for the opening of a persecution which was gradually increasing in severity. On the ground of a personal report to the Czar by the Procurator of the Holy Synod, the notorious Pobiedonostseff, Pavlov with Voronin and others was sentenced in 1887 to four years' banishment in Orenburg. When the four years had expired, he returned to Tiflis, but his liberty was brief. The Government demanded that he should sign an undertaking to abstain from preaching, and, like his English forerunner, John Bunyan, he refused. Thereupon he was sentenced to a further four years' banishment; and on this occasion, in contrast to the first, he was transported as a dangerous criminal, under strong escort and in chains, from prison to prison, until after much suffering he at last reached Orenburg.

During the first year of this second banishment the devoted

preacher was exposed to most severe trials. In a single week his wife and three children died of cholera; a fortnight earlier a daughter had been drowned in the river Ural, and only one boy survived. "I found myself in the valley of the shadow of death," wrote Pavlov, "but the Lord was with me. I asked myself, 'Why live, when thou hast lost almost all thy dear ones?' But an inner voice answered, 'Life has still purpose: thou must live for Jesus who has redeemed thee!' I recalled the words, 'Whether we live, we live unto the Lord: whether we die, we die unto the Lord!'" During his banishment he carried on a small retail shop and bakery in Orenburg; and, strangely enough, he was permitted within a limited district to do the work forbidden at home. He preached and laboured with zeal, and churches arose among the Russian and Ukrainian colonists of the region. The clergy strove to check the movement by challenging him to public debate; but the only result was to extend interest and multiply the number of Baptist adherents, so that the discussions were speedily broken off by those who sought them. Then offers of lucrative employment were made to Pavlov if he would abandon his ministry—but they were made in vain.

The baffled clergy raged furiously against the unconquerable Baptist preacher; and as the close of his second banishment drew near, they threatened to secure for him a third, this time to the uttermost parts of Siberia. Pavlov saw that in the interests of his work he must for a while withdraw from Russia; and immediately after his release, before hostile plans could take shape, he left the country.

He betook himself to Tulcea in Rumania, about eighteen miles from the Russian border, and this place became a centre for refugees from the savage persecution then reaching its height. Pavlov was tireless in evangelising his fellow Russians dwelling in the district, and in organising help for the needy refugees. He remained in Tulcea until, in 1901, the flood of violence having somewhat abated, he was able to return to his own land.

During the remaining years of the Czardom he laboured chiefly in the Caucasus and in Odessa, and blessing was richly manifest throughout. He undertook an evangelising tour that extended through the whole length of Siberia as far as Vladivostok, and occupied six months. Difficulties were many: Russia was no "land of liberty," and the hopes aroused by the Czar's edict of religious freedom (1905) were speedily disappointed. On several occasions Pavlov's work was interrupted by imprisonment for from one to four months. The charges against him were "propaganda" (i.e., preaching) and

the translation and publication of a booklet by Spurgeon. The last sentence passed upon him—eight months' imprisonment for translating the Spurgeon booklet—was never put into effect, since he succeeded in evading the Odessa police until the outbreak of the Revolution in 1917.

One episode in connection with an imprisonment may here be described. Shortly after the issue of the Czar's edict of 1905, the Russian Baptist Union was holding a conference in Odessa, to the bitter chagrin of the Orthodox priests, who were supported by the Governor, Tolmatshev. The Governor arrested about two hundred members of the conference. Most of them were liberated after a brief detention, but he sentenced the leaders to periods of imprisonment varying from two weeks to four months. Pavlov naturally received the longest sentence. In prison he was treated as a dangerous criminal and allowed no visitors. Representations were made by his fellow-Baptists to the Czar, who sent a high official to Odessa. This man—whose name also chanced to be Pavlov—saw the prisoner and had a long talk with him. He reproached the Baptists with influencing their sons and daughters against the State, whereas the Government expected children to be educated in a spirit of loyalty. The Baptist preacher very frankly replied that if children of Baptists should be ill-disposed to the Government, the responsibility lay with the Government itself. "Do you realise," he asked, "what must happen when I come home after four months in prison? My son will want to know where I have been for so long. There is only one answer: I have been in prison. The child will ask why; and again there is only one answer: I must tell him that I have done nothing wrong, but have been locked up for preaching the gospel. The child will be astonished and want to know how the police can so treat his father for doing what God commands." He boldly pressed the question: "Are the Baptists to blame if their children grow up without sympathy for a Government that persecutes their fathers?" The Czarist official became very serious, and promised to use his influence for Pavlov's release; but nothing came of this. The prisoner had to serve the full term.

Three dramatic appearances abroad during the early years of the present century made him known to fellow-Baptists from all parts of the world. He was at the First World Congress in London in 1905, at the European Baptist Congress in Berlin in 1908, and at the Second World Congress in Philadelphia in 1911. His address at Berlin, where his mastery of German brought him into closer touch with the assembly than the English-speaking conditions of London and Philadelphia permitted, was crowded with information regarding the history of

the Russian evangelicals, and has been freely used in this biographical sketch.

The story of his experiences after the Revolution may be briefly told. When it broke out he was travelling near Moscow. For months he had avoided the neighbourhood of Odessa, where the police were seeking him, and undertaken secret missionary journeys in other parts of Russia—in the Volga region, Orenburg, Turkestan, and Transcaucasia. In 1916 the church at Moscow called him to its pastorate and he accepted the invitation, but under the condition that he should take up the work only when the danger of arrest and imprisonment had passed. The Revolution freed him from this particular menace. For four years, under new and most difficult conditions, including peril, poverty and hunger, he served the Moscow church and the All-Russian Baptist Union by voice and pen, displaying deep interest in Bible courses and the gathering of historical data concerning the Baptist movement in his country. On the occasion of his Jubilee in 1921 the Russian Baptists undertook to support him for the rest of his life. We find him soon afterwards preaching for a time in Leningrad; and in August, 1923, he moved to Transcaucasia with the intention of devoting his special knowledge to mission work among the Mohammedans. The plan was not fulfilled. His heart had been overstrained by exhausting labours, and an attack by bandits on a railway train in which he was travelling aggravated his condition. After acute suffering he died in Baku on the 15th April, 1924. At the earnest request of the Church, which he had joined as a youth of seventeen, his mortal remains were conveyed to Tiflis for burial.

Pavlov's outstanding characteristics are zeal, thoroughness, courage, and all are rooted in an intense personal experience of salvation in Christ. His enthusiastic and far-reaching labours appear in the story we have told. His thoroughness comes to light in his eager and prolonged study of languages, but especially in his expository and theological work. He was resolved to find, not only emotional satisfaction, but clear intellectual conceptions of truth. These were embodied in his preaching, and they made him a formidable public disputant. As to his courage, there is no sign in his life of any yielding to fear. His withdrawal to Rumania for a few years was not a shrinking from persecution; he withdrew because he was threatened with banishment under conditions that would have denied him all opportunity of actively preaching the gospel. As pioneer, preacher, theologian, writer and editor, as a consistent Christian man, and as one who in a truly martyr spirit endured suffering for Christ, Pavlov is

worthy of high honour. He himself would have given the whole glory to the Lord who used him to influence more powerfully than any other Russian Baptist evangelist the men and women of his vast country.

Will his work abide? Who can doubt that it will? "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ."

J. H. RUSHBROOKE.

Frederick Tryon of Deeping.

IT was Saturday morning in the year 1850, at the town of Sleaford, Lincolnshire. My grandfather's household, of which I was a child guest, was as usual about early. My dear aunt, his housekeeper, had a journey before her, for to-morrow was the first Sunday in the month, when she endeavoured to be present for Communion at the Baptist Cause at Deeping, some twenty miles away, where she was a member.

At an early hour the carrier's waggon started from the market-place. It was a large covered vehicle that once or twice a week travelled from Sleaford to Peterborough and back, conveying passengers, parcels and goods. Its occupants, country folk with their bundles, whiled away the time on the slow journey with bucolic talk and comments on local events.

At Folkingham we halted to bait the horses. The jail near the green had a treadmill, and when the prisoners were on it two fans revolved above the roof, a process I afterwards heard called "grinding the wind." My childish enquiry was met and satisfied by a brief explanation and a solemn warning as to what becomes of children who go wrong.

At Bourne was a long halt, when my aunt went to the house of an aged Christian friend to lunch and talk. Then on again till we alighted at Deeping where, with a widowed relative, we were to stay till Monday. Her three young children, destined in after years to occupy honoured positions in Christian service, gave a cheerful tone to that quiet Puritan home.

Sunday morning, calm and bright in those fen-lands, to chapel. A plain building facing a street on the bank of the Nene, then a placid little river, but in autumn and winter over-