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THE RUSSIAN MISSION: SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISM, BOLSHEVISM, AND THE
IMMINENT APOCALYPSE, 1881 - 1946

By

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Baccalaureate of Arts, University of Alaska Anchorage, Anchorage, Alaska, 2015

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES	iv
INTRODUCTION.....	1
a. HISTORIOGRAPHY	5
b. ADVENTIST BEGINNINGS, BELIEFS, BATTLES	10
CHAPTER 1: THE MISSION, 1880 TO 1914.....	19
a. THE CHURCH IN RUSSIA TO 1914	23
b. MISSIONARIES IN RUSSIA TO 1906.....	27
c. MISSIONARIES IN RUSSIA TO 1914.....	32
d. ADVENTIST RESPONSE TO 1914.....	36
e. CONCLUSION.....	44
CHAPTER 2: THE MISSION, 1914 TO 1924.....	47
a. THE CHURCH TO 1920.....	49
b. ADVENTIST RESPONSE TO 1917.....	53
c. THE CHURCH, 1917 TO 1924.....	57
d. ADVENTIST RESPONSE, 1917 TO 1924.....	60
e. THE CHURCH, 1914 TO 1924.....	67
f. ADVENTIST RESPONSE TO 1925.....	72
g. CONCLUSION.....	78
CHAPTER THREE: THE MISSION, 1924 TO 1945.....	80
a. THE CHURCH TO 1928.....	82
b. ADVENTIST RESPONSE TO 1928.....	86
c. ADVENTIST RESPONSE TO 1945.....	92
d. CONCLUSION.....	100
EPILOGUE.....	104
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	108

ABSTRACT

Tree, Garrett, MA, May 2017

Major
History

The Russian Mission: Seventh-Day Adventism, Bolshevism, and the Imminent Apocalypse, 1881 – 1946

Chairperson: Robert H. Greene

The first Adventist missionaries made their way into Russia in the late 1880's, where they experienced imprisonment, exile, and sometimes both. The scope of my thesis concerns the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and how Adventist missionaries and leaders endeavored on the Russian Mission. Using the writings, letters, and correspondence of these missionaries, as well as the myriad Adventist periodicals, I explain and analyze the evolution of the Mission from its inception to the end of the Second World War. In what ways did Adventist missionaries or Adventist media outlets abroad understand, explain, or justify the Russian Mission and its hardships? What characterized the Russian Mission through this transitional period? How can we understand the Russian Mission, through the Seventh-Day Adventist Church's own writings and words, during the imperial period, the revolutionary period, and the early Soviet period? Why, in 1928, did Adventist periodicals stop calling for more evangelical missions and start heralding the second advent of Christ? What is the cause and significance of apocalyptic rhetoric?

The missionaries, proselytizing in Russia during the imperial era, only ever discussed the prophetic potential of the Russian Mission; Adventist periodicals mirrored these sentiments, despite circulating stories of persecution at the hands of the Russian Orthodox Church and the autocracy. Russia's entrance into the Great War, the consequent Russian Revolutions and Civil War, and the subsequent Volga Famine created an era of uncertainty for the Russian Mission, lasting well into the 1920's; again, Adventists in Russia and abroad heralded the Mission as an apostolic success. Beginning in 1924, these feelings of hope began to fade, as missionary groups on the ground lost contact and communication with domestic Adventist centers. Instead of the hope-filled calls to Russia, however, outlets of the Adventist media began developing an understanding of the coming apocalypse. By 1928, the activities and goals of the Russian Mission had disappeared, and Adventists came to see Russia as the staging ground for an imminent and personal second advent of Christ.

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1899 - 1906	24
Fig. 2: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1906 – 1915.....	26
Fig. 3: Louis Conradi and his wife.....	28
Fig. 4: Julius Boettcher, his daughter, and his wife	35
Fig. 5: Arthur Daniells	43
Fig. 6: 1915 Church Statistics for the Western Russian Union Conference.....	50
Fig. 7: Russian refugees escaping the famine	62
Fig. 8: Famine-stricken Children	62
Fig. 9: Louis Christian	64
Fig. 10: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1920 – 1924.....	67
Fig. 11: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1915 – 1924.....	72
Fig. 12: Front page of <i>The Signs of the Times</i>	74
Fig. 13: Leaders of the Living Church.....	75
Fig. 14: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1924 – 1928.....	84
Fig. 15: SDA Baptisms and Publications in Russia, 1921 – 1928.....	85
Fig. 16: Church made into Worker’s Club.....	93
Fig. 17: Lenin’s Mausoleum.....	95
Fig. 18: Anti-religious carnival.....	96
Fig. 19: Communists on a church	96
Fig. 20: A World Forecast for 1934.....	99

INTRODUCTION

In May 1917, Vernon Lovell, an American Seventh-Day Adventist and theological educator, authored an article in *The Educational Messenger*, which described Adventist hopes of a revitalized missionary movement in Russia following the February Revolution. “There is Russia with its 185,000,000 people, who are no longer ‘subjects’ but ‘citizens,’” Lovell wrote. He continued, “It is no longer an autocratic Russia, but a great democracy... So we can see how that God has prepared this great nation, formerly so hostile, for the spread of the Third Angel’s Message.”¹ This article, titled “The Gospel and the World’s Crisis,” represented a new sentiment of hope for evangelical missions within Russia. Lovell emphasized three reforms promised by the new, liberal Russian government:

1. Emancipation of the Jews, and abolition of all social, religious and national restrictions.
2. Absolute liberty of speech and freedom of the press for which hundreds have been imprisoned and executed in the past.
3. Immediate extension of amnesty to prisoners and exiles, suffering because of their political faith.²

For Adventist missionaries, the fall of the Russian autocracy and subsequent construction of the Provisional Government seemingly provided a new opportunity to openly preach and evangelize within Russia, free from the religious restrictions they had endured under the Tsar and the Russian Orthodox Church. After decades of social stigma, imprisonment, and exile, Adventist believers and missionaries interpreted the development of the Provisional Government as a God-willed relief. The promises of a democratic system in which the spheres of church and state were

¹ Vernon Lovell, “The Gospel and the World’s Crisis,” *Educational Messenger* 13, no. 4 (May 1917): 14. Brother Vernon Lovell was the editor of the bi-monthly *Educational Messenger* by 1917. He earned his missionary license in 1912, graduated from Union College in 1918, and continued to further his career in educational leadership. By 1924, he was the secretary of the Education and Missionary Volunteer Department of the South Africa Division. Lovell went on to his position of Academy principal of the Educational Department of the General Conference Committee in 1930, the Committee on School, Industries, and the Government Code in 1934, and the Committee on the Revision of Curriculum of Secondary Schools in 1940. That same year, he was offered the position of Secretary of Education at Lake Union in Washington. I pieced this biography together using the Seventh-Day Adventist Yearbook publications and his authorship in various periodicals.

² Ibid.

deliberately separate would provide an avenue of unrestricted evangelization and thus the salvation of many, many souls alongside an ushering in of the kingdom of God.

Within a decade, these sentiments had faded. In the outlets of Adventist media, the feelings of hope and renewal were replaced by those of doubt, futility, and apocalyptic imagery. An article featured on the front page of *The Watchman* in March of 1932 represents this dark and pessimistic shift towards the events unfolding in Soviet Russia. In this article titled “The People Cry ‘Crucify Him!’,” Adventist Robert Bruce Thurber wrote, “It becomes increasingly popular to deny and defy God and crucify Christ again.”³ Like the Provisional Government, Bolshevik leaders had made promises of religious freedom and church-state separation, but Adventists had slowly come to understand that the Bolshevik regime had no interest in upholding these. Instead, the Bolsheviks pushed strict anti-religious policies while simultaneously trying to manufacture an all-encompassing Bolshevik way of life. Thurber utilized specific and deliberate language in his article; by reversing their stances and policies toward religious groups, he argued, the Bolsheviks figuratively crucified Christ a second time.⁴

The gradual inclusion of apocalypticism and pessimism in Adventist attitudes toward Russia is demonstrative of a larger question concerning the relationship between church and state. Bolshevism and communism are notorious for their history of harsh antireligious policies, though this state atheism ultimately failed to outlive the very belief it sought to destroy. There were similar methods of authoritarian restriction under both the autocratic and Soviet systems.

³ Robert Bruce Thurber, “The People Cry, ‘Crucify Him!’” *The Watchman* 41, no. 3 (March 1, 1932): 1. Thurber was a popular Adventist author of over twenty-four separate works. Among those most notable: *Without Doubt, Faith for Today and Tomorrow, Personal Power for the New Age, and Min Din*. He served as the editor of the *Watchman* from 1923 to 1936, the editor of the *Oriental Watchman* in India from 1936 to 1942, and the editor of the Canadian tract *Signs of the Times* after 1943.

⁴ The title of the article was derived from Mark 15:13 which reads: So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!” Adventists do not specify a preference for any version of the Bible, though most scriptural references use either King James Version, or New King James Version. For clarity and ease of understanding, I will be utilizing New King James Version (NKJV) unless otherwise necessary.

Yet, Soviet leaders pursued militant atheist policies in a more streamlined and vigorous manner. Whereas the various Tsarist policies, compounded by apprehension and concerns on behalf of the Russian Orthodox Church, oscillated between acceptance and mere toleration of non-Orthodox faith, Soviet decrees gradually became more severe and restrictive over time until the Second World War. While quantifying or qualifying the levels of persecution under either regime is a futile endeavor, it is important to note that the practices by which the autocracy and the Bolsheviks restricted religious freedom did not change; both political systems enforced imprisonment, torture, and Siberian exile. It is noteworthy, however, that Adventists perceived a difference between the persecution they endured under the autocratic system and the Soviet system. For the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, there could be no collusion between ecclesial policies and governmental policies; complete and utter separation of church and state was understood as theologically necessary. Adventists had come to this conclusion during their formative years in the United States and brought it with them when missionaries entered Russia during the reign of Alexander II. While missionaries continued trying to evangelize within Russia after 1917, their voices were largely lost in the chaos and confusion of revolution and the establishment of a one-party Socialist state. Meanwhile, the Adventist media outside Russia pushed a different story on the events in Soviet Russia than they had during the imperial period.

After several decades of persecution under the autocratic regime, Adventist missionaries saw the Russian Revolution as a welcome relief and a push towards religious policies which coincided with Adventist belief concerning church and state. On February 2, 1918, Vladimir Lenin enacted a decree that reframed the relationship between religion and the Russian state: “It is forbidden on the territory of the republic to issue any local laws or ordinances which would hamper or restrict freedom of conscience or would establish any advantages or privileges on

account of the religion of citizens.”⁵ Beyond freedom of conscience, the decree explicitly mandated the separation of church and state. Perhaps surprisingly, early Bolshevik policies seemed to come to the defense of sectarian groups, including Adventism. For almost a thousand years, the Orthodox Church had enjoyed a dominant status and a monopoly on faith within the Russian Empire. Lenin’s decree responded to this relationship; even more so, Lenin aimed to completely reverse this millennial relationship with a handful of sentences. The development of two separate spheres of church and state was unprecedented since the official baptism of Rus in the late tenth century. Over the centuries, the Russian Orthodox Church had gained a strong political and cultural position and at times, the church and the state had held an obvious, though sometimes unspoken, alliance.⁶

The dominance of an atheistic and quasi-religious Bolshevik state, compounded by an Adventist history of resistance against governmental interference, created distance between Adventist evangelicals in Russia and Adventist media observers in the United States. From the Adventists’ entrance into Russia in the early 1880’s, they faced policies of religious restrictions aimed at preventing their evangelical movements. Despite oppression, the Adventist Church reported growth from 1881 to the onset of the First World War. In the brief period directly after the February Revolution, Adventist commentators and missionaries expressed hope for

⁵ Decrees of the Soviet Government (Moscow, Russia: Institute of Marxism-Leninism, 1957), vol. 1, pp. 373-374, as found on <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1917-2/conflict-with-the-church/conflict-with-the-church-texts/decrees-on-the-freedom-of-conscience-and-on-clerical-and-religious-societies/>.

⁶ The Russian Orthodox Church developed the title of “Handmaiden of the State” through centuries of supporting and endorsing the Tsar, as well as receiving support from autocratic policies. For examples, see James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York City: Knopf, 1966); Thomas Bremer, *Cross and Kremlin: A Brief History of the Orthodox Church in Russia* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2013); Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998); John Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia: The Orthodox Church and Russian Nationalism before the Revolution* (Jordanville: Holy Trinity, 2013). However, recent scholarship has begun to review the relationship in a more critical manner. For an example, see Gregory Freeze, “‘Handmaiden of the State?’ The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36, no. 1 (January 1985): 82–102.

unrestricted evangelization and rejoiced in the idea that Russia was advancing towards both religious freedom and a unilateral separation of church and state. Such hopes gave way to feelings of pessimism and apocalypticism after 1924, despite similar Adventist experiences of imprisonment and exile under both the imperial regime and the Bolshevik government. Adventist requests for prayer and evangelical support became more and more infrequent in the Adventist press as expressions of apostolic hope were pushed aside in favor of rhetoric concerning the second advent of Christ. By 1928, the faith-fueled stories of these contemporary apostles no longer reached the ears and eyes of Adventists outside of Russia; likewise, Adventists no longer understood Russia as the land of prophetic hope it had once been. While missionaries who were working in Russia before the Revolutions continued their efforts, they were unable to communicate to the domestic Seventh-Day Adventist Church. If the Russian Mission began under imperial persecution, and became revitalized through the fall of the autocracy, the fears and anxieties of a Bolshevik regime that endeavored in a militant, atheistic, and all-pervasive manner effectively killed the Russian Mission. Relative to general atheism, Adventists understood atheistic Bolshevism as a new entity, producing sentiments within Adventist media unlike the imperial regime had. As there is no major, substantive work on Adventism in Russia, and specifically no work on their position during the transition from autocracy to socialism, a discussion is necessary concerning the historiography with which my thesis contends.

Historiography

In recent years, historical works concerning religion underwent a transformation from mere pew-counting to the analysis of actual belief in the context of historical change. Historians like N. M. Nikol'skii regarded religion in Russia as an unimportant epiphenomenon explicitly

ted to the historical phenomenon of the autocratic state: an offshoot historical accident, insincere and superficial in nature.⁷ Newer Russia religious histories push agency back to historical actors whom historians, Marxists or western authors writing within the context of the Cold War alike, had ignored. For example, Vera Shevzov's "Chapels and the Ecclesial World of Prerevolutionary Russian Peasants" emphasizes how Russian Orthodox peasants sought to build chapels within a closer proximity of their villages, showing a genuine desire for laity to influence and interact with their belief system at a local level. Similarly, Robert Greene's *Bodies like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* displays the many routes of believers' justification, adaptation, and outright resistance to the unearthing of the tombs of saints, positioning lived faith as a genuine facet of faith culture.⁸

There is a minor lacuna in the historiography on non-Orthodox groups. Some works do exist, like Aleksander Klibanov's *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia, 1860's – 1917*, but are often non-analytical in nature and serve better as a chronology than anything else. Others, like Sergei Zhuk's *Russia's Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917* and Heather Coleman's *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929*, focus on the struggles of Russian sectarian groups in the late nineteenth

⁷ N. M. Nikol'skii, *Istoriia Russkoi Tserkvi* (Moskva, Russia: Izdatel'stvo Politicheskoi Literatury, 1982). For other examples of the early historiography concerning religion and the state, see: Albert Boiter, *Religion in the Soviet Union* (Beverly Hills, California: Center for Strategic and International Studies Sage Publications, 1980); A. I. Klibanov, *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia, 1860s – 1917*, trans. Ethel Dunn, ed. Stephen P. Dunn. (Oxford, England: Pergamon Press, 1982); Walter Kolarz, *Myths and Realities in Eastern Europe* (London, England: Drummond, 1946).

⁸ Vera Shevzov, "Chapels and the Ecclesial World of Prerevolutionary Russian Peasants," *Slavic Review* 55, no. 3 (1996): 585-613; Robert H. Greene, *Bodies like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

century.⁹ While Coleman’s work is a welcome addition, more historical work needs to be done concerning fringe religious groups after 1917.

Historians have also begun to reimagine the relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian autocracy. The title of “Handmaiden of the State” is an enduring but largely inaccurate description of the church-state relationship in imperial Russia. Historical works like James H. Billington’s *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* and Dimitry Pospelovsky’s *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* conjoin and conflate the goals and authorities of the Church and the autocracy.¹⁰ As Gregory Freeze posits in his aptly named “‘Handmaiden of the State?’ The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered,” the relationship between these two entities fluctuated and often came into conflict with each other. The Russian Orthodox Church did not always support or coincide with the goals of the Russian autocracy; conversely, the Church did not always enjoy the advantages of state-sponsorship, as historians have so often assumed. Paul Werth’s *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* positions the Russian Orthodox Church and the state as two separate entities, each playing a part in what Werth describes as Russia’s “multiconfessional establishment.” Werth’s research shows that while the state did seek to implement religious freedoms, leaders in the Russian Orthodox Church felt threatened by the prospect of apostasy which often caused push back or policy reversal. Within the Russian

⁹ Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005); Sergei I. Zhuk, *Russia’s Lost Reformation: Peasants, Millennialism, and Radical Sects in Southern Russia and Ukraine, 1830-1917* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2004).

¹⁰ For examples, see James H. Billington, *The Icon and the Axe: An Interpretive History of Russian Culture* (New York: Knopf, 1966); Thomas Bremer, *Cross and Kremlin: A Brief History of the Orthodox Church in Russia* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013); Dimitry Pospelovsky, *The Orthodox Church in the History of Russia* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998); John Strickland, *The Making of Holy Russia: The Orthodox Church and Russian Nationalism before the Revolution* (Jordanville: Holy Trinity, 2013).

political sphere, the Church and the state often collided and did not consistently share ideas or priorities.¹¹

My study is also in dialogue with another body of scholarship concerning the history of Russo-American relations. Adventist evangelical missions to Russia represent a facet of American, or more broadly “western,” ideals entering Russia in the early twentieth century, a period largely ignored in the historiography. Most histories have focused on the post-1945 period, examining the competing political paradigms of western capitalism and eastern communism, and the various proxy-wars connected to the era. Works like Richard Crockatt’s *The Fifty Years War: The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941 – 1991*, and Raymond Garthoff’s *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* do not mention the ways in which Americans, both state and non-state actors, involved themselves in Russian affairs prior to the Second World War.¹² A few notable works have attempted to shift the focus of Russo-American relations to an earlier periodization. David S. Foglesong, the preeminent scholar in this field, authored two such works: *America’s Secret War against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* and *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”: The Crusade for a “Free Russia” since 1881*. Both works emphasize endeavors by U.S. government actors to involve themselves in Russian affairs, though little has been done in the way of non-state actors. An important exception is Bertrand M. Patenaude’s *The Big Show in Bololand: The American Relief Expedition to Soviet Russia in the*

¹¹ For examples, see Gregory Freeze, “‘Handmaiden of the State?’ The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36, no.1 (January 1985): 82–102; Paul Werth, *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹² Richard Crockatt, *The Fifty Years War: The United States and the Soviet Union in World Politics, 1941-1991* (London: Routledge, 2003); Raymond L. Garthoff, *Detente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994).

Famine of 1921, which mentions mainstream ecclesial and charity groups that entered Russia in 1921 alongside the American Relief Administration.¹³

The third historiographical field to which my thesis speaks is the history of Adventism itself. United States Adventism has received some attention, notably by historians such as Jonathan Butler, Gary Land, David Rowe, and Ruth Doan.¹⁴ However, these studies are geographically focused on development within the contiguous United States, and do not address the international context. Little attention has been paid to Adventism's growth and reception in Russia; even Klibanov's 230-page study of non-Orthodox denominations spends only five pages on the discussion of Adventism in Russia. Marie Sapiets' *One Hundred Years of Adventism in Russia and the Soviet Union* and Alf Lohne's *Adventism in Russia* are two exceptions, but also serve better as chronologies than analytical pieces. Situating the Adventist development in Russia in the context of church-state relations is one of the many lacunas of Adventist history.¹⁵

¹³ For more examples of early Russian-American relations, see Carl J. Richard, *When The United States Invaded Russia; Woodrow Wilson's Siberian Disaster* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: 2013); Donald E. Davis and Eugene Trani, *The First Cold War: The Legacy of Woodrow Wilson in U.S.-Soviet Relations* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002); Donald E. Davis and Eugene P. Trani, *Distorted Mirrors: Americans and their Relations with Russia and China in the Twentieth Century* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2009); Victor Fic, *The Collapse of American Policy in Russia and Siberia, 1918: Wilson's Decision Not to Intervene (March-October 1918)* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1995); David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881* (New York City: Cambridge University Press, 2007); David S. Foglesong, *America's Secret War against Bolshevism: U.S Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); David S. Foglesong, "Redeeming Russia? American Missionaries and Tsarist Russia, 1886 – 1917," *Religion, State and Society* 25, no. 4 (1997): 353-368.

¹⁴ For examples, see David Rowe, *God's Strange Work: William Miller and the End of the World* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008); Jonathan Butler, "From Millerism to Seventh-Day Adventism: 'Boundlessness to Consolidation,'" *Church History* 55, no. 1 (1986): 50-65; Malcom Bull and Keith Lockhart, *Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989); Ruth Doan, *The Miller Heresy, Millennialism, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Mahlon Ellsworth Olsen, *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-Day Adventists* (Takoma Park: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1925); Douglas Morgan, *Adventism and the American Republic: The Public Involvement of a Major Apocalyptic Movement* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001); Douglas Morgan, "Adventism, Apocalyptic, and the Cause of Liberty," *Church History* 63, no. 2 (1994): 235-249; Alf Lohne, *Adventists in Russia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1987).

¹⁵ There is also a historiography on evangelical movements and American millennialism, in which Adventism does not fit neatly. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church and associated missionary movements largely precedes feelings of millennialism and apocalypticism in more mainstream American Christianity and there is not much on pre-millenarian apocalypticism. For more examples on evangelization in the context of American missionaries, see: Kevin Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America* (New York City: Basic

Secondary literature is still in its first historiographical waves. As is the case with evangelical and fundamentalist historiography, most scholars writing and discussion the history of Adventism are indeed Adventists themselves. The actions and events are therefore colored by faith, and do not lend themselves to any strong historiographical argument.

Adventist Beginnings, Beliefs, & Battles

The emergence of Seventh-Day Adventism in the United States is rooted within a larger historical context following the Second Great Awakening in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.¹⁶ As the spheres of religious morality and political progressivism merged, a several issues fell into the public forum; American political and religious groups alike fought against social issues like alcoholism, animal and child abuse, race- and gender-based oppression, and welfare limitations. As Jonathan Butler has noted of the 1850's, "Americans passed from freedom to control, from movement to stability, from diversity to uniformity, from diffusion to concentration, from spontaneity to order."¹⁷ The theological predecessor of Adventism, Millerism, developed within this context. Millerism, founded by a lay Baptist William Miller, heavily emphasized the second coming of Christ. When the expectation of a second advent failed

Books, 2015); Richard Pierard, "Pax Americana and the Evangelical Missionary Advice" in Joel A. Carpenter, *Earthen Vessels: American Evangelicals and Foreign Missions, 1880-1980*, ed. Wilbert Shenk (Eugene: WIPF and STOCK, 1990); Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014); Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York City: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁶ The brief overview of Millerite and Adventist history here is neither earnest nor original, and serves only to create a foundation upon which the development of Adventism in Russia can rest upon. For a more in-depth chronological look at Adventism, I recommend Mahlon Olsen's *A History of the Origin and Progress of Seventh-Day Adventists*. This massive piece is 745 pages of Adventist chronology. Olsen was an Adventist believer herself, and as such the book incorporates her own spiritual understanding of the events. For example, she makes the claim that Ellen Harmon was predetermined to lead the Adventist Church before she ever encountered Miller's sermons. For more analytical pieces, see the above historiographical section.

¹⁷ Jonathan Butler, "From Millerism to Seventh-Day Adventism: 'Boundlessness to Consolidation'" *Church History* 55, no. 1 (1986): 51.

to materialize, a group of these believers formulated a different understanding of the theological basis concerning this prophetic event.¹⁸ This group came to call themselves Seventh-Day Adventists, and by 1880, it became a concrete, actualized religious organization. Major leaders began codifying and structuring Adventist tenets, while also simultaneously trying to legitimize the Church itself.

Three major aspects of Adventist belief hold significant importance in influencing Adventist Church movements and actions: Saturday Sabbath-keeping, an imminent and personal second coming of Christ, and an intense focus on missionary evangelization. Joseph Bates, a leading Adventist worker, began advocating Saturday as the original Sabbath in the early years of the Church; consequently, many Adventist believers, notably influential leaders like Ellen and James White, began holding Saturday as the biblical day of rest.¹⁹ Bates authored a series of articles in the first publication of the *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, arguing that the shift in later centuries of the Sabbath to Sunday was “not sanctioned by any plain scriptural evidence.”²⁰

Seventh-Day Adventism derived its name from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “arrival.” The Adventist Church considers itself “the Remnant” of the Church of Christ, the true faithful who will adhere to Christian doctrine during the apocalypse itself; they would, as Adventist theology dictates, stay behind as other denominations are raptured. As Adventism developed in a tumultuous whirlwind of progressivism, religious revival, and the exploitation and dehumanization encountered during the Industrial Revolution, Adventists adopted

¹⁸ Daniel 8:14 - He said to me, “It will take 2,300 evenings and mornings; then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated.” William Miller cited this passage as the base for his estimate on the second advent of Christ.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁰ Joseph Bates, “The Sabbath: Authority for the Change of the Day,” *Second Advent Review, And Sabbath Herald*, (November 1, 1850): 6. The periodical was adopted by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the 1880s.

apocalyptic imagery in their descriptions and understandings of the advent. Drawing largely on the passages of Revelation 14:6 through 14:12, Adventists positioned themselves scripturally in an ecclesial space outside mainstream Christianity:

⁶ And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

⁷ Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

⁸ And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

⁹ And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

¹⁰ The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

¹¹ And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

¹² Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.²¹

The official views of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church posit the responsibility for Adventists to “keep the commandments of God and the Faith of Jesus” and announce the “arrival of the judgement hour,” proclaim “salvation through Christ,” and herald “the approach of His second advent.” Furthermore, “every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness.”²²

As historian Matthew Sutton points out, this paradigm of apocalypticism has had a profound effect on the lives and missionary efforts of Christian fundamentalists, including

²¹ Revelations 14:6 – 14:12.

²² This information was originally included in manifestos and manuals, and can now be found at <https://www.adventist.org/en/beliefs/church/the-remnant-and-its-mission/>.

Adventists.²³ The belief in an imminent end did not render them apathetic or disconnected from the world around them: “Although they felt sure that the global apocalypse was imminent,” Sutton argues, “it was never too late for the individual, the nation, or the world to be reborn.”²⁴ Therefore, Adventism places immense emphasis on spreading the Third Angel’s Message in Revelation 14. Non-Adventist fundamentalism came onto the American stage about three decades later, when conferences of apocalypse-emphasizing Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, and Methodists espoused the second coming of Christ while simultaneously distancing themselves from the Millerite movement and their spiritual successors, the Adventists.²⁵ Adventists had already long since distinguished themselves from these denominations. Adventist leaders made a point to separate themselves from these groups and establish a theological basis for their claim to the title of Remnant. James White argued this in a biblical tract titled *The Second Advent: Manner, Object, and Nearness of the Event* in the late 1870s:

The faithful watchman who sounds the alarm as he sees destruction coming is held up before the people from the pulpits of our land, and by the religious press, as a “fanatic,” a “teacher of dangerous heresies;” while in contrast is set forth a long period of peace and prosperity to the church. So the churches are quieted to sleep. The scoffer continues to scoff, and the mocker mocks on. But their day is coming. Thus saith the prophet of God: “Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as a destruction from the Almighty. Therefor shall all hands be faint, and every man’s heart shall melt.”²⁶

Theologically separated from mainstream Christianity and emphasizing the advent of Christ well before American fundamentalists began emphasizing this idea several decades later, Adventism

²³ Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁶ James White, *The Second Advent: Manner, Object, and Nearness of the Event* (Battle Creek, Michigan: Review and Herald Publishing), 27-28.

pushed into the world with the missionary goal of converting and saving as many souls before the imminent and personal second advent of Christ. Contemporary Christian denominations viewed the Seventh-Day Adventist Church with suspicion. The Church, then, found itself in a separate theological and social space, isolated from more mainstream Christian denominations. Because of its theological opposition to the collusion of the institutes of church and state, the Adventist Church abstained from joining certain progressive movements, in contrast to the quasi-political extensions of other evangelical Christian organizations like the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

Early Adventist leaders and publications strongly espoused and praised the idea of the separation of church and state, drawing from the well-known injunction to “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” in Matthew 22: 20 – 22. As early as 1906, the Adventist periodical *Liberty* proclaimed its mission statement on the title page, “Devoted to the American idea of Religious Liberty Exemplified in the Complete Separation of Church and State.” The text then quotes Leviticus 25:10: “Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof.”²⁷ The periodical maintains a similar structure even today, though it is digitized and online: consistent and deliberate references to religious freedom were, and are, abundant and consciously emphasized. The first century of Adventism as a simple congregation, and eventually as an organized Church, collided with intrusive United States government policies. During the late nineteenth century, James T. Ringgold, a prolific Adventist writer on such issues, authored a religious tract titled “Church and State.” In it, he lists a few grievances against the collusion of the secular and non-secular: Sunday-prohibitive laws, the exemption of church property from taxes, the religious

²⁷ *Liberty* 1, no. 1 (April 1, 1906): 1.

requirements of swearing witnesses in legal cases and for obtaining certain public offices, and “blasphemy laws.” His final paragraph summarizes a typical Adventist stance against these, and similar, religious government policies:

...and by [the United States’] Constitution’s absolutely forbidding religious tests and religious legislation, stands in harmony with the word of Jehovah, the living and true God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of sinners, whose majesty is His own, eternal and infinite, and never can be derogated from; and who is abundantly able to deal with offenders without any of the meddling mediumship of earthly governments.²⁸

As Adventist missionaries pushed the Third Angel’s Message into foreign lands, they brought with them this intense emphasis on religious liberty across the world. Among those visited was a nation where the line between church and state was even more obstructed and unclear: Russia.

Seventh-Day Adventism in Russia had its theological roots in movements of previous foreign Protestant-oriented missionaries. German Stundist missionaries began forming underground, communal, hourly Bible study groups around the periphery of Russia’s borders. Deriving their name from the German word for hour, *stunde*, they provided Russian laity with a personal interpretation of the Bible and a path of apostasy from Russian Orthodoxy. From these Stundists developed faith systems loosely based on Baptist ideology. As discontented Baptist converts met Adventist missionaries and engaged in theological discussions, small Adventist sites began to develop in a select few areas in the 1880s: the greater parts of Ukraine, such as the Kuban and Don Oblasts and the provinces of Taurida, Kiev, Kherson, and Stavropol; the Volga area to the immediate east, on the south stretch of the Volga River; the Vistula provinces which sat within modern-day Poland; and the Baltic provinces, the land of which now belongs to the

²⁸ James T. Ringgold, *Church and State* (Battle Creek, Michigan: The National Religious Liberty Association, December 1892), 60.

countries of Latvia, Estonia, and Belorussia.²⁹ It is in these areas that the Russian Mission began to gain a foothold in Russia. Thus, as Adventists entered autocratic Russia, they brought with them many noteworthy attributes: the observance of a Saturday-Sabbath, an intense, early focus on the advent of Christ and the associated apocalypse, a deliberate self-separation from larger Christian denominations, and an inherent apprehension and hesitation towards the collusion of church and state.

* * *

My thesis studies the position of the Adventist Church in relation to the Russian state, from 1880 to around 1945, focusing on the characteristics of Adventist thought and the position and role of Adventist media as the Russian Mission struggled against the various imperial and Bolshevik policies and persecutions. Chapter One addresses the imperial period, beginning with the first Adventist missionary movements to Russia in the early 1880's and explore the religious environment in which these Adventist missionaries immersed themselves upon entering Russia. Here, I examine how Adventists were perceived by Russian state and Orthodox ecclesial actors and frame the idea of sectarianism versus the Russian Orthodox Church. I detail Adventist growth up to 1906 and include a discussion on the 1906 Edict of Toleration and its effect on these fledgling Adventist groups. I discuss particularly notable Adventist missionaries, like Louis Conradi and Jacob Klein, and chart the ways in which these early missionary movements developed and the resistance they encountered from the autocracy and the Russian Orthodox Church. This methodology is mirrored over the period 1906 to 1914, when missionaries like John Godfrey Jacques and J. T. Boettcher began preaching the Adventist belief and met with

²⁹ Aleksandr I. Klibanov, *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia, 1860's-1917*, trans. Ethel Dunn, ed. Stephen P. Dunn (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), 229.

similar resistance. Finally, I portray the Adventist media, situated in the United States, and show how experienced Adventist missionary movements were seen and reported in domestic periodicals for international audiences.

The periodization for Chapter Two begins with the outset of World War I and ends in 1924. While 1917 is an oft utilized transition, I have opted to co-opt the “continuum of crisis” from 1914 to 1921. Historian of Russia Peter Holquist refers to 1914 as the beginning of Russia’s “continuum of crisis,” arguing that the two Russian Revolutions were largely a response to the autocracy’s role in the Great War.³⁰ While Holquist’s periodization ends at 1921, I am extending this to 1924, when the Adventist Russian Mission began to break apart. I discuss, briefly, how the Great War and two Russian Revolutions disturbed and destabilized the religious environment, with certain groups losing privileges and others gaining them. Over the course of these years, Adventist movements took on a charitable role and responded to the material and spiritual demands created by the First World War, the Russian Civil War, and the Volga Famine of 1921-1922. I continue to chart the growth of the Adventist Church amongst the desolation so abundant in the former Russian Empire, and include the developments and changes in the Soviet government once Bolshevik power is consolidated. I chart major changes in antireligious policies, and the Adventist response to this.

Chapter Three begins in 1925, when members of the Russian Communist Party attempted to reconcile differences in anti-religious strategy after the death of Vladimir Lenin. Over the first few years of the 1920’s, the aforementioned feelings of hope slowly started to fade. They were replaced by apocalyptic imagery, despair, outrage, and futility, unseen in earlier periods of Adventist evangelical missionary movements. No longer were outlets of Adventist media calling

³⁰ Peter Holquist, *Making War, Forging Revolution: Russia’s Continuum of Crisis, 1914 – 1921* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 3.

for spiritual action in the face of state oppression. Instead, the Soviet-atheist state represented a new, terrifying entity. I discuss, again, the religious environment during these years, and how the Adventist understanding of Bolshevism in theological terms, created anxiety and fear among Adventist believers and commentators. In detailing the lack of Adventist growth, I explain the absence of Adventist missionaries and how the Russian Mission changed from previous years in this respect. I explain the appearance and significance of this apocalypticism and connect it to a larger question of church and state, and how Adventist theological understandings helped to cultivate the rhetoric that brought the work of the Russian Mission to an end. The question of church-state relations, and what constitutes a difference between the two, remained close to the Adventist spirit. I conclude in 1945, when Stalin relaxed his suffocating grip on religious belief by lifting some of the harsh antireligious policies put in place years earlier.

CHAPTER 1: THE MISSION, 1880 TO 1914

In the late days of June 1886, a German-born American Adventist entered Russia, where Russian authorities and Russian Orthodox clergy tried to reject and refuse any non-Orthodox proselytization. Louis Conradi, a major influence in early the Russian Mission, found a religious environment in which the longstanding theological domination of the Russian Orthodox Church had blurred and complicated the relationship between church and state. At the border of Ukraine, Conradi met with the Russian consulate officer. The officer, upon learning of Conradi's non-Orthodox evangelistic goals, told the Adventist missionary, "We don't want any missionaries in Russia."³¹ When Conradi inquired as to the punishment for preaching non-Orthodox gospels, the officer explained to him that he would be charged and accused of "Jew heresy," and imprisoned and exiled to Siberia "without grace."³² This show of hostility towards any threat to Russian Orthodoxy represented the religious environment in which Seventh-Day Adventists found themselves. Though entirely unwelcome in Russia, the apostolic mission carried the Adventist faith forward. The complicated relationship between the Russian Orthodox Church and the autocratic state strained the liberties of religious freedom and toleration for sectarian groups, and amplified political unrest within the country. Moreover, the Russian Orthodox Church's position that Seventh-Day Adventism represented a foreign political threat made proselytization a dangerous task. These missionaries, despite the difficulties, saw Russia as a particularly prophetic mission.

This chapter examines the Russian Mission in the imperial era up to the Russian entrance of the Great War. I detail the development of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, as a

³¹ Louis Conradi, *Sermon by Elder L. R. Conradi*. March 28, 1903. Sermon regarding Russian Mission, Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Oakland, California, 17.

³² Alf Lohne, *Adventists in Russia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Association, 1987), 57-58.

movement, until the 1906 Edict of Toleration. After explaining the effects of this decree, I continue with the development of the Church to 1915. Then, I detail the missionary movements that fueled the Russian Mission, before and after 1906: the endeavors of Louis Conradi, Jacob Klein, Conrad Laubhan, Teofil Babiyenko, John Godfrey Jacques, and Julius Boettcher. I juxtapose this with Adventist missionary and Adventist journalist responses to the Russian Mission, to understand the Adventist scripture-based interpretation of the persecutions and events in Russia. Through this chapter, the reader will have an understanding of the imperial era and how this period enabled among Adventists a great hope and optimism following the Russian Revolution.

By no means did the Russian Orthodoxy represent the only belief system in the country. Through various territorial expansions, Russia had gained a significant population of non-Orthodox believers over the centuries: Muslims after the Kazan conquest in 1552, Lutherans after the Baltic capitulations in 1710, and Catholics, Uniates, and Jews following the partition of Poland in 1772.³³ In addition, several centuries of political and social strife spawned a myriad of domestic sectarian groups the Russian Orthodox Church deemed heretical and threatening: the Khristovoverly (believers of Christ), the Khlysty (self-flagellants), the Skoptsy (self-castrators), the Dukhobory (spirit wrestlers), the Molokany (milk drinkers), the Pryguny (hoppers), the Strigolniki (shorn-heads), the Nemoliaky (non-prayers), and the Neplatelniky (non-taxpayers).³⁴ Russia was not spiritually isolated from the outside world, either; Russian Orthodox missionaries had entered North America, mostly in Alaska, over a century earlier. At the same time as

³³ Paul Werth, *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 3.

³⁴ The term sectarian was often used by ecclesial members of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian state to denote religious groups that were either non-Orthodox or non-Russian.

Russian Orthodoxy reached out to the world, missionaries of different faiths were also entering Russia from different countries. Each of these groups represented a threat to the loyalty and monopoly on public spirituality that the Russian Orthodox Church had long enjoyed.

The existence of different belief systems created great anxiety for leaders of the Orthodox Church, both frustrated and frightened at the prospect of sectarian groups preying on the flock of Orthodox laity. Historian of Russia Paul Werth notes that the rise of apostasy among Russian Orthodox believers far more exacerbated the fears and anxieties of Orthodox clergy than did the simple existence of sectarian groups.³⁵ Werth argues that while this intense frustration towards “preserving” Orthodoxy existed, autocratic policies placed no great pressure on the “foreign” faiths to convert.³⁶ The spread of these faiths inside Orthodox communities, and what Werth describes as “‘heresy’ infecting their own ranks,” became the dominant Russian Orthodox perspective concerning attitudes towards sectarian groups. As Russian historian Alexander I. Klibanov writes, “The Orthodox Church, undermined by contradictions, desperately struggled to represent itself as one with the people, and declared any deviation from Orthodoxy to be the product of ‘insidious’ foreign propaganda.”³⁷ As Adventism was neither Orthodox nor Russian and placed an intense emphasis on proselytizing and missionary work, the Orthodox Church saw it as a foreign threat designed to steal Orthodox believers from the pews of Russian Orthodox churches. Thus, the autocratic regime, at the behest of Orthodox leaders, began writing and implementing legislation over the centuries designed to protect the Church. Intended to curtail several liberal policies, which Alexander III believed were to blame for his father’s assassination

³⁵ Werth, *The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths*, 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁷ Klibanov, *History of Religious Sectarianism in Russia, 1860’s-1917*, 3.

in 1881, the Russian Penal Code of 1885 signified two main points that would secure the position of the Russian Orthodox Church against the spread of sectarianism:

Section 187 declares that if any person tempts or persuades an adherent of the Russo-Greek Church to leave and join some other Christian Denomination, he shall be banished to Siberia for life. Section 188 provides that if any person shall leave the Orthodox Church and join another Christian denomination, he shall be handed over to the ecclesiastic authorities for instruction and admonition; his minor children shall be taken into the custody of the government, his real estate shall be put into the hands of an administrator, and until he abjures his errors he shall have no further control over either.³⁸

The wording is clear and aimed at punishing both Orthodox apostates and non-Orthodox missionaries. Because of the success of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and because Adventists promoted a Saturday Sabbath, they were often conflated with Jewish communities, and were targeted as such.³⁹

Adventist missionaries and laity alike thus found themselves in a peculiar position. While the autocracy did offer the illusion of religious freedom at least after the 1906 Edict of Toleration, the threat these sectarian groups represented to the Russian Orthodox Church's ecclesial hierarchy demanded actions and legislation which exposed religious toleration as a fantasy. This religious intolerance, in turn, strengthened the case for Russian Orthodox apostasy which ultimately helped to push believers away from the Orthodox Church and into the Bible study groups of non-Orthodox churches. The collusion between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian autocratic regime only reinforced Adventist antagonism towards Russia, which deepened the Adventist belief that Russia so desperately needed the Third Angel's Message.

³⁸ George Kennan, "The Russian Penal Code," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine* 35, (1888): 881-885.

³⁹ For examples of scholarship on Jewish persecution in Russia, see Zvi Gitelman, *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to Present* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988); Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

The Church in Russia to 1914

Adventism in Russia maintained a steady growth but fluctuated during times of civil unrest and hardship. The Seventh-Day Adventist missionary institution remained largely unorganized for the first decade of the existence of the proper Seventh-Day Adventist Church. While missionaries had entered Russia in the early 1880's, the leaders of the Adventist Church only began recording information on these movements in 1899. Foreign missionary leaders attempted, as best they could, to tally the numbers of churches, church membership, tithes, missionaries, licensed elders, and other statistical groups of interest. These numbers were reported to a central Union Conference, and then compiled in the Adventist Annual Statistic Reports.⁴⁰ These numbers were intended for internal use only and not circulated like the evangelical stories were, so these reports were not used to shore up holy fervor; therefore, it is safe to assume a certain level of credibility in terms of Church growth.

The institutional history of the Russian Mission shows how the Seventh-Day Adventist Church came to place an increasing importance on Russia as a prophetic field. It is not until after the 1906 Edict of Toleration and consequent backlash from the Russian Orthodox Church that the General conference designated the Russian Mission as its own unique mission; prior to this, they categorized it as a subsection of the German Mission.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church Annual Statistical Report underwent tremendous organization and categorization during the years 1899 to 1915. After September 27, 1901, Russia was included as part of the German Union Conference under the designations North, Middle, and South Russia. In 1904, this also came to include the Trans-Caucasian Mission but was dropped a

⁴⁰ See the Annual Statistical Reports in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Office of Archives, Statistics, and Research.
<http://documents.adventistarchives.org/Statistics/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fStatistics%2fASR&FolderCTID=0x01200095DE8DF0FA49904B9D652113284DE0C800ED657F7DABA3CF4D893EA744F14DA97B>.

year later. In 1906, Russian territories were designated as such: the East Russia Mission, the North Russia Mission, the Middle Russia Mission, the South Russia Mission, and the Asiatic Russia Mission. In 1907, the Russian Union Conference was established, and by 1910 the Russian mission was subdivided into nine separate missions: the Baltic, the Caucasian, the South Russian, the Central Asian, the East Russian, the Little Russian, the Middle Russian, the Siberian, and the West Russian missions. The Siberian Mission was separated in 1911. A year later, the Russian Union Conference was delineated even further: the Russian Union, the Azov, the Baltic, the Little Russian, the Neva, the North Caucasian, the Black Sea, the Middle Russian, the Polish, the Trans-Caucasian, the West Russian, and the White Sea missions. By 1914, the Russian Union Conference was split into the East and West Russian Conferences. These changes in the organizational structure of the Russian Mission portray the developing importance of it in the eyes of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. As Russia became an ever more important Adventist project, so did the need for a stronger and more defined structure for cataloging the mission.

Year	Churches	Membership	Tithe (US\$)
1899	29	1100	200.00
1900	33	1079	227.71
1901	37	1155	2,008.73
1902	40	1226	2,735.38
1903	51	2880	3,138.06
1904	58	4038	16,890.07
1905	56	4172	18,990.33
1906	52	4707	30,053.75

Fig. 1: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1899 – 1906.⁴¹

Between 1899 and 1904, the Adventist Church in Russia saw a modest growth. By the time of the 1905 Revolution, the number of Adventist churches had doubled and membership

⁴¹ Based on statistical data reported in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Annual Statistical Reports from the years 1899 to 1906.

had grown to almost four times that of 1899. It's worth noting that Seventh-Day Adventists found it a very difficult task to erect a legitimate church. The term "church" here instead refers to an organized and somewhat hidden ecclesial community, which usually held a makeshift church service in whatever building Adventist believers could obtain. Usually, these "churches" were in the homes or buildings owned by local Russian Adventists. Local tithes developed as well, growing from a mere 200 American dollars to nearly 19,000 by 1905. However, the 1905 Revolution brought to the forefront of the Russian political stage long-developing civil, political, and religious struggles.

The 1905 Revolution, brought about by massive discontent with the autocracy and a lack of civil and political liberties, pressured Nicholas II into legislation aimed at correcting the lasting effects of the 1885 Penal Code. He implemented within this legislation the 1906 Edict of Toleration, though opponents criticized the degree as largely ineffective in action. Nicholas II promised an extremely important liberty for Adventists, freedom of conscience, which the Department of Religious Affairs of the Foreign Confessions defined as "the right of every person possessing a sufficiently mature self-consciousness to declare or proclaim his faith, or even the absence of such, without hindrance and without any legal detriment."⁴² The drafters of this policy laced this promise with exemptions. Freedom of conscience and belief remained an illegal defense if its excuse violated the "requirements of state order." This prevented citizens from using or claiming their faith as an excuse or reason to violate the state's criminal laws, social order, or morality or to refuse obligations before the state, such as taxation or military service. The Edict promised the freedom to exercise personal faith in Article 66 of the document; in

⁴² Excerpts from the 1906 Constitution, as found in James Robinson and Charles Beard, *Readings in Modern European History: A Collection of Extracts from the Sources Chosen with the Purpose of Illustrating some of the Chief Phases of Development of Europe during the Last Two Hundred Years* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1908), 378-381.

Article 62, however, Nicholas II reaffirmed the Orthodox Church as the official Church of the Russian nation.⁴³ While the Russian autocracy affirmed the promises of religious freedom, Russian politicians and lawmakers felt obligated to protect the Russian Orthodox Church. Thus, the years immediately following the Edict witnessed a significant decrease in Adventism in Russia.

Year	Churches	Membership	Tithe (US\$)
1906	52	4707	30053.75
1907	41	1432	9754.26
1908	40	1534	11436.32
1909	111	3391	15617.83
1910	153	3952	21242.84
1911	129	3687	25384.93
1912	150	4168	26046.98
1913	168	4569	31403.07
1914	182	5221	30388.50
1915	200	5876	36468.74

Fig. 2: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1906 – 1915.⁴⁴

The political and religious instability proved a difficult environment in which to proselytize or even maintain the adherence of Adventist faith. From 1906 to 1908, Adventist census takers reported nearly 3,200 fewer members. Yet, as the Bosnian Crisis of 1909 and the development of active leftist movements shifted national and police focus away from sectarian groups, it became possible for Adventism to grow significantly. Between 1908 and 1909, sixty-one new Adventist workers helped to build seventy-one more churches and reported some 1,800 more church members. By 1915, there were two-hundred Adventist churches and 5,876 members. Adventists in Russia would be unable to report again until 1920; the destabilization caused by Russian involvement in World War I and the warfare on the Eastern Front proved too

⁴³ Ibid., 381.

⁴⁴ Based on statistical data reported in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Annual Statistical Reports from the years 1906 to 1915. The drop in membership from 1910 to 1911 is largely due to the Seventh-Day Adventist General Committee separating the Siberian Mission from the Russian Mission.

dangerous and unstable for census taking. While largely successful in maintaining an Adventist presence in Russia, Adventist missionaries and believers encountered resistance and hostility.

Missionaries in Russia to 1906

The Russian Orthodox Church responded to Adventist converts and foreign missionaries by imprisoning them, exiling them, or sometimes both. Adventist missionaries moved through towns and villages along the western and southern Russian peripheries, proselytizing and preaching to Russian men, women, and children. Fearing apostasy within the Orthodox flock, local clergy often prompted a response from local authorities. Despite the experiences of persecution, Adventist missionaries still reported the potential and hopes they felt towards the Russian people accepting the truth. Even while Adventist missionaries reported tales of prison sentencing and Siberian exile, Adventist commentators, nonetheless, described the situation as a great opportunity to glorify God. Adventist missionaries reported these apostolic stories to American Adventist observers and periodicals with two main motives. These stories were designed and written with specific language, often using biblical quotes to create a connection between these missionaries and biblical apostles; to show the successes of these contemporary “apostles” preaching the true gospel. And while there is no reason to suggest any level of cynicism on account of the Adventists either writing these reports or commenting on them, these stories were also aimed at inciting a type of holy fervor that would bring more into Russia: more missionaries, more Bibles, more money, more supplies, and more support.

Two waves of missionaries entered Russia, before and after the 1906 Edict, though neither focused heavily on the persecution in their reports to the church leaders in the United States; instead, the stories told were filled with divine inspiration and apostolic hope. The

Adventist Louis Conradi stood at the forefront of the early Russian Mission. Conradi, born in 1856 in Karlsruhe, Germany, emigrated to the United States when he turned seventeen. There, he converted to the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and devoted his life to missionary work. He entered Russia three years later, passing through Odessa in June 1886. After listing himself as a printer to get past consulate officers and gain entry to Russia, he established the first Adventist church in Odessa, an event marked by the baptism of two local, Russian women. Disturbed by the Adventist proselytization towards two Russian Orthodox believers, local police arrested Conradi. Captured and brought to the local jailhouse, the town sheriff charged Conradi with three offenses: Jewish heresy, baptizing women into the Jewish faith, and proselytizing among Russians.⁴⁵ Conradi spent forty days inside a cramped cell while local authorities prepared to exile him to Siberia. By what seemed to him a miracle, the sheriff released Conradi on September 10, allowing the Adventist to continue the Russian Mission.



Fig. 3: Louis Conradi and his wife.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Lohne, *Adventists in Russia*, 57 – 58. Lohne does not expand on this idea of “Jewish heresy.” In the fifteenth century, members of the Russian Orthodox Church targeted Jewish believers who held a Saturday Sabbath. Ecclesial and state leaders coined the term “Judaizer Heresy” to describe what they thought was a Jewish conspiracy to force Orthodox Russians into the Jewish faith. This is probably the idea that was attributed to Adventism, as Adventists also hold the Sabbath on Saturday.

⁴⁶ Picture of Louis Conradi and his wife, as found in the archives of the Ellen G. White Estate. <http://ellenwhite.org/content/file/l-r-conradi#image>.

During his journey from Odessa to Crimea, Crimea to Saratov, and from Saratov to Moscow, Conradi met with a converted Russian Adventist. Conradi later described the event in the *General Conference Bulletin*, remarking that the Russian man had “received the light” and “preached it.” The Russian Adventist had been exiled to the Caucasus with his family, where he went “door to door” to find employment. When Conradi inquired about the reason for his relocation, the Russian Adventist answered that local authorities exiled him “on account of [his] belief.” The Russian Adventist recalled his arrival in the Caucasus, where local authorities greeted him with a simple message, “we do not want any heretics.” Upon hearing about the Russian Adventist and his keeping of a Saturday Sabbath, Russian Orthodox clergymen in town issued a statement condemning the man, his family, and any others who followed him. The group of Russian Adventists were again exiled to the other side of the Caucasus. In the rural village, Conradi also met with the daughter of one of these exiled men and asked, “Are you not discouraged? Your elders have gone, your preachers have gone, and everybody else.” “No,” the girl responded, “God still lives. And if we ever go to work, we want to go to work now, and all they can do is to send us to where our fathers have gone.” Conradi reported that “in a little while a number accepted the truth.”⁴⁷ For Conradi, this story represented the apparent proof of God’s favor over the intrepid apostolic action of a committed remnant believer.

On his way to Saratov, Conradi stopped in Alexanderfeld in the Kuban Oblast north of the Black Sea. There he assisted in the baptism of eight local Russian Baptists, and continued alone towards the cities of Rostov and Taganrog, where he met with local Russian Adventists. Conradi, who described himself in this place as a “stranger in a strange land with but very little knowledge of the native tongue,” began preaching from a German Bible, alone in a house

⁴⁷ Louis Conradi, “Experiences in Russia,” *Union Conference Record* 4, no. 7 (July 1, 1901): 3.

surrounded by Russians who understood little to no German or English.⁴⁸ Conradi rejoiced, claiming that the Bible constituted a language that both he and a particular Russian man bonded over: “I never appreciated the knowledge of the word of God as at this moment, for he had hardly read it when he grasped my hand, and, giving me a kiss, exclaimed ‘Lubesni brat!’ — ‘Dear brother.’” Conradi concluded his writings on his time in Kuban by stating, “God has yet many honest hearts in this great empire, and with His help we may soon see a great work performed.”⁴⁹ Conradi, who observed others imprisoned and experienced his own imprisonment, only wrote of Russia with optimism and belief-fueled hope.

Jacob Klein became another major Adventist missionary for the Russian Mission. Also a German-born American Adventist, Klein grew up in a German Volga settlement in Saratov and came to Adventism after he emigrated to the United States.⁵⁰ Klein spent months in Nebraska at a missionary school, and had been laboring in Hamburg when he answered the call to Russia.⁵¹ By the autumn of 1889, there were over one hundred Adventist believers in Saratov when Klein returned. Klein began overseeing house-meetings in Saratov, and reported that “sometimes over 100 persons” showed up to hear the gospel. Klein met with another Adventist missionary in the area, Conrad Laubhan. Local authorities eventually captured and arrested Klein for “proselytizing Russians.” They imprisoned him for several weeks, due to both his inability to speak Russian and the clauses against proselytization in the Russian penal codes, but released Klein from the Saratov prison on December 20. Klein, in a letter to the Adventist Conference in

⁴⁸ “Stranger in a strange land” is a direct reference to Exodus 2:22 – And she bore *him* a son. He called his name Gershom, for he said, “I have been a stranger in a foreign land.”

⁴⁹ Louis Conradi, “A Visit to the Don Church,” *The Advent and Sabbath Review and Herald* 68, no. 11 (March 17, 1891): 170-171.

⁵⁰ Louis Conradi, “The Work in Russia,” *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times* 4, no. 21 (November 1, 1889): 332.

⁵¹ W. C. White, “Introduction of our Work in Russia,” *The Home Missionary* 2, no. 4 (April 1890): 79.

Hamburg, recalled the event as evidence of the divine deliverance God had shown to protect

Daniel:

They simply dropped the matter, as neither the accusers nor witnesses, nor even the priest, could say anything evil against us up to this time. We believe that God heard prayer in our behalf, that he intervened for us, and saved us from the lion's jaw.⁵²

Klein, after his release from jail, concluded his letter with a similar hope and optimism as

Conradi: "We are all of good courage."⁵³

While Klein awaited his court trial, Russian police were still searching for Laubhan, though local authorities never caught him. Born in the Lutheran Russian town of Sherbakovka, Laubhan encountered a Seventh-Day Adventist tract sent from the United States in 1879. Laubhan emigrated to Lehigh, Kansas, where he became a committed Seventh-Day Adventist before returning to Russia in 1886.⁵⁴ Laubhan, too, saw resistance in ways similar to other missionaries. Laubhan brought several converts on the Volga River for a series of baptisms but a large, hostile crowd of Orthodox believers met him with force. A large man wielding a wooden club attacked Laubhan, and the missionary was forced to abandon his quest. During Laubhan's subsequent mission towards Saint Petersburg, he received a letter from a group of believers in Crimea. Laubhan planned to visit, but Russian Adventists there warned him about local threats of violence.⁵⁵ By 1893, Laubhan fled the country out of fear for his life.

One case study of a Russian Adventist preacher exemplifies the antagonism they faced from local authorities. Stavropol authorities arrested Teofil Babiyenko, the first Adventist

⁵² Jacob Klein in a letter to the Brethren and Sisters in Hamburg, as reported by Louis Conradi, "The Work in the Russian Empire," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 67, no. 10 (March 11, 1890): 154. "From the lion's jaw" is a reference to 2 Timothy 4:17 - But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and *that* all the Gentiles might hear. Also I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion.

⁵³ 2 Corinthians 5:8 - We are confident (sometimes translated as "of good courage"), yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.

⁵⁴ *Seventh Day Adventist Encyclopedia*, (Washington: Review and Herald, 1966).

⁵⁵ W. A. Spicer, "Foreign Missions," *The Home Missionary* 6, no. 2. (February 1892): 32.

Church Elder of Russian descent, for evangelical activities in the area in 1891. During his exile to Siberia, he sent a letter to the General Conference in Takoma Park, Maryland, in which he portrayed the difficulties he endured. Unsure if the letter would even pass through the combing eyes of local authorities, Babiyenko explained that his punishment prohibited him from leaving or earning any significant amount of money.⁵⁶ Shortly after, the police of his hometown of Stavropol also captured his sister who described the process she faced in a final letter to her family. Local authorities had given her the option to choose her destination of exile: an island for a year and nine months, or to be exiled indefinitely outside of Russia. She remarked in her letter, “Finally I chose the second proposition, yet it will be hard to leave my relatives and all the dear members of the church, especially since I do not know for how long... Pray for us poor Russians!”⁵⁷

Adventist Missionaries to 1914

The 1906 Edict of Toleration brought about no significant change in the way ecclesial members of the Russian Orthodox Church understood Adventism. In fact, Adventist missionaries remarked that the Edict had the opposite effect and actually further repressed religious freedoms in Russia. Looking back, Russian Seventh-Day Adventist John Godfrey Jacques wrote in the early 1920s, “Near the beginning of the present century, religious liberty for all the ‘sectarians’ was announced; but in reality they had less liberty thereafter than before, when they depended upon secrecy for safety.”⁵⁸ Jacques continued, writing that it became a common practice for

⁵⁶ Teofil Babiyenko, “Letter to General Conference,” (June 17, 1892), as found in Louis Conradi, “The Present Outlook in the Russian Mission,” *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 69, no. 48 (December 6, 1892): 757.

⁵⁷ Babiyenko, Correspondence to Teofil Babiyenko, (September 1, 1892), found in Conradi, “The Present Outlook in the Russian Mission.”

⁵⁸ John Godfrey Jacques and Adelaid D. Wellman, *Escape from Siberian Exile*, (Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1921), 23.

Orthodox priests to “forcibly rebaptize” Adventist converts, though “others suffered much more severe punishment.”⁵⁹ He noted that many of these attacks were orchestrated by the “Black Society,” whose endeavored to protect the Russian Orthodox Church against “spiritual degeneracy” and apostasy.⁶⁰ Jacques also wrote that a Russian Orthodox priest beat an Adventist man to death with a walking stick for attempting to justify Adventism through scripture.⁶¹ Between actively disrupting Seventh-Day Adventist meetings, sending female spies to infiltrate Adventist communities and report any offenses, and committing outright physical violence towards missionaries, the Russian Mission saw increased attacks following 1906.

Jacques himself experienced the persecution aimed at Adventists. In December 1914, a Russian police officer in Odessa arrested him while conducting a service in a make-shift Adventist church. Jacques, ignorant of his actual crime, found himself thrown into a six-by-ten-foot “dungeon” with mildewed walls that “dripped water,” no ventilation, and cold stone.⁶² Jacques received his sentence in a courtroom, though the judge refused him a hearing or appeal process; the charges being brought against him remained a mystery to the Adventist. Instead, the judge told him that he would be sentenced to exile to Siberia. Jacques spent several years traveling through Siberia, writing what would become his memoirs, *Escape from Siberian Exile*. While trying to evade recapture, Jacques traveled from Irkutsk to Harbin, then to Mukden, to Shanghai, and finally to San Francisco. He finally arrived in the United States as a “man without a country,” having been exiled from his homeland in Russia. Despite this, Jacques immediately began planning to return to Russia. He concluded his writings with the following passage:

⁵⁹ Ibid., 25.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 27. The Black Society is probably a reference to the Black Hundred, a hyper-nationalist group formed to defend Russia from threats to the Russian nationality, to which the Russian Orthodox Church was connected. See Walter Laqueur, *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993).

⁶¹ Ibid., 27.

⁶² Ibid., 43.

Now, as I prepare to return to the land of my birth—one of the most needy yet most fruitful portions of the wide gospel field — instead of saying "Good-by" to you, I will invite you to "come over and help us"— help us to make known to many perplexed souls in that great country the loving Father who has given evidence, in the experiences recorded in this little volume, of His constant, personal care for each one of His children.⁶³

Jacques' story became a common story for Adventists in Russia during the imperial period. The 1906 Edict exacerbated Orthodox fears and anxieties concerning apostasy from Orthodoxy, which only amplified with developing civil unrest and the outbreak of the Great War.

Julius Boettcher, one of the preeminent American Adventist missionaries after 1906, experienced similar trials in Russia. Born in Lindenwerder, Germany, Boettcher came to the United States in 1881, where he accepted the Seventh-Day Adventist faith four years later. He earned his minister credential in 1897 and assisted in the creation of a German Adventist church and Sabbath school two years later in Germany. Boettcher entered Russia through Finland a year after the 1906 Edict of Toleration, and spent the following nine years working in Riga. In 1909, he helped create the first Russian Union Conference. That same year, after earning the title of Elder, Boettcher became involved in trying to mitigate the charges for an arrested Adventist. Brother Pilkevitch, a Russian Adventist, had been arrested for “speaking out against the State religion,” “speaking out against the Virgin Mary,” and “dishonoring the saints.” Robert Greene notes a common theme in Russian Orthodox miracle stories involved saints punishing apostates, who then repudiate their offense and return to the Orthodox Church.⁶⁴ In an article titled “The Little Russian Mission,” an Adventist commentator wrote about the court trial:

He had been working among the villages, and the charge urged against him was that he had spoken against the State religion. However, his witnesses were not

⁶³ Ibid., 288. In this passage, Jacques cites Acts 16:9 - And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”

⁶⁴ Robert H. Greene, *Bodies like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010).

permitted a hearing, whereas fifty of the opposition were permitted to bear false witness against him. He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment.⁶⁵

Boettcher wrote to American Adventists describing the arrest of Pilkevitch, who remained in prison for five years despite being sentenced to only two:

I also wish to inform you that visiting him is strictly forbidden, except in the case of relatives, who may visit him fifteen minutes once a week. He is treated like a vile criminal, and is allowed no cooked food. All our endeavors to procure better treatment for him are in vain.⁶⁶

Boettcher also remarked on the social stigma associated with Adventism. In 1912, at the Tenth Annual Session of the North England Conference in Aston, Birmingham, he showed a picture of Russian state-sponsored propaganda aimed against Adventism. The picture showed several white sheep surrounding Christ, representing the true Orthodox faithful. Surrounding these sheep were different types of men, one representative for each major sectarian group, who were preying on the sheep. The image portrayed the Seventh-Day Adventist Church as a highly-exaggerated caricature of a Jew who had broken down the fence and started grabbing sheep from the sheepfold.⁶⁷



Fig. 4: Julius Boettcher, his daughter, and his wife.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ W. J. Fitzgerald, "The Little Russian Mission," *The Missionary Worker* 14, no. 7 (March 30, 1910): 46.

⁶⁶ Julius Boettcher, "Persecution in Russia," *Union Conference Record* 14, no. 31 (August 1, 1910): 8.

⁶⁷ Julius Boettcher, "A Lantern Lecture on Russia: By J. T. Boettcher – Saturday Evening," *The Missionary Worker* 6, no. 19 and 20 (September 9, 1912): 141.

⁶⁸ Picture of Julius Boettcher and his family, as found in the Ellen G. White Estate Archives, accessed on March 22, 2017. <http://ellenwhite.org/content/file/j-t-boettcher-family-cabinet-portrait#image>.

Surprisingly enough, the persecutions did not illicit the dark and apocalyptic images which would be seen in later Adventist responses and rhetoric. Even while Adventist workers and missionaries were imprisoned, exiled, beaten, and killed, the Adventist response to the Russian Mission remained largely positive. Instead of despair, futility, or hopelessness, both Adventist missionaries and the Adventist media proclaimed a great opportunity in Russia.

Adventist Response to 1914

Adventists in Russia experienced imprisonment and exile frequently; those who fled escaped such punishment. Both Russian Orthodox ecclesial and lay members exhibited hostility and resistance to the spread of Adventism, fearing any level of apostasy within the Church itself. Yet, Adventists in Russia held their faith in the presence of this persecution and continued to spread the Third Angel's Message. Their faith clearly colored how they responded to such hardships and promoted a sense of hope and optimism for greater evangelical movements. Missionary actors often sent reports and letters back to domestic Adventist centers to maintain correspondence on the Russian Mission. These were then published either in periodicals or in memoirs. Seventh-Day Adventist missionaries, including the victims of Russia's anti-sectarian laws, only spoke positively of the mission. They called for more missionaries, more funding, and more Adventism throughout the Russian nation.

Despite his own experience of persecution and exposure to other Adventist persecution stories, Conradi maintained his adamant stance about the great opportunity in Russia and called for more and greater missionary movements among the Russian people. As early as 1894, Conradi stated that even with the difficulties he and other missionaries encountered, Adventism in Russia proved a major success. Praising God in a report on the Russian Mission, Conradi

described the growth of Adventism as developing from “a few drops here and there, now and then, and often long intervals between” to “more and more a steady stream.”⁶⁹ At the Seventh-Day Adventist General Conference on Wednesday, February 15, 1899, Conradi gave a speech in which he remarked on the progress in Russia since the first Adventist church established thirteen years earlier:

I remember when we first begun in Russia, in 1886, and organized a little church out in the country: We thought then that we would have to be in the country, among our nationality, far away from the Russian people, so that we would be safe; but now only a few months ago we had meetings in St. Petersburg and other leading cities of that empire, and God's protecting care was over it.⁷⁰

Ten years later, Conradi again met with the General Conference and updated American Adventists on the progress of the Russian Mission. He concluded his speech with a prophetic hope for Russia: “The truth has found an entrance, the seed is firmly planted, and, God giving the increase, it will undoubtedly grow and prosper.”⁷¹

In a special article in *The Home Missionary*, Conradi explained his view on the Russian Mission and pleaded for American support and aid. He described the difficulties of preaching the Adventist faith explaining that, “The Russian church claims the exclusive right to proselyte and is in this protected by the State.” Conradi continued to lay out his plans for a greater presence of Adventism in the area: first, to gain more Russian Adventist workers who can avoid the stigma attached to non-Russian missionaries, a stigma he argued “which exists in Russia as in no other European country;” second, to continue sending more experienced missionary workers to assist and help organize these Russian-based groups; finally, “when the proper time arrives” to

⁶⁹ Louis Conradi as reported by F. M. Wilcox, “The Work in Europe,” *The Bible Echo* 9, no. 36 (September 10, 1894): 36. The MSG Bible translation of Matthew 4:4 reads - Jesus answered by quoting Deuteronomy: “It takes more than bread to stay alive. It takes a steady stream of words from God’s mouth.”

⁷⁰ Louis Conradi, “General Conference Proceedings,” *The Daily Bulletin of the General Conference* 8, no. 1 (February 16, 1899): 4.

⁷¹ Louis Conradi, “Speech at the 1909 General Conference,” as found in Lohne, *Adventists in Russia*, 62. 1 Corinthians 3:6 reads - I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

petition[the Russian government for the recognition of the Adventist Church. He then wrote, “as to the present status of the work in Russia, I can say that it is prospering, but we lack the information and direct communication with the churches and scattered members which would enable us to help and encourage them as is needed.” Conradi finished by requesting monetary and spiritual aid and support from the Adventist conferences; he wrote, “I know that much more can be secured if we take hold in the right manner to encourage them.”⁷²

Elder Laubhan, who had been attacked by a club-wielding man for trying to set up baptisms in the Volga, wrote to *The Signs of the Times* in 1892, reporting on what he understood as a miraculous development of faith. He wrote:

During the summer I have baptized six on the left side of the Volga, among them a man who tried to kill me three years ago. While examining the candidates he confessed that he was the man, and asked me whether I would forgive him. This shows how wonderfully the Lord does turn the hearts of men. Many are anxious to hear the truth.⁷³

Much like the story of Saul, later Paul, the truth could turn even the most hardened heart towards God. In the *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, Laubhan stated that he felt the “prospects on the Volga look brighter than ever.”⁷⁴ Laubhan too requested for more missionary movements and funding, claiming that he expected a great awakening in the Volga territory.⁷⁵ These sentiments of hope and praise remained consistent, despite the amplification of persecution following the Edict of Toleration in 1906.

At the Tenth Annual Session of the North England Conference, held in Birmingham from August 1 to August 6, 1912, Boettcher gave a presentation concerning the Russian Mission titled

⁷² Louis Conradi, “The Work in Russia,” *The Home Missionary – Extra* (October 1889): 8.

⁷³ Conrad Laubhan in a letter as reported in “Field Notes,” *The Signs of the Times* 19, no. 12 (January 23, 1893): 189.

⁷⁴ Conrad Laubhan in a letter as reported by Louis Conradi in “The Work in Europe,” *The Bible Echo and Signs of the Times* 3, no. 10 (October 1888): 157.

⁷⁵ Louis Conradi, “From the Field,” *The Bible Echo* 9, no. 9 (March 5, 1894): 70.

“A Lantern Lecture on Russia.” He opened, saying “Russia is one of the hardest fields we have at the present time. The Lutheran Church has been working in Russia for four hundred years and has made no progress whatever among the Russians.” Boettcher remarked that after 1905, a governor supposedly had the power to “release” a person over twenty-one from the Russian Orthodox Church, though this continued to be near impossible in practicality. He explained the strict legality concerning baptisms through the story of a young Russian woman who wanted to become an Adventist. Following another baptism, the young woman approached Boettcher and said, “Brother Boettcher, you have put me off for a whole year, and I will not wait any longer. I must be baptized. I want to be saved, and if you will not baptize me, I will go into the same water in which you generally baptize, and baptize myself.” Circumventing the requirement of at least one witness in order to formally charge someone with proselytizing, Boettcher baptized her in secret and alone.⁷⁶

He continued describing the struggles of the Russian Mission. “Our workers in Russia labour under great difficulties,” he exclaimed. He discussed a letter, written by a member of another Adventist church in Russia, which detailed how local authorities had fined several Adventist believers for unauthorized meetings; Boettcher stated that he himself had frequently been placed in prison for twenty days as a punishment for a similar crime. Boettcher also included an excerpt from the letter, in which the Adventist brother said he desired to sell his only cow to help build a meeting place. “These people have a genuine love for the truth of God. I have seen them assembled in a room so closely packed that you could not take one step forward or backward,” Boettcher concluded, “I am glad to be in Russia, for the needs of the people

⁷⁶ Julius Boettcher, “A Lantern Lecture on Russia: By J. T. Boettcher – Saturday Evening,” *The Missionary Worker* 6, no. 19 and 20 (September 9, 1912): 141.

appeal to our hearts, and we can see that the Lord is blessing the efforts that are being put there.”⁷⁷

Alongside written testimonies from missionaries, Adventist writers and commentators gave their own interpretation on the Russian Mission. These reports often followed a typical formula. The first portion of the editorial would respond to the hostility of spiritual advancement, while the remainder would espouse hopes for further proselytization and church building. According to an unnamed author in the *American Sentinel*, “Russia retains the worst form of medieval darkness and despotism, inasmuch as with her Church and State are identical [sic],” stating that non-Orthodox believers are not considered true Russians.⁷⁸ However, Adventist commentators were often uninterested in focusing on the negative. H. P. Holser, the superintendent of the Central European Mission until 1901, wrote a number of articles on the Russian situation. In *The Missionary Magazine*, he described the cautiousness with which Adventists convened:

On account of the dangers of holding a large gathering, only a few representative members were called together, and after the meeting local general meetings were held in all parts of the field, so as to reach the body of our membership. Not being a “recognized” denomination in Russia, we have not the “legal” right to hold a meeting, and hence, need to exercise more caution than in most countries.

Holser then turned to the “remarkable” spread of Adventism among Russians, saying that the “Lord has ‘set his hand again the second time’” to bring the “truth” to Russia.⁷⁹

In the *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times*, Holser remarked that “it is impossible for a Protestant minister to enter Russia if it is known that he is such.” He wrote about the intense

⁷⁷ Ibid., 142.

⁷⁸ “The Persecuted Jews and the Duty of Free Nations,” *The American Sentinel* 6, no. 13 (March 26, 1891): 100.

⁷⁹ H. P. Holser, “The Russian Mission Field,” *The Missionary Magazine* 10, no. 2 (February 2, 1898): 53. Isaiah 11:11 is referenced here, which reads: It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people who are left, from Assyria and Egypt, from Pathros and Cush, from Elam and Shinar, from Hamath and the islands of the sea.

ensorship protocol for any religious printed matter that entered the country, in which government officials “black-stamp every passage that is in any way injurious to the [Orthodox] Church or Government.” Yet, Holser only spent half a paragraph on the difficulties in the country. “A number of Russians have also embraced the truth... they desire baptism,” he wrote, “In spite of all obstacles, the truth is making steady advancement among the nations, and we feel like praising the Lord for what he is doing. All the glory belongs to him.”⁸⁰

William White, the son of Ellen and James White, offered a similar perspective detailing the persecution missionary workers faced at the hands of the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church. He wrote that Conradi’s visit to Russia experienced considerable resistance by Orthodox communities, and that “Brother Klein was arrested and imprisoned only a few months ago... Brother Laubhan’s work has been greatly hindered by persecution.” He only spent a single paragraph detailing resistance to the Russian Mission; for the remaining three pages, White detailed plans and excitements about training new licentiates and missionary workers, building new churches, and converting more Adventist believers in Russia. “And yet the cause moves forward,” he exclaimed, “The people in that country seem to be hungering for the truth.” White concluded with a question, to which he already had an answer: “Brethren and sisters, are we planning too much? Read Acts 1:8 before you answer.”⁸¹ Acts 1:8 reads:

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.⁸²

⁸⁰ H. P. Holser, “Central Europe,” *Bible Echo and Signs of the Times* 4, no. 10 (May 15, 1889): 156.

⁸¹ William White, “Our Foreign Missions. – A Glance at the Year’s Work,” *The Home Missionary*, (November 1890): 19-20. William White was the son of Ellen and James White, and spent several years assisting his parents. He assisted the publication of the *Signs of the Times*, taught theology, and worked in several branches throughout the Adventist community.

⁸² Acts 1:8.

Indeed, Seventh-Day Adventists saw a prophetic mission to go to Russia, despite the dangers involved in proselytization in the country.

Adventist commentators and missionaries often brought biblical references to their descriptions of the Russian Mission. Stephen Nelson Haskell, credited with the creation of the South Pacific Seventh-Day Adventist Church, was proselytizing in Australia when he learned that Conradi had been imprisoned in August 1886. In the *Review and Herald*, Haskell made the point that laws concerning missionaries in Russia “are so severe that it is said that had Bro. Conradi been a citizen of any other nation, the influence of all the nations of Europe combined would have been of no avail to save him from Siberia.” “But God,” he said “in answer to prayer, made the efforts of the American minister in St. Petersburg effectual, and the prison doors were opened.”⁸³ Haskell, like other Adventist commentators, chose his words carefully; Haskell, in this passage, recalled the story of Paul and Silas who were imprisoned and beaten in Phillipi. In Acts 16:27, the “prison doors opened;” a similar miracle had occurred to free Conradi.⁸⁴

Despite the aggravated attacks on all non-Orthodox faith after 1906, these messages largely remained the same. Arthur Daniells, the longest serving president of the General Conference, gave a speech which the editor of the *Lake Union Herald* recorded and published in an article titled, “Progress of the Message in Russia.” Explaining that the situation in Russia could not be understood by observers without “having [their] heart thrilled with gratitude and devout thanksgiving,” Daniells stated, “Notwithstanding the many restrictions and prohibitions of the Russian government, the cause had during the past year made greater progress in that

⁸³ Stephen Haskell, “Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions,” *Review and Herald* 64, no.1 (January 4, 1887): 11.

⁸⁴ Acts 16: 16-40.

empire than in any other country in the world.”⁸⁵ Adventists, both in Russia and abroad, understood the hindered and attacked Russian Mission as a divine success, even in such a hostile environment.



Fig. 5: Arthur Daniells.⁸⁶

An unnamed author in *The Missionary Worker* in 1911 mirrored these sentiments. The article detailed an Annual Business Meeting on February 16, which Conradi attended and where he discussed his future missionary plans. Conradi told the members of the various Adventist associations about his plans to leave for Russia, again, a week later. The article read,

In a week's time [Conradi] expects to be in Russia, where our membership is rapidly growing in strength, notwithstanding the reactionary and illiberal spirit of Russian officialism, which is doing all it can do to discourage religious effort outside the state church.⁸⁷

Noting the collusion between church and state, Adventists saw and understood the Russian Mission as a judiciously dangerous, biblically necessary, and prophetically positive movement full of potential.

⁸⁵ Arthur Daniells, "Progress of the Message in Russia," *Lake Union Herald* 3, no. 46 Extra (November 17, 1911): 6.

⁸⁶ "Pastor Arthur Grosvenor Daniells," *Centro de Pesquisas Ellen G. White*, accessed March 22, 2017. <http://centrowhite.org.br/downloads/imagens/pessoas/pastor-a-g-daniells-1858-1935/>.

⁸⁷ "The Annual Business Meetings," *The Missionary Worker* 15, no. 5 (February 27, 1911): 34.

Conclusion

The Russian Mission, though beset on all sides, consistently grew and expanded throughout this period. The conflicts between public spirituality and Orthodox apostasy culminated in a theological environment hostile to non-Orthodox religions to varying degrees. While the state tried, at least outwardly, to create an air of religious tolerance, the fears of apostasy within the Russian Orthodox Church disallowed any real practice of this idea. Adventists entering the country through the Caucasus and through Ukraine understood this and anticipated they would face strong hostility. Regardless, they entered Russia and began their work, endeavoring to spread the Third Angel's Message across the country. The pioneers of Russian Adventism – Conradi, Laubhan, Boettcher, Klein, and others – found themselves propelled forward, into Russia, by their faith.

Adventists met significant resistance to their mission. Conradi and Klein were both imprisoned and sentenced to Siberia, though neither were relocated; Laubhan experienced physical attacks and threats of prison, exile, and execution; Stavropol authorities exiled both Teofil Babiyyenko and his sister from Russia for preaching a “heretical” doctrine; John Jacques, arrested and exiled to Siberia for several years, spent years escaping recapture; Brother Pilkevitsch spent five years for preaching about what the courthouse deemed antagonistic towards the “state religion.” These incidents only accounted for the most famous persecution stories, but other tales circulated throughout Adventist reports: tales of forced reconversions to Orthodoxy, Orthodox spies seeking to catch Adventists in dialogue “against the state,” social stigma, and anti-Adventist propaganda. Even further, due to their Sabbath doctrine, Adventists were often accused of “Jew heresy” and were therefore targeted more than other Christian denominations.

And yet, Russian Adventists and Adventist missionaries in Russia still claimed a prophetic hope for the country. Utilizing biblical language, Adventist missionaries described Russia as a theological farm plot with massive, prophetic potential for a bumper crop of converts to the Third Angel's Message. The frequent citation of the Acts of the Apostles is a telling story. Adventist missionaries saw themselves as contemporary apostles, divinely charged with the task of missionary work among nations who were unsaved, similar to the ways and locations in which the apostles worked. The setbacks and dire consequences of their faith only seemed to bolster their resolve and determination, though beset on both sides by church and state. They simply called for more: more missionaries, more funding, more churches, more movement, more baptisms, and more Adventism. The reports of their journeys fell in the hands of editorial publishers, and were then circulated throughout Adventist communities.

There is really no way to judge readership. Historians can always tally copies sold, or try to quantify circulation, but to deliberate on how much of any given reading material is read, understand, and then accepted as truth is an impossible task. However, the publications with authored articles on Russia were not small, insignificant, or unsuccessful journals. For example, *The American Sentinel* published 636 eight-page-long periodicals between January 1, 1886 and December 20, 1900.⁸⁸ *The Bible Echo and Signs of the Times* published 472 from January 1, 1886 to January 19, 1903, each around 16-20 pages.⁸⁹ Since November 4, 1908, the *Lake Union Herald* has published over 4,100 periodicals, and continues to as of 2016.⁹⁰ *The Home Missionary* and *The Missionary Worker* published, respectively, 145 periodicals and 766

⁸⁸ *The American Sentinel* was a published weekly, in which 466 of the 636 published periodicals had a section that involved Russia.

⁸⁹ *The Bible Echo and Signs of the Times* was published monthly until December 1, 1888, then bimonthly until November 1, 1893. It was thenceforth a weekly publication.

⁹⁰ *Lake Union Herald* is a monthly publication, but was weekly from November 4, 1908 to December 15, 1987.

periodicals which involved many heavily Russia-focused articles.⁹¹ The largest of the publications cited, however, is the *Review and Herald* which has published over 7,700 periodicals between November 1, 1850 to June 25, 1998.⁹² So while it may not be accurate to assume any level of readership of any of these, the publications were successful during their time and help to understand the reflection of Adventist attitude toward the Russian Mission. Just as Adventist missionaries remarked on the possibilities of growth in Russia, so too did Adventist commentators, and with largely the same rhetoric.

What pre-revolutionary Russia represents, then, is a moment in which Adventists were rubbing up against the restraints on religious freedom and proselytization imposed by the Russian state and the Russian Orthodox Church. Much like they faced the dilemma of church and state collusion in the United States, they felt this same pressure in Russia, only exaggerated and amplified. Yet, the persecution they faced only emboldened them and justified their theological apprehension to state interference in the spiritual realm. For thirty years, these sentiments incubated, finally reaching a climax at the same time as the fires of the Russian Revolution of 1917 engulfed the country. Their years of missionary experience in imperial Russia left Adventists with a feeling of renewed optimism as the pillars of the autocracy came crashing down.

⁹¹ *The Home Missionary* published periodicals from January 1, 1889 until December 1, 1897 at a monthly rate. *The Missionary Worker* published periodicals from January 15, 1902 to December 27, 1935 every two weeks.

⁹² *The Review and Herald* now encompasses numerous books and journals, but continues to also publish *The Review and Herald*. The journal fluctuated frequently between weekly and biweekly publication schedules.

CHAPTER TWO: THE MISSION, 1914 TO 1924

In 1914, global conflicts threw the world into a frenzy. As Russia held the Eastern Front against Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, the pains of war engulfed the European theatre in the fires of war. World War I pushed Russia past the point of exhaustion, exaggerating and amplifying the existing political and civil unrest throughout the country. Those living in Russia at the onset of 1917 found themselves in an intensely different Russia by year's end. Missionary Daniel Isaac wrote about the fall of the autocratic regime in an October 1917 letter to the Adventist Mission Board: "By the power of the old government, now laid in the dust, I was ordered to leave the war region in November, 1916." He gave this evaluation on the events that unfolding just months earlier:

Above everything else we are very glad and thankful for the full freedom we enjoy under the new government. I was shut up, so to speak, for five months, but the new government has given freedom, thank God! So we can work.⁹³

Russia, in the eyes of Adventist believers, represented a renewed opportunity for the growth of the Russian Mission. For decades, Adventist missionaries struggled to profess their faith throughout the country, all the while avoiding the watchful eyes of Russian Orthodox clergy. The conflicting relationship of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian autocracy proved unable to foster any real form of freedom of conscience; thus, the abdication of Nicholas II, provided the catalyst for a revitalized Russian Mission. The outbreak of the Great War and the consequent rise in Russian nationalism compounded this sentiment even further.

For the first few years of Bolshevik rule, Adventist communities largely avoided the antireligious iconoclasm unleashed by the new atheism regime. The Russian Orthodox Church,

⁹³ Letter from Daniel Isaac, as published by T. E. Bowen, "Notes from Mission Board," *Field Tidings* 9, no. 33, (October 10, 1917): 1.

deemed now the enemy of the people by Bolshevik leaders, became the target of these destructive assaults. Sectarian groups, for at least a few years, remained outside the purview of the Bolshevik regime. At the same time, Russia came under serious duress from the combined pains of the Great War, the Russian Civil War, and the Volga Famine. As the door for a renewed mission swung ajar, the need for missionary movements became more apparent than ever in the eyes of Adventist leaders. The abundant prophetic hope of the Russian Mission, however, was not to last. By the mid 1920's, Adventist leaders no longer saw Russia as a divine opportunity. The Adventist media, instead, began replacing the prophetic calls to Russia with a much darker tone of apocalypticism.

This chapter tries to make sense of these years of uncertainty. I detail the development of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to 1920 and elaborate on the missing figures in the Annual Statistical Reports. I discuss how the Russian Mission changed, comparing the wartime motives of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to those of the Russian Baptists during the period, and how the Great War pushed the Seventh-Day Adventist Church even further to the fringe. I also describe how Adventists, both domestic and foreign, perceived and justified the Great War. I then elaborate on how Adventists understood the Revolution and juxtapose that to the Adventist response to the immense suffering in the country. I interweave Adventist growth to 1924 with the religious environment that developed after the disasters of the Revolutionary period died down, from the early years of the New Economic Policy to related power struggles within the Bolshevik Party following the death of Vladimir Lenin in 1924. I conclude by demonstrating how and why, despite the air of uncertainty during Russia's "continuum of crisis" from 1914 to 1924, Adventism grew significantly.

The Church to 1920

The western and southern periphery of Russia felt the heaviest brunt of the conflicts, where Adventist missionaries and movements were concentrated. At the same time, the material and personnel demands of the war stretched Russia thin and the effects of these stresses were felt from the streets of Petrograd and Moscow to every small, rural village in Russia. Adventist missionaries tried to continue their apostolic movements, but found consistent communication an impossibility. The Church tried to continue the Russian Mission as best they could, but found even census-taking a difficult task. The Seventh-Day Adventist Annual Statistical Reports were unable to remain consistent during these times. By 1914, the Russian mission was organized into both the East Russian Union Conference and the West Russian Union Conference, which were then subdivided further by geographic location. The East Russian Union Conference included the Azof, Newa, North Caucasus, Middle Russian, Ural, Volga, and White Sea Missions; the West Russian Union Conference included the Baltic, Duena, Little Russian, Black Sea, Polish, and West Russian Mission. In the Annual Statistical Report for 1915, the Baltic, Polish, and West Russian Missions were denoted by an asterisk. At the bottom of the page, the key read only “On basis of pre-war reports.”⁹⁴ According to the 1915 reports, there were 200 Seventh-Day Adventist churches, 5,876 members, and 36,468.74 dollars in tithes.

In the 1916, 1917, and 1918 reports, however, there were no Russian Conferences reported or even included in the list. No proper census would be reported until 1920, though the compilers did address the status of the Russian Mission in the 1919 report. This report included a disclaimer about the status of several war-affected Unions, including the Russian Union Conference:

⁹⁴ By 1915, these regions were largely under German occupation.

In some cases estimates were made for these fields, in other cases returns are shown by Unions rather than itemized by local fields. Returns for this report were more complete than for any issued since 1915. No return whatever were obtainable from Russia.⁹⁵

The 1920 report read similarly, but amended the inability to report Russian returns: “These returns include figures for Russia, being the first reports received directly from that field since the outbreak of the war.”⁹⁶

	Churches	Membership	Tithe Receipts (\$)
Baltic Conference	7*	359*	1326.66
Duena Conference	14	462	7484.44
Little Russian Conference	26	666	2433.44
Black Sea Mission	20	467	1663.38
Polish Mission	3*	110*	201.67
West Russian Mission	13*	191*	419.35

Fig. 6: 1915 Church Statistics for the Western Russian Union Conference.⁹⁷

Indeed, World War I put an intense strain and an air of uncertainty on the Russian Mission. The 1920 report numbers, however, show an increase in the number of church communities, membership, and tithe receipts. The 1915 report catalogued 200 churches, 5,876 members, and 36,468.74 dollars between the East and West Russian Union Conference; the 1920 report, which added the Siberian Union Mission, claimed the adoption of 50 additional “churches”, the inclusion of around 2,500 new members, and about 6,000 more dollars in tithes.⁹⁸ These numbers portray a reality among certain sectarian groups during times of mass discord. Historians of Russia Lynn Viola and Heather Coleman both demonstrate that the rates of Russian laity converting to sectarian groups, especially those that emphasized apocalypticism,

⁹⁵ Compiled by H. E. Rogers, “Seventh-Day Adventist Conferences, Missions, and Institutions: The Fifty-Seventh Annual Statistical Report Year Ending December 31, 1919” (D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 1920), 2.

⁹⁶ Compiled by H. E. Rogers, “Seventh-Day Adventist Conferences, Missions, and Institutions: The Fifty-Seventh Annual Statistical Report Year Ending December 31, 1920” (D.C.: General Conference of Seventh-Day Adventists, 1921), 2.

⁹⁷ See the Seventh-Day Adventist Annual Statistical Report for 1915. Items marked with an asterisk denotes the conference statistics based on pre-war reports as is explained in the Statistical Reports.

⁹⁸ See the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Annual Statistical Reports for the years 1915 and 1920.

rose sharply during these tumultuous years.⁹⁹ But as Orthodox leaders watched believers walk from their pews into the folds of sectarian groups like Seventh-Day Adventism, their anxieties and fears concerning politicized religious threats seemed to come true. What can be gleaned from reports that did make it through the eastern warfront, or were discovered after the war had ended, is a reality experienced by Adventist missionaries: a continuation of the hope and optimism seen in the past few decades despite a heightened sense of Russian nationalism which carried forth a pronounced antagonism toward sectarian groups.

After 1914, Adventist believers found themselves ever more isolated from the world; in turn, the Russian Mission became that much more necessary in the hearts and minds of Adventists. The Great War exacerbated feelings of nationalism and patriotism in Russia, which consequently heightened Russian Orthodox fears of “insidious foreign threats” in the form of sectarian groups. In particular, according to historian Heather Coleman in *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905 – 1929*, sectarian groups with German ties felt the “devastating effect of arrest, exile of leaders, and closure of prayer halls after the outbreak of war sharply curtailed evangelical activity.” The question of Russian nationalism, already so strongly correlated to adherence of the Orthodox faith, became even more confused as the “accusations of Baptist ‘Germanism’ rang out ever more loudly.”¹⁰⁰ Seventh-Day Adventists, owing to their ties to ethnic Germans or German Volga settlements, might have seen a similar backlash, though Adventist discussions during the war hardly mentioned any anti-German sentiments.

⁹⁹ See Lynn Viola “The Peasant Nightmare: Visions of Apocalypse in the Soviet Countryside,” *The Journal of Modern History* 62, no. 4 (December 1990): 747-770; Heather J. Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution, 1905 - 1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 109. For more works on Russian nationalism during World War I, see chapters 6 and 7 of Stephen Norris, *A War of Images: Russian Popular Prints, Wartime Culture, and National Identity, 1812 – 1945* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2006); Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Despite the consanguinity of these groups, neither Baptists nor Adventists considered themselves on the same theological side in response to the Great War. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church remained adamant to stay out of the affairs of the Russian state. While Baptists willingly endeavored in the war effort, a matter of the state, Adventists refused to do so; even signaling to the freedom of one's conscience in regards to war-time service created a massive schism within the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. According to historian Marite Sapiets, the Adventist All-Russian Council left the decision to the conscience of the individual, but in no way advocated for church and state collusion. Some Adventists, led by Vladimir Shelkov, nevertheless found this an irreconcilable offense and formed the True and Free Seventh-Day Adventist Church during World War I. The Seventh-Day Adventist Church recovered from this Shelkavian split, but even the notion of the Church working with the state created conflict.¹⁰¹

On the other hand, Russian Baptists had no such reluctance towards working for the state. Coleman argues that the Great War provided a “chance to prove their patriotic allegiances by contributing to the war effort.”¹⁰² Even further, Baptist leaders had long sought to distinguish themselves from Seventh-Day Adventists. The Baptist missionary to Alupka in the Crimean Peninsula, Iashchenko, wrote in the early 1900's that Adventists and revolutionaries were similar, in that they “cause powerful harm to the local church.”¹⁰³ The Adventist Church, then, found no German or Christian comradeship with even the most similar sectarian group, the Russian Baptists. Instead, the Adventist Church separated itself further from other sectarian groups; the Adventist Church, owing to its own conflicts with both the Russian and American state, understood a single cause for the Great War: the willingness of both the Russian Orthodox

¹⁰¹ Marite Sapiets, “V. A. Shelkov and the True and Free Seventh-Day Adventists of the USSR,” *Religion in Communist Lands* 8, no. 3, (January 2, 2008): 202.

¹⁰² Coleman, 109.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 43.

Church and other sectarian groups to cooperate with the state. William Mayhew Healy, an Adventist heavily involved in religious tracts concerning religious liberty, discussed this in the *Signs of the Times*. He argued, “The spirit of war is the natural outcome of the state's enforcing the doctrines of the church, as her power is compulsion by physical force.” “The present strife of nations,” he maintained, “shows the moral failure of a religion united to the state.”¹⁰⁴

Ideologically separated from other evangelical groups, even from those with whom they might find the most sympathy, the tumultuous conditions in Russia prevented material and personelle support from the United States as well.

For Adventists in the United States, the only consolation about the Russian Mission came from the few correspondences that made it back to domestic eyes. The inconsistency, of course, made it difficult to ascertain any up-to-date information; no periodical made light of the difficulties they had in communication. To what extent these periodicals manipulated information to further the work of the Russian Mission is a question that, while worth mentioning, cannot be answered with any certainty. Periodicals from several regions, including those geographically focused on areas far from Russia, still discussed the events going on. Similar to Adventist reports during the imperial period, the struggles of the Great War only justified the hope and optimism that Adventist leaders and missions assigned to the apostolic mission in Russia.

Adventist Response to 1917

For example, the president of the Central Union Conference wrote about a letter sent from Boettcher to his wife, detailing the missionary's actions. N. T. Sutton wrote in the article

¹⁰⁴ W. Mayhew Healy, “Moral Failure of State Religions,” *Signs of the Times* 43, no. 25 (June 20, 1916): 6.

“Our Work and Workers,” that the letter gave “encouraging news of ninety baptisms in Riga, Russia, since the beginning of the war” despite the “perplexities brought upon” the Adventist work. “Gospel work has been hard and trying,” he continued, “and as a result Brother Boettcher is failing in health.”¹⁰⁵ An unnamed author in *The Eastern Tidings* authored an article titled “Effects of the European War,” in which he summarized a number of European missions including Russia:

Our workers seem to be labouring under difficulties in Russia at the present time. They cannot communicate with the headquarters so of course their supplies have been cut down. All of our workers in Russia are now on one-third salary, but they are labouring just the same.¹⁰⁶

Despite the disconnect from the Church and Church supplies, periodicals praised the relentlessness of Adventist workers in Russia.

Louis Conradi, who had risen to the office of the President of the European Division Conference by 1914, explained the current situation in that area. In an article titled “News from the War Zone,” the *Western Canadian Tidings* published Conradi’s letter concerning the work and status of the European Division. Conradi described the Russian Mission as “already cut off from us, and will have to finance itself.” “If the war lasts six months” Conradi warned, “or even two, [Adventist laity] will have to furnish money until normal conditions return.” Conradi made the point that there existed “little hope” in him returning to the United States for some time, but concluded the article with the same prophetic optimism found in earlier Russian Mission writing:

¹⁰⁵ N. T. Sutton, “Our Work and Workers,” *Central Union Outlook* 5, no. 19 (May 11, 1915): 8.

¹⁰⁶ “Effects of the European War,” *Eastern Tidings* 10, no. 6, (June 1915), 10.

Our hope is in God, who guides the destinies of the world, and who will protect his own, and will not allow his cause to suffer too terribly in the crucible of affliction. We know that our brethren in America will stand by our missions and brethren who are cut off from our division treasury. Remember us at the throne of grace.¹⁰⁷

Missionary reports directly from Julius Boettcher mirrored these sentiments. Boettcher moved into Siberia before the war could reach him and began preaching the Adventist faith there. In a surviving report to the 1918 General Conference, he cited growth over the previous few years. He wrote, “In 1914, in spite of the war, we baptized 180 souls in Siberia. In 1915 we baptized 208, and added one church... These brethren are just as loyal to this message as we are.” Even despite Seventh-Day Adventists being “scattered like sheep driven by wolves” from war areas, “there is a great work to be done in Russia,” Boettcher remarked: “But let me tell you we have in Russia not a teacher, not a publishing house, not a sanitarium – nothing of these, and yet there are 170,000,000 people in Russia who must hear the truth.”¹⁰⁸ Boettcher ended with a call to pray for Russia, stating “when the time comes that we can do more in Russia, I believe our hearts will respond.”¹⁰⁹

Another letter by Boettcher portrays a very similar picture of the Russian Mission. Under the subheading “The Importance of Scraps” in a larger article titled “How to Economize: Housekeeping for War Time, One-Course Meals,” *The Missionary Leader* published one of Boettcher’s letters about the situation in Russia. “Owing to these conditions,” Boettcher wrote, pointing to his mission’s lack of monetary and supply aid, “we have been obliged to cut down

¹⁰⁷ Louis Conradi, “News from the War Zone,” *Western Canadian Tidings* 3, no. 17 (September 3, 1914): 2. “Crucible of affliction” is a direct reference to Isaiah 48:10 - Behold, I have refined you, but not as silver; I have tested you in the furnace of affliction. “Throne of grace” is also a biblical reference to Hebrews 4:16 - Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

¹⁰⁸ “Scattered like sheep driven by wolves” may be a reference to Jeremiah 50:17: “Israel is like scattered sheep; The lions have driven *him* away. First the king of Assyria devoured him; Now at last this Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon has broken his bones.”

¹⁰⁹ Report from Julius Boettcher, as published in “Our Work in Russia: A Soldier Missionary,” *The Missionary Leader* 6, no. 8 (August 1918): 8.

the wages of all ministers and licentiates one third.” With a sense of urgency, due to “winter before the door,” Boettcher concluded his letter with an allusion to 2 Timothy 2:3: “We did not like to discharge some of our workers at the expense of others, so we shall suffer together like good Christian soldiers.”¹¹⁰ The discord and dangers of war-time evangelizing forced Boettcher to leave Russia in 1916, and O. E. Reinke in Petrograd took control of the East Russian Union Conference.

Reinke, the president of the Central European Union, assisted Boettcher until Boettcher’s departure. Reinke sent a report to the *Pacific Union Recorder*, describing the work there. “Thanks be to God, the work is onward, and we are all of good courage,” Reinke declared, despite listing the loss of twenty workers between the East and West Russian Unions. He continued, “At this place I am the only labourer left, but our church elders in all four churches are very active.” Naturally, the report ends on a hopeful note: “We are encouraged to learn of the interest the American brethren take in plans to help us financially, and of their united prayers to God. Our prayers unite with yours that the Lord may soon change the situation.”¹¹¹ Reinke, and other Adventist missionaries in Russia both depended on and trusted in continued domestic support.

The war years impacted the Russian Mission in a dichotomous way. While the impact of the war and everything that came with it placed an immense strain on the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, Adventist missionaries and observers remained confident in the Russian Mission. Even further, the very aspects of the war that created this struggle also allowed for significant growth

¹¹⁰ Letter from Julius Boettcher, as published in N. Z. Town, “How to Economize: Housekeeping for War Time, One-Course Meals,” *Review and Herald* 92, no. 1 (January 7, 1915): 15. 2 Timothy 2:3 - You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

¹¹¹ Report from O. E. Reinke, as published in “The Progress in Russia and Denmark,” *Pacific Union Recorder* 14, no. 18 (December 3, 1914): 2.

in the Church itself. Come 1917, however, the Russian Mission took on an entirely new and rejuvenated form.

The Church, 1917 to 1924

Immediately following the Russian Revolutions, Adventists found themselves in an entirely new land in which a chaotic whirlwind of revolutionary iconoclasm flew around them. Bolshevik activists targeted Russian Orthodox priests and parishes and, to the delight of Adventists, ignored the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, along with most sectarian groups. Adventist observers saw this destruction as a form of divine retribution, owing to the collusion between the Russian Orthodox Church and the imperial state. Maintaining their own position on the theological necessity of a complete separation of church and state, Adventists understood the Revolutions as a natural and ordained consequence of the collusion between Russian Orthodox leaders and state actors.

Having been directly involved in maintaining his mission during the Great War, Reinke gave his account of the tumultuous changes across the country. Presented in an article titled, “The Call of the Mission Fields,” Reinke regarded the iconoclastic destruction as “remarkable in the extreme.” He continued, “The great overturning came as the [Adventist] church in Russia was in the midst of special prayer in deliverance.” In answering these prayers, according to Reinke, “The great God of heaven and earth has at last visited in mercy His people to deliver them from the bondage which held them for so long.” Indeed, the fall of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Tsar represented a divine intervention into the affairs of humanity; specifically, the sort of punishment befitting a Church so willing to engage in the interplay of belief and law. Reinke concluded his analysis by quoting scripture: “I cannot help but think of Rev. 18: 1: ‘After

these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with His glory.”¹¹²

Analyzing the revolution, Elder Arthur Daniells included in his “Report of a Recent Visit to Europe” a four-page discussion of the events that had unfolded in Russia over the past two years. He recalled a conversation with a Russian Adventist who had fled from Odessa around the time Bolshevik leaders moved into the area, and reported, “our ministers were all alive and hard at work. Their great difficulty was to get buildings large enough to hold the people that came to them.” The Russian Adventist stated that Adventist preachers “now have unrestricted liberty” to proselytize to the “hundreds and hundreds” of people who were “embracing the message.” When Daniells asked the man about why there existed a distinction between Russian Orthodox priests, who were targeted by Bolshevik sympathizers, and Seventh-Day Adventist preachers, the man responded with a clear Adventist understanding of the relationship between church and state: “our people took no part in politics, but attended to their religion, while the priests meddled altogether too much in the civil affairs and were more responsible for the maintenance of despotism in all Russian than even the government itself.”¹¹³ Adventist missionaries did not, necessarily, regard the Bolsheviks as allies, but rather that the Adventist hesitancy to engage in politics safeguarded them from the iconoclasm going on around them.

Matilda Erickson Andross, an Adventist author and novelist, wrote about the heightened levels of Russian nationalism. She wrote in *Story of the Advent Message* that about seventy Adventist believers were imprisoned and sentenced to “hard labor in chains, with terms of from two to sixteen years (sic).” The Revolution, however, proved that “God’s loving eye was

¹¹² Letter from O. Reinke, as reported in “The Call of the Mission Fields,” *Australasian Record* 22, no. 10 (May 13, 1918): 12.

¹¹³ Arthur Daniells, “Report of a Recent Visit to Europe,” *Lake Union Herald: Union Conference Special No. 3* 11, no. 4 (January 28, 1920): 4.

following these suffering Christians... He brought deliverance in an unexpected way. The Regime of ages went down and a new one was set up.” She concluded with a report from Heinrich Loeb sack, a missionary who had been in Russia since before the Revolution: “we cannot but believe that it was in the providence of the prayer-answering God that the new government issued decrees for the liberation” of these Adventist believers.¹¹⁴

The events of the period from 1914 to 1920 clarified a few key facets of the Russian Mission for Adventist observers. The Great War had reinforced in Adventist minds the inherent dangers in merging the realms of church and state. Obviously, as Adventist leaders posited, the death and destruction of war characterized a direct consequence of the Russian Orthodox Church meddling in the affairs of the autocratic state; the targeting of Russian Orthodox churches and ecclesiasts by Bolshevik activists further justified this sentiment. Secondly, they understood themselves to be ever-more outside of contemporary evangelical Christianity; the very idea of leaving the question of wartime involvement to the individual caused a schism in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and spawned the True and Free Seventh-Day Adventist Church, still operating in Russia today, albeit in very low numbers. Even the Russian Baptists, who share a German heritage with Adventists, were not on the same theological side as Adventists. Justified in their belief of non-state involvement and their theological correctness, a divinely ordained opportunity to preach openly then exacerbated the drive of the Russian Mission, as if God had directly answered their prayers. The relative freedom of proselytization then collided with the extreme suffering that followed the Great War and the Russian Revolutions.

¹¹⁴ Matilda Erickson Andross, “When Prayer Broke Prison Chains,” *Story of the Adventist Message* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing, 1926), 173-174.

Adventist Response, 1917 to 1924

And indeed, Russia was suffering. A significant number of Russian peasants, some several hundreds of thousands, perished during the Great War; some two or three million soldiers died from direct conflict. The monetary cost of the war effort itself was immense, as well; an oft quoted amount stands at about twenty-two billion U.S. dollars. Grain shortages caused already heightened food prices to skyrocket. Furthermore, the intense political and civil unrest in Russia culminated in two destructive revolutions. Further complicating the situation, a multi-party civil war raged throughout Russia for the next three years. In 1921, the tragedy of the Volga Famine in the Volga and Ural River areas struck an already crippled country. According to historian John Forbes, there were more than ten million Russians who were critically undernourished: “The living were too weak to bury the dead.” Through 1921, that number rose to fourteen million. In addition, rates of cholera, typhus, and black plague rose intensely.¹¹⁵

But Adventists neither reported on nor responded to these numbers. They published, instead, tragic stories meant to conjure images of the crises in the country. The reports emphasized the horrible conditions felt by the common Russian man, woman, and child. On the front page of *Field Tidings*, in an article titled “Will You Help Fight: Famine – Pestilence – Death in Russia?” W. H. Heckman transcribed the writings of relief worker Anna J. Haines to “paint a pen picture” about Russia.¹¹⁶ Her recollection began with this chilling sentiment: “When one has seen garbage carts full of dead babies, and older children and adults dying from starvation on the streets, and the farm machinery...scrapped and rusting in the wayside, one loses

¹¹⁵ John Forbes, “American Friends and Russian Relief 1917 – 1927 (Part 1),” *Bulletin of Friends Historical Association* 41, no. 1 (Spring 1952): 40. Peter Gatrell notes that by 1917, the Great War had displaced around six million Russian refugees in *A Whole Empire Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press: 1999).

¹¹⁶ W. H. Heckman, “Will You Help Fight? Famine – Pestilence – Death in Russia?” *Field Tidings* 8, no. 48, (January 11, 1922): 1.

all desire to turn the situation into an epigram.” She wrote about a widow with a four-month-old child, who attempted to reach a richer relative in a nearby village. “The next day,” Haines reported, “she was found dead on the road with the live baby in her arms, unable to make that long trip.” Another story read as such:

We talked to a man who had a wife and five children, all expecting soon to die. He had dug a grave big enough to hold the whole family, for he thought that if the grave were ready the neighbors would at least bury him and his family.¹¹⁷

Heckman ended the article with an appeal for help: “Brethren and sisters, this terrible tragedy is growing... It will grow and grow, unless abundant funds flow in from America.”

A correspondence between two Adventist theology professors mirrored a similar sentiment. “I learned some interesting things about Russia” wrote Professor Kern, currently in Petrograd, to Professor A. F. Schmidt. “There is no violence or trouble now, but there is great distress because of lack of food, and the prevalence of typhus and other diseases...” he wrote, adding “many are dying of blood poison that might be saved if they could only get camphor... I wish something could be done to send a supply from America.” He continued, stating that the population of Petrograd had dropped from two million to a number between seven and eight hundred thousand throughout the years after the end of the War. “The only restaurant in existence is the Soviet,” he remarked, “and the only thing they serve is old decayed horse-flesh from which they make soup.”¹¹⁸ The authors of these articles sought to conjure both moral and material support for both a food and supply drive for Russia as well as a renewed missionary movement.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Writings of Anna J. Haines, as published in Heckman, “Will you Help Fight?”, 1.

¹¹⁸ Letter from Professor Kern to Professor A. F. Schmidt, as published in A. F. Schmidt, “Report from Europe,” *Northern Union Reaper* 15, no. 28 (July 20, 1920): 2-3.

¹¹⁹ Diane Koenker notes the population of Petrograd declined from 2.5 million in 1917 to 700,000 in 1920 in “Urbanization and Deurbanization in the Russian Revolution and Civil War,” in *Party, State, and Society in the Russian Civil War*, ed. Diane Koenker, William Rosenberg, and Ronald Grigor Suny, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989).

One publication of the *Present Truth and Signs of the Times* published photographs of Russia to conjure emotion and support. The front page showed a picture of Russian refugees, flocking towards a train to escape the region. The subtext read, “Russian refugees crowding on a train which they think will take them from the famine area.”

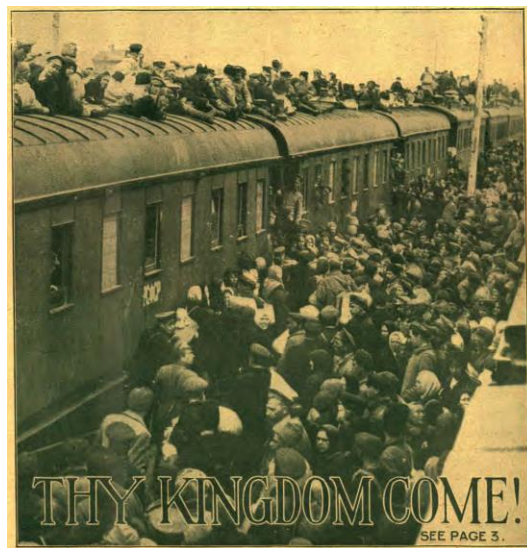


Fig. 7: Russian refugees escaping the famine.¹²⁰

Another picture portrayed starving children, with the message: “There are multitudes of them.”



Fig. 8: Famine-stricken children.¹²¹

Utilizing pictures like these became another strategy to gain support for the Russian mission.

¹²⁰ Picture of Russian refugees crowding a train to escape famine regions in Russia, as found in *Present Truth and Signs of the Times* 38, no. 19 (September 14, 1922): 1.

¹²¹ Picture of famine-stricken children, as found in *Present Truth and Signs of the Times* 38, no. 19 (September 14, 1922): 16.

Louis H. Christian, president of the European Division from 1920 to 1928, became a major advocate for material help to Russia.¹²² On the front page of the *Eastern Canadian Messenger*, he authored an article titled “An Appeal for Starving Russia,” which determined the shape of the Russian Mission during these tumultuous years. “Starving Russia today is a tragedy of the ages,” he wrote, “...no race of which has seen such misery. When Babylon or Assyria or Egypt went under, there was no such disaster as has befallen the Russian nation.” To Christian, and many Adventist readers, the Russian famine seemed to reinforce the unique prophetic nature of the Russian Mission: God sought to punish Russia, like Babylon, Assyria, and Egypt, for transgressing against the chosen people. He continued, writing that there were “at least 4,000” Adventists in the worst famine districts, and despite the “ton of bread or toast” already sent, the situation demanded more: “We should send not only bread, but other foodstuffs; and not only food, but clothing and shoes.” “We do hope and pray,” he concluded, “that God may save our suffering brethren there from starvation.”¹²³ The immediate subsequent article, authored by the president of the Eastern Canadian Union Frederick Stray and entitled “Inasmuch as Ye Did It,” responded directly to the previous article: “‘Inasmuch as ye did it,’ unto the brethren in Russia, ‘ye did it unto me.’”¹²⁴ This is a clear reference to Matthew 25:40, which reads:

And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.’¹²⁵

¹²² Louis H. Christian was the president of the European division from 1920 to 1928. He became the president of the Northern European Division when the European Division was split into four separate divisions in 1928, and was eventually appointed as the vice-president of the General Conference in 1936, a position he kept for the next ten years. From 1946 to 1948, he became the Field Secretary of the General Conference and retired in 1948.

¹²³ Louis H. Christian, “An Appeal for Starving Russia,” *Eastern Canadian Messenger* 21, no. 44 (November 8, 1921): 1.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁵ Matthew 25:40.

Although Adventists found fault with the Russian state, they understood the Russian people as separate from it. Stray argued it a direct commandment from the Bible, akin to helping Christ Himself, to assist in the plight of the Russians.



Fig. 9: Louis Christian.¹²⁶

The editors of several periodicals republished another article authored by Christian, “The Russian Famine – A Suggestion.” Christian lamented that “several Adventists have already died of starvation” and that “many others are perishing.” He urged Adventist readers not to send clothes, as “the clothes of those who die in the famine district are used by those who remain,” and not to send money, as the ruble had lost any real value during this time: “In September, one dollar bought 70,000 rubles; in December, 280,000 rubles.” “We have also arranged to save the lives of 200 children,” he remarked, “and we are sending a four dollar food package to each address of our starving people whom we have.”¹²⁷ Christian continued his campaign throughout the year.

¹²⁶ Picture of Louis H. Christian, as found in *The Advent Review and Herald* 99, no. 25 (June 5, 1922): 7.

¹²⁷ Louis H. Christian, “The Russian Famine – A Suggestion,” *Columbia Union Visitor* 27, no. 6 (February 9, 1922): 1.

Later in 1924, Christian himself went to Russia, traveling and proselytizing from Moscow to Saratov on the Volga. Christian's account mentions the kindness and helpfulness of the Russian authorities. "The famine in Russia is far worse than people on the outside can understand" he wrote, stating that five percent of the entire population of Kazan died in January, seven percent in February, and "still more in March." Christian's account of his travels through Saratov instilled in the reader a truly horrible and tragic image of Russian suffering there:

We first saw the starving people lying ready to die in a railway station about 150 kilometres west of Saratov. These were fugitives from the famine district who could get no farther on their way. Such misery we had never before seen, but later, when we visited the fugitive homes in Saratov and the various villages out in the country, we saw scenes far worse. The hundreds of little half-naked children with bloated bodies, sunken eyes and yellow-grey faces are a fearful sight. We went from home to home in the villages and saw the dreadful conditions of the people. They have little clothing, no food and are utterly discouraged. Some are dying every day. Near one village, twelve naked bodies had been thrown into a hole or grave within the past ten days. Those still living were too weak to bury them: In one village we visited, out of 400 children, 175 are fed, the others have died or will die. Cats and dogs are scarcely seen. They have all been eaten. In one of the homes that is doomed to die, we found no other food than the front foot of a horse from the knee to the hoof. The mother wept while five little half-naked children sat almost dead on the top of the oven. Along the roads and even in the streets of Saratov we could see dead bodies lying in the snow. We visited the children's homes where hundreds die of typhus and dysentery. In one room there were 500 children, though the lady in charge said that there were beds for only sixty. The filth, the stench, the vermin and misery cannot be told in words. We have twenty-five Adventists, most of them children, in these places. Thus far very few Adventists have died of the famine, but our brethren estimate that nearly 3,000 are in danger of dying before August unless they receive help.¹²⁸

Christian, however, did end with a note of optimism. "They lack literature and many other things," he exclaimed, "but there has been no apostasy movement in Russia, and our people all stand united in the true Gospel faith." Promising better days following the continual prayer to

¹²⁸ Louis H. Christian, "A Visit to Soviet Russia," *The Missionary Worker* 26, no. 8 (April 19, 1922): 1 - 2.

God, Christian ended by stating “Our faith in His message grows stronger as we see how the Lord takes care of His own and gives success to His work.”¹²⁹

Daniel Isaac, who had been in Russia since 1905, discussed the progress of the Russian Mission despite the myriad of setbacks in the early 1920s. In the *Missions Quarterly* third quarter issue in 1923, Isaac mentioned a number of hardships the Church had recently undergone: the death of Brother Perk, an Adventist missionary who had been imprisoned with Louis Conradi in August 1886; Brother Reinke, along with nine other Adventists, died from spotted typhus. “But the mighty spirit of God works on thousands of hearts in Russia even while the people run to and fro, hungry, seeking for the daily bread,” he wrote alluding to Matthew 6:9 – 13, “in this time of great famine, pestilence, and war.”¹³⁰ Isaac then told the story of a newly converted Russian Adventist woman who traded “25,000 rubles, a dress, some underwear, five pounds of butter, ten pounds of meat, and some grain, for a common Bible.” True or not, Isaac made no shy attempt to portray the strength of the Russian Mission amidst the chaos, positioning that “through the mighty hand of God, the unceasing labor” of the few remaining Adventist workers, “and the help of our faithful members,” the Russian Mission doubled membership rates “even in the time of tribulation.”¹³¹

¹²⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁰ Matthew 6:9 – 13, the basis of the Lord’s Prayer, reads: ⁹In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done. On earth as it is in heaven. ¹¹Give us this day our daily bread. ¹²And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. ¹³And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

¹³¹ Daniel Isaac, “Russia,” *Mission Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (Third Quarter, 1923): 19-21. “Time of Tribulation” comes from Matthew 24:21 - For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.

The Church, 1914 to 1924

Isaac was mostly correct. The Adventist Annual Statistic Reports catalogued the 1915 membership just shy of 6,000. By 1924, there were over 11,600 Adventist members.

Year	Churches	Membership	Tithe (US\$)
1920	356	8425	43,299.61
1921	920	8185	585.70
1922	358	9069	20,990.68
1923	397	10519	30,589.76
1924	459	11631	29069.45

Fig. 10: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1920 – 1924.¹³²

Another interesting facet of Adventist growth during the post-war era was the sudden jump in established church communities. In 1915, there were 200 Adventist “churches” in Russia; by 1924, despite a lack of monetary funds, food, and supplies, there were 459 buildings in which these communities of Adventists congregated. This reality, in which Bolshevik leaders largely left Adventists alone, allowed for an unprecedented growth in Adventist sites. Russia began to stabilize: the civil war ended in the late months of 1922 as the Red Army took Vladivostok; the Volga Famine had subsided by 1923, and the charitable actions of several organizations like the League of Red Cross Societies, the American Relief Administration, and the American Friends Service Committee mitigated in no small part the pains of these crises. As the fires began to die down, however, Adventists began to experience the true and now focused motives of the antireligious campaign of the Bolshevik Party.

The religious environment following the Russian Revolutions exhibited gradual increase in terms of religious restriction and mercilessness of execution. The immediate post-war years, dubbed by historians as the era of “Breathing Space,” was due to the intense political instability

¹³² Based on statistical data reported in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Annual Statistical Reports from the years 1920 to 1924. There is no explanation on the discrepancy in 1921, and this is probably just an error in inputting the figures.

during Russia's "continuum of crisis." The fledgling Bolshevik Party focused heavily on consolidating power, stifling counter-revolutionary movements, and dealing with the massive influx of foreign aid in response to the wars and famines. Bolshevik actors spent most of their efforts and energy on weakening the Orthodox Church while they largely ignored sectarian groups. By 1922, the Bolshevik regime had rendered most political threats powerless and consolidated itself as the only authority in Russia. Throughout the next few years, the Bolsheviks endeavored on a massive crusade against the Russian Orthodox Church in which they defiled the tombs of saints, and ripped churches and parishes apart for valuables.¹³³ Alongside this practice, NEP era religious policies also endorsed the "Living Church," whose members espoused the idea that communism and Christianity were not only compatible, but inseparable.¹³⁴ Bolshevik leaders endorsed this group in an attempt to weaken support for the Russian Orthodox Church until it became no longer beneficial to support non-Orthodox religious organizations.¹³⁵

Bolshevik leaders took on antireligious movements very methodically, eventually transitioning into harsher approaches towards sectarian groups. Lenin, during a speech at the First All-Russian Congress of Working Women, urged his listeners to "fight against religious prejudices extremely carefully." He argued to utilize propaganda to enlighten Russians, as the strategy of "bringing sharpness into the fight... may embitter the masses." A much more delicate campaign would succeed against the "deepest source of religious prejudices," poverty and

¹³³ See Robert H. Greene, *Bodies like Bright Stars: Saints and Relics in Orthodox Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010); Richard Hernandez, "Sacred Sound and Sacred Substance: Church Bells and the Auditory Culture of Russian Villages during the Bolshevik *Velikii Perelom*," *American Historical Review*, (December 2004): 1475 – 1504.

¹³⁴ Arto Luukkanen, *The Party of Unbelief: The Religious Policy of the Bolshevik Party, 1917 – 1929* (Helsinki: The Finnish Historical Society, 1994), 127.

¹³⁵ William Husband, *"Godless Communists:" Atheism and Society in Soviet Russia, 1917 – 1932* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2000), 57 – 58.

ignorance.¹³⁶ By 1922, however, the situation demanded a “strong conduct of policy.” The Central Committee argued that while these original policies were appropriate for the time, the situation necessitated an intensification of “cultural enlightenment work.” The Russian Orthodox Church remained the main adversary of the new Bolshevik government, but sectarian groups were treated differently. The Central Committee urged Bolshevik activists and leaders to “abstain in every possible way from anything which might constrain” the “economic activities” of sectarian groups that did not bear a “hostile character to Soviet power.” At the same time, however, it criminalized any “general congresses” of sectarian groups that would “include bourgeois and anti-soviet organizations in their midst.”¹³⁷ Still, Adventism continued to flourish.

Leon Trotsky’s 1923 article in a July issue of *Pravda* best encapsulated the movement antireligious practices and policies would take after the 12th Congress of the Russian Communist Party two months earlier. In the article, “Vodka, the Church, and the Cinema,” Trotsky wrote the following concerning peasant and worker spirituality:

Religiousness among the Russian working classes practically does not exist. It actually never existed. The Orthodox Church was a daily custom and a government institution. It never was successful in penetrating deeply into the consciousness of the masses, nor in blending its dogmas and canons with the inner emotions of the people. The reason for this is the same – the uncultured condition of old Russia, including her church.

Trotsky then appealed to the archetypal Marxist understanding of religion as nothing more than an epiphenomenon of history, and not a sincere belief:

¹³⁶ V. I. Lenin, “Rech’ na I Vserossiiskom S’ezde Rabotnits, 19 Noiabria 1918 g” (fragment), *Polnye Sobraniia Sochinenii*, v. 37, p. 186 as found in A. V. Belov, ed., *O Religii i Tserkvi: Sbornik Vyskazyvannii Klassikov Marksizma-Leninizma, Dokumentov KPSS i Sovetskogo Gosudarstva*. 2nd ed. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1981), 46.

¹³⁷ TsK RKP, “Direktivy Sovetskim i Patiinym Oranam TsK RKP(b) po Voprosu ob Otnoshenii k Sektam i Politiki v Otnoshenii Religioznykh Grupp Voobshche, 1922,” as found in A. V. Belov, ed., *O Religii i Tserkvi: Sbornik Vyskazyvannii Klassikov Marksizma-Leninizma, Dokumentov KPSS i Sovetskogo Gosudarstva*. 2nd ed. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1981), 59 – 60.

Hence, when awakened for culture, the Russian worker easily throws off his purely external relation to the church, a relation which grew on him by habit. For the peasant, certainly, this becomes harder, not because the peasant has more profoundly and intimately entered into the church teaching – this has, of course, never been the case – but because the inertia and monotony of his life are closely bound up with the inertia and monotony of church practices.¹³⁸

The solution, therefore, demanded the utilization and implementation of Bolshevik culture to replace the lasting bourgeois culture formed by the practices of Russian Orthodoxy.¹³⁹ The development of Bolshevik culture also necessitated the creation of several antireligious periodicals, like *Bezbozhnik (Godless)*, *Antireligioznik (Antireligious)*, *Ateist (Atheist)*, *Bezbozhnik i stanka (Godless at the Workbench)*, and the *Derevensky Bezbozhnik (Village Godless)*. Early articles, like early antireligious policies, were aimed almost exclusively at the Russian Orthodox Church, which allowed the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to grow during these years. The opportunity of growth, by itself, was not the cause of this growth; contemporary events remained effective in pushing Russian laity towards Adventism for many years.

Both Russian peasantry and the Adventist Church in Russia found a common ground in terms of apocalypticism. David Bethea, a major scholar on Slavic language and literature, identifies the historical roots of Russian apocalypticism. Beginning with the development and proliferation of “Moscow the Third Rome,” following the Ottoman sacking of Constantinople in 1453, several crises during the next few centuries helped format this apocalyptic paradigm: the extreme civil unrest, Polish wars, and famines during the Time of Troubles; the rebellions and

¹³⁸ Leon Trotsky, “Vodka, Tserkov, i Kinematograf,” *Pravda* (July 12, 1923).

¹³⁹ For examples of literature on Soviet culture, see Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Peter Kenez, *The Birth of the Propaganda State: Soviet Methods of Mass Mobilization, 1917-1929* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Nina Tumarkin, “The Myth of Lenin during the Civil War Years,” in *Bolshevik Culture*, ed. Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); Richard Stites. “Iconoclastic Currents in the Russian Revolution: Destroying and Preserving the Past,” in *Bolshevik Culture*, ed. by Abbott Gleason, Peter Kenez, and Richard Stites, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985); or Sheila Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism: Ordinary Life in Extraordinary Times: Soviet Russia in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

uprisings of peasants, Cossacks, and *streltsy* during the 1630's to the 1690's; the Great Schism in the mid-1600's.¹⁴⁰ Bethea argues that the legacies and effects of these events collided with the Petrine reforms and represented “*the* moment in Russian history when the oppositions of old/new and east/west enters into a particularly fateful alignment with the Russians’ myths about themselves and the governance of their state.”¹⁴¹ As mirrored in the context of Adventist development, Russian apocalypticism spiked during times of hardship and difficulty. Historian of Russia Lynn Viola remarks the disorder, exacerbated by the First World War, the Russian Revolutions, and the subsequent civil war and famine elicited images of the apocalyptic horsemen who “stalked the Russian land in an all too literal orgy of death and destruction” in the minds of Russian laity.¹⁴² Therefore, the similarities between Adventist millenarianism and innate Russian apocalypticism allowed for the proliferation of non-Orthodox belief systems, particularly among the peasantry where Adventism concentrated.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Annual Statistical Reports reflect a massive jump in membership as well. The pre-war estimated for 1915 reported almost 6,000 Adventists in Russia; by the time a consensus report could be taken again, there were over 9,000 in the country along with 158 “churches.” By the time of Lenin’s death in 1924, there were almost 12,000 Seventh-Day Adventists in Russia and an astounding 459 religious communities. Lenin’s death, however,

¹⁴⁰ The *Smutnoye vremya*, or Time of Troubles (1598 – 1613) represents the period following the death of the last Rurik Dynasty Tsar, Feodor Ivanovich, to the creation of the Romanov Dynasty. Millions perished due to a famine from 1601 to 1603; the Polish-Muscovite War, also known as the Dmitriads, occurred between 1605 to 1618. The 17th century saw several uprisings, including the “Salt Riot” in 1648, any of the Cossack uprisings during this time, and the anti-serfdom protests towards the end of the 1600’s. The *Raskol*, or Great Schism in Russia, separated the Russian Orthodox Church and the Old Believers as a result of significant Church reforms and also occurred in the 17th century.

¹⁴¹ David M. Bethea, *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1989), 19. For more examples of Russian apocalypticism, see Andrea Oppo, *Shapes of Apocalypse: Arts and Philosophy in Slavic Thought* (Boston, Massachusetts: Academic Studies Press, 2013); Irene-Masing Delic, *Abolishing Death: A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth Century Literature* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1992).

¹⁴² Lynn Viola, “The Peasant Nightmare: Visions of Apocalypse in the Soviet Countryside,” *The Journal of Modern History* 62, no. 4 (December 1990): 751.

created a massive rift within the Communist Party, leaving the question of religion liberal and conservative members to fight over the fate of religious liberty.

Year	Churches	Members	Tithe (US\$)
1915	200	5876	36,468.74
-	-	-	-
1922	358	9069	20,990.68
1923	397	10519	30,589.76
1924	459	11631	29,069.45

Fig. 11: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1915 – 1924.¹⁴³

Adventist Response to 1925

Adventist periodicals never found sympathy for the Bolshevik regime. Though they enjoyed the freedoms granted during the war period and considered the Revolution an answer to their prayers, Adventists maintained a strong caution toward the fledgling Bolshevik regime. As early as 1919, the managing editor of *Liberty* Calvin Bollman authored an article titled “The Menace of Bolshevism.” In the article, Bollman stated that the greatest present danger to the world was “not war nor famine nor plague, but all of these combined, and more, in what is known as Bolshevism.” The four-page cover story informed readers about this form of “radical Socialism in practice:”

Those who renounce their property or business and become laboring people, or proletarians, may live, but others must starve to death, perish from cold, or be killed by those who are determined that all members of human society shall be reduced to a common level.

The article concluded with warning that “Bolshevism, which means repression and despotism, is to be avoided whether in the religious and moral or in the industrial world... As thus far carried

¹⁴³ Based on statistical data reported in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Annual Statistical Reports from the years 1915 to 1924. The “-” represents the years from 1916 to 1921, in which there is no data available.

out in practice, it is evil and only evil continually.”¹⁴⁴ Over the next few years, the Adventist perception of Bolshevism continued to mirror this piece.

Earlier articles, however, did not specifically mention the aspect of atheism within Bolshevism. By 1923, however, it became clear to Adventists that the central tenets of Christianity and Bolshevism were incompatible and antithetical to each other. George McCready Price, in an installment titled “Poisoning Democracy: Applied Socialism,” explained that atheism and modern Socialism “leave absolutely no room for Christianity.” Price painted Bolshevism as ignoring the “blessed lessons taught by the Christian’s Bible” arguing that the working class “deliberately undertake to follow the advice of Bakunin and the Bolsheviks: ‘Let your own happiness be your own law.’”¹⁴⁵ Ironically, Price advocated his own dialectic on history mirroring Marx’s own. “Kings and Kaisers, priests and popes, were at one time dangerous to our liberties,” he stated, “but only because they refused to acknowledge the law of God and the word of God as still above them.” After the last despot is overthrown, however, “the caprice of the mob, or the vote of the majority” will act as the final government preceding the formation of the kingdom of God.¹⁴⁶ When this happens, Price concluded, “may heaven pity a nation or a world abandoned to such a mad philosophy.”¹⁴⁷ The evolution of Adventist understandings of Bolshevism came to incorporate aspects and descriptions of religious belief.

¹⁴⁴ Calvin P. Bollman, “The Menace of Bolshevism,” *Liberty* 14, no. 3 (Third Quarter, 1919): 51-53.

¹⁴⁵ George McCready Price, “Poisoning Democracy: Applied Socialism,” *The Canadian Watchman* 3, no. 1 (January, 1923): 8-9.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

Arguably the most renowned and read periodical, *The Signs of the Times* dedicated an entire publication to the war on Christianity across the world.¹⁴⁸ The front page portrayed a picture of the Holy Bible understood by radical Socialists in both the United States and in Russia.



Fig. 12: Front page of the *Signs of the Times*.¹⁴⁹

The banner headline read as such:

In RUSSIA it is the BOLSHEVIST government that challenges God; in AMERICA it is those PSEUDOSCIENTISTS and CHURCHMEN who declare the Bible wrong and evolution the maker of the world. But no matter who makes the challenge, or where, the result is one and the same.

The subsequent article, “Russia and America War on Religion” by Roy Franklin Cottrell, discussed this international movement against God. Cottrell described an “officially sanctioned anti-religious demonstration” of burning effigies of Jesus, Moses, and Mohammed in Russia as “another defiant orgy of atheism.” Bolshevism, Cottrell continued, “attempts the dethronement of God.”¹⁵⁰

The article also contained a picture of the leadership of the Living Church in Russia, whom Cottrell described as having been “set up by the Bolshevik authorities as the state

¹⁴⁸ The *Signs of the Times* has been in publication since April 6, 1874. It was published weekly until 1957, then published monthly. Between 1874 and 2015, there were 3,508 publications. This doesn’t count the offshoot *Signs of the Times Australian* or *Signs of the Times Canadian*, which respectively boast 3,119 and 416 publications.

¹⁴⁹ Front page of *Signs of the Times*, 50 no. 26, (June 26, 1923): 1.

¹⁵⁰ Roy Franklin Cottrell, “Russia & America War on Religion,” *Signs of the Times* 50, no. 26 (June 26, 1923): 2.

church... these men are mere puppets in the hands of the government, and so far as religion is concerned, it is secondary to politics and many other things.” The next few articles described American atheism in the form of evolution, Darwinism, and paganism. On page eleven, Leon Smith authored an article titled “Religious Bolshevism.” The idea of Bolshevism as a religion would develop intensely over the next few years. Smith argued Bolshevism was advocated by “persisting in the path of self-glorification.”¹⁵¹ “This spiritual Bolshevism, which repudiates God and substitutes human wisdom for divine revelation, and whose doctrines are no whit less absurd and contrary to reason and experience,” Smith stated, “results no less disastrous to the spiritual welfare of mankind than are the material results of political Bolshevism.” Smith concluded with a reference to Romans 1: 21-22.¹⁵² This idea of Bolshevism as both a state and religion would become the main point of contestation for Adventist believers towards the end of the 1920’s.



Fig. 13: Leaders of the Living Church.¹⁵³

A few ideas began to germinate within the Adventist paradigm of Bolshevism.

Complaints of atheism were not inherent in early observations, but as the confusion of the war

¹⁵¹ Leon A. Smith, “Religious Bolshevism,” *Signs of the Times* 50, no. 26 (June 26, 1923): 11

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 14.

¹⁵³ Cottrell, “Russia & America War on Religion,” *Signs of the Times*, 3.

period began to dissipate and the Bolshevik government began consolidating their power, the solidification of atheist characteristics within the Bolshevik government became more apparent. At the same time, the idea of Bolshevism supplanting Christianity as the de facto “religion” of Soviet Russia only just began to take form within Adventist discussions. The idea of Bolshevik Russian atheism did not yet elicit the apocalyptic imagery it would in a few years. Instead, as the first few years of Soviet rule unfolded the Russian Mission continued with consistent enthusiasm.

The same stories and prayer requests as had been seen in the imperial period continued well into the early 1920’s. Clarence Crisler, in the *Asiatic Division Outlook* “Week of Prayer,” spoke to this. “Under Bolshevik rule [Adventists in Siberia,]” he wrote, “are not permitted to worship in their appointed places of meeting, even though they have churches of their own; the State forbids the congregating together of sects other than those approved.” The decree by the Central Committee in 1922, apparently, did not consider the Seventh-Day Adventist Church to be compatible with the culture of the new Bolshevik state. “Let us pray for our brethren and sisters in Eastern Siberia, and through the Russian territory,” he requested, “that God’s work may yet be finished in those regions.”¹⁵⁴ Other periodicals continued publishing stories of apostolic success.

In 1922, Louis Christian gave a speech to the General Conference in which he heralded the Russian Mission as a prophetic success. “The world today is creaking and groaning and going to pieces,” he said, “yet it is true that in a country like Russia, where the situation is so forbidding, we have doubled our membership during the last five years.” He discussed the starving, famine stricken Russians to whom he preached: “I said to myself, here is a place where

¹⁵⁴ Clarence C. Crisler, “The Week of Prayer,” *Asiatic Division Outlook* 12, no. 22 (November 15, 1923): 1-2.

you must exercise faith in your God, where you must have self-control, and not permit yourself to weep or give way to despair with these people; for God has sent us with a message of hope and courage.”¹⁵⁵ Christian, who had seen “the dead lying here and there,” still maintained the apostolic, hopeful message of the Russian Mission.

The editor of a 1923 publication of *The Australasian Record* regarded the situation in Russia as “the greatest spiritual revival that Christianity has known since the days of the apostles.” He included a typical story of conversion to Adventism:

A noted Russian communist was sent into a certain district to propagate the atheistical views of the communists, and to preach rebellion against God. There happened to be one of our evangelists preaching the third angel's message at the same place. The people of the city attended the lectures of the infidel communist, and the Adventist preacher, alternately, in order to see which possessed the greater power. The matter ended by the communist becoming an Adventist, and together with about seventy others he was baptised and united with the church. The gospel is still the power of God unto salvation.¹⁵⁶

The Russian Mission and the Third Angel's Message was so true and commandingly righteous, Albert Anderson reported, it could soften the heart of even the most adamant atheist.

Other observers responded to the success of the movement in regard to the famine and starvation in years previous. L. H. Christian, who spearheaded the project himself, reported that the “very liberal offerings of both money and clothing” proved enough to save “every Adventist from starvation... It is a glorious thing to see that God is blessing His work in spite of hardships.”¹⁵⁷ G. F. Enoch also published another letter from a Russian Adventist sister to an American Adventist sister. It read, “America, the land of help, has fulfilled her high calling, and

¹⁵⁵ Louis Christian in a speech to the General Conference in Kansas City, September 24, 1922 as published in “Our Responsibility in View of Present World Conditions: The End of the Age,” *Missionary Leader* 11, no. 4 (April 1923): 1-2.

¹⁵⁶ A. W. Anderson, “Christian Growth and Development,” *The Australasian Record*, 27 no. 3 (January 22, 1923), 8.

¹⁵⁷ Letter from L. H. Christian, as published in G. F. Enoch, “European Relief Offering July 14, 1923: Starving Russia,” *Eastern Tidings* 18, no. 13 (July 1, 1923), 3 – 4.

has written her own name on our hearts so that no one can equal her... The sisters all rejoice with you. We refer you to Hebrew 10:35-39.”¹⁵⁸ Indeed, God remained with the Russian Mission despite the hardships.

Conclusion

This period of uncertainty did very little to hinder the Russian Mission. For decades, Adventists had been under the thumb of the Russian Orthodox Church and the autocracy. For a few years, the Great War destabilized the Mission; communications between missionaries and Adventist media were largely disconnected, though some did get through. The war represented, however, a spiritual justification of Seventh-Day Adventist belief concerning church and state. Adventist believers saw the Great War as a consequence of these two spheres comingling with each other. Thus, the fall of the autocracy signified a moment of divine intervention corresponding to these ideas. The Romanov dynasty fell, at least in the eyes of Adventists, because the Russian Orthodox Church held and acted on their political power and because domestic and foreign Adventists had been praying for the Russian Mission.

Instead, the trials and tribulations of these formative years only emboldened the Russian Mission. Fueled by the theological victories of the Great War and the Russian Revolutions, the Adventist Church in Russia continued to thrive despite the very real struggles going on around the country. A new challenge presented itself, one that would prove the power and necessity of

¹⁵⁸ Letter from a Russian Adventist sister, as published in Enoch, “European Relief Offering July 14, 1923: Starving Russia,” 4. Hebrews 10: 35 – 39 reads: ³⁵Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: ³⁷“For yet a little while, *And* He who is coming will come and will not tarry.³⁸ Now the just shall live by faith; but if *anyone* draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”³⁹ But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

the Remnant Church. As revolutionaries stormed the Winter Palace in 1917, they also dismantled the anti-sectarian edifices that were built alongside it. Lenin's decree, promising a complete separation of church and state, also seemed a great prophetic moment for the Russian Mission.

The stage was set: both the ability and the necessity for the Russian Mission to grow presented itself to the Adventist faithful; through to 1924, it seemed to Adventists as if they were fulfilling God's plan for Russia. Their experiences during the imperial period, particularly the struggles and persecutions of Adventist missionaries, helped to develop the great hope and optimism following the Revolution. The aftereffects of these tumultuous years then provided an exaggerated and emphasized need for the Third Angel's Message in Russia. This hope, however, would be stomped out by the end of the 1930s. Adventist periodicals replaced this rhetoric by heralding to the imminent advent of Christ, full of dire and apocalyptic imagery. The end of the world, indeed, was nigh and it would begin in the seat of Bolshevism: Russia.

CHAPTER THREE: THE MISSION, 1924 TO 1945

The optimism of the Russian Mission quickly began to fade throughout the 1920s. By the end of the decade, Adventists no longer saw Russia as the prophetic field of apostolic opportunity. Instead, it became clear to Adventist believers that the Bolshevik regime would bring to the world an imminent apocalypse. In 1931, an unnamed author wrote an article in the renowned *Signs of the Times Australian* titled “Atheism Plans to Conquer the World.” The writer explained that the development of Bolshevism characterized an undeniable “manifestation of the wrath of ‘the dragon.’” The article continued, describing the need for the “loyalhearted devotion to God and to the Lord Jesus Christ... Are we ready to stand the test and to hail with joy the appearing of the Christ in power and great glory?”¹⁵⁹ For this Adventist, and other Adventist observers, the proof presented itself in scripture; the author quotes within the article 2 Timothy 3: 1-13, Matthew 24:12, and Revelation 12:17:

2 Timothy 3: 1-13 ¹But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, ⁴traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, ⁵having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ⁶For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁸Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; ⁹but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. ¹⁰But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all the Lord delivered me. ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. ¹³But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ F., “Atheism Plans to Conquer the World,” *Signs of the Times Australian* 46, no. 29 (July 20, 1931): 6.

¹⁶⁰ 2 Timothy 3: 1-13

Matthew 24:12 ¹² And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.¹⁶¹

Revelation 12:17 ¹⁷ And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.¹⁶²

As the aim of the Russian Mission slowly faded from the view of the Adventist media, it began to be replaced with imagery and rhetoric detailing the end of the world and the second advent of Christ.

Adventist observers started to focus the content of their articles exclusively on the imminent apocalypse and the aims of the Russian Mission gradually fell away. The Adventist media emphasized two central aspects of Bolshevism, which they considered would usher in the second coming: atheism and “religious Bolshevism.” It is important to note that Adventist believers understood this form of atheism as an entirely new entity. The atheist regime pushed by Bolshevik leaders was militant and expansive; it was not the generic, simple irreligion against which Adventists had long argued. At the same time, Bolshevism exhibited pseudo-religious qualities and behaviors designed to replace the worship of God with the worship of self. Over the 1920’s, these ideas pushed the apocalyptic narrative to the front of Adventist discussions of Russia. For about a decade, Adventists argued that Bolshevism, through despotic atheism and the propagation of Bolshevism as the state church, would herald the end of the world. By the end of 1930’s, however, Adventists understood the looming Second World War as the actual event that would bring the world to ruin; the Bolshevik regime, then, became the primary antagonist behind it all.

¹⁶¹ Matthew 24:12.

¹⁶² Revelation 12:17.

This chapter covers the period from 1924 to 1946, in which the goals of the Russian Mission were abandoned. Even though the rhetoric that had accompanied the Mission subsided, I juxtapose this to the growth of the Church in Russia up to 1928. I dissect the two major complaints that Adventists had concerning the new Soviet regime, which eventually became realized through apocalyptic rhetoric. I then explain the Great Turn of 1928, when Joseph Stalin dismantled NEP and implemented his first Five Year Plan, the change in rhetoric concerning the Russian Mission, and how this change developed over the previous years. I portray and analyze the apocalyptic dialogue which ultimately replaced the apostolic conversations of the Russian Mission. The chapter concludes in 1946, when the Seventh-Day Adventist Church revived the Russian Mission and reported on Russia in the Annual Statistic Reports again.

The Church to 1928

The Thirteenth Party Congress in 1924 represented the last period of religious toleration for sectarian groups until the World War II era. The question of how to best follow Lenin's ideas and philosophy after his death earlier that year had split the Party. Throughout the next few years, Party leaders struggled in deciding how best to deal with the Russian peasantry and their long-lasting faith. Bolshevik actors, like Mikhail Kalinin and Vladimir Bonch-Bruyevich, maintained a liberal position towards sectarian groups and argued their usefulness if maintained as allies; through non-radical enlightenment and scientific programs, these backwards peasants, too, could become good Soviet atheists. Others, like Ivan Ivanovich Skvortsov-Stepanov and V. Dubovsky, argued that sectarian groups represented "a primary and most dangerous enemy of

communism and the proletarian dictatorship,” and that sectarians had become synonymous with “kulak elements of the peasantry.”¹⁶³

For a period of time, Soviet leaders acted on relatively moderate policies towards religion. Any sectarian group’s compatibility with Soviet culture determined the level of toleration these policies allowed: communities who paid taxes, agreed to military service, and engaged in Soviet culture were given more liberties than sectarian groups that did not; these so-called “pro-Soviet” groups continued to assemble, preach, and evangelize with some permission from the Party.¹⁶⁴ Adventists, naturally, found it a blasphemous injury to maintain any involvement in state issues; thus, in their refusal to adhere to Bolshevik policies, Adventist groups were denied such liberties. In 1925, Leon Trotsky, who had maintained a relatively moderate policy towards sectarian groups, resigned from his post as War Commissar and political dominance of the Party fell into the hands of the infamous triumvirate: Lev Kamenev, Grigory Zinoviev, and Joseph Stalin. Gradually, criticism towards the relatively tolerant policies of the NEP era became more frequent. Stalin, understanding the need to create class enemies in a political maneuver to cement his own power, came to the somewhat fabricated conclusion that both Orthodox clergy and sectarian groups were “stirring up the peasantry against Soviet power.”¹⁶⁵

Yet, the growth of Adventism remained steady. Between 1924 to 1928, over 2,000 Russian citizens gave themselves to the Third Angel’s Message. There were now over 600 churches, and tithe receipts showed a massive 81,000 dollars in 1928.

¹⁶³ Luukkanen, *Party of Unbelief*, 171.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 207.

Year	Churches	Members	Tithe (US\$)
1924	459	11631	29069.45
1925	509	12434	47068.02
1926	568	12744	72671.76
1927	602	13433	76895.00
1928	632	13771	81682.75

Fig. 14: Church Statistics of SDA in Russia, 1924 – 1928.¹⁶⁶

1928, however, would be the last year for nearly two decades in which the success of the Russian Mission would or could be recorded. The organization of the Russian Mission is also telling. In 1920, during the period of the continuum of crisis which had made census reporting impossible, the Russian Mission included the East Russian Union Conference, the West Russian Union Conference, and the Siberian Mission.¹⁶⁷ In 1921, the various subsections of the Russian Mission became consolidated under the singular Russian Union Conference, though several other mission fields were consolidated as well.

At the same time, Adventists began recording baptisms and Russian-language Adventist publications in 1920; while not specified in the records, these baptisms would have been performed largely among Russian Orthodox peasantry. The number of baptisms fluctuated, spiking in 1923 and leveling out until 1928, after which these numbers were not reported. They do, however, show some level of success in the Russian Mission through these years. In contrast, publication rates steadily grew. In 1921, 49 books, periodicals, and pamphlets were published. In 1925, probably in response to moderate antireligious policies, that number rose to 61. By 1928, the number of yearly publications jumped to 67.

¹⁶⁶ Based on statistical data reported in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Annual Statistical Reports from the years 1924 to 1928.

¹⁶⁷ The Harbin (Russian) Mission, while perhaps a “Russian” mission was under the Manchurian Union Mission, and therefore is not included here. Regardless, this mission only accounts for 1 church, 25 believers, and \$164.93 in tithe, per the Annual Statistical Reports for 1920.

Year	Baptized	Total Publications	Total Pages	Total Value (\$)
1921	992	NA	NA	NA
1922	1082	49	3008	18.8
1923	2777	49	3008	18.8
1924	1342	49	3008	18.8
1925	1564	61	3536	20.08
1926	1864	61	3744	23.63
1927	1463	61	3744	23.63
1928	1269	67	4314	25.66

Fig. 15: SDA Baptisms and Publications in Russia, 1921 – 1928.¹⁶⁸

To put this into perspective, the total value of Russian-language Adventist publications circulated through Russia was the eleventh most valuable out of 139 countries. English publications, obviously, were the most popular and therefore far and away the most valuable.

Other languages that surpassed Russian publications included: Danish, Dutch, French, German, Korean, Norwegian, Portuguese, Spanish, and Swedish.

The gradual evolution of apocalyptic rhetoric surrounding the Russian Mission cannot be attributed to the success, or to a lack of success, of the Mission; the numbers of general membership and baptism, worship and Bible study buildings, tithe receipts, and Russian publications indicate that the Russian Mission continued to thrive, even while Adventist periodicals heralded the second advent in Russia. And while Adventists were targeted over other Soviet-friendly sectarian groups, at least before 1928, the Adventist press featured no major articles concerning these stories. Adventists in Russia were largely disconnected from domestic Adventist correspondents, and perhaps this played into the conversation on the apocalypse.

Even the main Adventist history on the Russian Mission, Alf Lohne's *Adventists in Russia*, largely ignores the period of 1929 to 1940. Lohne spends 105 pages detailing Conradi's travels in the early 1880's up to the Fifteenth Congress of the All-Union Communist Part in

¹⁶⁸ See the Seventh-Day Adventist Annual Statistic Reports for the years 1921 to 1928. While \$25 seems an extremely benign amount, this would not have included the value of English-language publications in Russia. Note: The numbers recorded were for the previous year. Given the relative stability of publication rates, 1920 publication numbers would probably be quite like those in 1921.

1928. In a chapter titled, “Shadows Darken Bright Days,” Lohne spends four paragraphs leading up to the Second World War. Lohne states,

The new restrictions forbade ministers from visiting isolated members, limited them to a local congregation, and made them accountable for the political reliability for each member. Other restrictions brought the printing of literature to a stop and caused untold sufferings to Adventists through enforced collectivization and demands to work on Saturdays. Some farmers could not obtain other work and starved to death. The five-day workweek with the sixth day off made it impossible for Adventists to work in large factories... About 1930 the government dissolved all the conferences, and in the following purges the police arrest and exiled many ministers and members. Some lost their lives. Reports reached the outside world that no Adventist congregational worship functioned in the whole country.¹⁶⁹

Lohne then goes into the Shelkavian split within the Adventist Church, before moving into the post-World War II era around 1950. This absence of discussion on Russian Adventism in the late 1920’s and the 1930’s suggests, perhaps, both a lack of sources and a reluctance to discuss the Russian Mission during this period. And while few reports about the Russian Mission on the ground reached domestic eyes, Adventist commentators, continued to develop their understanding of the Bolshevik regime around two particular aspects.

Adventist Response to 1928

There are two strands of discontent shown throughout Adventist periodicals up to 1928: a form of atheism far more insidious than mere atheism, and religious Bolshevism. Adventists, like other denominations, had been arguing against atheistic ideals for some time. As early as 1860, the *Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* had been combating atheism within the United

¹⁶⁹ Lohne, *Adventists in Russia*, 106.

States.¹⁷⁰ Bolshevism, to Adventists, took a new and different understanding than to atheism with which they were familiar, and presented a troubling paradox for Adventist believers: this expansive, militant Bolshevism not only desired to eradicate all religious faith; the regime sought to simultaneously replace the worship of God with a prideful, arrogant, and similarly spiritual worship of man. The spread of this “religious Bolshevism” represented the most alarming development of the 1920’s for Adventist believers. And while these anxieties can be seen through the early 1920’s, they become concentrated and heightened towards the end of the decade.

Many periodicals noted the increasingly common blasphemous nature of the Bolshevism regime. Quoting Zinoviev, who advocated the Communist Party’s “onslaught upon the Almighty,” an unnamed author in a 1925 publication of the *Signs of the Times Australian* explained the tactics of militant atheism. “It seems that even the young have imbibed the spirit of Bolshevism’s antagonism against God and His worship,” the article read. “The outcome of the Bolshevism Sunday-schools and the Bolshevism caricatures of all things religious,” the author explained, should be held responsible for the Cheka’s open hostility towards believers: “The records of the tortures to which many of the priests were put are too terrible to recount here.” The Bolshevism government, according to the author, “has never had its counterpart for cruelty, unreasoning and inhuman, since the world began.”¹⁷¹ The article also published the words of Maitre Aubert’s *Bolshevism’s Terrible Record* to conjure in the Adventist mind images of the blasphemous movements against God in Russia:

They profane the altars, lighting cigarettes from the church candles, wrapping up herrings and puddings in the Gospels, installing café concerts and cinemas in the churches. The churches are open in Russia, but on condition that political

¹⁷⁰ This journal was originally a Millerite periodical and was co-opted by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church in the early 1880’s.

¹⁷¹ “Preparing for the Battle Against God,” *Signs of the Times Australian* 40, no. 16 (April 20, 1925): 1.

meetings are also held in them, and they are used in other ways than for religion. The Bolsheviks have organised blasphemous carnivals... They have erected a statue to Judas, because it appears that he was dishonoured by the bourgeoisie; they mock the Lord's Supper and the Sacred Writings, caricature Jehovah, the God of the Jews, beside the Christian God. They burnt at the stake Bibles, prayer books, ikons [sic], to the sound of military bands and blasphemous refrains...¹⁷²

Albert Anderson, an Australian Adventist, warned about the development of this atheist state. Global communism would create a “terrible future” should its goals be realized, he stated. He described it as a “nation of a people which is ‘without a sense of sin’ governed only by the natural desires of the inhabitants... a nation or a people in which every man’s hand would be against every other... in which every one of the Ten Commandments would be broken without remorse.”¹⁷³ Anderson explained communism as a futile attempt to “realize the dream of Utopia,” noting the absurdity of fallible human reason driving this infallible idea forward. He concluded that neither “Bolshevism, nor communism, nor any other human scheme can do what God has promised to do for the children of men.”¹⁷⁴

Adventists regarded Bolshevism as incompatible, even antithetical, with law and order; anarchy usurping laws in the name of the godless, where God had already supplied humanity with commandments through scripture. Tyler E. Bowen, in “Obedience His Highest Expression of Love” posited that God required from His follower’s self-restraint and moderation; Satan, on the other hand, “maintained that *they* should be left to do as they pleased; Bolshevism pure and simple!”¹⁷⁵ Another article conflated Bolshevism with “anarchy, violence, intolerance,

¹⁷² Maitre Aubert, *Bolshevism's Terrible Record: An Indictment* (William and Norgate, 1925) as transcribed in “Preparing for the Battle Against God,” 1.

¹⁷³ “Without a sense of sin” may be referencing Deuteronomy 32:38 - For they *are* a nation void of counsel, nor is *there any* understanding in them.

¹⁷⁴ Albert Anderson, “Communism’s Utopia: The Battle Against Religion in the Country of the Soviets,” *Signs of the Times Australian* 40, no. 33 (August 17, 1925): 1-2.

¹⁷⁵ Tyler E. Bowen, “His Highest Expression of Love,” *Signs of the Times* 52, no. 15 (April 14, 1925): 14.

lawlessness, and destruction.”¹⁷⁶ Yet another described Bolshevism as “civil government run amuck. It is the ship of the state in the hands of pirates, with violence on deck, ignorance at the helm, and the sails filled with every wind of human passion.”¹⁷⁷

More so than this irreligious lawlessness, however, Adventist observers worried about the quasi-religious aspects of Bolshevism. The Adventist media utilized religious and spiritual descriptions of cultural Bolshevism to better portray an understanding of Bolshevism as a religion in itself. Anderson, in “Democracy Threatened by Communism,” referred to Vladimir Lenin as the “apostle of the communists.” He responded to Lenin’s funeral oration, mocking it as “surely very grandiloquent terms to apply to this revolutionary Russian leader” which “serve to show how blind men can be... when their whole energies are consumed upon the carrying out of their own ideas of self-exaltation.”¹⁷⁸ Bolshevism replaced the worship of the Lord, Anderson argued, with the worship of the self through the same methodology and spirituality. In another article, Anderson stated that Bolshevism could only be the result of “revolutionary doctrines which have been preached for several decades.” Fundamental to “Bolshevik teachings,” totally opposed to Christianity, is that “no critical or independent thinking can be tolerated.”¹⁷⁹

Benjamin George Wilkinson dedicated two segments of a monthly installation titled “Present World Entanglements” to the spread of religious Bolshevism. In January 1925, he signaled to the three doctrines of “the world-wide program of Bolshevism. They are violence,

¹⁷⁶ C. F. McVagh, “Wholesale Salvation: Will the Nations of This World Ever Accept Christianity?” *The Canadian Watchman* 6, no. 9 (September 1926): 9.

¹⁷⁷ George Hyde, “The Clash in China: Is it an Omen of a Greater World War?” *The Present Truth and Signs of the Times* 43, no. 6 (March 17, 1927): 4.

¹⁷⁸ Albert Anderson, “Democracy Threatened by Communism,” *The Signs of the Times Australian* 39, no. 29 (July 21, 1924): 8.

¹⁷⁹ Albert Anderson, “Religious Liberty Department: The Seriousness of the Present Situation,” *Australasian Record* 30, no. 41 and 42 (October 18, 1926): 8.

free love and the corruption of youth.”¹⁸⁰ A month later, he decried the writings of “Lenin, Trotsky, Marx, Engel [sic], etc.” used to teach “evolution and atheism, the religion of the Bolsheviks.” “A great crusade,” Wilkinson stated, “is on to overthrow” Christianity and western democracy.¹⁸¹

The most hardline advocate in pushing the idea of “religious Bolshevism,” however, was Adventist Roy Cottrell.¹⁸² A prolific writer of both books and articles, Cottrell waged a campaign against Bolshevism, framing the ideology as a spiritual belief. In an article titled, “‘Moral-Ox’ Religion,” Cottrell argued that “the basis of nearly every false religion on earth, including modernism, is doing something; while the basis of living Christianity is, ‘Have faith in God.’” He wrote:

Finally, modernism is the deification and worship of self—the most fatal kind of idolatry—and is wholly at variance with the precepts and example of the Master. It was through humiliation and death that He reclaimed a lost world ; and it is only through another humiliation and death that any white man, black man, red man, or brown man can be saved. "Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."¹⁸³

The worship of God had been abandoned for the worship of man, according to Cottrell. He had earlier synonymized Bolshevism with modernism: “Throughout many countries this religious Bolshevism, otherwise called modernism, raises its head and struggles for intellectual supremacy... one of the great contributing factors to our slipping, leaning civilization.”¹⁸⁴

¹⁸⁰ Benjamin George Wilkinson, “Present World Entanglements – Part III: Reaching the Borderline,” *The Sligonian* 9, no. 4 (January 1, 1925): 10.

¹⁸¹ Benjamin George Wilkinson, “Present World Entanglements – Part IV: World-wide Unbelief, Its Growing Menace to Civilization,” *The Sligonian* 9, no. 5 (February 1, 1925): 11.

¹⁸² Missionary, author, pastor; Cottrell was born in New York state into a family of Adventist pioneers. In 1902 he married Myrtie Ball, and six years later they sailed for China, where he served until 1920. During those years he wrote 10 books that were published in the Mandarin language. After returning to the United States, he continued to write, authoring 15 books and booklets, eight series of Sabbath school lessons, and hundreds of articles that appeared in church journals. During his later years he served as a pastor in the Southern California Conference. He gave 60 years of devoted service to the church. This biography was derived from the Ellen G. White Estate Archives, <http://ellenwhite.org/content/person/roy-cottrell> accessed March 23, 2017.

¹⁸³ Luke 14: Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.

¹⁸⁴ Roy F. Cottrell, “Is Civilisation Leaning?” *The Signs of the Times Australia* 40, no. 3 (January 19, 1925): 5.

In January 1926, Cottrell remarked on the irony of antireligious Bolshevism embarking on a policy of “religious terrorism” against Russian peasantry. Cottrell compared the “wretched Russia of today” to the “blood-drenched France of 1793,” which exposed the most “forceful examples of militant atheism.” Bolshevik leaders, leftist university professors, and Living Church clergy, Cottrell maintained, “have generated that subtle and elusive theology, known as Modernism, that now seeks the overthrow of Christianity as revelation and a religion from God.” He concluded his article with Romans 1: 20 – 23, concerning apostasy from God to another religion:

²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

Under the guise of reason and logic, Bolshevik leaders were worshiping “an image like corruptible man,” and not God.

This “religious Bolshevism,” as Adventists understood it, compounded by the fears of militant atheism, became the foundations upon which apocalyptic rhetoric would sit. As Adventist Arthur Maxwell stated, this “new” atheism “has blossomed into a fiendish anti-Christian campaign,” something entirely different than the age-old sin of godlessness.¹⁸⁵ Come Stalin’s implementation of his first Five Year Plan, and the Great Turn of 1928, whatever remaining vestiges of hope and optimism in the Russian Mission were gone.

¹⁸⁵ Arthur S. Maxwell, “What is Being Done by The ‘NEW’ Atheism: In Its Efforts to Establish ‘Science’ and Abolish the Bible,” *Signs of the Times Australian* 43, no. 13 (March 26, 1928): 1.

Adventist Response to 1945

The year 1928 signified a pivotal turn in terms of antireligious policy. NEP maintained, at least in spirit, a hesitant toleration towards some aspects of religious life; the NEP era idea of *smychka*, or the union of the city and village, required a more delicate touch in dealing with the lasting faith of Russian peasantry. Neil Weissman notes that the Russian countryside experienced a lack of police presence which allowed for more freedoms in terms of religious belief.¹⁸⁶ Stalin's more hardline stance towards the problem of peasantry and belief, however, demanded class enemies; thus, Stalin aimed the top-down cultural revolution at kulaks and all kulak-like elements of society. Dubovsky's condemnation of sectarian groups as extensions of kulak power, then, created a particularly harsh situation for Adventists. Members of the All-Union Leninist Young Communist League, or Komsomol, "were given a free hand to fight against the cultural backwardness of the countryside" and often resorted to terror and brute force in their antireligious endeavors. Religion, then, was a lasting vestige of peasant backwardness that only helped maintain the class war in the country side between kulaks and good Soviet farmers.¹⁸⁷

Thus, Stalin replaced NEP policies with his "Five Year Plan," which involved the creation of forced collective farms and ridding the countryside of so-called kulak elements, which included Adventist believers who refused to engage in Soviet culture. The implementation of this plan coincided with a sharp increase in apocalypticism in the pages of Adventist periodicals. Some level of apocalyptic talk has always been an often-discussed subject among Adventist periodicals, as the nature of the advent has been a central pillar of Seventh-Day Adventism since its creation. That being said, apocalyptic rhetoric developed into a much more

¹⁸⁶ See Neil Weissman, "Policing the NEP Countryside," in *Russia in the Era of NEP: Explorations of Soviet Society and Culture*, ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick, Alexander Rabinowitch, and Richard Stites (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

¹⁸⁷ Luukkanen, *Party of Unbelief*, 214-215.

frequent tool, utilized in Adventist discussions on Russia, around the end of the 1920's; during the late years of the 1920's, the second advent came to be understood a prophetic event that would occur within the next few years. The periodicals that heralded Russia as the end of the world were not fringe periodicals; mainstream periodicals, like *The Signs of the Times*, *The Present Truth*, *The Signs of the Times Australian*, *Liberty*, and *The Watchman* were among the most published Adventist titles of the early twentieth century.

“Satan is making his last monstrous efforts to destroy the souls of men,” Adventist Henry L. Rudy wrote in a frontpage article titled, “Russia Wars on Religion.” With a picture of an atheist transforming a church into a worker’s club, Rudy stated that Christians should prepare for the “first fruits of the wicked harvest of the seeds of atheism.”

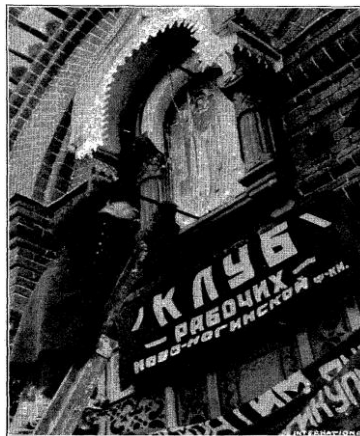


Fig. 16: Church Made into Worker’s Club.¹⁸⁸

“To a student of the Bible and prophecy,” he exclaimed, “these things are signs of the end of earth’s history.” The article also included a discussion on the desecration of churches and seizure

¹⁸⁸ Picture of the conversion of a church into a worker’s club. Henry L. Rudy, “Russia Wars on Religion,” *Signs of the Times* 57, no. 16 (April 22, 1930): 1. The text reads: The Soviet Republic in pursuit of its program to destroy all religion in Russia has ordered the conversion of many churches into "workers' clubs." Here is a workman ripping an icon from a church front.

of church valuables, the deification of Vladimir Lenin, the burning of effigies of Christ, and the prohibition of Bibles.¹⁸⁹

Another Adventist author in the *Present Truth* claimed that Russia was in the “grip of wild, fanatical forces.” Maxwell, now the editor of the *Present Truth*, quoted Revelation 16: 12-14:

¹² Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared. ¹³ And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. ¹⁴ For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

For Maxwell, the “kings of the east” were obvious; Bolshevism had pushed “from the mouth of the dragon” an air of anarchy and lawlessness, and therefore propagated the false prophecies in Russia, China, and India. “There is no mistaking the position of the hands on God’s great time piece,” Maxwell posited, “They are almost pointing to the midnight hour. The sands of Time are sinking and have nigh run out.”¹⁹⁰

Some Adventists emphasized the self-worship of religious Bolshevism, to which earlier periodicals had dedicated several articles. One such author wrote in “Improving on God’s Law” that the Bolshevik five-day-week blasphemed against the God-given seven-day week. The author also included a picture of “pilgrims” coming to see the embalmed body of a “saintly” Lenin.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹⁰ Arthur Maxwell, “Storm-Clouds in the East,” *The Present Truth* 46, no. 13 (June 19, 1930): 5-6.

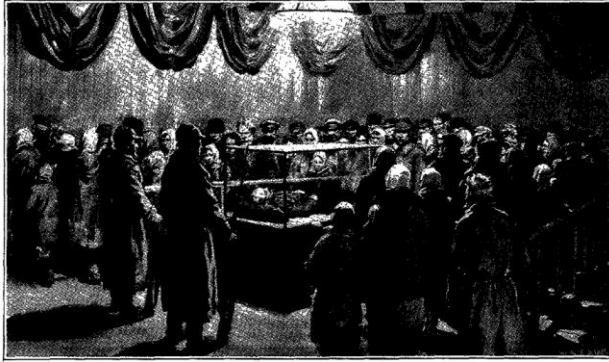


Fig. 17: Lenin's Mausoleum.¹⁹¹

Quoting Daniel 7: 26 - 27, the author stated that even though some of these “man exalting, God-defying” plans will prevail, it would only be temporary:

26 ‘But the court shall be seated, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and destroy it forever. 27 Then the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High. His kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey Him.’

The author likened the Bolshevik's attitude to that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and like these cities, Russia would soon be “consumed by the first of the wrath of God.”¹⁹² In fact, the Stalinist regime represented a “foregleam of what the final world emperor, or beast, will do when he appears.”¹⁹³

A similar article, “God-Defying Russia,” mirrored this sentiment. Likening Russia to Revolutionary France, a state he deemed “so risen in defiance of God-given rules, a government that has rebelled against tested principles of life,” Merlin Neff described the situation in “red Russia.” He discussed the myriad of developments he believed wholly incompatible with the Judeo-Christian values of the West: nullified rights of the individual, abolition of private

¹⁹¹ C. S. L., “Improving on God's Law,” *Liberty* 25, no. 1 (January 1, 1930): 6. The text underneath reads: Pilgrims Filing Past the Embalmed Body of Lenin in the Brown-Varnished Wooden Mausoleum in the Red Square, Moscow, Soviet Russia; The Russian Communists Have Announced a New Soviet Eternal Calendar of Seventy-three Weeks of Five Days Each.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 23.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 6.

property, the ease of obtaining a divorce, and the ridicule of God; “No homes, no parents, no religion, no future prospects in life!”¹⁹⁴ Next to a picture of an anti-religious carnival in Russia and communists standing atop a conquered church, Neff disparaged the development of the first antireligious university in Leningrad.



Fig. 18: Anti-religious carnival (left).¹⁹⁵
Fig. 19: Communists on a church (right).¹⁹⁶

“With family ties severed, church associations broken asunder, property confiscated, a constant fear of enemies in hearts, and very little individual justice,” Neff argued, “it is not to be thought strange that Russia’s condition is described as ‘a reign of terror.’” Another author entitled the subsequent article, “Atheism a Sign.” This atheism, then, could only be understood as a sign of the “day of the Lord.”¹⁹⁷

Article after article claimed Bolshevism as the central cause of the apocalypse. In response to the understanding of Christian apostasy to the Bolshevik “church” of atheism, one article read “This is to be expected, however, for Jesus foretold such a condition before His

¹⁹⁴ Merlin L. Neff, “God-Defying Russia,” *The Watchman* 39, no. 5 (May 1, 1930): 7.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

second advent. So faithless would be the generation living in the world.”¹⁹⁸ Another claimed that “Bolshevism aims to overthrow and destroy the bulwarks of civilization and Christianity”; this, naturally, denoted the “close of the Armageddon of prophecy” with the “destruction of the armies of the earth together with the hosts and leaders of evil forces.”¹⁹⁹ Yet another, using Cottrell’s language, blamed modernism for “a most serious situation that exists right throughout the world.” The article continued, “it is a message for the times, and it is calling out to people to stand staunchly for all the great fundamental features of the everlasting gospel, and to look forward to and be prepared for the glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ.”²⁰⁰ Adventists perpetuated these sentiments for the next several years.

Again, speaking to the concern of Bolshevism as a religion, Cottrell wrote in “Atheism, the Lesser Menace,” that the apocalypse would not be ushered in by irreligion but by “false religion.” “Even so-called atheism partakes of the nature of a religion,” he argued, reaffirming that Bolshevism is a “worship of the self.” Cottrell utilized the imagery of Revelation 16: 13 – 14, along with 2 Thessalonians 2: 3-12, to explain the exaltation of man above God and the rise in lawlessness. Adventist writers and intellectuals unanimously considered Bolshevism in this paradox of both religious and atheistic illiberalism and lawlessness. Bolshevism, if isolated from the world, may or may not have elicited the same sort of apocalyptic fears; Adventist believers, however, also saw Bolshevism as inherently expansive. Over the next few years, Adventists continued to read Bolshevism as the major catalyst of the second advent, but these fears came to take on an international concern as well.

¹⁹⁸ Merlin Neff, “Will the MAN of DESTINY RETURN?” *Signs of the Times* 56, no. 40 (October 8, 1929): 1-2. Matthew 17:17 reads: Then Jesus answered and said, “O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him here to Me.”

¹⁹⁹ C. H. Schowe, “The Crisis of the Nations Draws On: Are We Approaching Armageddon?” *Signs of the Times Australia* 44, no. 10 (March 11, 1929): 3.

²⁰⁰ F., “Sowing the Tares of Modernism in the Mission Field,” *Signs of the Times Australia* 45, no. 48 (December 1, 1930): 9.

Adventists began to argue that the tenets of Bolshevism, irreligiousness and illiberalism, were spreading across the world; this expansion, they argued, would be the primary antagonist in a world-ending, international conflict in the near future. Robert Boothby, in an article titled “Will Russia Rule the World?” argued that the spread of Bolshevism would usher in the kingdom of Daniel 2:44.

⁴⁴ And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

“Communism, or Bolshevism, has taken its seat in Russia... the home of the “Red” movement.” Boothby likened the situation to the fall of the four empires in Daniel 2: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.²⁰¹ Thus, the next and final kingdom would be the kingdom of God.²⁰² “Jesus Christ is coming the second time to change the order of things in the world,” he concluded, “He shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms.”²⁰³

Adventist sources consistently drew on the imagery of Daniel to describe the outward spread of Bolshevism. Cottrell, in a *Present Truth* article entitled, “This Unprecedented Age,” argued that the coming of “those enemies of capitalism – labour unions, socialism and Bolshevism” would herald a “titanic struggle.” “This age of achievement, which fulfills the prophecy of Daniel,” he argued, “serves also as the prelude to the great modern missionary enterprise.” Cottrell argued that the “close of human probation and Christ’s second coming” was predicated on “the everlasting Gospel... speedily carried to every nation and kindred, and

²⁰¹ Daniel 2: 36-40 - ³⁶This is the dream. Now we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. ³⁷ You, O king, are a king of kings. For the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, strength, and glory; ³⁸ and wherever the children of men dwell, or the beasts of the field and the birds of the heaven, He has given them into your hand, and has made you ruler over them all—you are this head of gold. ³⁹ But after you shall arise another kingdom inferior to yours; then another, a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. ⁴⁰ And the fourth kingdom shall be as strong as iron, inasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and shatters everything; and like iron that crushes, that kingdom will break in pieces and crush all the others.

²⁰² Daniel 2:44

²⁰³ Robert L. Boothby, “Will Russia Rule the World?” *Signs of the Times* 59, no. 24 (June 14, 1932): 1-3.

tongue, and people.”²⁰⁴ Thus was the proclamation of the Three Angels: “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people.”²⁰⁵ Cottrell concluded by urging his readers to remain steadfast in faith and in communication with God, despite his claim that “every feature and detail of prophetic forecast is now developed in the life and conditions of our day.”²⁰⁶

Adventists perceived contemporary economic and political conflicts as undeniable evidence of the second advent; again, Bolshevism provoked these world crises through its illiberal and expansive nature. The front page of a 1934 *Signs of the Times* boasted an elaborate image to capture the essence of the situation: God, carrying a scythe and an hour glass, standing over a world filled with sin.

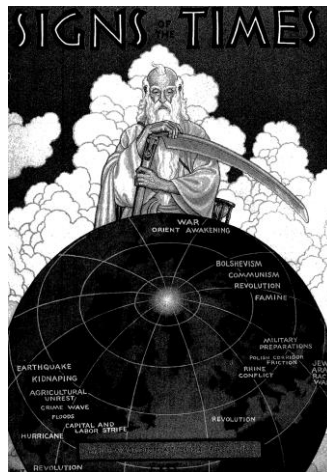


Fig 20: A World Forecast for 1934.²⁰⁷

Just by glancing at the international situation, Adventists argued, one could easily see Armageddon brewing due to the outflux of Bolshevism and socialism across the Earth:

²⁰⁴ Roy Cottrell, “This Unprecedented Age,” *Present Truth and Signs of the Times* 48, no. 13 (June 23, 1932): 2-3.

²⁰⁵ Revelation 14:6.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁰⁷ A picture of God, standing over the world with a scythe and an hour glass. The globe reads the following: “War, Orient Awakening, Bolshevism, Communism, Revolution, Famine, Military Reparations, Polish Corridor, Rhine Conflict, Jew-Arab Race War, Revolution, Earthquake, Kidnaping, Agricultural Unrest, Crime Wave, Floods, Capital and Labor Strife, Hurricane, Revolution; A World Forecast for 1934,” in *Signs of the Times* 61, no. 01 (January 2, 1934): 1.

Russia has for decades had her heart set on an empire that reaches eastward to the Pacific. Under Stalin and the Soviet regime she avows her purpose of being the dominant power... relations between [Russia and Japan] can eventuate only in conflict on the field of battle, which conflict may involve such nations as Britain, France, and the United States.²⁰⁸

Adventists understood that isolated Bolshevism, by itself, was no longer going to usher Christ's return; the permeating tenets of Bolshevism, however, would bring about a world conflict to end all earthly kingdoms.

An article by F. C. Bailey exemplifies this sentiment as well. The political conflicts the gripped the world in 1937 represented the "greatest and most extensive unrest ever known in history, and that men are trembling for the safety of our civilization." Communism, as Bailey put it, "is proclaiming itself the world's savior and urging the universal overthrow by revolution of capitalism and religion." The "world's savior," he stated using the rhetoric of religious Bolshevism, was "determined to develop an absolutely godless generation." More seriously, it portrayed an ungodly "example for the rest of the world to follow... causing serious uneasiness in many parts of the earth." Arguing that the world was "fast approaching the condition of Sodom and Gomorrah, which were consumed by the fires of the wrath of God," Bailey concluded by stating, "We are thus forced to the conclusion that politically, socially, and morally, the present order of civilization is threatened with collapse in the not far distant future."²⁰⁹

Conclusion

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, instead of continuing the calls to build Adventism in Russia, fixated solely on the prospect of an imminent apocalypse. The anxieties brought about by

²⁰⁸ "A World Forecast for 1934," *Signs of the Times* 61, no. 1 (January 2, 1934): 2.

²⁰⁹ F. C. Bailey, "Are we Moving Toward Revival or Chaos?" *Present Truth* 53, no. 04 (February 11, 1937): 4-5.

the development of this militantly atheistic, spiritually Bolshevik regime took priority over the sort of apostolic rhetoric that had fueled the Russian Mission for the past five decades. There were no numbers reported in the Annual Statistic Reports in 1929; there was, quite simply, no mention of Russia at all among the countries reported. During earlier periods of uncertainty, particularly during Russia's continuum of crisis, these reports at least attempted to justify and explain the disconnect between Russian Adventism on the ground and the census takers. Instead, the once fervent reports relegated all the country, indeed the entire Russian Mission, to a single, repeated line: "U. S. S. R. (Estimated): 13,709."²¹⁰ When Robert Bruce Thurber decried Russia for crucifying Christ again, he also warned about the "Chair of Godlessness" in Moscow that would reach out and bring the world to the door of the apocalypse. And while these fears of a Russian-driven, militant atheist expansion across the world never came to fruition, they were certainly enough to sound the death knell of the Russian Mission.

It was not the persecutions under the Soviet regime that did this, as these discussions never reached the eyes of domestic Adventist audiences. This disconnect between the Adventists in Russia and the outlets of Adventist media surely played a role in the development of apocalypticism. Heinrich Loeb sack's story, for instance, became surrounded in rumors concerning his whereabouts. He had entered Russia in 1905 and wrote back to the *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, "'Cast not away therefore your confidence... for yet a little while, and HE that shall come will come, and will not tarry.' Our Russian brethren are of abounding courage."²¹¹ During the 1920's and 1930's, however, his work was lost to the world outside the Soviet Union. Rumors emerged which claimed Loeb sack was imprisoned, sentenced to hard labor in a quarry, and had his legs amputated; these falsehoods were proven wrong when his

²¹⁰ See the Seventh-Day Adventist Annual Statistic Reports for the years 1928 to 1945.

²¹¹ W. W. Prescott, "Untitled Article," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* 82, no. 07 (February 16, 1905): 24.

narratives were published in 2006.²¹² His story did, however, exhibit the sort of persecution Adventists in Russia still encountered. In 1934, Heinrich was imprisoned, interrogated, and tortured until his death in 1938. NKVD agents also executed his daughter for preaching to a group of believers, and both of his sons-in-law were imprisoned for Adventist preaching; one died from the horrid treatment.²¹³

For nearly two decades, the Russian Mission remained a forfeiture; it was not until after the Second World War, after the supposed second advent had failed to materialize, that Adventist missionaries continued the actions of the Mission. In 1944, Stalin established two councils to ease tensions concerning religious freedom and conjure national support for the war effort: one, the Council of Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church, which allowed believers to practice Orthodoxy legally; and two, the Council of Affairs for Cults, which allowed non-Orthodox faiths to be observed.²¹⁴ Missionaries returned and statistics were once again reported to domestic Adventist centers; the preceding decades, however, are still an unclear period of Adventist history. The Church, to suggest a melancholy admittance of defeat, essentially gave up on the Mission. The general inability to maintain constant communication between domestic Adventist centers and Adventists in Russia played a role, though a minor one; they had a similar disconnect throughout Russia's continuum of crisis. And if Adventists abroad did receive reports of persecutions at the hands of the Bolshevik regime, the struggles would have only been reminiscent of those faced under the imperial regime. Neither of these struggles during the

²¹² E. Kotz, "News from Russia," *The Advent Sabbath Review and Herald* 109, no. 9 (March 3, 1932): 24. Heinrich Loeb sack, supposedly, concluded his memoirs, *The Great Adventist Movement and Seventh-day Adventists in Russia* in 1918, but the "political and economic situation" prevented its publication. The manuscript was lost in an Adventist publishing house in Germany destroyed by bombings during World War I, and was only recovered in 2006 according to Galina Stele in "The Unstoppable River," *Mission 360* 1, no. 3 (October 10, 2013): 25.

²¹³ Galina Stele, "The Unstoppable River," *Mission 360* 01, no. 3 (October 10, 2013): 25.

²¹⁴ See John Anderson, "The Council for Religious Affairs and the Shaping of Soviet Religious Policy," *Soviet Studies* 43, no. 4 (2007): 689-710.

previous decades demanded the same sort of rhetoric. It was the fears of a newer and militant, atheistic regime that sought to replace the church of God with a similarly religious worship of man. These concerns developed into an understanding of an imminent apocalypse, and this earnest preoccupation with the second coming pushed aside the priority of the Russian Mission

EPILOGUE

On June 24, 2016, the Russian State Duma adopted a set of federal laws aimed at “combating terrorism,” which the Federation Council approved five days later. These laws strictly limited religious freedom across Russia, and have been seen by the international community as an illiberal reminiscence from the imperial period. Article 24 concerns missionary activity, and limits evangelization to certain areas:

in cult premises, buildings and facilities, as well as on the land, on which buildings are located; in buildings owned by religious organizations on the property right or granted to them on other property right to exercise their statutory activities, as well as on the land, on which buildings are located; in premises belonging to religious organizations on the property right or granted to them on other property right to exercise their statutory activities, as well as on the land, on which buildings are located, have appropriate premises, in agreement with the owners of such buildings; in the premises, buildings, constructions and on land belonging to the ownership or other property right organizations established by religious organizations; on land belonging to religious organizations on the property right or granted to them on other property right; in places of pilgrimage; in cemeteries and additional; in the premises of educational institutions that have historically used for the holding of religious ceremonies.²¹⁵

At its base level, the law made proselytization and evangelization illegal outside of church buildings. For larger faith systems that maintain a strong physical presence within Russia, like the Russian Orthodox Church or Islam, these laws are less effective; indeed, the law serves to protect the Russian Orthodox Church from sectarians. For smaller, fringe religions, however, inviting someone to a home-based worship group would now be technically illegal.

The international backlash has been severe. Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, senior writer at *The Gospel Coalition* and a contributing editor at *Christianity Today*, has argued that “the requirement to practice religion only in registered places of worship creates a Catch-22 for

²¹⁵ "O vnesenii izmeneniy v Federal'nyy zakon "O protivodeystvii terrorizmu" i otdel'nyye zakonodatel'nyye akty Rossiyskoy Federatsii v chasti ustanovleniya dopolnitel'nykh mer protivodeystviya terrorizmu i obespecheniya obshchestvennoy bezopasnosti" no. 374-ФЗ, Article 24, Section 2 (2016), as found on <http://publication.pravo.gov.ru/Document/View/0001201607070016>, accessed March 27, 2017.

Russian Protestants, who are often blocked by the state from obtaining property on which to build those houses of worship.”²¹⁶ *The Christian Post* quoted the Seventh-Day Adventist Moscow-based Euro-Asia Division, which argued that “it is impossible for believers to comply with the requirements not to express their religious beliefs and to be silent even in their own homes as required by the legislation.”²¹⁷

Adventist leaders have also been endeavoring upon an appeal process since the implementation of the law. Oleg Goncharov, director of public affairs and religious liberty department for the Euro-Asian Division, appealed to Putin to reject this legislation. The message read:

If this legislation is approved, the religious situation in the country will grow considerably more complicated and many believers will find themselves in exile and subjected to reprisals because of our faith... All of this can't help but worry all faithful Seventh-day Adventist Christians, who have carried out their activities in Russia for more than 130 years.

Ganoune Diop, the director of the public affairs and religious liberty department for the Adventist world church regarded the laws as more than an attack on religious freedom; according to Diop, they threaten freedom of expression and assembly, which are “interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible.”²¹⁸

One would be remiss not to find similarities between these so-called counterterrorist laws and the Russian Penal Code of 1885. The 2016 anti-terrorism laws developed out of the fears and anxieties of foreign threats and extremism; the 1885 Penal Code represented a response to the

²¹⁶ Sarah Eekhoff Zylstra, “Russia’s Ban on Evangelism Is Now in Effect,” *Christianity Today*, (July 21, 2016). <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2016/july/russia-ban-evangelism-effect.html> accessed on March 27, 2017.

²¹⁷ Anugrah Kumaer, “Russia Seeks to Ban Evangelism Outside of Churches; No Religious Gatherings at Home,” *The Christian Post*, (July 3, 2016). <http://www.christianpost.com/news/russia-seeks-to-ban-evangelism-outside-of-churches-no-religious-gatherings-at-home-165964/> accessed March 27, 2017.

²¹⁸ Andrew McChesney, “Adventists pray for Russia Not to Restrict Missionary Activity,” *Adventist News Network*, (June 28, 2016). <https://news.adventist.org/en/all-news/news/go/2016-06-28/adventists-pray-for-russia-not-to-restrict-missionary-activity/> accessed March 27, 2017.

assassination of Alexander II in 1881, which Alexander III believed to be caused by his fathers liberalities. The 2016 laws prohibit proselytization, largely from non-Orthodox groups; the 1885 laws prohibited both prosleytization to and apostasy from the Russian Orthodox Church. And naturally, adherents of the Seventh-Day Adventist belief understand this in the relation of church and state. Adventism, of course, has evolved tremendously since Louis Conradi first entered Russia and began spreading the Third Angel's Message, and it would be highly inaccurate to simply conflate Vladimir Putin with Alexander III, Nicholas II, Lenin, or Stalin in any sense. There are, however, similarities to be analyzed between the movements of evangelic Christianity and the limitations of these movements under particular antireligious laws.

Today, the Russian Mission resembles that of the late imperial Russian Mission on the eve of the Revolution. Currently, there are two main missions: the East and West Russian Union Missions, both under the Euro-Asia Division. The East Russian Union Mission encompasses Central, East, and West Siberia; the West Russian Union Mission includes the Volga and Volga-Vyatskaya, Ural, Southern, Northwestern, Central, and Moscow Conferences. Also under the Euro-Asian Division are the Belarus, Far Eastern, and Moldova Union of Churches Mission, and the Caucasus, Southern, Trans-Caucasus, and Ukrainian Union Conferences which are associated with the Euro-Asian Division. As of 2016, the Euro-Asia Division boasts 1,821 churches, 32,674,589 dollars in tithe receipts, and about 114,879 church members. The status of the Mission today stands in a stark contrast to the defeatist, apocalyptic Mission in the decade preceding World War II.²¹⁹

It is possible that the 2016 anti-terrorism laws really are, as some opponents posit, an attempt to reestablish the Orthodox Church to the same position it enjoyed with the Russian

²¹⁹ Based on statistical data reported in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Annual Statistical Reports for 2016.

autocracy during the imperial period. But it was not the anti-sectarian laws or policies that paralyzed the actions of the Russian Mission; Adventist missionaries and evangelicals did not shy away at threats of imprisonment, exile, or both. If protecting the Russian Orthodox Church from insidious foreign threats is indeed the cause of the 2016 legislation, it can only serve to embolden the scriptural justifications of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the spread of the Third Angel's Message.

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²²⁰ This periodical was originally entitled *News Letter for the Asiatic Division* in 1912, then renamed *Asiatic Division Mission News* in 1914, and again changed to *Asiatic Division Outlook* in 1917, and finally changed to the *Far Eastern Division Outlook* in 1924.

²²¹ Originally called the *Union Conference Record*, this periodical was renamed the *Australasian Record* in 1911, and then renamed to the *Australasian Record and Advent World Survey* on April 6, 1953. On January 18, 1986, it was again renamed to the *South Pacific Record and Adventist World Survey*. This was shortened to *the Record* on June 6, 1987.

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²²⁴ Originally called *Christian Education*, it was renamed to *Christian Educator* in September, 1915, and then *Home and School* starting in September, 1922.

²²⁵ Originally called the *Eastern Tidings*, this periodical was renamed to *the Southern Asia Tidings* in 1954.

²²⁶ This periodical was originally entitled *News Letter for the Asiatic Division* in 1912, then renamed *Asiatic Division Mission News* in 1914, and again changed to *Asiatic Division Outlook* in 1917, and finally changed to *the Far Eastern Division Outlook* in 1924.

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²²⁷ *The Health Reformer* was renamed *Good Health* in January 1879.

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²²⁹ Preceded by the *Signs of the Times and Oriental Watchman* and the *Herald of Health*

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