

**COLONEL V. A. PASHKOV:
LEADER OF RUSSIA'S LOST REFORMATION* ****

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[V. A. Pashkov (1831–1902). Life and Service]. Korntal', Svet na Vostoke. 224 p.

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The reviewer considers Filipp Nikitin's new book on Colonel Vasilii A. Pashkov, a Russian Evangelical leader in the 1870s and 1880s. A rich Russian aristocrat and landowner, Pashkov was an unlikely missionary, but his conversion at the hands of the British Lord Radstock in 1874 led to a lifetime of preaching and charity among both social elites and the lowest members of society. Although initially not in conflict with the Russian Orthodox Church, Pashkov's increasing prominence and his efforts to unite Russia's various Evangelical movements led to his exile in 1884, where he remained for the rest of his life. The reviewer compliments Nikitin's comprehensive use of archival sources, drawn from a huge number of collections in Russia and abroad. This makes his book a significant contribution to the historiography, much of which is fragmented or out of date. The author's decision to release previously unpublished documents in the book's appendix is an excellent contribution. However, the reviewer points out that Nikitin quotes too much from and relies too heavily on source material, which drowns out his authorial voice: it is argued that the author should spend more time analysing the sources rather than just quoting them. The reviewer also suggests bringing in more contextualisation and consulting some of the recent conceptual approaches to religious biography.

Keywords: Pashkov, pashkovism, Russian Evangelical Christianity, baptists, lord Radstock

Рецензия посвящена новой книге Ф. Н. Никитина, посвященной полковнику В. А. Пашкову, лидеру российской евангельской церкви в 1870–1880-х гг. Пашков, богатый российский аристократ и землевладелец, был не самой ожидаемой кандидатурой на роль религиозного миссионера,

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однако его обращение, свершившееся благодаря британскому лорду Г. Редстоку в 1874 г., привело его на путь проповеди и благотворительности как среди социальных элит, так и среди низших слоев общества. Хотя первоначально Пашков не конфликтовал с православной церковью, рост его влияния и предпринятые им попытки объединить различные евангельские движения в России привели к его высылке из страны в 1884 г.; умер он в изгнании. Рецензент высоко оценивает глубокое знание Никитиным источников, почерпнутое из работы с многочисленными архивными коллекциями документов не только в России, но и за рубежом. Это делает книгу крупным вкладом в историографию, большая часть которой устарела или фрагментирована. Большим вкладом стала и публикация ранее неизвестных документов в виде приложения к книге. Однако рецензент отмечает, что в ряде случаев Никитин чрезмерно полагается на пространное цитирование документов, что неизбежно приглушает авторский голос: думается, автор мог бы более детально анализировать источники, а не просто их цитировать. Кроме того, рецензент полагает, что более широкая контекстуализация и использование ряда современных концептуальных подходов к изучению религиозной биографии могли бы усилить аргументацию автора книги.

Ключевые слова: Пашков, пашковизм, русское евангелическое христианство, баптисты, лорд Редсток

In the last several decades of imperial Russia, its inhabitants undertook a massive campaign of spiritual self-interrogation, one which seemed to leave no social sphere or minority people untouched. The so-called 'Russian religious renaissance' [Zernov] among the more mystically inclined members of the intelligentsia found its reflection even in some Marxist circles, with 'God Seekers' like Aleksandr Bogdanov attempting to fill Marxism's spiritual caesura with teachings filched from Nietzsche, among others [Glatzer-Rosenthal]. The novelist Lev Tolstoi preached his own idiosyncratic, materialist interpretation of Christianity, spawning a small cult in his wake [Степанова]. Fascination with the supernatural, seances, and hypnotism gripped much of educated urban society [Mannherz; Иррациональное в русской культуре]. The polytheistic peoples of the Altai and the Volga sought to reinvigorate their shamanistic nature worship with new patterns of religious behaviour aimed at achieving purer lives [for the Altai, see Znamenski; for the Volga, see Werth]. In the Baltic, Karlis Tennison began proselytising Buddhism to the Estonians and Latvians [Talts]. Among the Orthodox, the common people increasingly turned to charismatic figures, some (like Father Ioann Sergiev of Kronshtadt) [Kizenko] entirely legitimate, others (like Ioann Churikov) looked on with deep suspicion and eventually excommunicated [Herrlinger, 2013]. This almost universal soul-searching was deeply related to the arrival of modernity in Russia: increasing literacy rates, the shrinking of time and space through steam and telecommunications, movements of national

awakening, expanding economic opportunities, the birth of civil society, and the language of citizenship and rights. Although their policies were far from static and unresponsive, the state and the Russian Orthodox Church struggled to deal with this outpouring of devotional wanderlust, especially since traditional methods like excommunication and illegalisation seemed ineffective: equally, efforts to harness the potential cultural power of canonisation and elderhood backfired disastrously [Freeze, 1998; Paert].

A case in point was Evangelical Christianity. Although it had long been present in the Russian Empire amidst German settler communities, from the 1870s onwards it made great strides within the peasant populations of Ukraine and southern Russia. This the historian Sergei Zhuk has called 'Russia's Lost Reformation' [Zhuk]. Somewhat later, interest in the Baptists and similar groups expanded into the empire's larger cities: a good example is Ekaterinburg, where in the 1890s the number of Evangelical Christians achieved parity with the Catholics and Lutherans [Главацкая, Попова, c. 198]. Alarmed by this unanticipated challenge to its flock, the Orthodox Church employed new missionary organs and activities to meet the threat. Equally, the state saw 'Russian' peasants falling prey to a 'German' faith: in an era of heightened international tensions between the German and Russian empires, this was considered a menace to the polity's security. Hence the launch of a ban against domestic Baptism in 1894 [Coleman]¹. No less disturbing to the authorities, Evangelical Christianity also advanced among the empire's highest elites, the Petersburg aristocratic circles that revolved around the throne itself. This was the work of two men, the eccentric British Lord Radstock and the rich Russian aristocrat Colonel Vasilii Pashkov. The latter is the subject of the book to which this review is dedicated.

Some general words first. Filipp Nikitin's new book certainly stands out from the surrounding Russian and English historiography. Much of this is either outdated, fragmented, or difficult to obtain: for instance, the main account of Radstock and Pashkov in English dates from 1970 and was written without archival sources [Heier]. Thus, Nikitin's work marks perhaps the only up-to-date, accessible, and full-length treatment of this important but rather neglected individual. Furthermore, the author critically engages with almost all of this historiography (both in Russian and other major languages), correcting the mistakes of others where they exist and entering into a productive dialogue with interpretations that he finds flawed or lacking.

This he is able to do because of his unprecedented work with the sources. Pashkov was an eminent figure in both Russian and international circles, with connections across the globe: as such, his paper trail is truly massive, with documents about or by him to be found in archival depositories across the world. Nikitin has managed to use nearly all of these, including but not limited to the Archive of the Russian Union of Evangelical Christians and Baptists, the Historical Archive of the State Museum of the History of Religion, the

¹ Non-Russians, however, remained free to practice Baptism.

Russian State Military History Archive, the Central Archive of the Nizhnii Novgorod Region, the Central State Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives, the University of Birmingham Special Collections Department, and the Bogoroditskii Palace Museum. Certainly, no previous book on Pashkov or his movement has consulted such a vast number of repositories, making Nikitin's tome by far the most comprehensive to yet exist on Colonel Pashkov.

In terms of structure, Nikitin creates a broadly chronological narrative, starting with Pashkov's birth into an eminent and wealthy military family and ending with his death in Parisian exile. This is, of course, natural for a biography, where the subject's life provides a convenient structuring device for any narrative. So, in the first chapter we discover why it was surprising that Pashkov ultimately became the leader of a banned religious movement: not only was his family of unimpeachable aristocratic pedigree, it was also one of the richest dynasties in all Russia, with landed estates across the vast country. Abandoning his military career, Pashkov seemed to be on track to live a normal life for a person of his station: *pater familias* to his four children, his estates, and his dependents. Religion played little-to-no role in his life. Assiduously citing all the archival documentation about this period in his subject's life, Nikitin also provides an interesting excursus into Pashkov's activities as a landowner of thirteen estates spread across nine *uezdy*.

Pashkov's direction, however, underwent a tremendous revolution when he met Lord Radstock through the intervention of his (Pashkov's) wife. Radstock, a member of the British aristocracy who spent his life peregrinating around the world to spread the word of God, engendered in Pashkov a classic example of Evangelical awakening, hearing Christ's call and coming to the realisation that salvation was only possible through Christ. As Nikitin explores, Pashkov's new faith was centred on the word of Christ as embodied in the Bible. The main ways to bring people to Christ were preaching this word and engaging in good works. Although Pashkov did not necessarily reject the sacraments and associated religious rituals, they were of secondary or even tertiary importance: the same was true of icons and the cult of the Mother of God. It was this belief that eventually put Pashkov on a collision course with the Russian Orthodox Church, which granted centrality to the liturgy and the taking of the blood and body of Christ. Although Pashkov initially argued that his concern was to see the rejuvenation of Russian Orthodoxy, by the time of his Evangelical baptism in 1883, he considered it a dead faith, although this did not stop him supporting Orthodox churches on his estates [Никулин, с. 64–65].

Pashkov's religious activities (preaching, singing, charity) were aimed both at his aristocratic milieu and Russians of a far less exalted status. He preached, distributed literature, and combated alcoholism not only in his Petersburg home but also in public places between 1874 and 1884. The same home housed a cheap canteen and two schools, one for the children of Petersburg's proletariat and one for poor female artisans. Pashkov and his adherents visited hospitals and prisons and on occasion

provided monetary aid for indigent university students. The Society for the Promotion of Spiritual and Moral Reading, an organisation in which Pashkov participated, published Orthodox and non-Orthodox literature for distribution across the empire. His activity was not limited to Petersburg: he was busy on his estates in the provinces, too, establishing schools and hospitals and otherwise engaging in preaching and charity. Throughout all this, Pashkov established connections with other evangelical societies, both in Russia and in the West: help was also furnished to older 'rationalist' Russian sects, like the molokane and dukhobory. The culmination of this activity was the organisation of an Evangelical Christian congress in 1884, aimed at uniting all Russia's Evangelicals into a single movement.

It was this act that pushed the government into decisive action. Although the state and the Orthodox Church had been imposing limitations on Pashkov and the Pashkovites since 1878 (mostly attempting to prohibit his prayer meetings), in 1884 Pashkov was ordered to sign a document renouncing his faith: he refused and so was ordered into exile, which was to last until his death some eighteen years later. Nikitin then sets aside the volume's final chapters to examine attitudes to Pashkov both when he was alive and after his death, especially in terms of how his memory continued (and continues) to shape evangelical communities in Russia. The work ends by publishing some archival materials that have not been previously circulated, a great service to academics studying this field.

Throughout the work, Nikitin seeks to provide a true biography of Pashkov, as opposed to a hagiography. As such, he offers copious quotations not only from Pashkov's friends and allies, but also from enemies, disinterested bystanders, and a variety of both Russian and foreign journalists. The result is a holistic and balanced understanding of Pashkov's life, thought, and movement, as well as his contribution to Evangelical Christianity in Russia. The book is, to put it briefly, a mature and considered work of scholarship.

Nonetheless, there are some problems. First, Nikitin is too reliant on quotations from his source material, some of which stretch on for multiple pages. The authorial voice is thus sometimes submerged beneath this deluge: at these points, the work comes dangerously close to being a source anthology rather than a piece of historical writing. Nikitin needs to engage more with the source material rather than simply quote it *ad verbatim*: there needs to be more analysis from the author, a more distinctive enunciation of his understanding of Pashkov's place in Russian and European history. Second, while Nikulin locate Pashkov within the wider context of Evangelical movements in Russia, his contextualisation elsewhere is lacking. As the introduction to this review suggests, the period in which Pashkov was active saw a mass of similar activities and individuals provoked by very similar circumstances and seeking very similar goals. The Russian Orthodox Church, for instance, put a renewed focus on pastoral theology, preaching, and urban charity in the late nineteenth century, particularly at the St Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy: this Scott Kenworthy and others

have dubbed Russian Orthodoxy's 'social gospel' [Kenworthy; Herrlinger, 2007; Hedda; Грабко]. To truly understand the social moment in which Pashkov was operating and his ultimate impact, these wider contexts need to be considered. This is all the more the case when we consider that the Orthodox Church's renewed pastoral focus emerged in part as a response to the rapid growth in Evangelical Christianity, a 'transconfessional' borrowing of strategies and tactics aimed at strengthening Orthodoxy in the face of the new challenge [for transconfessionalism, see: Freeze 2017]. Third, Nikitin would be well advised to consult recent approaches to religious biography [Вера и личность], which might grant him the necessary conceptual lenses to better interrogate his subject. For instance, how did the spiritual awakening experienced by Pashkov and his followers alter their subjecthoods? Or, to put it better, how did this very individual experience of religious faith and calling affect the way they experienced themselves and their relationships with society and the state?

However, these are relatively minor problems. Overall, Nikitin's book is a valuable contribution, based on comprehensive coverage of both printed and unpublished materials from several countries and in several languages. This reviewer has no hesitation in recommending it to specialists on the religious history of the Russian Empire and the interested general public. This will be the standard biography of Pashkov for some time to come.

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