

**A VIEW ON RUSSIAN EVANGELICAL SOTERIOLOGY**

**Scripture or Tradition**

by

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

**MASTER OF THEOLOGY**

in the

**DEPARTMENT OF SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY AND THEOLOGICAL ETHICS**

at the

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AFRICA**

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**NOVEMBER 2001**



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I declare that "A View on Russian Evangelical Soteriology. The Scripture or the Tradition? " is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

  
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## Summary

The Russian Evangelical Soteriology as a phenomenon was evaluated in the dissertation.

The original Russian Evangelical confessions of faith and some other historical documents of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are used to present the following hypothesis. The historic fluidity of Soteriology of Russian Evangelicals may only be understood in the light of their consistent adherence to the principles of Sola Scriptura and the Priesthood of all believers.

We come to conclusion that the existence of Russian Evangelical Soteriology is not a question to be discussed, but a clear historical fact. We show that it has its past and present, a well-defended subject of study with clear presuppositions, rather developed vision, and it is unique as a phenomenon.

The major principles of this theology strictly devoted to the Scripture and a flexible formulation of doctrines. We strongly insist that it is impossible without being eclectic combine the Evangelical Soteriology of Scripture with the Orthodox Soteriology of Tradition.

The additional result of the study is the attempt to evaluate the possibility for a reconstruction of Russian Evangelical Soteriology as a part of a self-identification process.

### **Key words:**

Soteriology

Evangelical Soteriology

Russian Evangelical Theology

Russian Evangelical Soteriology

Origin of the Russian Evangelical Theology

Presuppositions of Russian Evangelicals

Prolegomena to Evangelical Soteriology

Confessions of faith of Russian Evangelicals

Russian Evangelicals and Baptists



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## List of Abbreviations

- ACECB – All Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (VSEHB)
- CC – Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians and Baptists (SCEHB)
- CECB – Churches of Evangelical Christians and Baptists
- ECB – Evangelical Christians and Baptists
- Fr – confessions of faith from the cycle of “Frizen’s confessions”
- Ha – confessions of faith from the cycle of “Hamburg’s confessions”
- Ka – one of the editions of “Kargel’s confessions of faith (1913)”
- Kha – confessions of faith from the cycle of confessions of charismatic movement
- Me – a confession of faith from the cycle of “the Mennonite’s confessions”
- Mo – one of the confessions of faith of Molocans’
- NIV – The Holly Bible, New International Version
- Pa – one of the confessions of Pashkovtsy
- Pr – one of the editions of Prokhanov’s confession of faith (1910)
- PR – Personal Relationship with God
- REB – Russian Evangelicals and Baptists
- RES – Russian Evangelical Soteriology
- RET – Russian Evangelical Theology
- ROC – Russian Orthodox Church
- ROT – Russian Orthodox Theology
- Sh – confessions of faith from the cycle of “the Russian Shtundists’ confessions”
- SS – Sola Scriptura
- UECB – Union of Evangelical Christian and Baptists

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The Problem and Its Relevance

These days we more and more often hear that there is no such thing as Russian Evangelical theology (RET).<sup>1</sup> Usually discussions on the topic depend on which circle a speaker comes from and are divided into two main parts. People who are more involved in practical church life sometimes go as far as a total rejection of the importance of formal theology, even to the point of seeing it as something rather dangerous for the churches. Those from our newly formed academic theological circles set the goal of creation or reconstruction of the Russian theology as if they were justifying their profession. In doing so they first of all point out the importance of paying close attention to Russian Orthodox theology (ROT) seeing it as something completed, being able to enrich or even to serve as a starting point for creating RET.<sup>2</sup> As the second source for its synthesis they take different modern western Protestant theologies. They have become formative factors for Russian theology simply because of a number of theological books and textbooks translated and published in Russian. They are being used as the main textbooks at the Russian evangelical schools now. Unfortunately, nobody asks whether these books and the theology they contain are compatible with the basic presuppositions of RET.

Initially, this dissertation was meant to be an attempt of reconstructing Russian Evangelical Soteriology (RES) in order to find out its most outstanding characteristics. The understanding of these characteristics seems to be crucial for the exposition of modern RES. I have chosen, however to concentrate on the locus of Soteriology within the whole body of theology. There are two factors supporting my choice. First my research and teaching of Soteriology<sup>3</sup> brought me to the realization – and that points to the second factor – that the central point of Russian Evangelical Theology is to be found in its mainly Soteriological position and points of departure.

In order to reconstruct RES we studied the documents from the beginning of the evangelical movement in Russia hoping to see its connections with older denominations, which served as its background. We wanted to find out the combinations of ideas that had been formed as a result of the historical doctrinal development. However, in the course of our work a certain problem came

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<sup>1</sup> Negrov, A. I., Charter, M. 1997. *Why is there no Russian Protestant Theology in Russia? A Personal Outcry*. Religion in Eastern Europe XVII: 30–31. See also Zavadsky, V. 1995. *Evangelical Movement in the USSR*. M.: 414.

<sup>2</sup> Penner, P. F. 1999. *Teach All Nations... Mission of Theological Education. Factors of Development of Theological Education in Russia and Counties of UNS*, St. Petersburg 228.

<sup>3</sup> The author has been teaching this subject for a few years in the Russian Evangelical University.

up. It became absolutely clear that to describe RES in terms of its development was in conflict with the basic presuppositions of the Russian evangelical movement. Such an approach of describing RES would have been eclectic<sup>4</sup> because this movement has never built its understanding of the Bible purposely on the doctrines of its forerunners such as the Russian Orthodox Church. Russian Evangelicals simply read the Bible, prayed about the understanding and gave its exposition as they thought was right before God. Their views often came into contradiction with the doctrines of their official Orthodox surrounding. However, even when their understanding did not differ the Evangelicals were not viewed as “brothers” because of the basic presuppositions that they depart from, which were very different from the Orthodox ones.<sup>5</sup>

It was a strong devotion to Scriptures and their personal relationship with God and not the doctrines per say that were the leading principles of their convictions. Many congregations did not even have their confessions of faith in written form. Often the confessions were written down as the answers to the official questionnaires required by the authorities. The authorities were searching for some official reasons to stop the meetings of the believers.<sup>6</sup> The Evangelicals went to prisons and were willing to die for their faithfulness to God and Scripture but not for some stubborn loyalty to their own teachings or creeds as it was believed by the authorities of those days and is still believed by some people even now.

The Russian evangelical movement was a movement of the Scriptures in contrast to Tradition and this is probably its most outstanding characteristic.<sup>7</sup>

On the other hand attempting to study the faith of the Russian Evangelicals’ ancestors we are doing now is nothing else but studying “the tradition” of their evangelical “fathers”. This is exactly what some Orthodox blame the Evangelicals for. They say that the Evangelicals have exchanged the “old good Tradition” for a new one. Trying to turn the “tradition” of Russian Evangelical theology into a new hermeneutic system for interpreting the Scriptures is nothing else but doing something very contrary to the basic premises of their beliefs. Do we really need to start the reconstruction of the doctrines of the Russian Evangelicals after all? Does the position of some modern Russian Evangelicals who reject the necessity of any academically formulated theology make sense? Their position is clear: “Who else besides boring historians need to know

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<sup>4</sup> Books of modern Western evangelicals are full of things like this. Often they do not take into consideration contradictions in presuppositions of cited authors. See, for example, how even our M. Erickson drew on the view of Freud on the issue of how often to have the Lord Supper (Erickson 1994: 1126).

<sup>5</sup> There is an interesting correspondence, which was published in 1872-75, between Molokans of I-st Donskoy talk (so called ‘Zakhariebtsy’) and an Orthodox priest (Mo 1875).

<sup>6</sup> It is clear from study of confessions published in Golovfastchenko 1998: 72–82.

<sup>7</sup> See also the similar idea of Penner (1999: 228).

the faith of the ancestors?” “Isn’t it better to go forward forgetting about the past and spend our time on something more useful for the sake of God’s kingdom?”

However modern Russian Evangelical churches need a well-balanced teaching of Scriptures. Unless we try to build it on the unquestionable authority of Scripture, others will do it on the basis of mainly human-centered non-scriptural presuppositions in an eclectic modern and postmodern way. These presuppositions are nothing but a new tradition but this time it would be a product of the modern and postmodern human mind, a new hermeneutics, a number of filters which would allow the Bible to say only what is pleasing to human beings<sup>8</sup>. Taking of the idea of the importance of these modern and postmodern presuppositions into account theologians often start saying that the principle of Sola Scriptura is well outdated, contradictory and does not mean anything (Valuisky 2001: 8).

The principle inspired the church fathers and the translators of the Bible. It gave birth to the European Reformation. It is the same principle for which the Russian Evangelicals went to prison and died. Now some zealous teachers of the modern human tradition more and more criticize this principle. “Was it right to denigrate the great idea of the traditional denominations, that is, to add Tradition to Scripture?” – some of the “New Russian Christians”, who still consider themselves Evangelical Protestants, are asking.<sup>9</sup> “Traditions are a given fact, it is up to personal taste which of them to choose” (ibid.). One can add many more of these questions and statements by “New Russian Christians”.

At the same time they do not take into consideration the fact that the idea of a Tradition is not a neutral thing. It always opens a door for worshiping human authority, hence, to the whole system of the attributes of traditional churches. Why shall we study the Scriptures “cracking” it with the modern hermeneutic systems? How about considering a “wise” suggestion of the Great Inquisitor to give up our own attempts to understand Scripture<sup>10</sup> and humbly ask certain authorities in the church hierarchy what the Scriptural interpretation should be since it is them who hold the monopoly of Scriptural interpretation. On the other hand shall we read and understand a certain decree of some Church council and accept it as the final truth about God’s revelation instead of attempting to understand the meaning of Scripture on our own?

The idea of this dissertation came up as a result of attempting to answer these questions. The relevance of this work can be demonstrated by simply pointing out that a short essay on the

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<sup>8</sup> Some feminists are ready to throw away the Bible by using a particular constructed type of hermeneutic to say what they want to hear (Lane 1997: 293).

<sup>9</sup> The expression “new Russian Christians” we have take from (Negrov 1997: 5).

<sup>10</sup> Dostoevsky F.M. *Brothers Karamazov*, see chapter “The Great Inquisitor”.

chosen topic in a University newspaper<sup>11</sup> brought forth the reaction described above. We feel that the time has come to address this topic more fully. The views of the Russian Evangelicals and Protestants on the principle of Sola Scriptura are very different today.

## 1.2. The Thesis

The existence of Russian Evangelical Soteriology is not a question to be discussed. It's a clear fact. The main characteristic of this Soteriology is its strong dedication to the exclusive authority of Scriptures as the only source of the theology and to the principle of a personal relationship with God for every believer. It is dedication to these two presuppositions that was the principal factor for conditioning its historical uniqueness on the one hand, and hindered the formulation of Russian Evangelical Soteriology into strict confessional dogmas on the other.

*Our thesis: The historic fluidity of soteriology of Russian Evangelicals may only be understood in light of the consistent (and defining) adherence to the principles of Sola Scriptura and the priesthood of all believers (= a personal relationship with God). This idea best explains the developments within Russian Evangelical Protestantism. The idea finds its support in the historical documents of the period of birth and development of the Russian Evangelical movement at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.*

We believe that the essence of systematic theology cannot be presented adequately as a reflection on the result of a historical development of dogmas. It is rather an always-new attempt to understand the old revelation of God by a new generation in the language of their time.

The attempt to trace some crucial ideas of the Russian Evangelical Soteriology would be used as a recent example to present my hypothesis. The additional results of the study could be the attempt to evaluate the possibility for reconstruction of the RES as a part of a self-identification process. Reconstruction as such is not the aim of the work and it should be left for a more extensive study in future.

## 1.3. The Method

In part 1 we demonstrate the **fact of existence** of RET and study RES as a particular phenomenon of this theological thought. In order to do this we will first limit the definition of theology to the terms accepted by Russian Evangelical Protestantism. It is important because in recent years the theological paradigm has become somewhat ambiguous. Then we will follow the main points of the formation of the Russian Evangelical movement, its setting and possible

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<sup>11</sup> Kouznetsov, V. M., "The Scripture or The Tradition?" This Is Us (St. Petersburg's Christian University), March 2001, 3.

influences of other denominations. Next we will give a description and analyze some written and oral sources that provide us with historical evidence of the movement's theology. We will discuss some nonstandard forms (like narratives, sermons, etc.) that were used for the exposition of RES. Thousands of churches and heroes of faith inspired by the foundational principles of their theology prove that RES did exist indeed.

In part 2 we will try to find out some founding **principles** of RES, which will help us to evaluate it. The background of the subject is crucial here. So we will first do the study of the presuppositions of the theology of Tradition, as they were understood by ROC, give a short summary of the Soteriology and describe a catholic principle of the development of dogma. Then we will study some principles of the Bible centered Soteriology, the way they were reflected in the confessions of faith of that period. Then we will try to answer the question why does it sometimes seem that RES does not exist in many people's experience. This impression is explained by RES's devotion to the principle of Sola Scriptura. We observe that as time goes on any Evangelical teaching has a tendency of being covered by human tradition like a tree trunk gets harder and inflexible as it grows. At the same time, there are young shoots that go forth. This process of hardening the trunk can be compared to the process of forming theology. After a while strictly defined theological teaching starts adding up and takes the place of Scripture. This is how the theology of Tradition is formed. The young branches are like new denominations that grow out of the old ones. This process can be shown empirically on the example of the Russian Evangelical movement.

In part 3 we will continue the discussion about some unique characteristics of RES. Based on the found confessions of faith of that historical period we will follow some questions that were raised in the context of that Soteriology and the **historical range of its doctrines**. The wide range of the doctrines seems to demonstrate the main thesis of this work that is a strong dedication to the premises mentioned above and inner causes that did not allow any strict definitions.

Finally in the last part we will suggest our vision of the main points, which should be reflected by the modern current version of the RES regardless of the forms it may take. It will be highlighted that the historical doctrines of RES are not to be used as another source for the writing of the modern RES but only as an example of the faith of our ancestors that should inspire us to study carefully and humbly the Word of God as the only source of Gods revelation leading people to salvation.

#### **1.4. Sources and accepted limitations**

The history of Russian Evangelical and Protestant theology counts hundreds of Russian sources most of which are well known from the works of the historians of the Evangelical Christians Baptist movement including first of all Savinsky. However in this dissertation for the sake of comparison we use some well-known works of the orthodox historians and a number of the latest editions that were not mentioned by Savinsky. Besides, we used some English books describing the Evangelical movement in Russia from a Mennonites' point of view. An access to the newly formed computerized general catalogue of the Russian National library, which has been gathering almost all of the official Russian editions over the last couple of centuries, allowed us to do research on theology of the Evangelical movement. The study includes separate books as well as periodical editions. Unfortunately, the limitations put on our work and general character of this chapter, which is supposed to be an overview, does not allow us to mention enough of them. However we want to point out that we were pleasantly surprised by the quantity of the material which in one way or another demonstrates the phenomenon of Russian Evangelical and Protestant theology of the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> – beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. When it comes to the Evangelical theological literature of the Soviet period, there are not many editions and they sound somewhat bias. In our dissertation, we will not focus on that period.

A classification of the sources on RES as a phenomenon is fuller presented in part 2.2 because the existence of such sources is one of our arguments supporting the thesis about the phenomenon of RES as such.

In chapter 3 describing the theology based on Tradition we use a few of original works of some modern orthodox writers. We also use materials from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which contain discussions between Orthodox missionaries and the Evangelicals at the period of rapid growth of evangelical congregations in Russia. It turned out that the Orthodox persecutors were the ones who preserved a major part of materials about RES of that time. A collection of materials on the Evangelical movement in the south of Russia published by Dobrodnitsyn and the work of Terletsky who gave a thorough analysis of sources of the Evangelical movement in St. Petersburg of the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century deserve special attention.

Principles of Evangelical theology were studied on the basis of the confessions of faith of that time, partly periodical publications and some polemical materials, which were mentioned above. A more detailed analysis of the Evangelical periodicals from the theological point of view could be interesting but a large number of such periodicals and some difficulties to the access to them made us give up the idea of scanning these sources in order to formulate the Russian

Evangelical Soteriology. Another difficulty of these periodicals was created by the narrative and devotional style of the materials. That made it hard to systematize. This kind of theological approach was meant to appeal to a human being as a whole, not only to his mind. The study of periodicals can be a good field for further work in the area of history of Russian Evangelical dogmas.

In chapter four we do a study of several confessions of faith from the Evangelical movement. The original texts and new editions were found using the key words and some overviews about the history of the Evangelical movement. We also use the texts of the confessions of faith published lately by Golovfaschenko, Sannikov and Dobrodnitsyn mentioned above. The results of our studies are presented in the text of chapter 4 while the descriptions of the sources can be found in Appendix 1.

Time limitations and the way we formulated our thesis did not allow us to search for confessions of faith of all denominations, which could have had some influence on RES. Such a study can be useful but it would be more appropriate in the course of Historical Theology. Therefore, we will limit ourselves by the confessions of faith of Russian evangelical congregations.

In chapter 5 we will share some personal insights and conceptual results. That is why we do not see using any extra sources necessary there.

In general, we would like to point out that the number of sources used in the course of this dissertation is only a small part of available sources and literature on RES.

## 2. The Phenomenon of Russian Evangelical Soteriology

### 2.1. *The Russian Evangelical Theology as Soteriology*

As we have mentioned above, the Russian Evangelical Theology as a whole can be called Soteriology. Why? First of all it is because nearly every discussion is concentrated on salvation as the central point of this theology. Russians love to speak about God as the Savior. And it seems that this is because they have in mind a tight connection of the topic with them as humans and sin. God is not far, He is close-by. God first of all is the Savior. He is the Savior of the fallen down nature of human beings and the power of sin in human beings.

For Russian Evangelicals it is very strange that their theology could be treated as a topic about something else, like it is possible to find in modern liberation theology. This theology sometimes feels free to redefine all foundational Christian definitions. For Russian Evangelicals God is God, sin is sin, and salvation is the day when God relieves people from their sin and not when He gives them enough money or political freedom from their oppressors. They want to obey Him, to 'practice' salvation, instead of having the 'praxis' of using Him for their daily needs. He provides for daily needs, gives them all they need and takes care of them in every respect. He does it because of His love, not because of their demand or their understanding of what is right and what is wrong. So Russian Evangelicals treat theology and salvation in a classical sense.

For a Russian Evangelical to do theology is not to do theoretical reflection about an idea of a "Transcendent Mystery", but to live out the idea of a personal God, to know how to live according to His will and how to have a personal relationship with Him. This theology is not the theology of dusted volumes of 'theological' books, but it exists everywhere, when a person starts to think what it means to obey God, to read the Bible, and discuss it with others. This theology can be expressed on the personal level, the level of a local congregation and the level of a broad denomination. It can be expressed in different forms, but its essence is the same. It is possible to find it not only in theological tracts but also in confessions of faith, songs, preaching, narrative stories about God reflecting the God-human relationship. Ordinary Bible-studies, especially in small groups from the very beginning play a special role in doing this type of theology.

This kind of theology is not that of atheistic Religious Studies or Postmodern 'Theories of Faith', but the expression of a personal relationship with a personal God; it is not human-centered, but God centered. Its dogmatic approach is not the study and following of the Tradition, but formulating of live confessions of faith, which is open to be changed, but under strict control of the Scriptures. Its Systematic theology is not philosophical, but Biblical. Its Bible theology is not

a study of inventions of the mind of a human-centered multitude of 'critics', but a study of fundamental Biblical Truth, which is the same for our ancestors and us. The Bible is treated in this theology as the True Revelation of God.

This theology has its own unique thousand-year history. In what follows we want to portray a short history of it.

## ***2.2. History of a Development of Russian Evangelical Theology***

### **2.2.1. ORTHODOX ROOTS OF RUSSIAN EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY**

Lately it has become almost classic<sup>12</sup> to look for the roots of the evangelical movement in Russia in three main streams that came out of the ROC: Shtundists in the Ukraine, Molocans in the Caucasus and the Evangelicals in St. Petersburg. The quest for self-identification makes the authors somewhat biased: some are trying to prove the Russian origins of the evangelical movement while others are trying to count themselves in the ranks of "advanced and enlightened" Europe.

It seems that the **true reasons** of the Russian revival at the end of the 19th century should be looked for not in the events of our secular or religious history but rather in the **sovereign activity of the Holy Spirit**<sup>13</sup> who was working in the hearts of people in spite of their nationality. Speaking of that it can be interesting to follow the history of German colonists who obviously were settlers in Russia. Almost simultaneously with the Russians they experienced the same kind of revival, which led to founding new evangelical branches in Russia (Brethren Mennonites and Baptists). Those churches stood on membership of those who were found to be born again Christians and baptized believers only on the basis of professing personal faith. They believe that the Church as the body of Christ consists not only of the visible body (local churches) but also has a "soul". This soul cannot be studied empirically by vain attempts of the rational mind, or does not depend on how much a researcher cuts this "body" with a scalpel. Its soul is in obedience to God, in harmony with the Holy Spirit, daily walk with Him and it cannot be described by a pen of a writer. That is why the apostle Paul talked about danger of fables and endless genealogies which cause disputes rather than godly edification, which is faith (1 Tim. 1: 4). He also wrote about forgetting those things, which are behind, and reaching forward to those things, which are ahead (Phil. 1: 13).

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<sup>12</sup> It was Pavlov, V.G., who started this view (Pavlov 1911: # 43-47); the continuation was by Karev, A.V. (1999: 85-193) and than Savinskiy (see Savinsky 1996; 1999 etc.)

However there are some reasons, which make a believer to study history. First of all we should remember and count all of God's mercies as we, Russian Baptists, sing. Second we should be ready to give an account of our convictions when required (1 Pet. 3:15). Third spreading of the Word of God is a historical process, which can be described. The process of accepting the Word is also essentially historical in its nature. However it is difficult to be described because it is closely connected with the spread of Christian culture, teaching and other outer signs. History of Christ's Church is actually the history of spiritual revivals and it does not always coincide with the changing of its visible forms.

With these thoughts about a possible spiritual usefulness of our work we will proceed to study of the history of the Russian Evangelical brotherhood.

### 2.2.1.1. Prehistory of the Russian Evangelical Movement

Prehistory of the Evangelical movement in Russia has already been described in many literatures<sup>14</sup>. Our goal is to present this subject shortly and vividly. We will discuss in detail only some separate topics. It is easier to do this using a chart added below. The idea of such chart was borrowed from other authors. This particular one was made with the focus on the history of Evangelical Christians, Baptists and Pentecostals in Russia and is a result of a creative compilation from a couple of dozens of sources (see the list of literature).

#### A. Possible Ways of the Origin of Christianity in Ancient Russia

In this part we are not going to discuss the issue of so called "Baptism of Russia" (Golubinsky 1997: VI. 3-97), because the baptism has to do more with history than theology. We will only provide a short list of some major approaches, or ways.

**First** possible believers in Russia are often mentioned in connection with preaching of Christ's disciple, apostle Andrew.<sup>15</sup> It cannot be proved that apostle Andrew actually preached on the hills of the future Kiev. However as long ago as in the 4<sup>th</sup> century Jerome (331-420) already mentioned, "the cold lands of Sciffs are burning with fire of faith".

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<sup>13</sup> Illarion, the Metropolit of Kiev writes in 1051: "Faith is not from Greeks, But from God!" (Tolstoy 1991).

<sup>14</sup> See (Karetnicova 1999: 3-83). On the p. 5 is a list of sources. Also see (Savinskiy 1999: 5-90).

<sup>15</sup> Savinsky 1999: 28 has a reference to [Grecov, B.D. 1939 *The Kiev Ross*]. Golubinsky (1997: V2, 19-34) gives details of the legend, including not only Kiev, but also Novgorod and says that, probably, apostle Andrew preached only in Skiffia (South of the modern Ukraine, where the Russian Evangelical Baptists started).

**The second way** that has much stronger ground consists in foreign contacts<sup>16</sup> (merchants, warriors and settlers from the West).<sup>17</sup>

**The third way** – Christians from Constantinople. It could have had some connections with the iconoclastic controversy.<sup>18</sup> In Crimea and up the Dnieper River as far as Kiev there are still some remaining caves where the ancient Christians used to live. According to this theory the Kievo-Pechersky monastery is a reflection of those settlements. Raimer called this way of spreading Christianity the "Pechersky" line.

**The fourth way**, the historicity of which is proven by every single letter of the Russian version of our thesis consists of the mission of Constantine (Cyril) and Methodius (about 863 A.D.). Their mission gave the Slavs not only the Cyrillic alphabet, successful preaching and conversion of some to Christ but mainly the Bible in the Slavic language. Remember that at the same time the Bible was not available in the native tongues for the ordinary people in Europe until the time of the Reformation because it was written in Latin.

**The fifth way** – conversion of two dukes, Askold and Dir, in 866<sup>19</sup>. Then under new Norman rulers there was a step back to paganism. However by the time of mass conversion of Kiev and the territory in 988 there was a cathedral church (hence not the only one) in Kiev.

Some researchers (Grushevsky 1962: 32) do not consider this way as something different from the mission of Kyril and Methodius.<sup>20</sup> However we see them as two different ways. The Word of God in Slavonic had a much deeper and stronger influence on people than the official acceptance of Christianity, the first attempt of which was made after the conversion of Ascold and Dir.<sup>21</sup>

**The sixth way** has to do with a well-known story about the conversion of the grand duchess Olga<sup>22</sup> (955<sup>23</sup>) and the official mass baptism in Kiev and the territory by the grand-duke Vladimir.

Some atheistic researchers (Gordeenko 1986: 3) consider some of the above-mentioned data incorrect and view the process of adapting Christianity as a longer one that was taking place later in history. We agree on the point that it did not happen over night if we are talking about conversion of people under the influence of penetrating into Russia the oral and written Word and the work of the Holy Spirit but not about an "introduction of Christianity" (Gordeenko 1986: 3).

<sup>16</sup> Golubinsky gives 5 possibilities (1997: 4–5).

<sup>17</sup> More about Christians at the South, see: (Savinsky 1999: 28), (Grushevsky 1962)

<sup>18</sup> J. Reimer presented the idea in his lectures on Missiology in 1995 at SPCU.

<sup>19</sup> See (Savinskiy 1999: 28); (Golubinsky 1997: 35-51); (Rapov 1998: 80).

<sup>20</sup> See (Grushevsky 1962: 32).

<sup>21</sup> The understanding is coming from Nestor (Tolstoy 1991:8).

<sup>22</sup> See (Golubinsky 1997: 69).

The introduction of Christianity, if it really happened as being described in the sources, could do nothing but giving the birth of the official "Byzantine" line which was gravitating towards the Byzantine style of church administration on the one hand and the unity with the state (later represented by Moscow) on the other. Finally it was this dependence upon Byzantine and the union with the state that built the foundation of the future Schism.

## **B. "Pecherky" Line in ROC**

When reading some writings about Russian saints (Tolstoy 1991) and works of church historians, one notices two opposite lines in the ROC. One of them is following the ancient Pechersky monastery and developed into later monasticism with its fathers-hermits (so called "startsy"). It was more national in its essence. We will be calling it the "Pecersky" line. The other one represents an official Orthodox Church with its hierarchy and close connection to the rulers of the country. We will be calling it the "official" line.

It seems that these two lines have never blended together though they existed closely with each other. Anyway as we are going to see later an attempt to force upon people new forms of liturgy, the idea of the Third Rome and finally trying to make the church into a subject of the state (Karetnicova 1999: 45) led to the Great Russian Orthodox Church Schism (Zenkovscy 1995: 185-311; 304).

## **C. Schism in ROC and New Movements**

History of the Schism starts with the movement of so-called *Bogolubtsy*. One of the prominent names in that movement is the name of Ivan Neronov who was under the influence of the writings of Maxim the Greek who in his turn was writing about Savonarola's preaching. Another influence experienced by Neronov was the famous Trinity-Sergiev monastery (Zenkovscy 1995: 63-65). Through a like-minded person, the tsar's personal priest, Stefan Boniphatiev (Pospelovsky 1995: 86) Neronov had a significant influence on the young tsar Aleksey Michailovich who supported Bogolubtsy (ibid. 85).

With the tsar's support Bogolubtsy started fighting corrupted clergy and called for the revival of Christian morals and against drunkenness. They were hoping to achieve their goals through establishing a "single voice singing" during the liturgy (instead of singing different parts of liturgy simultaneously in order to save time). That reform was supposed to improve the spiritual condition of the people. This led to a struggle for the "letter of the law" and a necessity of correcting mistakes in the liturgical books. These ideas resulted in great dissatisfaction among

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<sup>23</sup> Golubinsky has 2 versions: 955 (1997, 77) and 997 (1997, 97).

the clergy. A future patriarch Nikon was also a part of the group of Bogolubtsy who later took advantage of that dissatisfaction and betrayed his former friends. The Russian Orthodox Church got divided into two parts: the Old Believers and the Nikonians.

However it seems that true reasons (Pospelovsky 1995: 89) of the schism were not an attempt to change the old Russian way of making a cross sign with a newer Greek one as well as some liturgical changes. It was rather a spiritual division between the formal church leadership seeking power and the movement for spiritual revival, which had reached its culmination at that time.

Another important detail is that the Russian Orthodox Church over the centuries was ruled by the Byzantine priests, first metropolitans, and later by patriarchs. Then after the fall of the Byzantine Empire until the schism the Russian Orthodox Church was auto-cephalic that is independent. It was at that time that Orthodox Russia started to be called the Third Rome as a successor of the Byzantine Christianity. Later according to Zenkovsky (1995: 197), inspired by the successful war with Poland and hoping to release the Greeks from the Turks a newly chosen patriarch Nikon ambitiously desired to adopt the Greek style of liturgy in order to gain influence over the whole Orthodox realm in the future. Although he did not managed to become the world's Orthodox ruler the inner church struggle weakened the Russian Orthodox Church so much that the secular authorities got the upper hand in Russia and the patriarch's power lost its former strength for ever.

The schism of so-called Staroobryadtsy (the Old Believers) (1667) was in some way a more mature movement within the Orthodox Church than those of Strigolniki (1374-1376) or Nestyazhately (15th century). As a matter of fact it was by that time that Francis Scorina (1490-1551) and later Ivan Fedorov (1510-1583) printed the first editions of more or less available Gospels (1574) and the Bibles (1581) in the languages understood by the majority. The books gave the schism spiritual power and it did not disappeared but gave birth to spiritual strivings among the people. This was the beginning of Russian Protestantism.

The Old Believers got divided into "Popovtsy" (those who were recognizing the necessity of official hierarchy) and "Bespopovtsy" (those who did not). Some decades previously after lots of persecutions and wandering around the successors of "Popovtsy" joined the official Orthodox Church. "Bespopovtsy" gave the birth (Savinsky 1999: 38) for so-called "sects" of Khlysty and Skoptsy on the one hand and Duhobory and Molokans on the other. Pryguny (jumpers) and Trjasuny (shakers) were in some way forerunners of the modern Charismatics. We think that these movements, especially Duhobory and Molokans being quite numerable and widely spread should not be called sects.

The official Orthodox Church even with the help of the secular authorities could not overcome the "Pechersky line" and turn the church into a pocket one. Any vigorous attempts to accomplish such a task (like that in the 1960s with the Evangelical Christians Baptists) always lead to new divisions and a wider spread of the Gospel. When a fresh branch is cut the new shoots appear. A dry branch simply falls off.

### 2.2.1.2. Some Points of Theological Heritage of the Schism

The Old believers were known by their faithfulness to the Word and Liturgy. Slavs received both at the dawn of Russian Christianity, some seven centuries before. For them it seemed absolutely impossible to start changing and correcting Scriptures (the version they were used to) or Liturgy according to some New Greek standard. They were ready to die and many of them did die for the right to worship the way that they thought was right. It seems that a certain attitude to Scriptural interpretation expressed by a phrase "read as it is written" is rooted in the period of the Schism.

The Old believers were also known for their sincere search for truth. Their beliefs were more important for them than political ambitions and considering themselves "the Third Rome". They did not give up. When they could not convince the tsar and the Patriarch to keep "the old faith" they ran into the woods of Northern and Eastern Russia where they could worship according to the way they wanted. It is interesting to note that when political ambitions become more important for the church leaders these ambitions lead to splits. For example, there was a split in the evangelical movement not on the doctrinal basis but on the basis of the relationship of church and state in the sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A prominent Russian evangelical attitude is that the church should not be involved in political affairs.

Another principle that has possibly been inherited from the Old believers was their attitude towards the "world" such as drinking alcohol and corruption of the official church leaders. They were very clear on these points: the Church should be separated and different from the world, clergy must show a good example by their lives and obey God more than the authorities. We want to point out that these were the principles the Russian evangelical movement dedicated to as well.

Finally as we have noticed above the Old believers were insisting on "single-voice" singing during the liturgy instead of "multiple-voice" singing when different part of liturgy were sang simultaneously in order to save time. It is interesting that Evangelical Protestants followed the practice of "single-voice" singing from the start.

## 2.2.2. REVIVAL IN ST. PETERSBURG IN THE 19TH CENTURY

### 2.2.1.1. Historical points

#### A. Presuppositions

There is a number of things that caused an evangelical revival in St. Petersburg. The Napoleonic wars (1805-1814) put Russia face to face with the Catholic and Protestant West. Losses and sufferings caused by the war brought forth a **spiritual hunger** and a quest in the hearts of people.

Another reason was the **distribution of the Bible** in the contemporary native tongue. In 1812 the Russian Bible society was organized with the goal of printing and distributing Bibles as well as translating Scripture into the languages of national minorities. The society turned out to be very successful and many people got access to the Word of God. Since 1818 the society started printing the four Gospels in contemporary Russian. Then from 1822 until 1825 it printed and distributed tens of thousands of copies of the New Testament with parallel Slavonic and Russian texts (Karev 1999: 65). Until being closed in 1826 the Bible society had also translated and printed some books of the Old Testament, although they were burnt and never got to be sold.

Johan **Grossner** a former Catholic priest converted into Protestantism preached in St. Petersburg from 1820 till 1824. Under the influence of his preaching many people from different classes of society experienced a new birth. This movement was so significant that Karev later called it the *first wave* of St. Petersburg's revival (Karev 1999: 113).

In 1870 Russian duchess N. Liven when being in England<sup>24</sup> was converted to Christ.

*The second wave* of the spiritual revival is connected with an English preacher lord **Redstock**<sup>25</sup>. A countess Chertkova invited him to Russia. From 1874 to 1878 Redstock preached in English mainly among Petersburg's nobility. A few high ranked aristocrats came to Christ under the influence of these sermons. Among them there were colonel V. A. Pashkov, baron M.M. Korf, count A.P. Bobrinsky, duchess V.F. Gagarina (N. Liven's sister), A.I. Peiker and others. They continued Redstock's work after he left.

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<sup>24</sup> For details See (Liven, S. 1990)

<sup>25</sup> His real name is Grandville Waldegrade (Chalandeau 1978).

## B. Development of the Evangelical Revival

In 1876, before the final banishment of Redstock by zealous Orthodox leaders Pashkov, Gagarina, Korf and Chertkova started the "Society of Spiritual and Moral Reading". The Society managed to publish a good number of high qualities Christian literatures of both Russian and foreign authors (including John Bunyan's books translated into Russian) until the time it was closed in 1884.<sup>26</sup> Censors were very reluctant to allow the publications suspecting that the books contained "Luther's teaching" in them. M.G. Peiker and her daughter started publishing a magazine called "*The Russian Worker*" at about the same time (since 1875 until 1885).

In 1862 the New Testament was published for the broad public. The 1876 Synod published the whole **Bible** in contemporary Russian.

From 1877 to 1894 Dr. **F.V. Bedecker** from time to time preached in St. Petersburg. He later traveled throughout the Russian Empire up to the Sahalin Island preaching the Gospel and giving out copies of the New Testament

Meetings of those who turned to Christ in St. Petersburg started in 1874. Since 1878 they became regular and usually gathered in the houses of Pashkov, Liven, Gagarina, Bobrinsky and Chertkova. At those meetings people prayed, read the Bible, heard the preaching of the Word in Russian and sang hymns. Soon these meetings started to be attended by people from lower classes. In 1880 such meetings were sometimes attended up to 1500 people. At that time the meetings were not congregations with defined membership. They practiced an open Lord's Supper, recognized infant baptism. In their preaching they especially emphasized repentance and the new birth.

In 1882 for a few weeks a Swiss pastor Shtockmayer taught a series of sermons on sanctification. Then in 1882-1883 a well-known founder of orphanages, George Muller from Bristol, England preached in St. Petersburg. In 1882 he baptized according to the profession of their faith V.A. Pashkov, N.F. Liven and some other members of a new St. Petersburg's congregation (Savinsky 1999: 153).

## C. The Years of Persecutions 1882-1905

In 1881 a new tsar Alexander III came to the throne. An oberprocurator, the tsar's representative and the head of the Holy Synod was Pobedonostsev, a well known enemy of any reforms, whose goal was to put the end to what he saw as sects. This period of time was filled

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<sup>26</sup> The literature is observed by Terletsky, the Orthodox researcher in his famous book "Pashkovsthcina" (Terletsky 1891)

with persecutions for Russian Protestants. The researchers divide it into three smaller sections (Savinsky 1999: 153):

1882-1893 – occasional persecutions;

1894-1896 – total and severe persecutions;

1897-1905 – fall of persecutions

Since 1882 it was forbidden to have a meeting at Pashkov's house. At that time believers got more involved in charity work. For example, they started sewing workshops for women that existed for two years before they were closed by the government.

In April 1884 Pashkov and Korf organized a conference in St.Petersburg and invited about 70 leading brothers from Shtundists, Molokans, Mennonites, Duhobory and Evangelical Christians who lived in different parts of Russia. They were discussing a possibility of uniting their movements and some practical approaches to evangelism. The conference was scattered by the police. Soon the authorities closed the "Society of Spiritual and Moral Reading". Korf and Pashkov were promptly exiled out of Russia. Later Bobrinsky followed them. The meetings continued only in the houses of two ladies – Chertkova and Liven.

Since 1884 the leadership of the congregation was passed to I.V. Kargel (Sannikov 1999: 344) who first came in touch with the Pashkovtsy in 1875. In 1889 he accompanied Dr. Bedecker on his trip visiting Siberian prisons.

In 1887 a newly baptized I.S. Prohanov started his preaching ministry in St. Petersburg. Since 1889 he was secretly publishing a Christian magazine called "Beseda" (Pobedonostsev 188?: 9). Then till 1898 this magazine was published abroad with help of Kirhner, smuggled to Russia and distributed there.

In 1895 a group where Prohanov preached was transformed into a congregation. Its pastor was A.V. Berdinkov. Later because of the persecutions Prohanov had to leave Russia for a couple of years. After his return this congregation under his leadership was to play an important role as the leading church in the evangelical movement.

#### 2.2.2.2. Theological Points

It is not an easy task to follow the origins of modern Russian evangelical thought because of the great diversity of different influences that have been shaping it. In Petersburg almost from the time of the foundation of the city there were the representatives of all the main denominations including the Protestants. However the official policy of not allowing the Russians and the foreigners to mix and strict laws against proselytizing had to reduce the foreign influences. On the other hand it was impossible to avoid the influence of the Orthodox Church upon Russian

Evangelical Protestantism. Besides many of those who later became Evangelicals and Baptists came out of the Old Believers. That was also often the situation where the members of the newly founded Protestant congregations lived.

The publications of the New Testament and later the whole Bible in the contemporary language fell on the time of certain displeasure among people with the Orthodox Church hierarchy. It was at the same time that Grossner, Redstock, Bedecker, Muller and others preached and in whose preaching the idea of **Sola Scriptura** could not have been missed. It was natural that this idea became a cornerstone of the Evangelical movement in Russia. The persecutions from the Orthodox church that followed the revival and the disputes with the Orthodox missionaries who were playing the role of Russian inquisitors made this emphasis in Russian Protestantism so prominent that even the works of the church fathers were viewed by the Russian Evangelicals very cautiously and never had the authority comparable to Scripture.

Along with the church writings the Russian Protestants were not accepting pseudo scientific views of those Orthodox missionaries-persecutors who persecuted more political than religious goals. **Read as it is written** has become a vital slogan of the Russian evangelical movement. Such attitude was also created due to liberal rational ideas coming from the West, first of all from German Protestantism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Those liberal ideas were well known among the high society of St. Petersburg.

The principles of the **simplicity in Christ** and **common sense** when interpreting the Scriptures were joyfully accepted by Russian nobility converted to Christ. Those principles became a strong foundation for the future and for many years protected the Russian evangelical movement from pseudo scientific wanderings of the Western liberals. It is not by chance that in one of the first confessions of faith written by Pashkov we read the following words:

...The publishers of the Society (the Society for Distribution of Spiritual and Moral Literature –V.K.) strictly held to God's revelations and brought our readers the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in its simplicity and purity [] We limit our preaching to confessing Jesus Christ as God and Savior who alone is worthy of all faith and love of sinners for whom He gave up His life (Liven 1990: 59).

From the very beginning, we see a very serious attitude toward studying the Word. It was Redstock who began the Bible studies (ibid.). Then this work was enthusiastically continued by Pashkov and others including some ladies who had an important role in spreading the Gospel. Soon they organized Sunday schools for children, although boys and girls separately.

Analyzing the reasons of such success of a short mission of lord Redstock, duchess Liven first of all pointed out to the work of the Holy Spirit in the man's hearts who was sent to Russia to preach. He had been praying about such possibility for ten years, so when he heard a call he did not hesitate, left everything (including his dying mother) and went to Russia. He was not seeking

any material profit or praise but quietly and faithfully did his part of the work God called him for and left the rest to God. Russian believers inherited his **dedication to the Word, prayer and ministry**.

The Evangelical Church in Petersburg was **missionary minded** from the very beginning. The spread and eagerness for evangelism of those believers strikes us even today. Their desire to share the good news with others was natural for born again Christians and became one of the main characteristics of that church. This desire was not overcome neither by persecutions nor time. It is interesting that the representatives of the highest ranks of society were not ashamed of preaching to servants but found great joy in doing so.

**The teaching** of the new congregation was Christ centered. It started with the recognition one's sinfulness before God, repentance, faith in Christ's atonement, followed by assurance of salvation (Liven 1990: 69) and a life of sanctification (ibid. 63).

These beliefs immediately came into conflict with the state **Orthodox** Church. These new believers did not recognize either good works or personal merits as the way of salvation. The Evangelicals did not worship icons, did not pray to the saints and "refused many more from the dead rituals" (ibid. 53). Good knowledge of Scriptures allowed them to defend their convictions well in disputes with the Orthodox missionaries, so when the latter did not have any arguments left they appealed to the state's power. The state considered the Orthodox Church as the foundation of the throne and was zealously oppressing anybody who thought otherwise. The Evangelicals trusted the Lord, did not oppose themselves to the state and did not get involved with politics but when it came to the Gospel they were firm: "Who should we obey more, the Lord or the tsar?" (ibid. 68) and went to prisons and exiles in spite of the high position in society that some of them had.

The believers in St. Petersburg from the very beginning did a lot of **charity** work. They helped anybody who was in need and preached the Gospel at the same time because this was the only thing that could fully satisfy deep human needs. They started workshops that provided work for the unemployed, canteens for the students, visited prisons, hospitals and much more. This desire of Petersburg's believers could be seen even some 40 years later. This we find in reading memories of Vera Shelpjakova for example (see Shepliyacova 1995).

**The forms** and organization of the church services were very simple from the very beginning. They consisted of singing, sermons and prayers in one's own words. Their sermons were not theological speeches. The preachers shared the Word in Christian simplicity in such way that some noble ladies could be touched by the words of their common "brother-preachers" who had just learnt how to read. From the beginning, that is, from the time of Redstock, it became customary to pray kneeling down. It was also considered appropriate to dress in simple and clean

clothes for the services. Ladies were supposed "to dress modestly and not to wear jewelry (the latter was probably required because of a huge gap between the classes of society represented at the services)... not to drink wine nor to smoke" (Liven 1990: 104). Only those could become members of the church who testified about experiencing the new birth. Later some of the Evangelicals started to practice rebaptizing believers and a "closed" Lord's supper.

Almost everything mentioned above is still true about the Evangelical-Baptist movement in Russia.

**The confessions of faith** of the congregation of Evangelical Christians of St. Petersburg can be found in the following sources (Savinsky 1999: 154, 314; Liven 1990: 59-60):

- Pashkov's letter to the rector of St.Petersburg's Orthodox academy I. Janyshv, of April 9, - 1880
- Pashkov's similar but a shorter letter written in 1884 to a Russian ambassador in Paris (Liven 1990)
- "The confession of faith of Petersburg's believers" written in 1895-1897 (Terletsky 1891)
- "Exposition of the evangelical faith or the doctrines of the Evangelical Christians" written in 1910 by Prohanov (the second publication was made in 1924 in a Christian magazine "Christianin").
- "Shorter doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Christians" written by Kargel for the Second Petersburg's congregation. (Kargel 1913)

Another important source about the teaching of the Evangelicals is **conferences** and **congresses**. However they experienced stronger influence of Shtundists and Baptists. It could be good to follow the **influence of theological education** achieved by missionaries and some leaders. However now such an analysis goes beyond the limits of this dissertation.

## 2.2.3. THE INFLUENCE OF MENNONITES AND BAPTISTS

### 2.2.3.1. The Revival Among Russian Mennonites

A spiritual revival among Russians was preceded by a revival among German colonists in the south of Russia, which helped the development of the evangelical movement in Russia.

The first colonists came to Russia being invited by the empress Catherine II after a peace treaty with the Turks in 1774. Starting in 1789 on the Khortista Island and on the banks of the Dnieper river, 346 Mennonite families settled who came from Prussia (Bekker 1973: 10). They started 10 colonies.

These Mennonites were the descendants of the Dutch Waldensians who long before (1540-1549) were invited to Prussia by the king Sigizmund I for doing works of melioration. At that time they enjoyed some privilege from the king and as hard workers in a short time they became wealthy people. However, because of jealousy of their neighbors and their dedication to Protestantism they got persecuted. Since 1642 they got some privileges again but later in 1779 a new edict of the Prussian government made them look for some new opportunities to immigrate (Bekker 1973: 4).

In Russia the Mennonites got big land allotments, money grants to start their farms and a release from military service.

In following years till 1835 the Mennonites and other Protestants continued arriving. Since 1803 they started to settle in a place called Molochny Vody where they formed a number of new colonies. Since 1851 new colonies appeared in Samarskaja and Saratovskaja areas. Besides Mennonites there were Lutherans and Moravian Brothers there.

The Mennonites that moved to Russia although having their own services and while baptizing adults, were in general spiritually cold and indifferent (Karev 1999: 87). However, there were some born again Christians among them who started to be called Shtundists because along with the main services they started to gather for prayers and the Bible studies. Their leaders were Johan and Karl Bonekumpers. In 1845 a Lutheran pastor Edvard Wust came from Germany to Russia. His flaming sermons started a revival, which spread among the whole Mennonite South of Russia and later, after his death in 1859, reached Samarskaja and Saratovskaya regions (Karev 1999: 88). With time groups of born again Germans started to separate from the churches they used to attend and founded new congregations. These congregations were called "Bretheren Mennonites" (Bekker 1973, 52). Some of their first pastors were Jakob Becker, Hergard Willer and P.M. Friezen.

### 2.2.3.1. Revival Among Russian Molokans

At about the same time, since 1802 the Russian government started exiling the Molokans and Duhobors. The German colonists being very successful farmers needed to employ their Russian neighbours. It was quite natural that the workers were welcomed to the Bible studies held in the evenings and on Sundays. Remembering about strict orders not to proselytize the Orthodox believers the Mennonites preferred to employ the Molokans, Duhobors and the Old Believers. When the revival among the Germans started it also involved some of their Russian workers. The latter after the seasonal works were over returned to their villages with the Bibles and the New Testaments, started learning to read and organized similar Bible studies at home. We have already mentioned that since 1822 at the time the Russian Bible Society printed and distributed the New Testament these prints served greatly to the growth of Russian congregations. The converted Russians were also called Shtundists because similarly to the Germans they also met for the Bible studies at the same hour.

Among the first Russians who were converted we know Onischenko,<sup>27</sup> then Michail Ratushny and then Rjaboshapka.

### 2.2.3.3. Baptists Among "Russian" Germans

Among the born again Mennonites Abram Unger held a prominent place. Reading some Christian magazines that were published by Baptists in Hamburg he got interested in the issues concerning baptism and started corresponding with a leader of German Baptists Johann Onken.<sup>28</sup> Soon he became a dedicated defender of Baptist's views on baptism, the Lord's Supper and church order. In 1861 Unger was baptized with full immersion according to the Baptist tradition by a preacher Herhard Willer. Within a few years the whole "new Mennonite" movement becomes rather Baptist in essence (Karev 1999: 94). Since 1869 baptism through immersion became widely spread among the Germans. At the same time Willer baptized some Russians as well.<sup>29</sup> Onken twice visited newly founded Baptist congregations and in 1869 he ordained Unger to be a pastor. In that very year Unger baptized Efim Tsimbal<sup>30</sup> according to the insistent requests of the latter. Besides Onken a German Baptist August Libig visited a few times. After his visit in

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<sup>27</sup> The life of Ivan Onischenko is described in (Krudner 1992)

<sup>28</sup> Onken is a founder of Baptism in Germany, the author of the known confession, the so called Hamburg Confession (1849). Pavlov translated it into Russian. He was also the initiator of the Baptist Seminary in Hamburg. Pavlov, Kargel, Prochanov were among the protagonists for the latter.

<sup>29</sup> In 1863 and in 1864. For these baptists G. Willer was taken into prison (Savinaky 1999: 112), (Karev 1999: 95)

<sup>30</sup> Efim Tsimbal than baptised Ivan Rjabisaca and others who started Russian Baptist congregations.

1871 the Bretheren Mennonites started baptizing only by full immersion and serving the Lord's Supper only to those who were baptized by faith (Karev 1999: 95).

From these congregations, besides their influence on new Russian Baptists emerging from Shtundists, a number of leaders came to the fore that played an important role in the Evangelical and Baptist movement in Russia.<sup>31</sup>

#### 2.2.3.4. Theological Influence

In the South of Russia and along the Volga River with the support of persecutions a unique situation developed when the Protestants with an Orthodox background (Duhobors, Molokans and the others) and those with a Catholic background (Lutherans, Mennonites, the Moravian Brothers, etc.) were living together. First of all the process of shaping their evangelical theology was taking place not at universities but in the Bible study groups that were started not by highly educated but very sincere people for whom the Word of God was not an abstract subject but the source of life. At the same time some very diverse views were present among them. Second they discussed not theological literature but the Bible itself. Third they were prepared to pay a very high price to be persecuted for what they chose to believe. The essential attitude was towards personal experience (not memorized prayers), and trust to the Holy Spirit for revealing the truth.

Almost from the very beginning they stood on the **Sola Scriptura** principle partly because of the Protestant background of the participants and partly because of the new "protest" against the attacks of the Orthodox apologists.<sup>32</sup> In fact this was not the first wave of "Protestantism" in Russia. The hermeneutic principle **read as it is written** neither meant plain literal interpretation nor got them into a deep allegorical style of interpretation. It seems that due to German naturalistic practice and the philosophical attitude of the Russian mentality they interpreted the Bible according to the principle of **common sense**.

According to their convictions it was faith, not works that was at the foundation of salvation. Works are only the result of faith. The question about election is to be found in the views of Particular Baptists.<sup>33</sup> They thought it was impossible to gain salvation by good works or "to be taken from the hands of Christ". However it seems they differed in their views on the latter point.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For example, the famous dynasty of Vins's (J. J. Vins, P.J Vins, G.P. Vins) and others.

<sup>32</sup> The authority of Scripture was higher in Russia, than in the West: in Russian for a longer time it was in understandable language.

<sup>33</sup> Savinsky 1999: 327.

<sup>34</sup> Savinsky 1999: 323. In the Confession of Prokchanov predestination on the basis of prediction is sound clear. It is possible for a man to reject Grace and to become lost (Sannikov 1996: 445).

*Baptism according to faith* partly received from the German Baptists and partly understood from Scripture soon became founding principles of Russian Baptists. They saw baptism as a promise of good conscience to God and a symbol of cleansing of sins, a sign of a new birth and an entering of Christ's church. Water symbolized that anyone being baptized was immersed in Christ.<sup>35</sup>

It was different in the case of the *Lord's Supper*. There were four different positions: spiritual understanding of the Lord's Supper by Molocans, Transubstantiation held by German Bretheren Mennonites, open Lord's Supper held by Evangelicals and a closed one held by Baptists. This issue was raised on a number of times at different conferences and congresses and for a long time the issue was understood differently and remained open.

The Bretheren Mennonites also practiced *feet washing* but the custom was not widely accepted by Russian Baptists though it was practiced by some congregations.

Those converted from the Orthodox Church (it seems there were not many in spite of the "noise" made around Shtundists by the Orthodox missionaries<sup>36</sup>) stopped worshipping icons, relics, making cross signs, praying about the dead, seeking intercession of the saints and some other attributes of the Orthodox Church. This brought persecutions upon them. These persecutions of the born again Christians on behalf of the Orthodox Church left Russian Baptists with antigovernment attitude. For example, the cross sign for them symbolized the priests-persecutors who did not have any fear of God. "The cross was an instrument of death. Jesus Christ was killed on it. Why should we put it everywhere?" – they thought.

In 1873 the Bretheren Mennonites accepted their first confession of faith, which differed from the one written by Onken, at the first congress of German Baptists in 1849. The difference was only on the point of the washing of feet and a rejection of the military service and taking of an oath.<sup>37</sup> Unger issued in 1876 a similar confession of faith with the exception of two the last points for German Baptists. The latter was translated into Russian by V.G. Pavlov in 1876 and was used by Russian Baptists since then (Savinsky 1999: 336).

Besides this confession we also know "The doctrines of the Russian Brotherhood" which was used by a congregation in a village called Osnova in the Kherson area,<sup>38</sup> and a "Confession of Faith of Russian Baptists" written in 1879–1880 by I.G. Rjaboshapka.<sup>39</sup> A number of teachings of

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<sup>35</sup> Savinsky 1999: 323.

<sup>36</sup> See plenty of documents in Golovfastchenko 1998.

<sup>37</sup> Karev 1999: 95. The next confession was adopted by the Bretheren Mennonites only in 1902 (Savinsky 1999: 314).

<sup>38</sup> Savinsky 1999: 314. It was found by the Police in 1873 at Ratushniy house.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid 314

Molokan's congregations, which gradually joined Baptists, can be found in Golovaschenko (1998, 225-274). They had other differences on a number of issues. Some were still recognizing child baptism, for example, Evangelical Christians from Don, Novo-Vasilievka village (235). Their doctrinal statements reflect some points in their convictions in their transforming from Molocans to Baptists. Those details are not in any contradiction with the state of being a born again Christian, which became the central point during that time.

Finally it is important to point out that some examples of selflessness shown by some German Evangelicals, who risked to be exiled but still continued to preach to Russians, had been taken up and increased by their numerous followers. That made these Russian congregations from the very beginning active preachers of the Gospel, albeit persecuted they were alive and growing fast.

The fruit of true faith never vanishes. The sparkles of faith cannot be suppressed by any persecutions. Persecutions can only make the fire bigger and help it to spread.<sup>40</sup> Is it the same with our academic, interdenominational and accredited Christianity today anywhere in the world?

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<sup>40</sup> Savinsky 1999: 116

## 2.3. Special Moments of History and Some Problems of ECB

The evangelical movement in Russia was molded into a separate denomination at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Its formation was influenced by a number of various movements in Christianity: In the first place by the Orthodox Church through Molocans and Duhobors – two movements which go back to the Old Believers, the Nikonovsky schism and further to the beginning of Russian monasticism. Secondly, it was influenced by Western Protestantism through descendants of the Hussites, Mennonites, Puritans, and Baptists on the one hand, and Lutherans, Anglicans and Presbyterians emerging from Catholicism on the other hand. Thus ECB in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in some way or another was influenced by *all of the main branches of Christianity* from both Western and Eastern words.

### 2.3.1. POSITIVE MOMENTS

We assert that it was the **Bible** that had the greatest influence on the formation of ECB. The Russian Synodal translation done in understandable language from the very beginning placed the evangelical movement under the control of the Word of God. It was the Word that had the final authority and united various denominations and the representatives of different social groups. No other authority could not and cannot be more significant for a human being than the revelation of God. From the very beginning the evangelical movement was essentially *biblical*. Everybody had an open Bible at the meetings and worship services. The preachers could not teach anything that would contradict its clear message. Even in our days when a preacher does teach something contradictory to the Bible somebody will correct the preacher at once in a note sent to the pulpit, or after the meeting.

*The Bible studies* in small groups were a common practice in ECB congregations. Actually these congregations often started from Bible studies. The Bible Study consists of reflection on the Word with an equal right to share for all those present and prayers by everyone. It is characterized by deep reverence before God and openness to the action of the Holy Spirit. It is at Bible Studies, not in the "ivory towers" of some theologians, that the theology of the ECB was formed. *The principle of priesthood of all believers* was expressed in such groups most vividly when a talented preacher had to listen to interpretations of an elderly lady or a teenager. The whole church was involved in the formation of its theology. Opinions, such as those of Luther or Bultmann, meant nothing more than opinions of any member of the church. *The church became a live hermeneutical body*. The criteria of a correct understanding of Scripture was not an opinion of the Pope nor some decision of Church Councils, nor an external artificial hermeneutic system, but a

personal understanding of the Bible by a believer, the understanding of which is open to any correction by the Holy Spirit or through other believers, that is, the church. On the one hand such an approach makes theology *alive and flexible*. For the same reason it cannot be written down. Any stated thesis could be doubted on the basis of Scriptural authority. Scriptural authority has to be seen as the basic principle of the Evangelical movement in Russia. On the other hand the high authority of Scripture viewed as the revelation of God made ECB theology stable, immutable, automatically conservative and capable to confront excesses of human mysticism and attacks of heresies and unbelief.

Only the highest authority of Scripture sometimes expressed by a phrase **Read as it is written** allows to preserve the flexibility of doctrine, openness to various interpretations and sensitivity to real life situations. The Church experience stiffened in the Orthodox Tradition is understood by some Orthodox people as the works of the Holy Spirit within the Church. The experience ceases to be something special when compared with actions of the Holy Spirit right in the hearts of the believers nowadays. The authority of human being, even in the position of a preacher or a priest, is nothing in comparison with a personal understanding of the Bible and a personal fellowship with God.

*A second birth and personal contact of a believer with God* made ECB's theology very practical. It was taken for granted that it was impossible to understand Scripture when living in sin. One must not grieve the Holy Spirit because He is the unique Teacher who reveals the truth. Hence a believer should live a life of sanctification.

*Salvation by faith, not by works*, allows each believer already to feel himself or herself a part of the Catholic (Universal) Church not on the basis of one's own merits but exclusively on the basis of grace and mercy of God. At the same time true faith and personal relationships with God rule out an opportunity for a believer to allow himself or herself to commit sin consciously. Sanctification becomes a daily way of life instead of being a special spiritual way of life meant only for some heroes of faith.

*Baptism of adults* was considered by believers as a personal covenant with God, some kind of a marriage union with Christ, a visible action through which on the one hand a believer is connected to Christ's bride – the Church and on the other hand symbolizes his or her death for sin. Recollecting his or her baptism a believer realizes oneself belonging to God and being in a covenantal relationship with the Creator, a chosen one, and the one who is different in the corrupted world around.

*Evangelism*, which is a natural internal desire of a true believer, was widely presented in ECB's churches. From the very beginning these churches were missionary minded in two ways. First, they were involved in personal evangelism by words and by the way of life they conducted.

Second, they evangelized as a whole church. As we have seen in the course of some large evangelical campaigns of the recent years those traditional ways of evangelism have proved to be much more effective in comparison with the work of foreign missions.

Usually in the doctrinal statements of ECB we find seven basic principles: 1) the authority of the Bible; 2) necessity of a second birth; 3) adult baptism and conscious participation in the Lord's Supper; 4) independence of a local church; 5) the universal priesthood of all believers; 6) freedom of worship and 7) separation of church from state (Evangelical Christians Baptists 1992: 4-5).

### 2.3.2. DIFFICULTIES AND PROBLEMS

ECB are Protestants of the Protestants. The absence of any external authorities over churches highly lifts each believer personally and his or her importance before God. It causes a certain measure of emotional negativism and feeling of exclusiveness similar to that, which characterized the people of Israel. It is especially true about the second and third generations of believers. Personal fellowship with God and deep understanding of His grace are capable to restore the right balance in this respect.

With time the internal rules and establishments in congregations, which once used to be flexible and helpful in struggle against sin, became some kind of Tradition, the letter of the law. The ministers of churches began to dominate, law is started overcoming grace. The church from being alive and sincere in its faith in God shifts towards traditions and becomes in some way similar to Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches and starts seriously thinking about acquiring and copying some of their features. Meetings turn into the worship services, which are run by the ministers. Most of church members become laymen. Disputes on the issue of the balance of law and grace burst out. A tendency toward divisions develops rapidly. The Bible Studies and personal evangelism are pushed aside. Instead churches become more interested in external forms of the church ministry. Instead of "glorifying God in any place" church buildings become very important, their construction require lots of attention, energy and all kinds of resources.

Constant intervention and pressure of the state is another factor that had a negative effect on the development of church. For example such pressure led to a split in ECB churches in the beginning of the sixties in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

The process of gradual dying of denominations is an objective one, which also happens with all historical denominations. The only way to avoid it is being devoted to God instead of being devoted to the denomination as such. The basic principles of REB are not bad though by themselves without close fellowship with God they will not guarantee the right development of

churches. The Church is the body of Christ, not a society that is confessing and developing certain dogmas. Any dogmas without God are nothing but empty sounds.

## **2.4. Sources Reflecting Russian Evangelical Theology**

First of all let us state clearly that we are not going to discuss sources from which the Russian evangelical theology derives its understanding of the doctrine of Soteriology. Such approach would get into a contradiction with the main principle the RES was build on. Instead we are going to discuss some written sources which have fixed this Soteriology as it was understood at a certain historical period (the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century).

The list of sources used for writing a history of the Russian Baptist movement (Savinsky 1999:5) in many respects coincides with sources fixing Russian evangelical theology. However we will supply a list of prospective sources. Their great number and variety does not allow us to do a careful study of all the listed materials below, so we will limit ourselves with research and analysis of available doctrinal statements only as the most informative ones when it comes to describing Russian evangelical theology.

### **2.4.1. DIRECT SOURCES**

#### **A. CONFESSIONS OF FAITH**

We have found more than 40 confessions of faith, which are helpful for the understanding of Russian Evangelical Soteriology. They can be divided into the following:

*Table 1. Classification of the confessions of faith.*

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· Doctrinal statements of Molokans .....	(Mo)
· Doctrinal statements of those from Molokans who were converted, the first Russian Baptists and other Shtundists of the evangelical branch .....	(Sht)
· A group connected with "the Hamburg confession " .....	(Ha)
· Doctrinal statements of Pashkovtsy .....	(Pa)
· Doctrinal statements of the Bretheren Mennonites .....	(Me)
· Doctrinal statements of Friezen and Prohanov .....	(Fr)
· Doctrinal statement written by Kargel .....	(Ka)
· Statement of the evangelical beliefs or Doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Christians written by I.S.Prohanov .....	(Pr)
· Doctrinal statements of Khlysty, Shalaputy, Malevantsy, Pentecostals, etc .....	(Ha)
· Confession accepted by the Council of ECB at the 43-d Congress in 1985 .....	(ACECB)
· Confession of the Odessa Seminary of 1992 .....	(OS)
· Confession accepted by the Council of Churches of ECB at the Congress in 1997 .	(CC)

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The confessions of faith are to be the subject for our study in chapter 4. A brief dogmatic comparative analysis of 10 main confessions of faith can be found in the book written by Savinsky (1999: 5).

#### B. TEXTBOOKS

- ECB Bible Institute: (Bychkov, Mickevich, Karev, Somov, Savinsky);
- Materials of the Bible Courses in St.Petersburg and Moscow (1907-1913; 1927-1930).

#### C. PERIODICALS

- Articles written by Russian authors
- Articles written by the foreign authors, selected for publishing in the magazines of the evangelical direction, which prove the doctrinal acceptability of those magazines by our brotherhood (Spurgeon etc.)

#### D. SEPARATE SPIRITUAL ARTICLES AND BOOKS;

#### E. THE COLLECTIONS OF THE SERMONS

- Of the known preachers in written form and
- Readings on tapes;

#### F. HISTORICAL MATERIALS INCLUDING SOME PIECES OF A DOGMATIC MATERIAL;

- Memoirs, written memoirs of the elderly members of ECB;
- Histories of ECB;
- The data of state archives, materials of businesses on prosecution;

#### G. THE NOWADAYS LIVING AUTHORITATIVE MEMBERS OF CHURCHES KNOWN IN BROTHERHOOD;

#### H. FOREIGN SOURCES:

- Members of ECB in other countries;
- Other modern denominations, close to ECB (Mennonite brethren, Pentecost, Baptists):
- Coursers on Dogmatic and Systematic Theology written by people from the emigrants
- History of Dogmatics;
- History of the church, especially the Russian period;

I. POETRY WRITTEN BY EVANGELICALS FROM RUSSIA;

J. COLLECTIONS OF SPIRITUAL SONGS;

K. ORAL SOURCES: BIBLE STUDIES; THE SERMONS;

## 2.4.2. INDIRECT SOURCES

- The spiritual books of the foreign authors widely read in brotherhood;
- Other denominations, influencing on the ECB;

The doctrinal statements of those denominations, which had direct influence on the Russian evangelical theology, could provide the additional information for understanding of our subject. These include Orthodox, General and Particular Baptists, Darbists, the Moravian Bretheren, Church Mennonites, Lutherans-Pietists, etc. However the correct analysis of their influences can be a very difficult and almost impossible task to accomplish and would not be of much interest considering the main stream of our research, that is, that the **Sola Scriptura** principle was determinative in the development of Russian evangelical theology.

As we have seen, there is no lack in material for the reconstruction of the doctrine of Russian evangelical Soteriology as it was stated at a certain time in history. However, consistent recognition of its basic principle of **Sola Scriptura** gives to such research more cognitive and historical than theological interest. The study is directed to asserting how people at that time understood Soteriology in relation to those problems, which were set before them by real life situations. We are more concerned about the principles they used for defining their Soteriology. It is true that the Apostle Paul called Timothy to remember beliefs of his grandmother Loida but he totally rejected a possibility of gradual development and any changes in the Gospel message (Gal. 1:18), that is, he rejected the principle of doctrinal development. It means that we should take our doctrines from Scripture instead of building them on the achievements of our new evangelical Tradition or the convictions of our ancestors. We say this with a sincere respect for their beliefs while giving close attention to their principles, on which they approached the Bible. They left a worthy example to follow but not more than that... We should go to God's Word for truth and not to men...

### 3. Scripture versus Tradition as a Distinctive Feature of RES

#### 3.1. Soteriology of the Tradition

##### 3.1.1. TERM "TRADITION"

The word "tradition" in Russian is quite ambiguous and can be used in different ways.

First, this word is used by Orthodox and Catholic Churches for a designation of a part of the revelation of God handed over from one person to another. In this sense Orthodox people define it in the following way: the term "Tradition" (tradicio) means "any cultural values which are passed horizontally – to the contemporaries – or (what is especially important for us) vertically – from one generation to another" (Mudjugin 1995: 160). They can be passed either in a written form (doctrinal statements, literature) or in an oral form (legends, myths), or as the works of art. Nowadays "everything, that is included in Tradition is present in a written form" (ibid.).

Basically there is a distinction between the terms "Legend" and "Tradition". However orthodox authors usually use these terms interchangeably. The orthodox author Andei Kuraev uses them as synonyms, distinguishing, however, between "traditions" and "legends" when written with small letters and in the plural form (Kuraev 1995: 5). We will also follow this distinction offered by Kuraev.

Second, the word "tradition" (we shall write it this way here instead of Tradition with a capital letter) is used for designating denominations or trends in Christianity. In this sense we speak about Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant or even Baptist tradition.

Third, the word "traditions" (with a small letter and in plural form) designates a number of the established rules of behavior, views or mutual relations accepted by society or a group of people. In this sense traditions are closely connected and belong to a certain group of people. For example a family may have a tradition to gather together once a year to celebrate Christmas.

Fourth, traditions or legends are used as technical terms in theories of liberal theologians, such as higher criticism of sources. Bultman, for instance, used them in his discussion of the synoptic problem for designation of the words of Jesus, which were supposedly changed and «wrapped» in other words, or sayings in the process of passing on.

In order to prevent any misunderstanding we will assume that in the further part of our work we will use the word Tradition only in the first sense, unless we specifically redefine it.

### 3.1.2. SOME CHARACTERISTIC FEATURES OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH THEOLOGY

The most common features of the theology of the Russian Orthodox Church are the following:

- Sources of revelation: Scripture plus Tradition;
- *Imago Dei* and meaning of the paradigm of an image;
- Immanence of God and mysticism;
- Salvation only through the Church.

Those features indicate the Russian Orthodox Theology as a theology of the Tradition.

Theology of Tradition is built on three basic points. First, it is built on Tradition of the Church as the basic hermeneutic system and inspired source for interpreting Scripture. Second, it assumes that the relationships of a believer with God are indirect. They are accomplished with help of icons, liturgy and other visible church images. The thesis "There is no salvation outside of Church" begins to sound very literally. Theology of Tradition in contrast to that of the Old Believers' views of salvation as "not in the ribs" but "in the logs" as an Old Russian saying goes which means that a church is a building rather than people. Third, the lack of a personal relationship with God, which is necessary for the control over the rule of reason, is replaced by some mystical approach to the matters of salvation. Thus the most important thing is not a personal salvation as such, because, as they say, it can be achieved through the ordinances of the church, first of which is baptism, but also some mystical personal experience with the goal of becoming more Godlike. It was mostly presented by the Hesychastic mysticism. Though the process of becoming Christlike is somewhat similar to the Protestant doctrine of sanctification, it is however one of the basic Soteriological doctrines of the Orthodox Tradition. Let's consider each of these moments in a more detailed way.

### 3.1.3. TRADITION AS THE ENVIRONMENT OF FORMING THE ORTHODOX CHURCH THEOLOGY

One of the basic differences of Orthodoxy and Protestantism consists in their attitude towards Church Tradition as an agent of passing on the revelations of God. When the Protestants following Luther's **Sola Scriptura** do not consider it a source of revelation in any way, Orthodox believers put it almost on the same level with Scriptures.

For Orthodox believers Tradition is a story about precedents of the relations of human beings and the Church with God. It is the prototype and standard for those who live in the present

eve, which essentially does not differ from what was determined by the Church as the canon of the Bible.

Three main supports, on which the Orthodox Church builds its doctrines, are these: Church authority, Tradition and the Bible. If for the Catholic Church the role of the Pope is very important because it is considered that he received his authority in the way of the apostolic succession from Christ himself through the Apostle Peter, the Orthodox Church attaches great importance to the authority of Tradition as summarized experience of Church in the past and the present, considering Traditions not as personal or individual experiences of Christians who lived before us but as a part of God's revelation which we should trust.

It is important to note that the Orthodox authors differ concerning the issue whether one should consider Tradition as a part of revelation. “*Only* (italics is mine, – V.K.) Scriptures can and should be considered as revelation in our sacred Tradition, that is, the books of the Old and the New Testaments accepted in by the Church as canon (Mudjugin 1995: 161). However Kuraev believes that works implemented by the Church in the Tradition can also be considered as a part of the revelation of God: “Revelation is **not only the words** of God but also His **works**. Protestantism says that ... Christian history was not accomplished successfully, the congregations became **Christian only by name** and lost the purity of the doctrine of Christ ... in the course of history **the actions of Jesus have died out**” (Kuraev 1995: 61). “The Word of God is not only Scriptures, the Word of God is the Bible and the Tradition, which are not two independent sources... Scriptures will not be clear if it is separated and pulled out of the lively multitude of the data fixed in the Tradition. The data, which is kept and passed on by an ever awake Church consciousness...” (Znosko-Borovsky 1992: 78).

The Protestant, believers according to the Orthodox viewpoint has taken out of Christianity only the dead doctrines leaving out the soul of the real experience of walking with God: “Unless the Word is rooted in the heart experience... how can it be alive? The Tradition is an experience of the fellowship with God” (Kuraev 1995: 63-65).

“Further rejection of the Church Tradition was the main source of errors of the Protestants” (Znosko-Borovsky 1992: 78).

Orthodox believers say that having stepped on the road of criticism of the Latin Church, which abused the authority of the Pope and “included into the Tradition false documents and facts” (Znosko-Borovsky 1992: 78). Luther and his followers began a destructive movement of the rejection authorities. The evolution of the protest, according to Kuraev who is citing the words of Abba Dorofeev, evolved into its logical conclusion namely complete atheism: “At last he (a man from the monastery community, – V.K.) became proud before God himself and thus lost his mind” (Kuraev 1995: 61).

“It is not the Church that keeps Tradition, it is Tradition that preserves and builds it over and over again ” (Kuraev 1995: 57).

“Protestantism has dropped out of the experience of the Church, has dropped out of the Church, having put ARBITRARINESS and ACCIDENT of personal experiences of interpreters of Scriptures in the place of Church Tradition which has been tracing its beginning from Christ and the Apostles and the mutual experience of Church. This has led the Protestants to the loss of objective Christianity ” (Znosko-Borovsky 1992: 79). Znosko-Borovsky concludes that rejecting the authority of the ancient Church Fathers and teachers the Protestants have rendered this authority to Luther and Calvin and their writings, which means, according to the above named author’s logic, *the acceptance of the new Tradition with new authorities*, which was not inherited by the apostolic succession.

### 3.1.4. SOTERIOLOGY FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE THEOLOGY OF TRADITION

#### 3.1.4.1. Church Fathers on Soteriology

Salvation of human being usually thought of in two areas: first the objective work of redemption through Christ, secondly the way by means of which the believers gain salvation. The first (the work of redemption by Christ, atonement) is usually discussed under Christology. The second one (accepting of the divine grace) is examined under Soteriology (Ericson 1999: 752). Such division is only artificial, however it is considered standard.

The early Church Fathers have not provided in their works a complete concept about achieving salvation (Kelly 1978: 375). It seems that they equally reflected divine (grace) and human (choice) sides of salvation (Berkov 2000: 227). The early Fathers emphasized that human being receives salvation through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as it is written in the New Testament. They understood faith as a unique and sole means of gaining salvation. At the same time they distinguished different aspects of faith: coming to the knowledge of God on the one hand and trusting Him on the other hand. They considered Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice as an object of their faith. It was faith, not the works of the law, that was considered as a means of justification (ibid. 228). However the late Fathers, for example, Irenaeus and Origen emphasized that a human being is saved by faith when Latin Fathers like Tertullian, Cyprian and mostly Ambrose emphasized the corruption of human beings (ibid. 228).

Athanasius is considered to be the first who systematized various views on salvation (Berkov 2000: 184). "He [Christ] was made man that we might be made God", – declared Athanasius building on this soteriological statement his whole polemic against Arius (Meiendorf 2000: 124). In his work "On the Incarnation of the Word" Athanasius gives a summary of his Soteriology: "He [Christ] has become incarnate so that we could be likened to God. He has become visible putting on human flesh so that we could comprehend the invisible Father; he has suffered insult from men so that we could inherit incorruption" (Citing from Meiendorf 2000: 286). For Athanasius the restoration of the image of God, lost at the fall, meant an acquiring by a human being of the true knowledge about God, who is eternal life. It also meant that a human being became a partaker of the divine nature through the knowledge of Christ, that is, in essence, the knowledge of God Himself. And finally the Word being the law of life has replaced the law of death returning to a human being the gift of incorruption (Kelly 378). Making a start from Athanasius the Eastern Orthodox Church has developed the doctrine of becoming Godlike.

Gregory Palamas made it later a foundation for his doctrine of Hesychastic mysticism (a prayerful so called "clever doing" and seeing a vision of the divine (Tabor's) light).

In the West the hottest discussions in the area of Soteriology were between Pelagius (about 360 – 420 AD) and Augustine (354– 430 AD). Pelagius has shifted away from the biblical concept of grace. He taught, "Christian can live a sinless life without the help of God, leaning only on the teaching and the example of Jesus Christ" (Lain 1997: 55). According to Arius sin is not inevitable and the fall of Adam was only a precedent. Augustine actively confronted these ideas. Since 397 after a careful study of the message of the Apostle Paul he wrote his autobiography, the "Confessions", in which he meditated on human nature and the way God dealt with it. In the beginning of his Christian experience he thought that a human being can turn to God by the virtue of his will – rational free choice.

Later Augustine understood that faith is God's gift and that salvation is given only by grace. He insisted that all people have sinned in Adam and therefore sin has passed on to all Adam's descendants, that is, the entire human race without exception (ibid. 56). The free will of a human being is capable only to commit sin. A human being is still free, but only free to sin. He is not free to turn wholly to God. God himself has chosen some people to be saved. *God's working grace* precedes the good will of a human being. "The Grace does not search for man wishing to be saved but rather makes him to wish" (ibid.). Further he develops this idea asserting that God's grace is irresistible. God convinces a human being in such a way that he cannot resist and a human being's soul responds to God's call joyfully and freely. There upon the will of a human being begins to cooperate with grace. *Cooperative grace* preserves a human being from falling. Both types of graces mentioned above can be lost (Berkov 232). To achieve eternal salvation people need a *gift of perseverance*, which is granted only to those who were chosen by God (Lain 1997: 57).

The views of Augustine like nobody else's had profoundly influenced the Christianity of the Western European peoples, but most of all they influenced a future Calvinistic doctrine of salvation which received wide circulation in Western theological thought.

#### 3.1.4.2. Salvation from the Point of View of the Russian Orthodox Church

The term "salvation" in the systematic treatises of the Orthodox theologians is not used very often at all. Instead the writers prefer using the term "**becoming Godlike**" (obozeniye) which means "neither physical nor magic action performed over man but an internal graceful action in man which is completed with cooperation of man's freedom and not in contradiction to man's

will” (Bulgakov 1985: 236). Becoming Godlike includes both a human act of faith and good works. It is a “realization of likeness to God, restoration of the image of God in man” (ibid.).

The concept of **the image of God in man**, which is seen as the basis of the opportunity of becoming Godlike, is constantly emphasized by the Orthodox Church (ibid. 273). The image is restored in fallen man due to the gift of the redemption of Christ. The work of Christ is a free gift for all humankind and is intended for *free appropriation* by any man. “Personal salvation is a *spiritual birth of oneself accomplished freely* for achieving the eternal life through the gift of grace in redemption and becoming Godlike ” (ibid. 237). “An objective side of salvation, the basis of rescue for man, is accomplished by God. However a subjective side of receiving salvation is accomplished by man ” (ibid. 241). Any human being as a result of the fall has become unable to achieve salvation by himself but he has preserved an ability to accept it. God through the Word produces in a willing human being “repentant faith ” which is constantly shown and conformed by good works. Living on the basis of this faith man becomes righteous but his *final destiny will be determined on the last day* (Znosko-Borovsky 1992: 82).

*Any merit of good works* with all of their importance for one’s salvation is rejected: “An idea of any merits of man is inappropriate [...] Good works are no merit ... but rather constitute personal participation of man in the realization of his salvation ” (Bulgakov 1985: 237). “Man has preserved remainders of freedom and therefore is called to work toward gaining his salvation” (ibid. 238).

As one of (sometimes the main one) means of achievement of Godlikeness many Orthodox theologians put forward a mystical *tradition of Hesychasm*. This tradition by means of so-called “*clever doing*” (repeating Jesus’ prayer) and other special practices seek to attain the beatific vision of God. The Hesychasts claimed that by doing certain prayer exercises, holding breath, fixing their eyes upon their navels, and making their spirit re-enter the soul, they could achieve “unity with God and a vision of the divine light” which shone around Christ at the time of his transfiguration on Mt. Tabor (Meiendorf 2000: 145, Bulgakov 1985: 314). Such vision of light, in the opinion of some Orthodox authors, removes a dilemma between grace and freedom of man’s will because this state is reached by efforts of free will and is conceived as unification with God (Meiendorf 2000: 145). It is necessary to note that this tradition is not shared by all the Orthodox people.

The icons, mysticism of worship service, visions “of the other worlds”, exercisers of mystical feeling which is “the very air of Orthodoxy ” (Bulgakov 1985: 309) are supposed to work together towards achievement of continuous fellowship with God, that is, toward becoming Godlike.

### 3.1.5. SOTERIOLOGY OF TRADITION AND DOCTRINAL DEVELOPMENT FROM ROMAN CATHOLIC PROSPECTIVE

An adequate investigation of the doctrines of soteriology is impossible without the understanding of their internal essence and the principles of their existence. Soteriology of Traditions and Soteriology of Scripture has principally different interpretations because of their internal logic. The idea about the development of doctrines comes from the supposition that doctrine is a product of the theoretical work of the church, which is led by continuous revelation. This is absolutely true from the catholic standpoint. Newman, the 19<sup>th</sup> century Anglican turned Catholic, shares this position. The conservative Protestants have a different view. They see doctrines in the Bible itself but not only in the church traditions. The question about the nature of doctrines is very essential: is the doctrine itself only the human understanding of the invariable God's revelation which is given us in Scripture or is doctrine itself a continuous Revelation, in which God only uses the church for its expression. Protestants are inclined to the first opinion, while Catholics are more likely to have the second one.

The Newman's model of the developing revelation of God is not something very new. "The Doctrine Development Theory" (Newman 1989: 30) is only a theoretical formulation of the things in which Catholics believed before: understanding of the traditions as a very important part of the revelation. And as Pope is the one who determines what is included in tradition, the aim of such a theory is absolutely evident: to confirm the Pope authority (Newman 1989: 148-165) and also to present his own dogmas as revelations. It is obvious that this theory was made to contradict the protestant viewpoint (see, for example, Newman 1989: 6).

In the chapter 5 Newman gives 7 basic moments of the development of doctrines (Newman 1989: 169-203). The first point is that doctrines grow in dissimilarity as a growing substance to the initial one (*preservation of type*), like for example, the chicken will become a hen, not the fish after it will grow. The second point is that the doctrine and principle, which is behind it, should be differentiated and that the last one should be consistent (*continuity of principles*). The principle correlates to a doctrine just as the postulate or axiom in mathematics correlates to a definition (Newman 1989: 179). The personal responsibility is the principle, but God's existence is the doctrine. "We may say that a doctrine's life should be turned out in principles, in which it is embodied" (Newman 1989: 178). Doctrines flow from principles. The difference between heresy and the catholic doctrine is not in the doctrine itself, but in the principle, which is behind it.

The third moment is based in a doctrine's ability for assimilation, to accumulate the ideas from the cultural environment (*power of assimilation*), like an organism, which grows and absorbs in it the substances from the environment and made them parts of itself (Newman 1989:

185). The fourth moment underlines the possibility of the logical continuation of the doctrine (*logical sequence*). The fifth moment of the doctrine's development is anticipation of its future condition (*anticipation of its future*). The sixth moment needs the conservative approach to the doctrines past, that is to say its succession (*conservative action to its past*). At last, the seventh moment is "the chronic energy" of the doctrine (*chronic vigor*), which is its ability to have a long existence based on the principle: a bad doctrine exists shorter (Newman 1989: 203).

All those moments of Newman are based on the analogy with the development of ideas (concept) in general, which presumes the human character of their origins and allows him to justify the Pope's arbitrariness in the definition of the church doctrines.

So, if a Soteriology of Scripture sees in the doctrine a modern formulation of the truth, which is in Scripture, then a theology of Tradition sees in it the result, achieved up to today, of the historical process, which incessantly takes place in church and society through the revelation of the Holy Spirit. In this sense, doctrine develops more fully as the time flows and reflects God's revelation more fully. Tradition in this view is not only acceptable or a minor importance source, which helps to interpret the Scripture correctly, but an essential (even main!) part of the revelation. The Russian Orthodox view, as we have seen above, is closely aligned to the ideas of Newman on the development of doctrine, although there are strong differences of opinion among individual representatives of the Orthodox view.

## **3.2. Soteriology of Scripture**

### **3.2.1. MAJOR PRINCIPLES OF RUSSIAN EVANGELICAL SOTERIOLOGY**

A Soteriology of the Scripture is based on two establishing principles of its development, accepted as basic premises. Those are **Sola Scriptura (SS)**” and “the Principle of a **personal relationship with God (PR)**”. Below, we will look at each of them in more in detail.

#### **3.2.1.1. Scripture as an exclusive source of Soteriology (Sola Scriptura)**

This pattern reflects a conservative Protestant view of the impossibility or unwarranted development of doctrines, no matter what authorities take part in it. The Bible itself contains the essence of doctrines, as well as the principles of its interpretation, and this allows Protestants to do without the idea of an authoritative Tradition and without any other authority except the Scripture itself, which is understood as the Revelation of God. Certainly, any statement about a doctrine depends on the context, in which it is made and from the understanding of those who formulated it. This restriction influences only the interpretation and not the doctrines of the Bible itself. If a doctrine is absent in the Bible, its existence is doubtful and it can be contested at any moment. The experience of the Church has only the secondary value as a process of understanding of existing doctrines, and though it can be beneficial, it is not a basic criterion for the verification of a doctrine. Therefore, this approach emphasizes the vertical dimension and the authority of the Bible as the sole authority of God’s revelation.

#### **3.2.1.2. Personal relationship with God**

This approach also has been expressed in Western Evangelical Protestantism and especially in Russian Protestantism. The principle of “personal experience” obviously has a negative meaning in the eyes of many people, however the principle of this approach is based on the Scripture and on the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a believer. Moreover, this approach does not necessarily lead to subjectivism and, certainly, does not coincide with the pluralistic understanding of “situational ethics” and with a belief that there is no absolute truth. This approach emphasizes the necessity of dependence on the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of the Bible with regard to doctrines. At its extremes, if one unites this principle with an idea of doctrinal development, it can evolve into the “truth” for the given moment regardless of its presence or absence in the Bible. However, if the truth that is opened personally to someone by

the Holy Spirit is present in the Bible, it is difficult to contest the authority of such an understanding.

### 3.2.1.3. Correlation between the SS and PR principles

Russian Evangelical Christians use the principle of **Sola Scriptura** and the principle of **personal relationships with God**, as complementary. In addition, the vertical relationship with God, which helps Christians to have an actual understanding of the Scripture, cannot contradict the Scripture itself. In this sense, the Scripture is a criterion that does not allow to be fall in excessive subjectivism or brutal conservatism. The necessary conditions of correct understanding of the doctrines of the Bible can only be the “birth from above” and the living personal relationships with the Author of these doctrines. No theories of the development of the doctrines can rise the authority of these doctrines because the theories themselves rest on the reasoning of a human mind.

### 3.2.2. COMMITMENT OF THE RES TO THE PRINCIPLES OF SS AND PR

The commitment of Russian Evangelical Theology to the principle of the acceptance of the Scriptures as an exclusive source of revelation is acknowledged by all Russian Evangelical denominations.

In a confession of Christians of one of the Evangelical denomination, called Molokans from the Don, we read:

The Holy Scripture... is the only revelation of God's will to human beings... and the only source [which] with the assistance of the Holy Spirit [leads] to knowledge of God... no less than unique immutable rules of faith and moral godly and pleasing to God life (Mo 1899: item 2).

A similar position is contained in the teaching of Frisen, which adds to the statement above: “...any other doctrine and writing is a subject to examination on the basis of the Holy Scripture under the control of the Holy Spirit” (Fr 1909: p. II).

In the confession of the Russian Baptists, it is formulated similarly. The books of the Holy Scripture “should be the only source of knowledge of God, and the only rule and measure of faith and behavior of ours” (Ga 1928: I). The confession itself, according to Odintzov, has only a supplementary role: “...that this aid has helped the Russian brothers... to go deep into studies of the Word of God, that they were always... *prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have* (1 Peter 3:15, NIV)” (Odintzov 1928: 4).

Similar positions are also contained in other confessions of the Russian Evangelicals.

### 3.2.3. SECONDARY POSITION OF THE DOCTRINES IN RELATION TO PRINCIPLES PR AND SS

The analysis of the Confessions of faith clearly demonstrates a difference, which is sometimes essential in the formulation of the doctrine of Russian Evangelical Soteriology. The Confessions exposed the doctrine as being in a gradual revising in discussion with Russian Orthodox Church on the one hand, and with the Calvinistic type of Protestants, on the other hand. Thus, for example, Molokans have changed their attitude towards the baptism. In the very beginning they understood the baptism in a spiritual way and denied the water baptism. Later they accepted not only the water baptism, but, more than that, the baptism of infants on the pattern of the Orthodox Church. The attitude to the ordination also changed, and the understanding of the Trinity became more clearly defined. The only things, which the Russian Evangelicals were not ready to change, were the principles of PR and SS. They say: "If I misunderstand something, God will open it to me, even that could be through the other people, but if a doctrine is not found in the Scripture, it has to be rejected, no matter what the cost of the rejection might be". These motives can be seen in the processes of the change of the dogmas of the Russian Evangelicals. And in this understanding they continue the ideas of their forerunners – Russian Staroverys and Western Protestants.

Thus, the principle of the commitment to the Scriptures (SS) leads fatally to the acceptance of some fluidity in the formulation of the doctrines. If we compare this to physics it could be compared with the principle of uncertainty of Heisenberg (1927), which denied the possibility of defining simultaneously and exactly some properties of microparticles. The **Principle of the uncertainty of doctrines**, which is operating in the case of a serious attitude towards the SS, leads a person to some limitations. The same principle, which does not allow a person to go too far in the understanding of the Scriptures, recognizes the right of a person to think freely and to look into oneself only before God and not before somebody else. The commitment to the Scriptures (SS) allows some freedom in formulation of the doctrines. The commitment to the doctrines results in some uncertainty in the attitude to the Scriptures and moves a person towards the Tradition.

The other reason permitting us to count on a possibility of an adequate understanding of the Scriptures is taking **the work of the Holy Spirit** very seriously. Despite all speculations abound, the Scriptures itself cites recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit, as the basic hermeneutic principle for an understanding of the Scriptures. "*As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you*" (1 John 2: 27, NIV). "*But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and*

*will remind you everything I have said to you*” (John 14: 26, NIV). To ignore these indications, mean to be not serious about the Scriptures.

### 3.2.4. TRADITION FROM THE THEOLOGY OF A SCRIPTURE PERSPECTIVE

The criticism of Protestantism by the Orthodox Church concerning the “new” Tradition has some substantial ground. This ground consists in a misunderstanding, or, at least, in a very inconsistent applying of Luther’s “Sola Scriptura”. Though not Luther himself, but some Protestants put a role of authority and of the Church experience on the plump volumes of lexicons, commentaries, numerous methods of hermeneutics<sup>41</sup> and “approaches” of the different writers explaining the Bible. They do it in a similar way the Orthodox Church does with the Tradition. Some Protestants, fed up with the results of their own reason with its fatal deduction “God is dead”, today with melancholy look back on the “good old” Tradition. They are nearly ready to return it back to the Church.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, “the holy place is never empty”! It is not possible to live without authorities. The path of a constant search for God is really difficult.<sup>43</sup>

Luther has remained completely misunderstood by modern devotees of the Tradition. Not the living deeds of faith experience known in the Church, and not the experience following God, and not the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church was rejected by Luther, but an authority established by human beings. No matter whom he was – the Roman Pope<sup>44</sup>, or the Metropolit or even Athanasius the Great<sup>45</sup>. At all respect for their experiences, their authority has no value as a source of revelation. For it is clear from the Bible, that there should not be an intermediary between God and a person except Christ.

*If the Scripture appeals to the authority of God Himself, the Tradition is an experience of human beings. A human authority decides what should be included into the Tradition. Without the authority of Church hierarchies, it is simply impossible and becomes completely indefinite. They, being assembled, or in a singleton – it is a matter of taste, of the East or of the West, – they*

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<sup>41</sup> We do not deny the study of the Bible as such. Here we speak only about a transformation of the Bible science, of the methodology and of the hermeneutics into a particular tradition, the “icon of postmodernism”, which modern theologians worship to, instead of worshipping God.

<sup>42</sup> Some even tried to wear clothes similar to the Orthodox tradition and to display a cross to align them not being separated from the Tradition.

<sup>43</sup> Not in vain the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoyevsky tried “to correct” Christ, having taken away the people’s freedom. He knew how difficult it is for a person to make a choice each day anew in life!

<sup>44</sup> The Second Vatican Council attempted to emphasize the priority of the Tradition and not of the Scripture. But the Council declined this statement and they claimed their relations as “of two different but inseparably bound and intimately communicating transmission modes of the same subject, which the Revelation is” (Mannutchi 1996:244).

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, the Luther – Erasmus controversy (“About servitude of will”, 1994) concerning the references of Erasmus on authorities (as a matter of fact, appeal to the Tradition).

decide what is true and what is false. The references on 'sobornost'<sup>46</sup>, on this kind of Church experience makes no difference, for it is well known from history, how much the solutions of the Councils were influenced by political and other human factors.<sup>47</sup> The Tradition includes not "an objective Christianity", as the Orthodox writers say, it includes an integrated high-handedness of Church hierarchies on the one hand, and human experience, with all its errors on the other hand.<sup>48</sup>

If we think of human experience, the position of liberal theologians who have delivered *ones own reason as the final authority* differs no more from devotees of the Tradition. Why is the new Tradition worse than the old? Why is Harnack worse than Marcion? Why is the universalism of the modern Protestants worse than the universalism of Origen?

In his search for the true historical Tradition Rudolf Bultmann completely rejected "Christ coming in the flesh" and His Resurrection. At the same time he managed to claim himself a Christian, who sincerely believes in the Kerigma (Tradition) of the Church.<sup>49</sup> He made many efforts of removing the uncertainty, which was relevant for his understanding of the Tradition. He was prepared to substitute the authority of the Bible with this form of historical Tradition (Bultmann 1956: 198). This is an exaltation of the historical Tradition and a dishonor of the Word of God. It is the "Christology from below", an exaltation of the human search of God and a detraction of the authority of God's self-revelation. It is difficult here not to mention the Grand Inquisitor of Dostoyevsky. What was the most significant for a person according to Grand Inquisitor? "The miracle, the mystery and the authority"! If we substitute the authority of God, even partly, by a human authority, the only way left for a human being is to worship a miracle, a mystery or an authority. Here is the definition of the Scripture: "*They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served things rather than the Creator*" (Rom. 1: 25, NIV).

Our Russian Evangelical Christians also have a tendency to build a new Tradition. Some of the local church regulations and traditions, which over time had become solidified and hardened in the Church (and sometimes they were simply inherited from the Orthodox Church), came nearer to a view of the Tradition with its own authority. In fact many of these regulations and traditions operate like a New Tradition. They quite often are used to substitute by the human law the living dialogue of a person with God. These regulations and traditions quite often are thus used to decide what is good and what is bad before Him in particular situation. It is difficult for a

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<sup>46</sup> 'Sbornost' – is an Orthodox conception of Church unity.

<sup>47</sup> The Russian Great Schism or the role of the Emperor on the Councils could be taken as some examples .

<sup>48</sup> It's not by chance, for example, that the Orthodox Church accepts Origen, though the Councils have rejected his teaching, and it accepts many others, claimed to be heretics, pillarists and monks feeding worms by their bodies. Human experience is so reach!

<sup>49</sup> The author himself has heard it from his former student and follower Etha Linnemann on her lecture in summer course of 1994. See also Bultmann 1951: 27; Bultmann 1956: 175.

person to make decisions in the dialogue between a living person and the living God. It is easier to act automatically according to the Tradition as generalized experience. For this purpose it is not necessary to be a human being, it is not necessary to have a relationship with God. A spiritually dead person or even a robot can do that. If there is *no living* relationship with the Creator one cannot escape the conclusion that the living relationship will be substituted by something else. There are only two ways: to the right – in servitude of the law, Tradition, authority of hierarchies, or to the left – in servitude of lawlessness, pride of human reason, atheism, anarchy and pluralism. And from this point it is not that far to syncretism of the New World Religion. The new artificial World Religion will be an aggregate of both the right and the left. The right is the authority of the Roman Pope together with the experience (Tradition) of World religions (and with some other old Traditions), on the one hand, and the left is so called “Transcendent Mystery” or may be the New Age Religion, together with the self-assertion of human pride, atheism, and pluralism, on the other hand <sup>50</sup>.

Certainly, the experience of living before God has great value. “*The solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil*” (Hebrews 5: 14, NIV) – says the Scripture. There is no necessity in Russia, where alcoholism is a national disaster, to decide anew each time, whether one should drink, or not to drink at all. The traditions, doubtlessly, can be beneficial for the development of a believer. However, a tradition endowed with the authority of Revelation is an icon and that is an idol. It is blasphemous because it substitutes the authority of God through the idolatrous Tradition.

All the above does not mean that we profess modern postmodernist “situational ethics”. Absolute values do exist, and the most significant of them for a person is an absolute immediate and living obedience to God’s Word. It is the obedience to the Word, which is keeping the Church, instead of the Church keeping the Word. Obedience to the Word understood in sincere simplicity as to how the Holy Spirit clearly reaches out and opens up to everyone craving for His guidance. Opens up in that measure, in which its understanding is necessary to a person for the right relationship with God. **Obedience to His Word**, instead of illusive, humanly sophisticated and contradictory mysticism of the Tradition, whether the latter is embodied in the shape of “Hagiology”, or of “The Institutions” or in ecumenical postmodernist ideas of the Second Vatican. Therefore, **Sola Scriptura** is not reasoning versus experience, it means the obedience to God versus the obedience to men.

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, the book: (Hill et al. 1999).

### 3.2.5. TENDENCY OF INCREASING ROLE OF TRADITIONS

Thus, the devotion the legalism we observe above in its negative side, put churches of Russian Evangelicals in alignment with the churches, devoted to Tradition. Each society has a tendency to accumulate traditions and regulations. It is this remarkable mechanism, which arranges the life of a society and simplifies the solution of many permanent original problems, fixing the routine forms. However, the trouble is that these forms, which express the contents, tend to substitute it by themselves and acquire an independent value. After some time, they become something completely essential to the people experience. So in addition to the Scripture there is the Tradition, which initially simply images and comments the Scripture, but in its ongoing progression already restricts, interprets, supplements or even corrects and substitutes the Scripture. This process generates a constant necessity to feel a dependence on the Holy Spirit, of His control and corrections. Reformation as an updating process is not a deflection from the normal development of the Church it is a basic principle of its existence. Reformation requires constant observation of the process of human culture, through which the voice of God's revelation can become less and less audible.

The accumulation of traditions, which is not controlled by the principles of SS and PR, tends to development into a determinative Tradition. It can be seen, for example, in the confession of faith of the Council of Churches of Evangelical and Baptists (1997). It discusses more and more local rules and regulations accepted in the Churches of this brotherhood, which were not in the views of their forerunners.

### 3.2.6. SALVATION FROM THE WESTERN PROTESTANT CALVINISTIC PERSPECTIVE

Western evangelical Protestantism in the Calvinistic<sup>51</sup> sense is also based on the principles of the Scriptural theology, which as we saw before has played an essential role in the formation of the Russian Evangelical and Baptist Soteriology. We briefly look at the main points of the Soteriology of this viewpoint as well.

Human beings are completely sinful both by virtue of original sin and because of their own sins. Human beings can attribute absolutely nothing for acquiring of their salvation, which is given exclusively by the sovereign will of God. Salvation is unconditional, that means that it does not depend on the will of a human being.

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<sup>51</sup> The account of this understanding of salvation is given from a generalized interpretation (by the author) of Erickson, Tiessen, Rairy, Buswell, Lewis and some other books of modern western Protestant writers of Evangelical and Calvinistic directions. Although they differ with regard to detail, we have attempted to describe the general picture.

Salvation is the *gift* of God's Grace. **Grace** is subdivided into *common Grace (General Calling to salvation)*, which is given to all with the accusation of their sins and *special Grace (effectual calling)*, which is given only to those who are elected. God gives to the elected faith and the desire of repentance.

**Faith** has two sides: acceptance of the fact of salvation, accomplished by Christ, and the ability to trust God in the walking before him. Faith leads to an acceptance of God's Word, thus *to repentance and regeneration*. **Repentance** is a humble confession of sins before God with readiness to leave sin completely behind. The repentance corresponds with the past. **Conversion** describes the regeneration in relation to faith and the future life of sanctification of the believer. **Sanctification** is the process of transformation into the image of Christ, which takes place already during the earthly life of human beings. It is connected with the constant desire of human beings to have their consciousness free from sin and the will to please God in everything.

*Good works* are the consequence of faith and a response to God's love. An elected person can not escape from doing good actions, these are the certificates of the gift of faith received by them, but they have no relation either to the merit of good works, or to the their salvation at all.

The elected person *cannot lose salvation* and cannot consciously remain in sin. If a human being, who was thought to be converted, lives in sin – it means simply that that person is not elected, or will be still saved in future. The regenerated elected one cannot be let sin consciously. Grace cannot be an excuse for sin. However, if the person has sinned, the Blood of Christ is sufficient for forgiveness.

Grace is not the basis for inactivity. The elected realize themselves as the priests of God and that the fulfillment of His will is the main priority of life. As the elected do not know, who is elected, and whom to preach to, they pray for everybody, because they understand themselves as God's means for salvation of the others. In the practical questions of walking before God the sincere Calvinist evangelical has no difference with the evangelical Armenian Protestant, though they give different explanations to their actions.

In general one can conclude that the Eastern theology could be characterized by terms: God's image, becoming Godlike (*obozeniye*), prevenient grace, free will, acceptance of salvation, participation of the person in a process of salvation, possibility to loose salvation, relationships with God, birth from above, being part of a church or community. These are mostly Arminian terms. For the West the more typical terms are: individualism, legal understanding of salvation, strong sense of duty to fulfill God's will, predestination towards salvation, irresistible grace and sovereignty of God. It is highly problematic to continue this division. In a very generalized way it becomes absurd. It is necessary to compare not separate characteristics of the Eastern and Western theologies but separate theological systems.

### 3.7.7. CONCLUSIONS

Therefore, in this chapter we have seen the crucial idea or the main presupposition of Russian Evangelical Soteriology. The main ideas are the devotion of the **Sola Scriptura** principle and a **Personal Relationship with God**. These principles are in contrast with the principle of the Tradition, which is treated as a part of the revelation of God. That is why one cannot combine a soteriology of Scripture with a soteriology of Tradition. It will be a kind of a pure eclecticism. Any current idea to see modern Russian protestant soteriology, as some vital combination of RES and Russian Orthodox Soteriology cannot be acceptable.

## 4. Doctrinal statements on Soteriology of Russian Evangelicals

The confessions of faith (or doctrinal statements), undoubtedly, are one of the most direct sources of information about doctrines of any denomination. In order to restore some of the doctrines of Russian Evangelicals we should first of all examine these documents.

The purpose of this chapter is to study the Russian evangelical doctrine of Soteriology while using concrete historical material and to detecting differences and similarities that different evangelical groups had on the doctrine. All researched documents belong to congregations confessing the principle of **Sola Scriptura** and the possibility of a **personal and direct relationship with God**. These congregations were joined together into one Russian evangelical brotherhood. The observed doctrinal differences of the churches, which have formed one denomination, serve from our point of view a strong argument in support of the basic thesis of this dissertation. Deep devotion to Scripture strongly limits the possibility (in the process of studying Scriptural convictions which are constantly redefined) and necessity of writing fixed denominational statements of faith because this kind of devotion expresses the functions of such a statement. In other words the principle of the devotion of Scripture does not allow any competitors in this regard and should not be substituted by either a doctrinal statements or by a rigidly formulated theology.

### 4.1. Classification of the Documents & Principles of the Analysis

We are aware of many doctrinal statements related to the Russian evangelical brotherhood. However parts of them are nothing else but new editions of former statements, sometimes with slight changes. A review of 10 chosen doctrinal statements with short descriptive comparisons is provided by Savinsky (1999: 314-333). The latest computerization of the general catalogue of the Russian National Library which has been collecting copies of all official printed editions in Russia for a couple centuries, allowed us to carry out an independent search of the texts of the present confessions. The results of this search are submitted in Appendix 2. It turned out that there were more documents than we expected or were analyzed by Savinsky. However we approve with his choice: he has captured the most typical of them.

We have divided all the doctrinal statements into some basic groups according to the denominations to which they were attributed or could possibly be attributed. We have also included into our research some confessions of faith of Molokans because most of them joined Stundist and Baptist congregations. Each group had several doctrinal statements issued in different years, which would assume the opportunity to see the *dynamics of their teachings*.

However, since the doctrinal statements belonged to different congregations, such a comparison would not be quite correct. In the same religious group there could exist slight differences of teachings at the same time. Most likely that had been the case, especially if we take into account that most of the confessions came from the South of Russia and from St. Petersburg, two places that were historically known for a great diversity of views. It is true, for example, that Molokans with time, developed different branches, which in turn got divided again. It is possible to follow the history of these divisions, however to find out their mutual influences are not possible to detect. It was not even possible for the Orthodox missionaries while they lived in that time and in the same places, with the help of the police and the investigation system to get at the heart of these divisions.

It is also important to note that a part of the confessions of faith was compiled by congregations as answers to the questionnaires offered by the authorities. It reduces their depth and distorts their authentic representation about the most important issues of their teaching.

Therefore we only attempt to establish a **general paradigm** of the discussed questions and to establish a **range of diversities** in their vision of the doctrine of salvation.

#### ***4.2. Basic Questions Raised in the Doctrinal Statements***

In this section we are going to consider only the issues concerning Soteriology: the work of Christ and the reception of salvation by a human being. We will try to avoid whenever possible questions about the nature and person of Christ traditionally studied under Christology. The idea of generalization requires a concrete paradigm of questions. For this purpose we consistently looked through the doctrinal statements and noted discussed questions with the exception of repeated ones. Then we put them in some logic order. The offered grouping of questions is arbitrary and corresponds to a general accepted logic of the subject of Soteriology instead of following the logic of certain doctrinal statements. Our logical order does not depend on the frequency of mentioning the given issue in the doctrinal statements. An attempt to generalize the important issues raised in the area of Soteriology in the researched documents is submitted in Table 2.

*Table 2. Basic Issues of Soteriology Raised in the Doctrinal Statements of the Russian Evangelical Movement*

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- 1) Reasons of salvation:
    - a) Man is created in the image of God
    - b) The fall. Complete sinfulness
    - c) Impossibility to be saved by one's own efforts
  - 2) God's provision of salvation (an objective aspect of salvation)
    - a) Election and predestination.
      - i) About predestination of Christ to become the sacrifice for sin
      - ii) Christ's death: for all or only for the elect?
      - iii) Predestination of man: is it conditional or unconditional?
    - b) Accomplishing of salvation: incarnation of Christ
    - c) Redemption and its meaning. Meaning of Christ's sacrifice: substitution, propitiation...
  - 3) Accepting salvation by man (a subjective aspect of salvation)
    - a) Faith
      - i) The object of faith
      - ii) The source and origin of faith
      - iii) Balance of faith and works
    - b) Repentance: meaning, components, repeatability
    - c) Conversion
    - d) A second birth (a birth from above). The work of the Holy Spirit
    - e) Means of grace for salvation
      - i) The word
      - ii) Preaching
      - iv) Prayer
  - 4) Sanctification
    - a) A possibility of achieving of holiness. A possibility of living sinless life
    - b) Means of grace for sanctification:
      - i) The Baptism. How does it relate to salvation?
        - (1) Water baptism
          - (a) Conditions of baptism
          - (b) A possibility of infant baptism
          - (c) Laying hands after water baptism.
        - (2) The Baptism of the Holy Spirit
        - (3) The Fire baptism
      - ii) The Lord's Supper: meaning, ordinance or symbol, participants, its relation to sanctification and salvation
    - c) Faith and good works
      - i) Balance of faith and good works
      - ii) Works of the law and good works
        - (1) Need of keeping the law for salvation
        - (2) The ceremonial and moral aspects of the law
        - (3) Celebrating Sunday instead of Saturday
  - 5) An attitude to Tradition as the means of salvation
  - 6) Role of Church in salvation
  - 7) An attitude to the cross sign as the means of salvation
  - 8) A possibility of losing salvation. Assurance of salvation of the saints: external and internal.
  - 9) Impossibility of being saved after death. Salvation of some and condemnation of other
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-

The list could be continued. It is surprising that though each of the confessions mentions only some aspects of Soteriology the whole picture is quite comprehensive and impressive. Evangelicals formulated their views practically on all of the issues of soteriology discussed in the modern Protestant textbooks on Systematic Theology. Let's proceed to the range of views most often discussed.

### **4.3. Range of Views Presented in Confessions**

The doctrine of salvation of a human being subdivided into two different parts: presuppositions of salvation and work of salvation. The work of salvation in its turn includes the objective aspect of salvation, which is carried out by God and the subjective one, which has to do with an individual human being who is being saved.

A further description in our dissertation of the basic issues of Soteriology presented in the researched doctrinal statements will not get equal attention: some issues will be developed fuller while others will be mentioned briefly. Such a style is required by the goal of this chapter – to show only some features and distinctions of the doctrinal statements instead of developing a detailed analysis of the whole Russian Evangelical Soteriology. The latter, by virtue of a significant range of views, seems to us rather difficult because each doctrinal statement has its unique internal logic, which gets inevitably destroyed by an attempt of generalization. It would lead to a redefining of terms, displacement of Soteriological accents and to an eclectic style of description.

At the same time we believe that the internal diversity of RES is much more insignificant than an attempt to summarize into a single system which covers all Soteriological views of Western Protestants. We think it can be explained by an essential adherence of REB to the Scripture. The second reason, as it seems to us, is in the continuous dialogue around Scripture, which is conducted on the level of Bible Studies. These blessed hours around the Word of God, considering the desire of each participant to understand God's revelations, from the very beginning of the Russian evangelical movement, were the heart and the soul of the Russian Theology of Scripture.

#### **4.3.1. PRESUPPOSITIONS OF SALVATION. DEFINITION OF BASIC CONCEPTS**

Before starting to discuss the doctrine of salvation as such doctrinal statements usually present some basic concepts of Soteriology, which rarely differ from one confession to another. The unity in understanding the doctrines of God, man, sin, and need for salvation was repeatedly noted by Orthodox experts and missionaries as well. They also emphasized the absence of serious

differences on these issues with the Orthodox Church, ancient Christian creeds (Apostles' and Nicene) and the teachings of the first councils (Terletsky1891), (Mo 1875).

### **God**

Almost everywhere God is presented as Triune God. However there are some exceptions (Mo 1865). Probably those confessions of faith have some relations to modern Russian Unitarian Protestants. For modern Jehovah Witnesses, for example, these confessions would be a very beneficial historical ground.

### **Human beings**

Man is created in God's image and likeness. This is stated in the majority of Russian evangelical confessions. However, some confessions mention that man was created for fellowship with God and in the beginning possessed an opportunity of free choice:

"God could have created man deprived of freedom that he would not be able to choose anything and would be a kind of mechanical executor of the will of the Creator. But in this case man would be a slave of his Creator and would not bear the image of the Creator. The praise of the involuntary slaves would not give to the absolutely free God full glory, worthy of Him" (Prohanov 1910: II, V).

### **Sin**

In all of the confessions sin is presented as an opposition and rebellion against God. The fall of human beings have made them enslaved to sin. Total depravity and absolute impossibility to be saved by one's own efforts are also admitted as indisputable facts everywhere in REB confessions and are not challenged.

Taking into account the most important presuppositions and essence of salvation the doctrinal statements do not differ among themselves. Salvation is everywhere understood in the similar sense: salvation from sin, guilt of sin, power of sin and its consequences.

#### **4.3.2. SALVATION OF HUNAN BEINGS**

All confessions in one way or another divide the work of salvation in **two parts**: **God's** (objective) side, which provides salvation, **and the human** (subjective) side which has to do with "the reception of salvation by man" (Pr 1910: 12) or with "the work of God in man" (Ka 1913: 4), or with "God's applying salvation to man" (Ha 1906: VI).

#### 4.3.2.1. Objective Side of Salvation

Stating God's side of salvation the confessions practically do not differ among themselves. All of them emphasize that:

1. Christ is **God** who put on human flesh and came to die for sins of men and a **Perfect blameless man**: "...the Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly God and perfectly man... by His perfect obedience, sufferings and death He... has made... propitiation for sin" (Pa 1897: paragraph 5). "Jesus Christ, the Son of God... is God from God...who became incarnate... He is true God and true Man..." (Fr 1909: III).

2. **The only means ensuring salvation is the redeeming death of Christ who carried the wrath of God and punishment for sins of men**: (Ha 1908: IV; Pr 1910: VI; Ka 1913: 4; Mo 1909:7). **The possibility of salvation is insured only by the Blood of Jesus Christ and can not be found in anyone else**: "I repeat for everybody that "there is no "salvation in any other" (Acts 4: 11), for "no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11)" (Pa 1891: 70) "Jesus Christ... is the only Savior for sins and trespassers... there is no other sacrifice for sin" (Pa 1897: paragraph 5). "Man can be saved only by once and for all by the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin which is perfect and satisfying for the righteous God" (Fr 1909: III).

3. **Christ is the only Mediator between God and man**: "... Jesus Christ... the only Mediator between God and people..." (Pa 1897: item 5).

4. **Salvation is given as a gift from God not on the basis of good works or merits**:

"We are not justified not by our works but by faith in Jesus Christ" (Pa 1891: 71). "Christ's righteousness justifies us before God through faith, not by fasts, alms, worship or any other good works... They all are incapable of satisfying God's law concerning our sins nor to save us" (Pa 1897: paragraph 7).

In statements concerning the subjective side of salvation there are some differences and sometimes even some opposite views. Therefore we will look at them more closely.

#### 4.3.2.2. Subjective Side of Salvation

It is necessary to note that according to all of the confessions **God does** not only provide a basic opportunity of salvation through atoning sacrifice, but also **initiates salvation of an individual person**: "God gives salvation to those accepting the Word of God" (CC 1997: section 4). "In Christ God offers the free gift of salvation" (ACECB 1985: section 6). "God's Providence... offers... the powerful help – grace of God which is a good gift of God working repentance in man's heart, conversion, a second birth and sanctification... The grace of God is

necessary from the very beginning for repentance, conversion and new birth... ” (Pr 1910: VIII). “Man due to his corruption should be born again by the power of the Holy Spirit. Without this spiritual birth nobody can be saved ” (Pb 189I: paragraph 6).

The first point in which we notice an essential difference concerns **different accents on the role of man in the process of salvation**, which also causes a **different description of God’s role** in the work of “the imputation of the salvation of man”. The difference is also explicit in the use or neglect of the phrase the “means of grace”. Usage of this phrase in the confessions characterizes the balance of God’s part and man’s part when it comes to the salvation of a certain human being.

## **A. The Process of Acceptance of Salvation by a Human Being**

### **I. THE CALL OF MAN OR “AWAKENING” MAN WHO IS BEING SAVED BY GOD**

A number of confessions emphasize an active role of God, not only in providing salvation but also in imputation it (sic!) to a certain human being: “...God has established the means of grace, through which He brings sinners to Himself and implicates salvation acquired by Christ to them” (Ha 1908: VI). “ The work of salvation for man... remains useless unless God did His work in man... Christ accomplished the former without our assistance; the latter is accomplished by the Holy Spirit with man’s consent. The Holy Spirit produces in man internal “revolution” or repentance... the same Holy Spirit produces in him sanctification” (Ka 1913: IV).

Other confessions when speaking of the subjective aspect of salvation emphasize an active role of a human being in the personal reception of salvation. Fiezen’s confession giving the whole initiative to God sees man’s part only in having a choice: “...man according to God's good will awakens him from sinful sleep... If an awakened man obeys the call of God he receives the grace of repentance... ” (Fr 1909: III).

Prohanov’s confession goes further, saying that: “God on behalf of Jesus Christ has prepared salvation, a human being needs only to accept it. Man receives salvation... ” (Pr 1910: 7). The doctrinal statements of 1985 and 1997 are even more specific: “It depends on man whether to accept the offered salvation and eternal life by faith or to reject it” (ACECB 1985: section 6). “It depends on man if he will be saved through faith or having rejected the Word of God makes himself unworthy of eternal life ” (CC 1997: section 4).

From the above citations mentioned it is obvious that the initiative (Friezen calls it “**awakening**”) of salvation is carried out by God through His Word with the direct help of the Holy Spirit revealing the Word and motivating repentance. “Man by means of the Word which is

alive and effective is awakened from deep sinful sleep, realizes his sins... and repents” (Ha 1928: VII).

## II. FAITH

Faith or saving faith is an ability given by God to human beings to recognize the truth of God’s revelation (Pr 1910 VII). In many confessions, faith is mentioned before repentance as a starting point (Pr 1910; ACECB 1985, CC 1997).

On the other hand faith is necessary for the acceptance of forgiveness that is mentioned by practically all of the confessions: “Through faith in Jesus Christ we get remission of sins... ” (Fr 1909: III), (Ha 1928: VII); “Faith... gives assurance of forgiveness of sins and in justification through the merits of Christ ” (Pr 1910: VII).

*Source of faith* – is hearing the Word of God (CC 1997: section 4) and the work of the Holy Spirit: “Faith is given to man through activity of the Holy Spirit and hearing of the Word of God ” (ACECB 1985: section 6).

*The object of faith* is the “truth of the revelation of God ” or “effective power of salvation accomplished by Christ... justification through the merits of Christ ” (ibid.) Similarly it is presented by Kargel: “Faith in Christ’s sacrifice and trust upon salvation accomplished by Him” (Ka 1913: IV) and by other confessions.

Another aspect of faith is *full confidence* “in Christ as the Lord and personal Savior ” (ACECB 1985: section 6); “...faith motivates man to trust the Lord and to be obedient to Him ” (ACECB 1985: section 6; CC 1997: section 4).

## III. REPENTANCE

The doctrine of repentance is presented in confessions as the central point of accepting salvation by human beings: “Repentance is necessary for salvation... ” (Mo 1891: VII).

Some confessions identify repentance with a second birth or conversion: “All people deserve to be eternally lost, unless this important change called in Scripture the repentance or a new birth takes place in their internal being (Sht 1891: II).

The source of repentance is seen in the influence of the Word of God and in the work of the Holy Spirit on the one hand and acceptance of it by a human being on the other: “... if an awakened man obeys the voice of the Calling then he will receive grace of repentance... ” (Ba 1909: 5). “Man is awoken by the Word of God... realizes his sins and guilt and sincerely repents in them...” (Ha 1908: III). “Preaching of the Word... brings sinners to repentance...” (Pa 1897: 5). “The Holy Spirit produces in man an internal change or repentance ” (Ka 1913: IV).

The repentance consists of: 1) “the recognition of sin which caused condemnation and inability of man to struggle against it”; 2) the grief because of sin; 3) the confession of sin before God and desire to receive forgiveness of sins 4) the assurance of receiving a pardon (Pr 1910: VII); 5) the abandoning of sin: “Those who realize their sins and abandon them will have mercy” (Mo 1909: 21).

Similarly, repentance is defined by modern confessions: “Man is convicted by the Holy Spirit, repents of sins, is converted from dead works to God and accepts Jesus Christ as his Savior and the Lord. Repentance... includes grief about sins, confession of sins and abandoning of them” (CC 1997: p. 4).

Repentance “begins and ends with faith” (Pr 1910: IV), that is, faith is necessary to receive the very opportunity to repent as well as to receive a pardon: “Faith leads man to repentance...” (ACECB 1985: p. 6); “...by faith in Him we receive remission of sins and salvation” (Ha 1928: VI).

The result of repentance is forgiveness of sins and salvation: “Fruit of repentance is remission of sins, justification, that is, removing of the punishment for sin and restoration in the rights for the lost blessedness” (Pr 1910: IV).

### III. CONVERSION

Conversion is considered as a consequence of repentance or as another side of it: “Repentance is followed by conversion. These two are inextricably related” (Pr. 1910: IV). Some doctrinal statements under the word “conversion” mean the whole initial phase of accepting salvation: “VII. About Conversion of a Sinner by the Means of the Word of God ” (Ha 1928 VII); “It is what is called conversion...” (Fr 1909: 3).

Kargel calls conversion “an internal revolution” and does not distinguish it from repentance: “The Holy Spirit produces in sinner an internal “revolution” or repentance...” (Ka 1913: 4). Pavlov calls it “the great change in the heart and mind of a sinner which is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit” (Ha 1928: VII). ACECB considers conversion the result of faith of a human being: “Faith leads man to repentance and conversion from dead works to salvation in Christ Jesus ” (ACECB 1985 p. 6).

Conversion consists in “complete change of the way of thinking and the way of life ” (Pr 1910: VII).

Consequences of conversion are: 1) “remission of sins” (CC 1997: p. 4); 2) justification before God (Fr 1909: 3) personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior (ACECB 1985: p. 6).

#### IV. THE SECOND BIRTH (REGENERATION)

The terms also used under this topic are: rebirth (Ha 1928: VII), awakening to life (Fr 1909: 3), new birth” (Sht 1891: II), (Pr 1910: VII).

The confession of faith of Petersburg’s believers emphasizes that a second birth occurs by the power of the Holy Spirit and without this new birth nobody can be saved” (Pb 1891 paragraph 6). Onken also considers new birth as an action of the Holy Spirit and sees it as the result “of His almighty and effective action” (Ha 1928: VII).

In “The Statement of Faith of the Evangelical Christians” instead of “the birth from above” we read that the Holy Spirit from God “comes upon believers and abides in them”; “everyone driven by the Holy Spirit can not do anything contradictory to the law of love. The Holy Spirit was God’s promised special gift to men” (Kha 1911: 4). Probably they meant here not a second birth but that which Pentecostals call “the baptism by the Holy Spirit ”.

Prohanov sees a second birth occurring “in an internal man” simultaneously with repentance and describes it as a “radical change in the internal life, in the heart, in moral strivings of the soul... It occurs with man instantly but always deeply in the soul and is demonstrated by fruit ” (Pr 1910: VII). ACECB sees a second birth as “a consequence of conversion and personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior” and calls it “ the birth from above through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God”. It is considered a “a necessary condition of adoption and entry into the Kingdom of God” (ACECB 1985: p.6).

The attributes of a second birth are listed in the documents of CC and ACECB: 1) change of the way of life; 2) giving up ungodliness and wordly lusts; 3) fulfilling of the will of God; 4) love to the Lord and the Church; 5) desire of the fellowship with God through the Bible and prayer; 5) desire to follow Christ’s example (CC 1997: p. 4).

Consequences. Through a second birth a human being becomes 1) a child of God; 2) a partaker of God’s nature; 3) a temple of the Holy Spirit (ACECB 1985: p. 6); (CC 1997: p. 4).

#### **B. The Means of Grace for Salvation**

The means of grace necessary for salvation are mentioned by only some of the doctrinal statements, especially by those, which emphasize the role of God in the work of salvation. This term is mostly used by the “Hamburg” confession and connected to them the Friezen’s confession (1909) as well as by the Donsky Molocan’s confession in one of its later editions (1899) and, very recently, in the “Doctrinal statement of Petersburg’s believers”.

The confession of Onken includes a special section “About Graceful Means and Their Order ” (Ha 1928: VI). The “means of grace” occupy the central place in this confession. The main point

of this confession is election to eternal blessedness. In section V it says, “before the creations of the world at God's council... all means which should lead them (the elect ones – V.K.) to faith in Christ were predetermined”. Further the concept of “the means of grace” becomes the central one around which the whole structure of the doctrine about “imputing salvation to man” is unwrapped:

... God has found the means of grace by which He attracts sinners to Him and imputes on them salvation acquired by Christ... These means are the following: a) *The Word of God*; those who were converted through the Word under the influence of the Holy Spirit join the Church through b) baptism; members of the Church participate in c) *the holy Lord's Supper* testifying by it the death of Christ and close fellowship with Him. At the Lord's Supper d) *the fellowship of the saints* finds its highest expression. However e) *prayer* is the center of all these means of grace... (Ha 1918: VI).

From this text it is clear that the concept of the “means of grace” has a different meaning than the meaning of the Catholic Church. Here the Giver of grace is God, not the Church sacraments. Baptism and the Lord's Supper possess more the nature of personal relationships with God and are not seen as things connecting human beings to the Church.

The confession of Molocans from the Don River gives a even more detailed picture which strongly resembles what we have seen in the “Hamburg” confession. It calls them the “means to achievement of grace” and includes these means: 1) the Word of God; 2) “sincere and intimate prayer accompanied with repentance, grief over sins with tears and fasting ”; 3) “a repentant sinner through the Word of God and the Holy Spirit comes into senses and then joins the Church through baptism ”; 4) the Lord's Supper.

The confession of Fiezen speaks of “the means of grace” as established by Scripture and used by the Holy Spirit “in the course of conversion and sanctification.” Among them he lists “preaching of the Word of God (sermons) at the conversion; the word of God, holy baptism and the Lord's Supper for the believers in the fellowship of the Church. Prayer is inseparably connected with all these means of grace...” (Fr 1909: III). Thus he views separately the means for conversion and the means for sanctification.

“The Doctrinal Statement of Petersburg's believers” does not speak directly about the means of grace, but mentions evangelism as “the main means determined by Christ to bring sinners to repentance ” (Pb 1897: paragraph 12).

Other confessions avoid using this term. It is not used in the modern confessions of the ECB either (ACECB 1985; CC 1997).

## I. THE WORD OF GOD

Scripture as the main means of reaching sinners is to some extent emphasized by all the confessions. There are no essential differences on the given subject that we could have found.

## II. PREACHING

Some confessions especially emphasize the preaching of the Word of God as a separate means for salvation. As we have already mentioned, this point, for example, was especially emphasized by the "Doctrinal statement of Petersburg's believers" (Pb 1897: paragraph 12).

## III. PRAYER

The confessions give a lot of attention to prayer in the course of man's salvation: "*Prayer is the heart of all these means and all blessings on a broader scale... it begins with the first moment of a born again life and never ends*" (Ha 1918: VI).

Prohanov's and some other later confessions devote a separate section to prayer in which they state necessity of prayer, its essence and meaning for the believer. True prayer "1) should be expressed by the words that express the needs and feelings of man's heart; 2) it should proceed from the heart; 3) it should be inspired by living faith in God's goodness and openness to hear it" (Pr 1910: XII).

Other confessions do not have essential differences on the doctrine of prayer. The doctrinal statement of so called Christians of the Evangelical faith (Pentecostals) speaking about the Holy Spirit points out the following: "He speaks mysteries, prays and sings..." (Kha 1926: 5). Probably they meant praying in tongues.

## C. Sanctification

The question of sanctification in the same confession is separated in a special paragraph (Ga 1928; Pr 1910), but in the others it is observed in the connection with the doctrine of the church.

Prochanov defines sanctification as the process of growing and development of born again spiritual persons. This process "is fulfilled by God himself, but with participation of the man, who devotes his free and reasonable efforts and discovers in himself and strives to put to death his sinful desires" (Pr 1910: IX). The definition of sanctification is similar to the Baptist's confession: "...After removing the domination of sin from the heart of the born again... he, under the constant influence of the Holy Spirit, now exerts his best efforts to die for sin, which nevertheless still effects him..." (Ga 1928: XI).

Striving to sanctification is the "duty of every Christian, and that one who does not have this aspiration makes sin". The Christian's attitude to sin is clearly negative: "...the believer, born again and staying in God can not sin with arbitrary sin (can not sin by his choice)" (Pr 1910: IX). It is interesting that the same idea is also strongly stressed by the Baptist confession, which is

influenced by Calvinism. The person who strives to "fulfill God's law... can nevertheless be trapped by different sins, which he never excuses, but deeply repents of them... he can not find comfort for him until he receives forgiveness again and will walk more carefully from now on" (Γa 1928: XI).

Love to God step by step changes a human being into God's image, which human beings lost because of falling into sin.

Evangelicals and Baptists define the question about the possibility of achieving a sinless state on earth differently. Prochanov thinks that achievement of total freedom from sin "is possible on earth". Baptists have an idea, that "sanctification must continue all our life, and we regardless of the most holy life always need the forgiving of God's grace..." (Ga 1928: XI). Frisen says that "sanctity in this life is not perfect, but growing... if one claim to be without sin, deceives himself...". But he speaks also about sanctification by position: "Believer is perfect in Christ only" (Φp 1909: III).

Usually evangelical confessions do not connect the final result of salvation with the sanctification process. Neither does it Kargel, nor Prochanov, nor the Baptist's confession. But in the Frisin confession the paragraph about sanctification ends with the words: "...God knows His own". "Perform your salvation with fear and trembling". – Those "nobody will be able to steal from the Saviour's hand" (Φp 1909: III). This phrase gives the impression that Frisen presents salvation as a process by seeing the important role of sanctification in as within the action of a person's salvation. But the end of the process is not dependent on the result as seen from the Orthodox viewpoint, but from the sincere striving of a human being. But this interpretation may go beyond those thoughts, which Frisen had in mind when he wrote this paragraph. It may be also interpreted in the sense that "His own" simply will walk before God "in fear and trembling" and definitely will be saved.

Other confessions also pay serious attention to sanctification. It is especially true of the two modern Russian evangelical confessions.

## **D. The Means of Grace for Sanctification**

### **I. BAPTISM**

Molokans from the Don for a long time understood baptism in a spiritual sense. However after a certain time some Molokans from the Don (so called Salamatintsy) under the leadership of the presbyter Zinovy Zakharov began to practice water baptism. Another group of Molokans in their confession asserted (on the basis of Mark 16:16, John. 3:5 etc.) that baptism has a "saving power" and practiced therefore baptism of both adults and infants (Mo 1875: 9). Further after

several decades of research and discussion of this issue both with the Orthodox missionaries and with Baptists, accompanied by a careful study of Scripture, the majority of them accepted water baptism of adults by immersion (Savinsky 1996: 160). In due course the former Molokans played an important role in the formation of the evangelical-baptist brotherhood.

Pavlov's confession counts baptism among the graceful means of salvation. This confession and some later doctrinal statements of the ECB viewed baptism not so much as means of salvation but rather as a "Church establishment" and understood as "the commandment of God for visible performance" (Pr 1910: XIV).

All doctrinal statements by and large mention the issue of water baptism. Some doctrinal statements (Mo 1865; Pr 1910: XIV) distinguish different meanings of the word "baptism": 1) Water baptism 2) Baptism of the Holy Spirit 3) baptism by fire. However so called "baptism in the Spirit" does not coincide with the Pentecostal and Charismatic understanding of "the second experience" or "baptism of the Holy Spirit accompanied by signs and speaking in tongues". In a number of confessions, which are close to, the Molokans' confession this term carries an idea of some special relationships with the Holy Spirit and a life wholly devoted to God and His Word (Mo 1865) instead of some mystical and subjective experiences of a believer. Prohanov wrote about the first acceptance of the Holy Spirit which "is accompanied by a second birth and the receiving of a spiritual gift..." (Pr 1910: XIV).

The conditions of water baptism are described in detail. Infant baptism is denied as a rule. But there is also some doctrinal statements which recognize infant baptism (Sh 1913). The laying on of hands after water baptism is also mentioned in several confessions.

The question of whether water baptism can influence one's salvation is not discussed anywhere though a number of doctrinal statements mention it among the means of grace. The same confessions do not allow infant baptism. This rule is clearly presented in the Hamburg's confession (Ha 1928 VIII).

## II. THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is mentioned practically in all of the doctrinal statements. However Baptists see it as the "graceful means" by which a "believer's feeling and realizing of his participation in Christ and His sacrifice becomes stronger" (Ha, 1908: VI). In other words, each time when a believer participates in the Lord's Supper he again experiences the reality of salvation and his remissions of sins (Ha 1909: IX). In connection with this it is interesting to note the use of words "to celebrate the Lord's Supper" (ibid.), which sounds a bit western for a Russian confession.

Some mention the Lord's Supper regardless of salvation simply as an establishment of the Church. Others consider it as Eucharist and an act of giving thanks to God. Thus the participation in it is seen as a consequence and ascertaining of the received salvation rather than the means of getting or mastering salvation (Pr 1910: XIV). All confessions, including those that speak about the means of grace view the Lord's Supper not as an initial stage of salvation (conversion of man) but in connect it with the process of sanctification.

The meaning of the Lord's Supper strongly differs from both the Roman Catholic and Orthodox understanding. We think that even the order of the words in Russian (the "graceful means" instead of the "means of grace") is not accidental and is called once again to emphasize the difference of the Russian evangelical concept of salvation from the Roman Catholic understanding of Eucharist. Through the participation in the Lord's Supper the believer is reminded of accepting from God His gift of Christ's sacrifice for sins and cleansing from them. This way God asserts the believer in his or her salvation again and again. This understanding has nothing in common with the mystical idea of transferring grace through the Church to the believer by means of partaking in the physical body and blood of Christ into which bread and wine are supposedly turned. Salvation in the Russian Baptists understanding does not depend in any way on participation or not participation in the Lord's Supper but is beneficial as "graceful means" given to us by Christ Himself.

However the Lord's Supper in RES possesses certain reminders of ordinance, which is captured by confessions. At the same time "ordinance" is understood quite differently. During the Lord's Supper a believer has a mystical fellowship with the Lord, examining his or her spiritual condition, a deep internal realization of his or her imperfection and joy of being cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus it is not the ordinance of transubstantiation but the ordinance of very close fellowship with God.

At the same time the Lord's Supper has also a symbolical meaning of commemorating the death of Christ within a congregation, the sense of the union of the believers in this event.

There is certain diversity when it comes to the issue of who can partake in the Lord's Supper. Pashkovtsy stood on the "open" Lord's Supper and invited everyone to participate in it handing the responsibility over to the person. Baptists and Evangelical Christians introduced a "closed" participation in the Lord's Supper: "Only those can partake who: 1) believed and were born again 2) testified to death with Christ through water baptism... 3) conduct a Christian way of life" (Pr 1910: XIV).

## E. Faith and Works

This issue of balance of faith and works is given significant attention in the confessions. In this matter they show complete unity. The human person is saved only by faith independently of works. This presents an essential difference with the popular understanding in the ROC and with doctrines of the Latin Church. This doctrine is so strongly emphasized in RES that the researcher of Pashkovtsy's doctrines Terletsky holds that it is "the basic and prevailing idea of their teaching" (Terletsky 1891: 95).

On the other hand faith is understood not as a speculative belief, but alive, effective, showing itself in good works: "Man trusting on lifeless faith without works is miserable; but how much more miserable is he who hopes to be saved without faith only by works..." (Pr 1910: X).

Thus salvation was in no way thought of as the result of a person's merits, hence the term "semi-pelagian" being sometimes applied to Russian Evangelicals is simply a misunderstanding even when it comes to the most "Arminian" interpretation of the observed confessions.

## F. Election and Predestination. An Assurance of Salvation

The issue of election is discussed in "Hamburg" confessions (Ha 1906). It is also raised in documents that were probably close to Molokans' and in Prohanov's confession (Pr 1910).

The Hamburg confession traces its roots back to German Particular Baptists and naturally gives only the Calvinistic approach to the issue. It includes a section specially devoted to it "About Election to the Eternal Bliss", which says:

We believe that from the eternity there was free and not preconditioned by anything outside of itself good will (Eph. 1:11; Rom. 11:34) and determination of God to save some sinners (John 3:16). Therefore due to the merciful love of God which is beyond understanding before the creation of the world in God's council it was decided that Jehovah, the Anointed one, through His incarnation and His death will become the Redeemer (Acts 3:18; Eph. 3:10, 11) of those persons from the lost human race who were elected by the Father... Their names are written in heaven, they are in the hands of the Redeemer, as His people, as sheep of His flock, for whom he had laid down His life, His heritage... and His bride. To these persons the eternal life in Christ Jesus is bestowed, and all means which should bring them to faith in Christ, to holiness and, at last, to the eternal bliss. Such determination of God is immutable and stands forever so the ones who it concerns, the elect, can not be taken from the hands of Christ but by God's power are preserved in faith and love to Christ until they become the partakers of His glory. (Ha 1928: V Cit. From Odintsov's edition).

The whole confession is consistently written in the same spirit. This idea is emphasized a few more times: "Redemption... is the only reason of our salvation" (Ha 1906: IV); "all men... share the same completely corrupted nature, are born as children of wrath... absolutely incapable and reluctant to anything that is good but capable and inclined to all maliciousness..." (Ha 1908: III); "Man... comes to Christ... and through faith receives remission of sins and assurance in his

heart... of the great change... which is exclusively the work of the Holy Spirit... He is the one who converts sinners... opens their hearts and enlightens their souls..." (Ha 1908: VII).

Thus this confession states **five central points of Calvinism**: total depravity of a human being, unconditional grace, limited atonement, irresistible grace and perseverance of the saints. The double predestination is not mentioned anywhere though it is definitely affirmed that not everyone will be saved: "both eternal bliss and eternal sufferings of men after life are inevitable and everlasting. There is no transition from one state to another and no salvation is possible after death..." (Ha 1908: XV).

Prohanov, on the contrary, asserts the free will of a human being and his or her ability to reject the offered grace. Salvation is offered to all. The elect ones are those who accept it, that is, Prohanov teaches predestination on the basis of God's foreknowledge:

God... has created man in His image and likeness... (Pr 1910 II). God has given... man free will, that is, the right to chose between good and evil... God could have created man deprived of freedom... as a mechanical executor of the will of the Creator, but in this case man being a slave would not be like his Creator and the glory from slaves would not be worthy of the absolutely free Creator... Man has chosen a way of the knowledge of evil and should face the consequences... In order to keep man from becoming proud, thinking that by his own efforts he can return the lost bliss God has given man... the natural law... moral law... and ceremonial law... No man could keep the law... all have sinned... every single man is deprived... (Pr 1910: V).

God... wanted to save man... Redemption accomplished by Christ is sufficient for all humankind... It is the only means for salvation... Nobody can replace Christ and become intercessor for sins of people... (Pr 1910: VI).

God... has prepared salvation; man needs only to accept it. Man acquires salvation... Salvation of man is a free gift and does not depend on any human merits but only on his conscious desire to be saved (Pr 1910: VII).

God's Providence... to man... offers grace, which is the gift of God, saving power working repentance, conversion, a new birth and sanctification in man. The grace of God is necessary from the very beginning for faith, repentance, conversion, a new birth, good works and sanctification. [] The grace of God... is offered to all people and not only to the elect ones.

God's predestination of some to eternal salvation and others to eternal condemnation is based on His foreknowledge of whether a person receives salvation or rejects it.

Grace... does not limit freedom of man, does not force him to accept salvation. It involves active participation of man in what is being conducted in him and through him. Grace is necessary for man's perseverance in faith and if he seeks it he will never be lost, nobody will take him from the hands of the Father, but man by his own decision can refuse grace... and be lost for ever (Pr 1910: VIII).

Sanctification is conducted by God at participation of man (Pr 1910: IX).

Therefore Prohanov's doctrinal statement asserts: 1) total sinfulness of a human being and his or her helplessness before sin; 2) predestination on the basis of foreknowledge; 3) Christ's death for all human beings that made salvation available to everyone; 4) that God is not forcing His grace on a human being; 5) though salvation cannot be lost as a human being has the right to refuse it. On all five points the statement looks **very similar to an Arminian position**.

However this statement states: 1) double predestination (as in the case with hypocalvinism!), 2) insufficiency of any merits of man in the matters of salvation (it cannot possibly be seen as "semi-pelagianism" for which the merits of man play the key role). 3) The Grace of God is not a "necessary condition for any human effort" (Buswell 1973: II, 136). Human efforts here do not play any saving role: "miserable is he who hopes to be saved without faith, only through works..." (Pr 1910: X). The free will of a human being in the acceptance or rejection of God's gift of salvation is declared in the confession. It is interesting to note that this position formulated by Prohanov, though very similar to an Arminian one, does not substantiate any arguments of Buswell against Arminianism (Buswell 1973:II, 136).

Undoubtedly, considering Prohanov's biography, his historical setting and the way he formulated the confession demonstrates that Prohanov was well familiar with both Calvinistic and Arminian positions. He surely experienced criticism from both sides. It was not by chance though that despite being widely known and very popular in the brotherhood of the Calvinistic confession of Baptists (republished by Odintsov in 1928). It was Prohanov's position that became the official one of the united evangelical-baptist brotherhood many years later (see, for example, ECB 1985: IV-VI).

**Though Kargel** does not openly raise the issue of Calvinism it is rather obvious that he was acquainted with it. In his concise confession he does an excellent job simply ignoring the problem and providing all the important answers at the same time:

...God created man in his image but he... has fallen into sin and fell short of the glory of God... all men are children of wrath... and deserve death... Man can not save himself neither by his own goodness nor by any good works... By the only salvation accomplished by Christ who is God Himself by means of His death for all men the Lord offers reconciliation, forgiveness of all sins, justification and life eternal. This work of salvation is for man, but it remains useless for him unless the work of God in man is accomplished. The first was already done by Christ without our assistance, the second is being done by the Holy Spirit with man's consent. The Holy Spirit produces an internal change or repentance in man, faith in Christ's sacrifice, and trust on salvation accomplished by Him... Then the same Spirit produces sanctification and preserves the believer for life eternal... (Ka 1913: III-IV).

Considering this brief masterpiece how can anyone talk about the "absence" of Russian Evangelical Protestant theology? With a few phrases Kargel solves a number of difficult questions. He states: 1) complete depravity of a human being, 2) unconditional grace for everyone, 3) death of Christ for everyone, 4) importance of a human being's consent and 5) perseverance of the saints by the power of the Holy Spirit (Who obviously cannot fail). What is it: Arminianism or Calvinism, or a compromise, or some kind of eclecticism or a high synthesis? Or may be it is simple what we see reading the Bible? This doctrinal statement is similar to Prohanov's but much more balanced, clear and precise. It has got something of Arminianism (recognizing a human being's freedom) and of Calvinism (attributing to God the whole work of

salvation and leaving no merit to a human being). It balances the work of Christ for human beings and the work in human beings accomplished by God the Father, Christ and the Holy Spirit. It emphasizes the Trinity as also very important.

Other doctrinal statements mention these issues very briefly. For example, the Baptist doctrinal statement attributed by Savinsky to Friezen (Savinsky 1996: 324), speaks about a possibility of a choice for human beings in the following manner:

“Man was created by God in His likeness, innocence and righteousness... has sinned and fallen away from God... All of Adam’s descendants... are not capable of doing anything good but are inclined and capable of doing evil, doomed to everlasting condemnation... Man due to the good will of God is awoken from his sinful sleep... If an awakened man obeys the voice of the Calling, he receives grace of repentance through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ... he gets saved... Only man who keeps awake and abides in Christ can conduct holy life. Nobody will see the Lord without holiness... The Lord knows His own... Therefore... conduct your salvation with fear and trembling. Such a person will... never get stolen from the hands of the Saviour...” (Fr 1909: 2-3).

Here we find: 1) total depravity, though a human being was created in God’s image; 2) grace is necessary for repentance which is viewed in connection with a human being’s desire to obey. Grace directed to a human being’s awakening is unconditional by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice; 3) the theoretical question whether Christ has died for all or only for the elect is not discussed. Instead it is stated that not all will be saved in the end. Salvation is possible only through the blood of Christ; 4) grace is not irresistible. It is possible to not obey it; 5) the saints cannot lose their salvation as long as they abide in Christ, in fear and trembling working out their salvation (Philippians 2: 12, NIV).

It seems necessary to conclude that this confession is difficult to analyze within the struggle of Calvinism and Arminianism. Only the last phrase gives us a hint that the author was definitely familiar with the dispute but preferred to ignore it.

It is interesting to analyze in a similar detailed way some other issues of Soteriology. For example, an attitude to Tradition as means of salvation, the role of the Church and some rites and rituals in the process of salvation, the assurance of salvation, and the impossibility of getting saved after death.

Because of the limitation of our work we do not have an opportunity to develop the whole picture of Soteriology, presented in the various doctrinal statements. However what we have already discussed is sufficient to illustrate the basic thesis of our work. First we see that the RES is non-uniform and contains a number of inconsistencies and at times mutually exclusive statements. Second, those contradictions, which in Western Protestantism, led to divisions in RET, which were solved rather peacefully and were not viewed as grounds for separation between churches or different branches of the movement.

## 5. General Principles of the Modern RES Development

In previous chapters, we have discussed only the most fundamental facets, which reflect the historical essence of the development of Russian Evangelical Soteriology. Although this presentation may have definite advantages for the modern reader, its historical value is greater than its contemporary application. The realization the truth of the Gospel is a unique phenomenon of a process of self-determination which takes place in every generation, since Theology should provide answers from an eternal perspective to questions which are bothering Christians today.

The volume of this paper allows us to present only certain general principles for an approximation of the Russian context about the concept of the development of Soteriology.

### 5.1. *The Need for the Development of Soteriology*

The Gospel, the Good News of salvation from sin, is introduced to human beings in the particular revelation of God in the Bible, and any change from it is an impermissible heresy. However, it is introduced there, *at first*, not in a classified order. *Secondly*, it requires comprehension of, and comparison with the current picture of the world in the mind of a modern person. *Thirdly*, it requires a constant search for a method to construct an adequate picture of the world for the best understanding by modern persons. Reflecting about these factors, the reason why the Good News is entrusted to be preached by people, instead of by angels, is that only human beings are able to pass it on to their contemporaries in the best possible way. Because Soteriology should be addressed to a specific group of people, it makes the process of the development of modern Soteriology always actual, requiring rethinking and revising of it again and again. At the same time the objective content of the Good News is determined by the Word of the God and cannot vary (Gal. 1: 6-12). The variation has only to do with its understanding and its method of exposition of the Good News to the modern people.

The second factor resulting into different understandings of salvation is the problem of the **sources of Theology**. The historical development was such, that though the word of God was always considered as a main source of revelation, the various systems of Soteriology included both different philosophical views, and different ideas of theologians. From time to time soteriological views were discussed on Church Councils, which solutions were also important as a source for the next theological theories of development. In this way these traditions were formed and accepted by some Churches as generalized experience of the Church, formed under the influence of the Holy Spirit and therefore as a result of the continuing revelation of God. Subjectivism and a set of other factors making the traditions only a human book has caused

Protestants to refuse the use of it as a source of revelation because by far it did not always agree with the Bible. However, it is necessary to remember that the indicated sources essentially influenced the understanding of salvation.

The next problem of the development of Soteriology is the problem of **presuppositions**. In this regard we talk only Christian views seriously, namely the idea of Biblical inspiration, the idea of incarnation of Jesus, the Christ and the fall of human beings. The social and philosophical doctrines and utopias, not based on the Bible, are not subject of our consideration, because their premises and source are completely different to ours.

## 5.2. The Definition of Soteriology

Under the term of Soteriology we understand the doctrine of the salvation from sin in those and only those senses, in which the concept of sin features in the Bible.

The concept of *Soteriology in a broad sense*, which includes both God's side of Salvation, and the human ways of obtaining or accepting salvation had been emphasized by Orthodox and Armenian authors.<sup>52</sup>

*Soteriology in a narrow sense* speaks only of human acceptance of salvation.<sup>53</sup> Last usage of the term is more common now.

Under a sin, according to the Bible, we understand any protest of the person against God occurring at the lifetime of a given person, or inherited through his or her parents from Adam. The extent of consciousness of the protest can be different, but the essence of sin leads to a disruption of the relationship with the Holy God. Salvation is a restoration of these relationships.

As the consequence of sin as disruption of the normal<sup>54</sup> the relationship with the Creator covers also other spheres of the person's life. Salvation implicitly involves also these areas. In a sense the problems of the restoration of normal "horizontal" relationships with created world also refers to salvation from consequences of sin. However at such an approach it is necessary to esteem as partitions of Soteriology all existing subjects of reasoning, including the natural sciences and the results of which allow a person to be more effectively "saved" from different

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<sup>52</sup> In this way often but not always Orthodox and Arminian authors (Bulgakov, Danning, Kelly etc) present Soteriology.

<sup>53</sup> In this way, for example, Ericson, Tissen, Rairy, Hodge and many other authors (who tend to a Calvinistic view on predestination) built their statements.

<sup>54</sup> The normal is in the sense of their accordance to the plan of the Creator and not what a person thinks as normal.

material problems.<sup>55</sup> In order not to bring confusion to a definition of the terms by spontaneous redefining, it is usual to refer as the field of Soteriology only the problem of a "vertical" relationship of a person with God. We are confining ourselves to this area.

We view salvation in three senses: 1) from punishment for sins, 2) redemption of adherence to sins, or from a necessity to do sins, and 3) from original sin.

### **5.3. The Context and Some Problems to be discussed**

*The features of a modern Russian context* have decisive value for a choice of the basic problems of an account and an exact arrangement of the emphasis on Soteriology.

Those features consist, at first, in a considerable outreach and influence of the Russian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox understanding of salvation as a process of deification, which includes both repentance and the process of sanctification requires careful consideration, as it introduces the specific aspects of the understanding of the meaning of salvation, which can be drawn, from the Tradition and not from the Bible. The thorniest problems are those on the role of baptism in salvation, the essence of repentance, the involvement of a person in the process of salvation, a problem of works and grace, the role of the Church in salvation, and the completeness and reversibility of the process of salvation. The personal and public relation of salvation is also important as well as the possibility of salvation after death and the role of intercessional prayers and the relation to rituals. It is necessary to take into account the problems, bound with the "Pecherskaya line" in Russian Orthodoxy and expressed in the monastic movement. It is important also the mystical side: this amounts to the Hesychastic practice of "umnogo delaniya" (clever doing), the role of the rituals and sacraments (the Sacrament, anointment etc.), and the role of the spiritual battle in relation to salvation.

Secondly, here are strong *materialistic and humanistic philosophical premises* imposed in the last decades by the existing system of education. It requires a clear statement of all the assumptions and taking into account apologetic questions while formulating the doctrine of salvation. It is necessary to substantiate the necessity of salvation, the possibility of salvation and the means of salvation.

Thirdly, it is necessary to take seriously the views of Evangelicals and Baptists in the matter of salvation. We do not agree with those who think that the Soteriology of Russian Baptist and

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<sup>55</sup> Rescuing from pain or ecological catastrophes, saving those who die from hunger, usually are executed by special services. The theory of these questions is studied at the special courses (not in Soteriology as a part of Theology). For the same reason we do not talk here of social problems such as "saving" poor from despotism of rich people, women from a "men-centered" world and black from white. All these questions do not belong to Theology.

Evangelicals is very undefined. Russian Protestantism was formed in the unique situation of an intensive Bible-centered discussion by all basic Christian denominations and its origin is a Biblical revision of existing views. By efforts of an atheistic surrounding the belief formed at the beginning of the last century was placed in conditions of the accessibility of only the Bible, as the exclusive source of Theology. The atheistic surrounding also put Russian Evangelicals into the strong isolation from the "winds of teachings" which existed in the world. The view of the salvation of believers has been exposed to severe trials in persecutions from the atheistic surrounding. In addition, it was tested in the practice of Bible studies, which involved the discussion of theological problems in a broad circle of believers. The written information about this kind of theology is very little, while indirect sources reflect not quite precisely a real picture of the understanding of Russian Protestants about salvation. However, an analysis is possible and is necessary.

Fourth, it is necessary to take into account problems raised by late branches of Russian Protestantism: the connection between salvation and the "baptism with the Holy Spirit" and glossolalia, problems of observing the Law, circumcision and the Sabbath, etc. It is necessary to express a definite position on these problems and to introduce its substantiation although raising these problems is nowadays both unpopular and painful.

Fifth, the problems raised by the discussion with modern Western Protestant thinking, which became wide spread in Russia during the last years. It boils down to the problem of Calvinism and Arminianism, free will, the possibility of losing salvation and different deviations from traditional Western views both with regard to the openness to sin and universalism.

It is necessary to pay special attention to the following problems such as: the variations with regard to the concept of salvation, answers to liberalism and postmodernism (bound with Buddhism and with attempts to formulate the idea of world-wide religion) and an answer to the Roman Catholic concept of "anonymous Christianity".

*The primary issues of discussion should be the following:* understanding of God's plan of salvation and the participation of a person in the process of salvation should create the core of the discussion. The problem of sanctification and the aspect of the reliability of salvation (the possibility not only to receive, but also to sustain salvation) are also to be presented. A detailed development of such a soteriology goes beyond the framework of this dissertation and is left for future studies.

## 6. Conclusion

In as far as we could evaluate the documents of the Russian Evangelical movement, we come to the conclusion that Russian Evangelical Soteriology at least is something real that exists. The existence of it is not a question to be discussed. It is a clear and well-documented historical fact. Only by being not part of the Church or not being acquainted with the whole body of theological data can one doubt it as a phenomenon. It has a *history*. We can trace its history back for about a thousand years in a large number of documents.

It has its past and present. It was not only fixated in the numerous sources but it is lived out in the convictions of believers in thousands of churches. This living out process is the vital theology of the second biggest denomination alongside the Orthodox Church in Russia.

The Russian Evangelical Soteriology has a well-defined subject. RES is, first of all, a “living” teaching about salvation from sin and not from something else.

In this dissertation we could also see that the crucial idea and the main presupposition of the Russian Evangelical Soteriology comprises of the principles of the devotion to the Sola Scriptura and personal relationship with God. It is especially important in the evaluation of the Tradition and its role in the revelation of God. We strongly insist that it is impossible to combine a Soteriology of Scripture with a Soteriology of the Tradition. Such a combination would be highly eclectic. Therefore we do not accept the current idea that modern Russian Protestant Soteriology should be constructed as a vital combination of RES and Russian Orthodox soteriology. The idea is not acceptable.

Russian Evangelical Soteriology is unique. It is not a copy of Western Evangelical Soteriology. It seems to be more devoted to its source – the Word of God. When it comes to interpretation it requires not only the ability of human reason but also the work of the Holy Spirit. RES is simultaneously more biblical in its essence and more open to different understandings of the Bible, but only inside of what it does teach itself. The principles it is devoted to are not outdated. We should continue emphasizing them when we formulate theology nowadays to keep it biblical and understandable for our contemporaries.

Another lesson we could learn from those who wrote theology at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries is to keep it flexible while the Word of God has to stand firm. We should remember that as soon as we write our theology “in stone” it would die.

Thus the essence of systematic theology cannot be presented adequately as a reflection on the results of historical development of dogmas. It is rather an ongoing process of new attempts to understand the old revelation of God by a new generation in the language of their time.

An attempt to trace some of the crucial ideas of Russian Evangelical Soteriology has been used as an example to present our hypothesis. An additional result of the study was the evaluation of the possibility for the reconstruction of RES. The reconstruction as such was not the aim of the work and it should be left for a more extensive study in future

The sources available provide fertile ground for a number of future papers in the field of History of Dogma. We feel as if we just slightly touched a very big field.

First of all it would be wise to analyze the confessions of faith within stricter categories or groups, to make the picture less complicated. Though RET is strongly soteriological, it should be good to examine the other fields of theology. Such a theology could also be studied in a number of shorter time frames, to ascertain the time changes.

It would be interesting to do an accurate study of the huge material in Russian Evangelical periodicals and books and to compare it with the multitude of Orthodox missionary (who were adversaries of the Evangelical Theology) accounts and police reports. Other sources, including Collections of Songs used in congregations and the poetry of evangelical authors and other documents mentioned are to be studied. A full-blown RE Theology could be reconstructed in such a way. And it would be a book not less than Erickson's Systematic Theology. But it would not be systematic but dogmahistorical in character. It will be about what they, our fathers, believed. It will be interesting, but does it really strongly correlate with what we believe? It could be done by some attempts to get to know what different groups, are presently teaching, but to what avail? To use it as something helpful to understand the Bible, or to use the understanding of others like a strict rule to evaluate other teachings? But we have the Bible as the determinative measurement of all theology and human actions.

I want to finish with one note on the role of Theology in practical Church life. Theology in no way should be interpreted as something additional to the Bible or as one more source available to prepare a Sunday sermon. A pastor should read the Bible, not a commentary or a volume on Systematic Theology, if he only takes the SS and PR principles seriously. It is a big temptation to read about the Bible, but not the Bible itself. I know it from my own experience and sometimes I struggle a lot, preparing for a lecture. It is much easier to have something ready to communicate. But doing this we should be aware that we communicate, teaching or preaching one of the many human theological works, not the Scripture as it. In that case we put the experience of people between the Revelation of God and us. In other words we accept thereby a Tradition, as an additional source to Revelation and that is not acceptable.

Yes, like all people, I have my own presuppositions and my own Tradition in mind. But am I willing to communicate just my vision, or will I ask the Lord to give me a Word for the people I have to speak to? Do they really need to listen to my human experience and my 'fairytales'? My

theology and my understanding is extremely important to me, but this dissertation is not a suitable place for it. I think I can compare my many hours in Bible study groups with only the Bible in hand and my reading and understanding a lot of theological books. There is a big difference between the study, reading and understanding of the Bible and the study, reading and understanding of theological confessions, books and journals. If God is willing to communicate His Truth through His Word, The Bible to us and through us, let us be sensitive to His voice and be living priests who are part of His revelation while standing in personal relationships with God.

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