

# “Living as Monks” and Fools for Christ’s Sake in the Russian Baptist Brotherhood

Constantine PROKHOROV, *Omsk, Russia*

© C. Prokhorov, 2010

## 1

In several articles we have already compared the Russian-Ukrainian Baptist brotherhood, especially in its late Soviet form, with Russian Orthodox monasticism (first of all, with the not unfamiliar “monasticism in the world”).<sup>[1]</sup> However, this point of view perplexes many Baptist church members of our acquaintance; it evokes doubt or sometimes even an emotional rejection. The present article attempts to clear up the misunderstandings connected with the subject and at the inter-confessional level, in the context of church history in general, to demonstrate the legitimacy of the thesis of the “monastic way” of Russian Baptists, based in a certain measure on the Eastern Christian understanding of holiness.

The debated concept of “monasticism in the world,” which became especially relevant following the Bolsheviks’ rise to power in Russia, has been elaborated by a number of famous Orthodox authors.<sup>[2]</sup> Zealous Christians, living in a militantly atheistic State, raised, as it were, “a kind of monastery wall between one’s soul and the world, which lay in evil.”<sup>[3]</sup> For example, Archbishop Ioann (Shakhovskoi) wrote in the 1930s:

<sup>[1]</sup> See, for instance: C. Prokhorov, “On Several Peculiarities of the Understanding of Baptism in the Russian Baptist Church,” *Theological Reflections*, 8 (2007): 89-105; “On Christian Pacifism,” *Theological Reflections*, 9 (2008): 124-141.

<sup>[2]</sup> See, for instance: Archbishop Ioann (Shakhovskoi), “Beloe inochestvo” [White monasticism] in: Archbishop Ioann (Shakhovskoi), *Izbrannoe* [Selected works] (Petrozavodsk: Sviatoi ostrov, 1992), pp. 118-28; Archpriest Valentin (Svetsitskiy), *Monastyr’ v miru* [Monastery in the world] (Moscow: Lestvitsa, 1999).

<sup>[3]</sup> Deacon L. Kalinin, “Predislovie” [Preface], in: Archpriest Valentin Svetsitskiy, *Dialogi* [Dialogues] (Moscow: Pravoslavniy Sviato-Tikhonovskiy Bogoslovskiy Institut, 1995), p. 10.



**Constantine Prokhorov** is a graduate of North Kazakhstan University and Odessa Theological Seminary (Ukraine) and holds an MTh degree (IBTS, Prague, Czech Republic/University of Wales). He is presently working on his doctoral dissertation. Constantine Prokhorov is the author of several books on history and theology: *Sectarian Stories* [2002], *The Mystery of Predestination* [2003], *God’s and Caesar’s Kingdoms* [2005], *Fight of Faith* [2009], *An Introduction to Russian Evangelical Theology* [2009], as well as numerous articles. He is a deacon of Omsk Baptist Church (Russia). He is married and has three children.

Anyone can be a monk – in his heart... King David had several wives but was a monk, ...he became the most beloved teacher of the hermits, the great elder of all monks... ‘White monasticism’ began to be restored... This is the first apostolic, martyr Christianity, the genuine discipleship of Christ... If you want to burn with love for the Lord, choose any way: the white or black monastic life... The Apostles were already the pure white monks, both Peter with his wife and Paul without wife... There are many covert monks and nuns in Russia now.<sup>[4]</sup>

It is interesting that Russian Baptists, for all their everyday critical attitude towards Orthodoxy, often spoke well of the monastic (“narrow”) way, and compared themselves, whether intentionally or not, with those who have taken on the “angelic image.” The intentional naming of the Russian Baptist Union *bratstvo* (the brotherhood), as well as the characteristic and indispensable reference of its members to each other as “brother” and “sister,” suggest a parallel with a monastic *brotherhood*. One of the founders of the movement of the Council of Churches of ECB, Iu. K. Kriuchkov (brother of the leader G. K. Kriuchkov), for instance, writes:

We involuntarily adopted the mentality of the Russian Orthodox environment. In turn, that religious environment was based on the patterns of the “Lives of the Saints,” various ascetics, monks and anchorites...<sup>[5]</sup>

<sup>[4]</sup> Archbishop Ioann (Shakhovskoi), *Beloe inochestvo*, pp. 119-125.

<sup>[5]</sup> Iu. Kriuchkov, *Vnutritserkovnoe Dvizhenie EKh-B v Byvshem Sovetskom Soiuze* [Within the church movement of the ECB in the former Soviet Union] (Sacramento, CA: n.p., 2001), p. 57.

<sup>[6]</sup> Testimony of N.F. Mazhnaia – interview (INT), Fresno, California, USA, 2006. Here and hereinafter, there are references to a number of interviews by the author with well-known Russian Baptist ministers and church members who emigrated from the Soviet Union to the USA during the years of perestroika.

An ECB church member from Gomel (Belarus), N. F. Mazhnaia, recalls with a positive Christian attitude, that after her conversion in the 1950s, when she started to visit the Baptist church regularly, unbelieving neighbors called her a “Stundist” and a “nun” simultaneously.<sup>[6]</sup> B. M. Zdorovets, who founded the “blue” (hectograph) press of the Council of Churches, very often uses monastic imagery and vocabulary in his recollections about the Russian Baptist brotherhood in the time of Khrushchev and Brezhnev. For example, he feels sorry for young sisters who sincerely turned to God and then after that realized that they had entered a “Baptist nunnery” (since the women in the congregations, as a rule, greatly outnumbered the men). Nevertheless, at baptism the young sisters were traditionally bound by making a promise in public (a kind of vow). To the question, “If an unbeliever makes an offer of marriage to you...?” the answer was, “No, I have fallen in love with Jesus!”<sup>[7]</sup> In this way, Russian Baptists actually preordained the mass female monastic way of life.

If we look at the matter from a different standpoint, one can say that monks themselves are a kind of sectarian community within Orthodoxy (“Orthodox fundamentalists”), whose mode of life often shocked the common laity of the Russian Church – and it shocked them no less than the Baptists’ mode of life, at that.<sup>[8]</sup> Therefore, it is

<sup>[7]</sup> Testimony of B. M. Zdorovets (INT, Spokane, Washington, USA, 2006).

<sup>[8]</sup> Nominal Russian Orthodox relatives of zealous Christians who have entered a monastery often mourn for them exactly as they would for people who have “gone into a sect.” See, for instance: D. Iusupova, “Okhota na Ved’m” [A witch-hunt], *Ogonek*, 40 (1998); N. Petrovskaiia, “Ia ushel v monastyr’, chtoby byt’ shchastlivym chelovekom” [I entered a monastery to be a happy man], *Pravoslavnaiia gazeta* (Ekaterinburg eparchy), 1 (1996); I. Podberezhskiy, *Protestanty i drugie* [The Protestants and others] (St. Petersburg: Mirt, 2000), p. 89; etc.

no wonder that there was always a sympathy for monasticism within the ECB brotherhood (among the “true sectarians”).

The main periodical of the ECB Union in the post-war period, *Bratskiy vestnik* [Fraternal messenger], initiated some attempts to offer an interpretation of Russian Orthodox monasticism as a kind of forerunner of the evangelical movement in Russia:

Orthodoxy gave rise to a great God-seeking among the Russian people... The infinite number of cloisters and hermitages, ...churches and chapels testify to this... There was one thing that Orthodoxy did not bring to the Russian people, – knowledge of the Bible.<sup>[9]</sup>

Russian monks... also wakened spiritual thirst, ... [they] contributed to the strivings for spirituality in Russia.<sup>[10]</sup>

In spite of the stereotyped view of the lack of biblical knowledge in the Orthodox Church, paradoxically combined with gratitude to it, on behalf of the ECB, for the Synodal translation of Holy Scripture (“we appreciate the services of the Russian Orthodox Church, it provided... the Scripture: first in the Church Slavonic language, and then also... in Russian”),<sup>[11]</sup> the Baptists often cherished kindly feelings for the best manifestations of the monastic way of life.<sup>[12]</sup>

A special ministry started in the monasteries – *starchestvo* [monastic elders’ ministry], which consisted in the spiritual care and guidance for souls seeking of salvation... Many people... followed the elders’ admonitions.<sup>[13]</sup>

‘Faith without works is dead’. Works of charity were an integral part of church life in Old Russia. The first hospitals and nursing homes originated in monasteries...<sup>[14]</sup>

From the beginning of the Christianization of Russia, domestic monks did not lose contact with the life of common people. The suffering of one’s neighbor and the needs of one’s native land were cause for the concern of Christian ascetics. This is evident, for example, in the life of Sergius of Radonezh who had a humble monk’s heart... Deep meditations on Divine truths and heavenly flights of the spirit did not isolate him from the surrounding world...<sup>[15]</sup>

They are mistaken who think that such statements in the Baptist press before and during perestroika may be explained merely by the political correctness of Soviet censorship that “obliged” Protestants to be on friendly terms with the Orthodox Church. It is worth noting that the underground (“independent”) publications of the Council of Churches of ECB were also entirely in accord with the opinion of the AUCECB in

<sup>[9]</sup> The words of A. Karev, cited in: A. Bychkov, “100-letie Ob’edinitel’nykh S’ezdov [The centenary of the uniting councils], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 6 (1984): 44-5.

<sup>[10]</sup> I. Gnida, “Dukhovno-patrioticheskoe sluzhenie” [Spiritual and patriotic Ministry], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 6 (1984): 51. See also: V. Popov, “Isikhazm kak chayanie dukhovnosti: Opyt istoricheskogo analiza” [Hesychasm as a spiritual aspiration: An attempt at historical analysis], *Bogomyслиe*, 2 (1991): 127-31.

<sup>[11]</sup> “Poslanie tserkvam EC-B” [Epistle to the EC-B churches], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 3 (1988): 71.

<sup>[12]</sup> See, for example, the many benevolent words about the Russian monasticism in: I. Raimer,

*Missionerskaia deiatel’nost’ drevnerusskogo monashestva* [The missionary activity of the Old Russian monks] (Germany: Logos, 1996); Popov, “Isikhazm kak chayanie dukhovnosti,” pp. 115-34, etc.

<sup>[13]</sup> M. Chernopyatov, A. Vasiliev, *Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’* [The Orthodox Church], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 3 (1988): 50.

<sup>[14]</sup> These words of a Russian Orthodox priest, are quoted with favor in: V. Mazharova, “Byl bolen, i vy posetili menia” [I was sick, and you visited me], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 6 (1988): 69.

<sup>[15]</sup> Popov, “Isikhazm kak chayanie dukhovnosti,” p. 125.

respect of monasticism. If anything, the sympathies of the “unregistered” Soviet Baptists for monastic asceticism, contrary to the official dogma of the ECB (which was formally critical of monasticism), were even stronger. For instance, the service book (a kind of “Book of Needs” or “Ceremonial”) by N. P. Khrapov contains such strict ascetic instructions that not many monasteries could require more.<sup>[16]</sup> A minister of the Kiev Baptist community of the Council of Churches (which later became “autonomous”), P. F. Kunda testifies about the long and positive contact of their church members with a Russian Orthodox monk in the 1970s.<sup>[17]</sup> There are many testimonies about the close and friendly contacts between Orthodox people and Baptists before perestroika.<sup>[18]</sup>

The periodical of the Council of Churches, *Vestnik istiny* [Herald of truth], in an article related to Eastern Church history, wrote in part:

The monks read the Holy Scripture in their cells, and worked to earn their daily bread. All of their property was held in common... They gathered for prayer and the singing of psalms at midnight...For four

years John [Chrysostom – C.P.] dwelt as a hermit... In the desert [he] tempered his spirit, contemplated God in silence; at the same time, as a deacon, he served people... He gave his own silver to the poor.<sup>[19]</sup>

It is notable that the Council of Churches published not only aphorisms of St. John Chrysostom (as was often done in the official *Bratskiy vestnik*) but also entire homilies of this “great upholder of monasticism,”<sup>[20]</sup> for instance: *On Prayer*,<sup>[21]</sup> *Homily on Repentance*,<sup>[22]</sup> etc. *Vestnik istiny* also gives insight into the cause of the special sympathy of the Soviet Baptists for the saint: Chrysostom was baptized as an adult (“by faith”); he was strict and intolerant of any sin; he condemned the rich and the powers that be, as well as women – because of their fineries and adornments.<sup>[23]</sup> It probably also impressed radical Baptists that St. John was twice discharged from his hierarchic ministry “for the truth.”<sup>[24]</sup>

The idea of “desert solitude” or “living in retreat” like monks was not alien to Russian Baptists either. For example, according to B. Zdorovets, the first leader of the Initiative Group, A. F. Prokofiev, shortly before the start of their famous movement,

<sup>[16]</sup> For example, the “closed” mode of communion, preceded by strict fasting and confession of sins before the congregation; the continuous character of ministry, i.e. the absence of any “vacations” for the presbyter; the obligatory regular visiting of all church members by the presbyter; the gratuitousness of all kind of ministries in the community; fasting “for 10, 15, 30 days” with total abstinence from all food held up as a good example, etc. See: *Dom Bozhy i sluzhenie v nem* [God’s House and its service] (The Council of Churches of EC-B), ed. by N. P. Khrapov (1972-1974), <<http://www.blagovestnik.org/books/00280.htm#76>>

<sup>[17]</sup> Testimony of P. F. Kunda (INT, Sacramento, California, USA, 2006).

<sup>[18]</sup> See, for instance, memoirs of A.M. Bychkov: *Moy Zhiznenny Put'* [My Life] (M.: Otrazhenie, 2009), pp. 47-8. Also the testimonies of Baptist ministers and church members: V. Ia. Bgatov (INT, San Diego, California, USA, 2006); P. M. Abankin (INT,

Sacramento, California, USA, 2006); V. D. Bondarenko (INT, Los Angeles, California, USA, 2006); L. E. Kovalenko (INT, Sacramento, California, USA, 2006). See also the periodical *Bratskiy vestnik*: 2 (1976): 20; 5 (1985): 79-80; 5 (1988): 82, 88-90, etc.

<sup>[19]</sup> “Ioann Zlatoust” (editorial article), *Vestnik istiny*, 4 (1977): 30.

<sup>[20]</sup> The expression of A. Lopukhin. See: A. Lopukhin, “Zhizn' i trudy Sv. Ioanna Zlatousta” [Life and writings of St. John Chrysostom], in: *Polnoe Sobranie Tvoreny Sv. Ioanna Zlatousta* [The complete works of St. John Chrysostom], 12 Vols. (Moscow: Pravoslavnaia Kniga, 1991), v. I, part 1, p. 20.

<sup>[21]</sup> See: John Chrysostom, “O molitve” [On prayer], *Vestnik istiny*, 2 (1987): 17-20.

<sup>[22]</sup> See: John Chrysostom, “Slovo o pokaianii” [Homily on repentance], *Vestnik istiny*, 1 (1990): 11-3.

<sup>[23]</sup> See: “Ioann Zlatoust” (editorial article), *Vestnik istiny*, 4 (1977): 30-2.

<sup>[24]</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

asked Zdorovets to find for him a “secluded room” in Kharkov (Ukraine) for fasting and prayer, and Prokofiev added, “I will not leave that place till I receive what I ask [from God] or die.”<sup>[25]</sup>

All this could not just be a coincidence: from the beginning, Russian Baptists chose the most definitely ascetic, strictest mode of life that would be in the least measure possible for Protestants around the world.<sup>[26]</sup> And this yearning for the “strict faith” was truly Old Russian, monkish, natural only to the most sincere and unreserved religious feeling.

It is notable also, how readily Soviet Baptists (both the “unregistered” and official groups) used certain words and special terms drawn from the monastery, for instance: *obitel’* (cloister, spiritual abode),<sup>[27]</sup> *kel’ia* (monastic cell), *podvizhnichestvo* (asceticism, selfless devotion), etc.

*He will raise the holy abode for us,  
He will give us the golden crown...<sup>[28]</sup>  
Time is passing; you and I are called  
To another abode...<sup>[29]</sup>  
Knocking, I stand at your door.*

<sup>[25]</sup> Testimony of B. M. Zdorovets (INT, Spokane, Washington, USA, 2006).

<sup>[26]</sup> The “City of the Sun” (Evangel’sk), planned by I. S. Prokhanov, in the Siberian woods should be actually understood as a large “evangelical monastery”: “The City of the Sun will be great: // The habit of drunkenness or the power of money // Will not reign there // But people will glorify God by their life...” (*Khristianin*, 1 (1928): 15-6). Evidently, at a certain stage of its development, even the Protestant branch of Eastern Christianity automatically displays some monastic motifs.

<sup>[27]</sup> Both *Sbornik dukhovnykh pesen* (SDP) and *Pesn’ vozrozhdeniia* (PV) have whole sections titled “Nebesnye obiteli” [Heavenly abodes]. See: *Sbornik dukhovnykh pesen Evangel’skikh Khristian-Baptistov* [Songbook of the Evangelical Christians–Baptists] (Moscow: AUCECB, 1968), pp. 344-72; *Pesn’ vozrozhdeniia* [Song of revival] (Izdanie CCECB, 1978).

<sup>[28]</sup> SDP, #106, p. 78. See also: #130, p. 93; #285, p. 194; #464, p. 309; etc.

*Admit Me to your cell!*<sup>[30]</sup>

*In the innermost cell of the heart...<sup>[31]</sup>*

Wherever you are: in the secluded cell or on the working place...<sup>[32]</sup>

We must reach the spiritual [mountain] peaks: ...purity of heart, prayer, asceticism...<sup>[33]</sup>

We have to follow the example of spiritual leaders who gave their lives for the Lord... and continue [their] selfless devotion.<sup>[34]</sup>

Strive to do deeds for God’s sake, to self-sacrificing devotion, to... asceticism on the narrow way...<sup>[35]</sup>

Some traditional mystical monastic motifs, for instance, of the “spiritual ladder,”<sup>[36]</sup> i.e. the gradual, submissive climbing of the “ladder” to God in heaven, occupied the minds and struck a deep chord in the hearts of Russian Baptists. In the preface of the monastic *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, it is written:

This book... presents to us a firmly-based ladder leading us up from the earthly to the holy of holies, at the summit of which is the God of love. Jacob saw... this ladder also... when he slept on his ascetic couch. Let us ascend... with diligence and

<sup>[29]</sup> PV, #296, p. 192. See also: #92, p. 60; #200, p. 130; #312, p. 203; etc.

<sup>[30]</sup> SDP, #140, p. 99; PV, #332, p. 215.

<sup>[31]</sup> SDP, #122, p. 88; PV, #351, p. 226.

<sup>[32]</sup> “Nasha bran” [Our battle] (editorial article), *Vestnik istiny*, 1 (1977): 9.

<sup>[33]</sup> “Semidesiatiletie Generalnogo Sekretarya VSEKh-B A.V. Kareva” [The 70th anniversary of the General Secretary of the AUCECB, A.V. Karev], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 1 (1965): 76.

<sup>[34]</sup> V. Zinchenko, “Prodolzhenie podviga” [Continuing the exploit], *Vestnik istiny*, 2 (1986): 10.

<sup>[35]</sup> “Veroiu prines Bogu zhertvu luchshuiu” [He offered to God a better sacrifice] (editorial article), *Vestnik istiny*, 2 (2001): 36.

<sup>[36]</sup> See: St. John Climacus, *Lestvitsa* [The ladder of Divine ascent] (Sviato-Uspenskiy Pskovsko-Pecherskiy Monastery, 1994); *Monasheskaia zhizn’ (Vypusk 1)* [Monastic life, Issue 1, 1885] (Sviato-Uspenskiy Pskovo-Pecherskiy monastery, 1994).

faith... The Holy Father, in arranging the ascent for us, wisely decided... to depict the ladder including 30 rungs of spiritual perfection...<sup>[37]</sup>

Respected Russian Baptist authors appealed many times to this favorite theme of the Orthodox monks, as well:

Like the ladder that Jacob saw in his dream, with the angels of God descending and ascending to heaven, we also have both descents and ascents in our spiritual life... The first rung... is forgiveness and justification... The second rung... is receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit...<sup>[38]</sup>

The words of Scripture about the ladder that Jacob saw in his dream, also light up the Cross of Christ on Calvary... Jacob's ladder joined earth with the heaven. The Cross of Calvary represents the reconciliation of heaven and earth... Millions of sinners have climbed this blessed ladder of Calvary... to heaven.<sup>[39]</sup>

The Church is the ladder joining the earth with heaven ('because the Church is the threshold of heaven') – Genesis 28:12.<sup>[40]</sup>

In the words quoted above, we sense something far distant from the Protestant "instant sanctification" or again – *instant* justification by "faith alone,"<sup>[41]</sup> while the Orthodox idea of the *long* daily spiritual

transfiguration and theosis (θείωσις), in our opinion, is clearly expressed.<sup>[42]</sup> The following is a pictorial description of the subject of the "spiritual ladder" by an anonymous Baptist author in *Bratskiy vestnik*:

Just one false step and we can... fall. This idea is well expressed by... a painting depicting people climbing a ladder to heaven. The angels of Satan are shown flying near the ladder. They hold steel hooks in their hands which they use to push people off the ladder. One man is already falling from the bottom rung of the ladder. There are even some stumbling among those who have climbed high... God holds out His hands... but a man is falling... This painting alerts all believers to the danger of a lapse at any time.<sup>[43]</sup>

What kind of striking painting the author of *Bratskiy vestnik* had in mind is easy to understand if we acquaint ourselves with the description of the ancient Orthodox icon, *The Ladder*.

*The Ladder* from the cloister of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai is a unique icon created in the twelfth century... The ladder is going up the heaven where Jesus Christ meets those who have surmounted every hardship... Monks are climbing up the ladder, some of whom do not hold on and tumble down... into the paws of demons

<sup>[37]</sup> St. John Climacus, *Lestvitsa*, p. 5.

<sup>[38]</sup> Ia. Zhidkov, "Preobrazhenie Gospodne" [The Transfiguration of the Lord], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 5-6 (1962): 40; See also: I. Tatarchenko, "Dukhovnaia lestnitsa" [The spiritual ladder], *BV*, 6 (1969): 47-8; S. Fadiukhin, "Bog Vsemogushchiiy blagosloivil menia" [God Almighty blessed me], *BV*, 5 (1982): 18, etc.

<sup>[39]</sup> A. Karev, "Golgofa" [Calvary], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 3 (1964): 24. See also: A. Karev, "Golgofa," *BV*, 2 (1974): 25.

<sup>[40]</sup> N. Kolesnikov, *V pomoshch' propovedniku: Sbornik konspektov* [Assistance to the preacher: A collection of sermons] (Moscow: Zlatoust, 1995), v. II, p. 295.

<sup>[41]</sup> See, for instance: M. Erickson, *Christian*

*Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998), p. 869; K. Bockmuehl, "Sanctification," in: *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by S. Ferguson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), pp. 613-5.

<sup>[42]</sup> See, for instance: V. Losskiy, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1974), pp. 97-110; N. Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2004); Archbishop Georgy, *Obozhenie kak smysl' chelovecheskoi zhizni* [Theosis as the meaning of human life] (Izdanie Vladimirskoi Eparkhii, 2000).

<sup>[43]</sup> [Anonymous], "Na rasput'e" [At the crossroads], *BV*, 4 (1972): 66.

who are on the watch for their victims, using cords, pincers and shooting arrows from their bows... Before us is the way of ascetic righteousness, the way of the Christian ascent to eternal life.<sup>[44]</sup>

There is a ladder from the earth to heaven. People in monastic dress are climbing it. The Lord holds out His hands to those ascending... This is an ancient Russian icon of the mid-sixteenth century. In the middle of the image there is a church representing the threshold of Paradise... Monks on their way above meet with temptations – demons with hooks and pincers pull them off the ladder of salvation into the pit of hell...<sup>[45]</sup>

Comparing these texts, which undoubtedly describe the same canonical iconic plot (the ladder to heaven, Christ above, the demons with “hooks” flying in the air, etc.),<sup>[46]</sup> we can draw the following conclusion. By replacing the word “icon” with the neutral word “painting,” the editorial board of

*Bratskiy vestnik* once again characteristically identified Soviet Baptists with Russian Orthodox monks in their highly demanding divine ascent, as well as in their spiritual struggle against the powers of darkness. The spiritual ladder, starting on the earth with its top lying hidden high up in clouds, so delighted Soviet Baptists that they composed devotions about it,<sup>[47]</sup> wrote poetry on the subject,<sup>[48]</sup> dreamed about it,<sup>[49]</sup> etc.

The monastic orientation of the brotherhood of ECB can also be seen in the traditional political indifference and pacifism of the Russian Baptists. Many of them refused to participate in Soviet public life: they did not take part in elections, refused to work in “Communist” organizations, nor even visited such,<sup>[50]</sup> and refused military service and medical assistance in times of illness. Some congregations rejected any “red” certificates (including regular passports)<sup>[51]</sup> and even some evangelical Christians, living by natural economy, tried to

<sup>[44]</sup> O. Popova, “Vizantijskie ikony VI–XV vekov” [Byzantine icons of the 6th–15th centuries], in: *Istoriia ikonopisi: Istoki, traditsii, sovremenost’. VI–XX veka* [History of icon painting: Origin, traditions, the present. 6th–20th centuries] (Moscow: ART-BMB, 2002), pp. 64–5. See also: P. Rak, *Priblizheniia k Afonu* [Approaches to Mount Athos] (St. Petersburg: Satis, 1995), p. 10.

<sup>[45]</sup> E. Stepanova, “Za tri shaga do nimbi” [Three steps from the nimbus], *Neskuchniy sad* [Orthodox life periodical], 2 (2008), <<http://www.nsad.ru/index.php?issue=45&ion=10019&article=879>>

<sup>[46]</sup> There are two main versions of the icon *The Ladder*, which in terms of narrative bear a strong likeness to one another: the Byzantine (twelfth century) and the Russian (sixteenth century). The images can be seen on the official Russian Orthodox website *Pravoslavie.Ru*, <<http://days.pravoslavie.ru/Images/ii986&1327.htm>>

<sup>[47]</sup> For example, the following words were spoken during a church service of Petropavlovsk Baptist community (Kazakhstan) at the end of the 1980s (the author of this paper noted them in his diary): “Saving faith has three steps, like ladder rungs... The first two are able to save no one, but the third one will save.

However, it is impossible to rise to the third rung, not having risen previously to the first two...”

<sup>[48]</sup> See, for instance, the poem “Lestnitsa zhizni” [The ladder of life], <<http://www.blagovestnik.org/books/00430/db/v6171177.html>>

<sup>[49]</sup> See for instance, the chapter “Ladder to Heaven” (interview with A. T. Kharchenko) in the book: *Podvig very: Unikal’nye svidetel’sva o zhizni khristian v SSSR* [The battle of faith: Unique testimonies about the life of Christians in the USSR] (n.p. Pacific Coast Slavic Baptist Association, 2009), pp. 371–7.

<sup>[50]</sup> As the saying goes, “believers should not go to sobes – since they do something there *together with demons*,” etc. (*sobes* was the official abbreviation of the “social security department” of the USSR; *bes* in Russian means *demon*; in addition, the first part of the abbreviation [*so-*] in Russian means “together with”).

<sup>[51]</sup> See: Biuleten’ Soveta rodstvennikov Evangel’skikh Khristian-Baptistov v SSSR, 21 (1975): 46; Iu. Kuksenko, “Nashi besedy” [Our conversations], Kazakhstan’s Baptist Union Archives, 2002, p. 113; A. Vlasov, *Ot izbytkha serdtsa* [From the heart’s fullness] (Idar-Oberstein, Germany: Titel Verlag, 2000), p. 10.

do without Soviet money (in villages).<sup>[52]</sup> All of this was very similar to the pattern of life of the “true Orthodox Christians” who lived as monks in the world.<sup>[53]</sup> There is information from a report of the Communist Central Committee of Kazakhstan concerning a true Orthodox Christians’ village near Temirtau at the end of the 1950s: “They do not read any newspapers and books, ... nor take part in elections; they refuse military service.”<sup>[54]</sup> Some Russian Old Believers of the “priestless” persuasion also rejected passports, military service, and the use of money in their time.<sup>[55]</sup>

In 1967, a young Baptist woman was on trial in Novosibirsk for the illegal printing of literature of the Council of Churches of ECB. When the accused was asked who had managed the printing process at her home, she answered simply, “Christ,” and judges were unable to get any more out of her.<sup>[56]</sup> N. Struve wrote about a similar incident with a member of the community of true Orthodox Christians in Tambov province. He burned his identity card and refused to serve in the army. Standing trial, he was asked his name and answered, “God knows it.” When he was asked “Who are you?” he replied, “God’s servant.” The judge tried to arouse his public spirit: “But are you also a

citizen of the USSR?” The answer was, “No, I belong to God.”<sup>[57]</sup> Undoubtedly, this is one and the same Russian religious type, no matter whether they call themselves Orthodox or Baptist.

## 2

The Russian Orthodox interpretation of holiness evidently exerted influence on the ECB brotherhood. The absence of official church canonization is not by any means an obstacle to general public reverence for one saint or another. In the Russian Orthodox Church, alongside of universal canonization, there is also a local one, concerning a certain diocese or even a monastery or church closely associated with the life of a particular saint.<sup>[58]</sup> We see a similar state of things among the Russian Baptists.

For example, testimonies about the holy lives of brethren Iosif Andreevich Laptev and Ivan Vladimirovich Ivolin became widespread among the Baptist congregations of the Volga River region and South Russia. There are some actual hagiographic features of their life stories below.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Iosif Andreevich Laptev lived in the small town of Shakhuniia (Gorky province) and served as a rural preacher. He was never married, giving his

<sup>[52]</sup> Testimony of B. M. Zdorovets about the “evangel’skie khristiane sovershennye” [Perfect Evangelical Christians] (INT, Spokane, Washington, USA, 2006).

<sup>[53]</sup> See, for instance: I. Brazhnik, *Sotsial’naia suschnost’ sektantskogo ekstremizma* [The social essence of sectarian extremism] (Moscow: Znanie, 1974), pp. 21-3. A considerable number of the True Orthodox Christians were former monks. The Communists destroyed their last large secret cloister in the 1950s. See: M. Shkarovskiy, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ pri Staline i Khrushcheve* [The Russian Orthodox Church under Stalin and Khrushchev] (Moscow: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor’e, 1999), pp. 252-4.

<sup>[54]</sup> Cited in: Shkarovskiy, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ pri Staline i Khrushcheve*, p. 259. See also: D. Pospelovskiy, *Russkaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ v 20 veke* [The Russian Orthodox Church in the 20th century] (Moscow: Respublika, 1995), pp. 317-20.

<sup>[55]</sup> See, for instance: S. Zenkovskiy, *Russkoe starobriadchestvo* [Russian Old Believers] (Minsk: Belorusskiy Ekzarkhat, 2007), pp. 497-9.

<sup>[56]</sup> A. Pakina, *Raskol Evangelikh Khristian-Baptistov 1961 g. i ego vlianie na obshchiny Novosibirskoi oblasti* [The 1961 split of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists and its influence on the congregations of Novosibirsk province], dissertation (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskiy gosuniversitet, 2000), p. 33. The author makes reference to records of the local Religious Affairs officer, which she found in the State Archives of Novosibirsk province.

<sup>[57]</sup> N. Struve, *Christians in Contemporary Russia* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1967), pp. 247-8.

<sup>[58]</sup> See, for instance: G. Fedotov, *Svyatye drevnei Rusi* [The Saints of Old Russia] (Moscow: Moskovskiy Rabochy, 1990), pp. 34-5.



whole life to God. According to eyewitness accounts, Laptev was a good, humble shepherd who was constantly fasting and praying. He never accepted any presents, however much he was offered them. He refused even meals in the villages where he served. When Laptev was invited to the table, he usually answered, “Thank you! There is nothing I want, I am fasting today...” In the difficult post-war time, Iosif Andreevich earned his daily bread by weaving wicker baskets and gluing together galoshes out of old car tires. He loved to copy cautionary Christian books by hand, as well as texts of the Holy Scripture (which decorated the whole room where he lived). I. A. Laptev was on friendly terms with a local Orthodox priest; they used to sit together for hours, conversing with pleasure about spiritual things – both what unites all Christians and, delicately, about where Orthodox and Baptist ways have parted...<sup>[59]</sup>

In the 1960s, Ivan Vladimirovich Ivolin served as the pastor of Piatigorsk Baptist Church (Stavropol region). According to testimonies, he was a humble servant of God, a preacher of the Gospel, who lived a holy life, almost in complete poverty. Brothers and sisters wanted to help him; they often left some food or clothes in his house without being noticed, but Ivolin immediately dealt out all gifts to the poor. When church members awarded a salary to the pastor, ninety rubles a month, he accepted

only thirty. Ivolin visited every church member seven times a year, encouraging them, consoling and praying. The pastor was an outstanding preacher, a disciple of I. V. Kargel. Even visitors from Moscow said many times that they had rarely heard such simple and, at the same time, deep sermons that stayed in the mind.<sup>[60]</sup>

Such are some of the stories about the “holy paupers” of God (*sviatye bessrebreniki*), their pious lives and service to the Lord. The accounts do not seem to suppose any shortcomings in these people. Even stylistically the stories bear a strong resemblance to the Russian Orthodox “Lives of the Saints.”<sup>[61]</sup> The unmarried state of some holy Baptists also comes to the fore, which again mirrors the ancient monastic tradition. Having no space to retell here the many hagiographical narratives of the ECB brotherhood, we will merely mention several typical plots.

The above mentioned theme of holy self-neglect may be supplemented with testimonies about a Baptist congregation treasurer in Kazakhstan, A. L. Maniakin, who, in the 1960s, not having any money of his own, walked a long distance with the church’s entire treasury in his hands without taking (either as remuneration or a loan) even a small sum for carfare. When the brethren asked the treasurer about this, he answered, “How could I have taken a penny from there, it is God’s money!”<sup>[62]</sup> Another minister of a large Baptist church in Kazakhstan,

<sup>[59]</sup> Testimonies of several EC-B church members from Gorky province and Krasnodar region, for instance: M. A. Vasiliev and O. E. Avdeeva (INT, Everett, Washington, USA, 2006).

<sup>[60]</sup> For example, testimonies of Baptist church members from Krasnodar, S. G. Odariuk and N. M. Odariuk (INT, Everett, Washington, USA, 2006). Some sermons of I. V. Ivolin were published. See, for instance: I. Ivolin, “Ogon’ Svyatogo Dukha” [The fire of the Holy Spirit], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 3 (1969): 45-6.

<sup>[61]</sup> See, for instance, the life stories of Russian paupers for God: Sts. Feodor and Vasilii, Tikhon

Lukhovskiy, St. Evstratii Pecherskiy, etc. – *Zhitiya Svyatykh, na russkom iazyke izlozhennyye po rukovodstvu Chet’ikh-Miney Sv. Dimitriya Rostovskogo* [Lives of the Saints, in the Russian language, retold according to the cycle of readings by St. Dimitriy of Rostov], 12 vols. (Moscow: Sinodal’naia Tipografiia, 1903-1911), v. XII (August), pp. 160-72; v. X (June), p. 389; v. VII (March), pp. 573-7.

<sup>[62]</sup> Testimony of Baptist church members I. M. Kaplenkov and A. M. Kaplenkov (Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan, 1997).

through whom considerable donations for the poor were distributed, wore such threadbare clothes himself and was so modest in everyday life that he became a proverb among many people.<sup>[63]</sup>

Many times the author heard numerous testimonies of aged ECB church members about showing Christian fortitude, both during Stalin's years and subsequently. In Soviet labor camps they were beaten, starved, and guard dogs were set on them. According to one reliable story, on one occasion the dogs miraculously did not touch a couple of Russian Baptists who were ready for a martyr's death.<sup>[64]</sup> It is interesting that the theme of the meekness of the most dangerous beasts towards God's people blends well with the Russian Orthodox *Lives of the Saints*. For example, it is reported that when St. Sergius of Radonezh lived in the forest, ravenous wolves and bears did not touch him.<sup>[65]</sup>

In ECB literature about the martyrdom of Nikolai Khmara (Altai Territory, 1964) one also recognizes some hagiographical features, pious interpretations of his exploit: "Khmara witnessed for Christ until the end and therefore his captors tore out his tongue."<sup>[66]</sup> Similar firmness of faith has inspired Christians throughout the ages.<sup>[67]</sup>

Another testimony of the ECB brother-

hood tells of a Soviet Baptist woman with four small adopted children who barely survived the terrible famine and then suffered many indignities and persecutions for the Christian faith in her village in the 1930s. At the beginning of the Great Patriotic War when their area was occupied by the Nazis, all of the village activists and Communists were arrested; the German authorities then compelled the peasants who had suffered as victims of the Soviet regime to give their accusatory evidence. Many people willingly put their signatures to the charges against the Communists, but the Baptist woman refused and said that she had already forgiven her persecutors, as Christ taught. The Germans then threatened her and finally lashed her cruelly with a whip. However, she endured this suffering, too, with all humility. This Christian did many simple, good works during her long life. When she died in the 1980s many people in the area, both Baptists and Russian Orthodox (this woman's holiness was also recognized by Orthodox people who knew her well), gathered for the funeral. Above her, as she lay in her open coffin, according to eyewitness accounts, "heaven was weeping" – out of the cloudless midday heat, large, sparse raindrops suddenly started to fall.<sup>[68]</sup>

<sup>[63]</sup> The author is well acquainted with this remarkable minister. Since he is alive, his name is not mentioned here, knowing that he would not approve.

<sup>[64]</sup> For instance, see the testimonies of Baptist ministers: V. N. Khot'ko (Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan, 2000), Ia. A. Meleshkevich (Bishkul, Kazakhstan, 2003), etc.

<sup>[65]</sup> *Zhitie prepodobnogo Sergiia Radonezhskogo* [Life of Saint Sergius of Radonezh], ed. by M. Pis'menny (Moscow: RIPOL KLASSIC, 2003), pp. 32-3. See also: Cloistress Taisiia, *Russkoe Pravoslavnoe zhen-skoe monastestvo* [Russian Orthodox women's monasticism] (Minsk: Izd-vo Belorusskogo ekzarkhata, 2006), pp. 15, 32, 245.

<sup>[66]</sup> Cited in: W. Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981), p. 143.

<sup>[67]</sup> See analogous pious stories: "Stradanie Sv. Muchenika Gordiia" [The sufferings of St. Gordius the Martyr], in: *Zhitiia Svyatykh*, v. V (January), pp. 146-7; "Zhitie Prep. Maksima Ispovednika" [The life of St. Maximus the Confessor], in: *Zhitiia Svyatykh*, v. V (January), p. 715.

<sup>[68]</sup> Testimony from the website of the Russian Baptist Union, <<http://old.baptist.org.ru/forums/archive/index.php/t-89-p-3.html>>. Several characteristic features of this report are typologically similar to the hagiographical story about the robbers' assault on St. Seraphim of Sarov: he did not resist them and was severely beaten, but when the robbers were caught, the saint announced his forgiveness to them and interceded for mercy, which caused finally their repentance. See: "Zhitie prep. Serafima Sarovskogo" [The life of St. Seraphim of Sarov], in: *Zhitiia Svyatykh*, v. V (January), pp. 77-9.

The General Secretary of the AUCECB, A. M. Bychkov, also related that Orthodox people treated some pious Baptists with special respect:

Recently, there was the funeral of an elderly Baptist presbyter in a small town in Central Russia. When the procession approached the local Orthodox church, the priest ordered that the bells should be rung as a sign of respect for the deceased servant of Christ...<sup>[69]</sup>

Analyzing the above mentioned life stories, it should be noted that the Baptist hagiographies, as well as the Orthodox *Lives of the Saints*, often omit the essential details of the events described; it is not always clear where and when the events are taking place. The moral example and spiritual edification definitely come first, not the historical context. No doubt, this is a reflection of a well-known feature of the Slavic soul – the tendency toward the spiritual and mystical rather than the rational perception of the world. Here, for example, is a characteristic entry that many Soviet Baptists of the 1950s – 1970s jotted down in their notebooks: “The Christian’s address: Spiritual Homeland, Gospel Region, District of Zion, City of Heaven, Street of the Narrow Way, Thorny Lane, House of the Tabernacle. The Holy Spirit is the guide; inquire of the Watchman of conscience...”<sup>[70]</sup>

Such words are nonsense to an outsider. However, the essence of the allegorical text (copied down by both young and mature

Soviet Baptists!) is slightly clearer if we compare it, for instance, with the following words of a Russian Orthodox hagiographical author, “...But from what town or hamlet and from what family such a leading light was descended, we do not find in the writings; God knows this; for us it is enough to know that he was a citizen of the Heavenly Jerusalem, God was his Father and the Holy Church was his Mother, his relations were tearful, all-night prayers and unceasing groaning; his neighbors were the vigilant desert works.”<sup>[71]</sup> The general, non-rationalistic approach, in which there is little about abstract spiritual and moral notions and very little about actual historical data, is to a considerable degree typical for both Russian Orthodox and Soviet Baptist hagiography.

### 3

In the Russian context, the unique spiritual phenomenon of foolishness for Christ’s sake is closely related to the theme of holiness. In the Eastern Christian tradition, the Savior Himself, who rejected the values of this world and taught that His Kingdom is “not of this world,” was often interpreted as the first of “God’s fools.”<sup>[72]</sup> Although foolishness for Christ is, strictly speaking, an “anti-canonical” deed, many Russian Orthodox people consider God’s fools the most honored saints.<sup>[73]</sup> Their “wretchedness” and “insanity,” unconventional life style in society, demonstrate sincerity of religious feeling, childlike trust in God, an extreme form of Christian asceticism. Hun-

<sup>[69]</sup> A. Bychkov, “110-letie russko-ukrainskogo bratstva ECB” [The 110th anniversary of the Russian-Ukrainian brotherhood of ECB], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 5 (1977): 70.

<sup>[70]</sup> From the personal files of G. E. Kuchma, member of Omsk Central Baptist Church.

<sup>[71]</sup> Cited in: V. Kliuchevskiy, “Istochniki russkoi istorii” [Sources of Russian history], in: V. Kliuchevskiy,

*Sochineniia* [Works], 9 vols. (Moscow: Mysl’, 1989), v. VII, pp. 74-5.

<sup>[72]</sup> See, for instance: Iu. Riabinin, *Russkoe iurodstvo* [Russian foolishness for Christ] (Moscow: RIPOL klassik, 2007), p. 5.

<sup>[73]</sup> See, for instance: S. Ivanov, *Vizantiyskoe Iurodstvo* [Byzantine foolishness for Christ] (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1994), pp. 4-5.

dreds of fools for Christ's sake became famous in Russia, and dozens of them were canonized.<sup>[74]</sup>

In such an atmosphere, it is little wonder that the Russian Baptists had many fools for Christ, as well. According to a curious legend, Ivan Grigorievich Riaboshapka, one of the pioneers of the evangelical movement in South Russia, who lived during the second half of the nineteenth century, "played the fool" at the fairgrounds, where he liked to cry loudly, "He has stolen it! He has stolen it!" People gathered around him and asked what had been stolen. Riaboshapka answered, "Satan has stolen the people's salvation!" After a while he cried out again, "I have found it! I have found it!" The onlookers gathered again: "What you have found?" This time Riaboshapka said joyfully, "I have found my eternal salvation!" And then he began his unusual "popular preaching" to the large group of people who had gathered.<sup>[75]</sup>

In the period under review, dozens of fools for Christ became known among Soviet Baptists. The most famous of them was probably Vania Moiseev. He came from the Moldavian village of Volontirovka and was a member of a congregation of the Council of Churches. In 1972, during the second year

of his military service in the Crimean city of Kerch, Vania suffered the death of a martyr for his Christian faith. He was distinguished among many other Baptist sufferers during Communist times by his "holy simplicity," amazing spiritual insight, and evident foolishness for Christ's sake. Even the official sources of the Council of Churches of ECB report many more extraordinary things about Vania Moiseev than are strictly allowed from the point of view of Baptist dogma. For example, they make no secret of the fact that he saw visions of the heavenly Jerusalem, Old Testament saints, and apostles of Christ, as well as communing with angels of God.<sup>[76]</sup> During his military service in the Soviet Army, Vania prayed many hours a day, as he had done before at home. He simple-heartedly told other soldiers and commanders (Communists) about Jesus Christ, enduring much mockery and beatings because of this. Once he publicly prophesied that an unbelieving sergeant would get a furlough ("I prayed with my spirit, and the Lord revealed it to me"). This sergeant was someone who, it seemed, had no chance to visit his home in the foreseeable future (but it happened!). Vania miraculously recovered after a severe injury without the help of any doctors; he could

<sup>[74]</sup> See, for instance: S. Iurkov, *Pod znakom groteska: Antipovedenie v russkoy kul'ture, 11 – Nachalo 20 vz.* [Under the sign of the grotesque: Anti-behavior in Russian culture, 11th – early 20th c.] (St. Petersburg: Letnyi sad, 2003), pp. 52-3; *Khristianstvo: Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'* [Christianity: An encyclopedic dictionary], ed. by S. Averintsev, 3 vols. (Moscow: Bolshaia rossiyskaia entsiklopediia, 1995), v. III, pp. 286-7.

<sup>[75]</sup> *Riaboshapka* (typescript), from the personal files of Russian Baptist historian S. N. Savinskiy (Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, 2006). See also: V. Koval'kov, E. Sokolov, "I. G. Riaboshapka," *Bratskiy vestnik*, 6 (1981): 60. A peasant by birth, I. G. Riaboshapka used the language of the common people. For example, there is a testimony about the following expression from Riaboshapka's "baptismal formula": "You make

a vow... to serve God faithfully to the coffin of your life." Cited in: S. Savinskiy, *Istoriia evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov Ukraini, Rossii, Belorussii* [History of the Evangelical Christians–Baptists of Ukraine, Russia, and Belorussia, 1867–1917] (St. Petersburg: Bibliia dlia vsekh, 1999), p. 323. His appearance also often corresponded to that of a fool for Christ: for instance, there is a report about his visit of capital city St. Petersburg. Riaboshapka arrived there for a meeting of the brethren dressed in a red shirt and wide trousers – one of the trouser legs was tucked into his shabby boot, and the other was "rolled high up." See: *BV*, 6 (1981): 57.

<sup>[76]</sup> See: *Podrazhaite vere ikh: 40 let probuzhdennomu bratstvu* [Imitate their faith: The 40th anniversary of the revival brotherhood] (Moscow: Sovet tserkvei EC-B, 2001), pp. 350, 355-6.

get along without food for several days; in the winter cold, he walked for the entire nights outside in just his summer uniform without detriment to his health; he took all punishments from his commanders without a grumble and even with joy (for example, he gladly scrubbed the floor of a big barracks with a brush and soap, which was always considered especially humiliating work for second-year soldiers). And with the same simplicity he became a martyr for Christ.<sup>[77]</sup>

Comparing the Christian exploits of Vania Moiseev with the *Lives* of well-known Russian fools for Christ’s sake, we find many essential common features, such as meekness and love for the people around them, including their oppressors; “strange” public conduct; great zeal in prayer; visions of the spiritual, angelic realm; gifts of wonder-working and prophecy; and an ascetic mode of life. Thus St. Procopius of Ustiug suffered with humility many “vexations, reproaches, and beatings” for his foolishness for Christ;<sup>[78]</sup> St. Michael Klopskiy was known for his special asceticism, as well as for his indefatigable praying and miracles;<sup>[79]</sup> St. Simon of Iureivets walked in the winter in a flaxen shirt and without any footwear;<sup>[80]</sup> St. Vasiliy the Blessed was considered worthy of angelic visions and had a great prophetic gift,<sup>[81]</sup> the same as Procopius of Viatka, Nikolai of

Pskov, and many other well-known fools for Christ’s sake.<sup>[82]</sup>

Boris Maximovich Zdorovets from Kharkov (Ukraine) is another famous Soviet Baptist fool for Christ. A well-read and highly gifted person, he often put on the “mask of foolishness”<sup>[83]</sup> during his life to condemn the vices of the powers that be, both the representatives of the state atheistic authority and some Baptist leaders. During his first arrest (in December 1961, because of many activities among Christian youth), Boris “played the fool” with KGB agents and militia for about three hours, not opening the door of his house in spite of all the latter’s demands. The militiamen had the imprudence to come at 5 a.m., and Zdorovets lectured them with characteristic humor, saying that only bandits make a living at that hour so they should come at 8 o’clock. The militiamen froze outside for awhile, and then began to break the door down, while Boris, who was, like many Soviet Baptists, an absolute pacifist, shouted at them menacingly through the door, “Hey, woman! Bring me the axe; some bandits are forcing their way into the hut!” That frightened everyone.<sup>[84]</sup>

When Zdorovets was imprisoned, he fasted for fifteen days and nights (drinking only water) every time he was put into the punishment cell. And Boris was there because of his “misbehavior” quite often.

<sup>[77]</sup> See: *Inye zhe zamucheny byli* [Others were tortured] (booklet of the CCECB, 1970s), pp. 1-32; *Podrazhaite vere ikh*, pp. 340-61; testimony of EC-B church member from the Crimea, V. P. Litovchenko, who was personally acquainted with Vania Moiseev (INT, Los Angeles, California, USA, 2006).

<sup>[78]</sup> See: Fedotov, *Sviatye drevnei Rusi*, pp. 202-3.

<sup>[79]</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 203-4.

<sup>[80]</sup> See: A. Panchenko, “Smekh kak zrelishche” [Laughter as a spectacle], in: D. Likhachev, A. Panchenko, N. Ponyrko, *Smekh v drevnei Rusi* [Laughter in Old Russia] (Leningrad: Nauka, 1984), p. 119.

<sup>[81]</sup> See: A. Panchenko, “Iurodivye na Rusi” [Fools

for Christ in Russia], in: A. Panchenko, *Ruskaia istoriia i kul'tura* [Russian history and culture] (St. Petersburg: Iuna, 1999), p. 397; *Khristianstvo: Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'*, v. I, pp. 338-9.

<sup>[82]</sup> See, for instance: Hieromonk Alexei (Kuznetsov), *Iurodstvo i stolpnichestvo* [Foolishness for Christ and pillar asceticism] [1913] (Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo Podvor'ia Sviato-Troitskoi Sergievoi Lavry, 2000), pp. 202-4.

<sup>[83]</sup> Concerning the foolishness for Christ of sane Orthodox people in Russian history, see for instance: A. Panchenko, *Iurodivye na Rusi*, pp. 392-3.

<sup>[84]</sup> Testimony of B. M. Zdorovets (INT, Spokane, Washington, USA, 2006).

When the policy of the Council of Churches towards its own “dissidents” became especially tough, and excommunications even of reputable ministers were common practice, Zdorovets once interrupted the accustomed flow of a church service during the sermon of a well-known Baptist leader who was guilty of a great abuse of power. Suddenly Zdorovets publicly handed him a rope and bar of soap, saying, “That’s enough of you tormenting God’s people!”<sup>[85]</sup>

Boris Maximovich had many visions of God during his life; he prophesied (“to talk with the Lord through the Bible alone is the same as communicating with your father by letters; it is not enough...”), used prayer beads he made himself out of thirty-three apricot stones<sup>[86]</sup> at a labor camp in the 1960s, etc.<sup>[87]</sup> Some people, of course, denounced such unusual conduct for a Baptist, but others certainly found a display of God’s grace, called “foolishness for Christ’s sake,” in Boris Zdorovets.<sup>[88]</sup>

In his life, yet another important facet of traditional Russian foolishness for Christ was illuminated, namely the courageous denunciation of the powers that be. What was unthinkable for common people, and even those from the nobility, was often per-

mitted to fools for Christ, through whom, according to a pious belief, God Himself spoke.<sup>[89]</sup> For example, when St. John Big-Cap (*Bol’shoi kolpak*) met Boris Godunov, he openly (and in rhyme!) warned the tsar about the consequences of his unrighteous government: “Clever mind/Understand what God is doing; God waits long/And beats hard...”<sup>[90]</sup> Another sainted Russian fool for Christ, Blessed Nikolai of Pskov, according to legend, once during Lent offered Tsar Ivan the Terrible a piece of raw (bloody) meat. “I am a Christian and do not eat meat during Lent!” the Tsar turned pale. “But you drink Christian blood!” said the saint.<sup>[91]</sup> Against such a historical background, Boris Zdorovets of Kharkov, denouncing a “Baptist tsar” with rope and soap in his hands, no longer looks so strange.<sup>[92]</sup>

Another interesting case of “Christian foolishness” in the ECB brotherhood took place in Karaganda in 1986. A certain brother N. N., known to the Kazakhstan churches, had a supernatural revelation to visit a local high-ranking officer of the KGB. N. N. asked for an audience at the time revealed to him from above. Miraculously, without any previous appointment, a brief

<sup>[85]</sup> That was probably a hint at the dismal end of Judas Iscariot. See: B. Zdorovets, *Kakim sudom sudite* [The way you judge], <<http://www.praise.com/denominations/group650/index.shtml>>

<sup>[86]</sup> Incidentally, beads are one of the mandatory attributes of an Orthodox monk, and thirty-three beads symbolize the number of years of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. See, for instance: S. Trofimov, *Chetki* [Beads] (Moscow: AST, 2001), pp. 16-25; *Pravoslavnaiia entsiklopediya* [Orthodox encyclopedia], ed. by O. Markicheva (Moscow: AST, 2007), p. 373.

<sup>[87]</sup> Testimony of B. M. Zdorovets (INT, Spokane, Washington, USA, 2006).

<sup>[88]</sup> For instance, a Kharkov newspaper *Sobytie* [The event] once published a lengthy article about Boris Zdorovets’ life in which he, with evident sympathy and unequivocally, was called a fool for Christ. – S. Rudenko, “Vashe vremia konchilos” [Your time is

up), *Sobytie*, 29 August 1992.

<sup>[89]</sup> See, for instance: *Sviatyni drevnei Moskvy* [Sacred places of ancient Moscow] (Moscow: Nikos, Kontakt, 1993), p. 7.

<sup>[90]</sup> See: Hieromonk Alexei, *Iurodstvo i stolpnichestvo*, p. 187.

<sup>[91]</sup> See, for instance: Fedotov, *Sviatye drevnei Rusi*, pp. 207-8.

<sup>[92]</sup> Perhaps one should also add two handkerchiefs to the symbolical presents of Baptist fools for Christ that were presented to the newly-elected presbyter of the Chernovtsy community, K. S. Sedletskiy, in the late 1950s–early 1960s. It was correctly prophesied that the young presbyter would experience “many tears” and it was added that the big handkerchief was for crying privately before God, while the small one was for weeping in public. – K.S. Sedletskiy, “Vospominaniia” [Memoirs], personal files of P. K. Sedletskiy (Omsk, Russia, 2007), p. 92.

meeting took place. During the meeting, there was the following remarkable dialogue.

- ...The Lord Himself has sent me to you to say that you should repent and believe in the Gospel.
- ...What is your business with me?
- There is just one piece of business: the salvation of your soul...
- If that is the business, I do not want to talk with you...
- ‘This is the only one’... I got up, moved to the door, stooped down and said, *Shake off the dust from your feet* (Luke 9:5)... ‘I do not know when [your soul] will pass into eternity – tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. I had an occasion to talk with Volodia in the coal mine. *I have enough time* – he said, but he did not have enough time, he departed into eternity early...’
- You know, there is a penal code article on intimidation. I can inform the right people, and you will be punished.
- I stand ready for any punishment, so long as you are saved... I will continue to pray for you. God bless you...
- O Lord! ...I beg of you: help him not to perish.<sup>[93]</sup>

In this story, we see another version of the sacral plot about the meeting of a “holy fool” with a “tsar.” It all begins with the revelation (“The Lord Himself has sent me to you...”). “God’s fool” feels without the slightest doubt that he is an instrument in the Lord’s hands, the executor of His will, so the meeting, unexpected for the “tsar,” for all his many engagements, cannot but

take place at the strictly fixed (or “preordained”) time. “God’s fool” speaks about the noble’s soul, just as if he was speaking to one of the common people. Meeting with a rebuff, “God’s fool” immediately resorts to dramatic effects: defiantly “shaking off the dust from his feet,” referring to known, literally interpreted words of Scripture, and also predicts the future, mystically hinting at the death of a certain man who also did not listen to him... Finally, “God’s fool” concludes his speech with a prayer and a wish for his interlocutor’s eternal salvation (apparently he has no doubts about his own salvation).

A very similar picture of this kind of “playing the fool” can be seen, for instance, in the description by Protopop Avvakum (who was a leader of the Old Russian Orthodox Church in the second half of seventeenth century) of his famous meeting with the Greek Patriarchs, Paisiy and Makariy, during the Russian Orthodox Moscow Council in 1667.

As usual, “God’s fool” speaks not his own, but the words of the Lord: “I was brought to the Eastern Patriarchs... God opened my sinful mouth, and Christ disgraced them by my mouth...”<sup>[94]</sup>

Avvakum, grieving over Greek Orthodoxy, exhorts the newly arrived Patriarchs and frightens them with coming destruction: “I said much to the Patriarchs from the Scripture... Rome fell long ago and lies yet without rising, and the Poles perished with it... and your Orthodoxy has turned motley...”<sup>[95]</sup>

When all words are unavailing, “God’s fool,” the better for people to remember his message, animatedly accompanies it with

<sup>[93]</sup> V. Zhuravlev, *Velika vernost’ tvoia, Gospodi: Svidetel’stva iz zhizni* [Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord: Life testimonies] (Steinhausen, Germany: Samenkorn, 2006), v. I, pp. 309-10.

<sup>[94]</sup> Avvakum, *Zhitie Avvakuma i drugie ego sochineniia* [Life of Avvakum and his other writings] (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1991), p. 60.

<sup>[95]</sup> Ibid.

shocking acts. Protopop Avvakum continues his narrative: "I have a clear conscience, and I shake off the dust from my feet before you, as it is written... They started to push me and beat me, and the Patriarchs themselves ran at me... I retreated to the door and lay down on my side there and told them, 'You can sit, but I will lie here for awhile'..."<sup>[96]</sup>

The encounter closes with words of admonishment, Avvakum doubtless enduring deep moral suffering because of the "ruinous way" of the Greek and Russian Orthodox mainstream: "They laughed, 'The Protopop is a fool. He does not even honor the Patriarchs.' But I told them, 'We are fools for Christ's sake! You have honor, but we are despised! You are strong, but we are weak!'"<sup>[97]</sup>

In response to even seemingly the most insignificant events, Russian Baptists sometimes involuntarily reacted in a way that, on closer inspection, reveals its roots in the old Eastern Christian tradition. Here, for example, is one of the pious reflections known to the author of a Baptist minister during Soviet times. During a church service, a fly alighted on presbyter N. N. and bit him painfully. At first the presbyter drove the fly away, but when it settled on him again, he meekly decided to put up with it, thinking about how much greater were the sufferings Christ endured: "...Just as I could drive the fly away at any moment, Christ might also have stopped His torments in a flash, too. But He decided... not to come down from the cross..."<sup>[98]</sup>

This is also a kind of foolishness for Christ in miniature, bringing to mind the many holy men who worked for God in humility and patience, full of suffering. For example, St. Simeon Stylites, according to his life story, fed worms on his open wounds and even put them back when they fell off, saying, "Eat what God has given you."<sup>[99]</sup> Nikita of Pereiaslavl voluntarily exposed his naked body to the bites of mosquitoes and midges that densely swarmed all over him.<sup>[100]</sup> And many other Russian saints did the same: Seraphim of Sarov, Theodosius of the Cave, Nicander of Pskov, Sabbas of Vishera...<sup>[101]</sup>

Russian Baptists, who have many times criticized all monastic extremes in words,<sup>[102]</sup> would probably prefer now to dissociate themselves in every possible way from this kind of Christian experience, all the more in the above mentioned context; however in practice the problem appears much more complex. The fact is that it would be scarcely possible to distinguish fundamentally between the behavior, as well as – what is more important – the *motivation* of holy Orthodox monk-ascetics on the one hand and, for instance, the same remarkable Baptist presbyter, N. N. on the other. Whether we like it or not, this is the same radical religious spirit that testifies: scratch a Russian Baptist and you will find a monk.

The deliberate "playing the fool" that took place during some Soviet-era trials of Baptists was also notable before perestroika. There are, for instance, some expressive passages from the full trial transcripts of

<sup>[96]</sup> Ibid., pp. 60-1.

<sup>[97]</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>[98]</sup> V. Zhuravlev, *Sila v nemoshchi: Svidetel'stvo iz zhizni* [Strength in weakness: Life testimonies] (Steinhagen, Germany: Samen Korn, 2008), v. II, p. 90.

<sup>[99]</sup> Zhitie prep. Simeona Stolpnika [The life of St. Simeon Stylites], in: *Zhitiya Svyatykh*, v. I (September), p. 26.

<sup>[100]</sup> Hieromonk Alexey (Kuznetsov), *Iurodstvo i stolpnichestvo*, p. 320.

<sup>[101]</sup> See: *Zhitiya Svyatykh*, v. V (January), p. 69; v. IX (May), p. 133; v. I (September), p. 486; v. II (October), p. 26.

<sup>[102]</sup> See, for instance: A. Karev, K. Somov, *Istoriia khristianstva* [The history of Christianity] (Moscow: AUCECB, 1990), pp. 88-92.



“Baptists’ trials” in Semipalatinsk in 1962 and in Fergana in 1971.

*Judge:* ‘Who is the leader of your illegal community?’

*Accused Baptist:* ‘I have already told you – Christ and the Holy Ghost’...<sup>[103]</sup>

(The accused decline any assistance from state advocates and announce the wish to use the New Testament for their own defense. The latter was not allowed.)

*Question:* ‘One of your psalms has the following words, *It is worth working, it is worth struggling...* Tell us: to work – with whom, to struggle – against whom?..’

*Answer:* ‘We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual wickedness in high places’...

*Question:* ‘You must have an official certificate confirming that you are a presbyter.’

*Answer:* ‘A presbyter should work not by certificate, but by inspiration’...

*Question to a Baptist witness:* ‘What do you know about the accused?’

*Answer:* ‘I know that their names are written in the Book of Life, that theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven, and that their reward in heaven is great!’

*Question:* ‘Show us... this book, we need documents!’

*Answer:* ‘This book is in heaven.’<sup>[104]</sup>

It is possible to imagine what an awkward situation the atheist judges found themselves in during such trials, sentencing believers to long imprisonment for their “religious fantasies” (as the Communists said) rather than for criminal offences. Such sentences inevitably were a heavy blot on the judges’ names. It is no coincidence that centuries-old Russian public opinion held that no one can offend God’s fool without punishment.<sup>[105]</sup> It is significant that one of the distinguishing marks of the true Church in the Eastern Christian tradition is the unfailingly kind, patient, and caring treatment of “God’s fools.”<sup>[106]</sup> Communities that spurn them are thereby displaying a serious lack of charity within their own ranks.<sup>[107]</sup>

In general, in the widespread Russian Baptist interpretation of holiness before perestroika, which sometimes reached evident foolishness for Christ’s sake, one cannot help but see significant Russian Orthodox influence.<sup>[108]</sup> It is notable that, in Soviet labor camps (where prisoners were not divided into groups on the basis of their religion), there were even some instances of joint “playing the fool” by the Orthodox and Baptists. Such well known past leaders of the CCECB as Iosif Bondarenko and Boris Zdorovets testify to this in their memoirs.<sup>[109]</sup>

<sup>[103]</sup> Zapis’ sudebnogo protsesssa nad Baptistami g. Semipalatinska, 1962 g. (Record of Baptists’ trial in Semipalatinsk, 1962), *Istoriia evangel’skogo dvizheniia v Evrazii* [History of the evangelical movement in Eurasia] 4.0 (Odessa: EAAA, 2005) [Windows CD-ROM].

<sup>[104]</sup> *Sud nepravedny: Stenogramma sudebnogo protsesssa* [Unfair trial: Full trial transcript], *Vestnik spaseniia*, 1 (1973): 22-6.

<sup>[105]</sup> See, for instance: *Nebesnye pokroviteli Sankt-Peterburga* [The patron saints of St. Petersburg], ed. by O. Nadporozhskaia (St. Petersburg: Izdatel’skii Dom “Neva”, 2003), p. 87.

<sup>[106]</sup> See, for instance: Panchenko, *Smekh kak zrelishe*, pp. 72-3.

<sup>[107]</sup> For instance, the Senior Presbyter of the Baptist churches of Kazakhstan, F. G. Tissen, once remarkably developed this theme in the Soviet Baptist tradition (Saran, Kazakhstan, 1999).

<sup>[108]</sup> Not the church members who consider themselves holy (even referring to Scripture), but the Christians who, feeling their own imperfection, repent before God even for their smallest sins, have the true sense of holiness. See, for instance, the following materials in *Bratskiy vestnik*: 5 (1985): 12-3; 5 (1972): 26; 6 (1975): 29-35; 3 (1976): 28, etc.

<sup>[109]</sup> See: I. Bondarenko, *Tri prigovora* [Three verdicts] (Odessa: n.p., 2006), pp. 122-3; testimony of B. M. Zdorovets (INT, Spokane, Washington, USA, 2006). At the “churchy” camp in Mordovia where

Many Soviet Baptists before perestroika were not ashamed to admit that they were “poor sinners”<sup>[110]</sup> who needed the purification of “weeping over their sins”<sup>[111]</sup> and “could not be pure.”<sup>[112]</sup> Such a world-view was often in contrast with their genuine Christian, “ascetic,” and even sometimes anguished lifestyle in an atheistic Communist state. It was probably close to holiness in the Eastern Christian sense of the word. From our point of view, the root of Russian Baptist specificity is to be sought first of all in its common history with Orthodoxy, in its life in the same country, in the unconscious following of the general Eastern Christian tradition (including monastic

trends) which was especially noticeable in the postwar years, when the Western world and socialist countries were separated by the Iron Curtain for a long time. But already since the end of the 1980s, in the atmosphere of glasnost and perestroika, other theological trends, represented, for instance, by numerous Western missionaries and preachers, appeared in Russia. As a result, the Occidental wing of the Russian Baptists (which undoubtedly always existed too) quickly grew in strength and began to put considerable pressure on their “Slavophil”-brothers, which is the situation as we see it today.

## Bibliography

Hieromonk Alexey (Kuznetsov), *Iurodstvo i stolpnichestvo* [Foolishness for Christ and pillar asceticism, 1913]. Moscow: Izd-vo Moskovskogo Podvor'ia Sv'yato-Troitskoi Sergievoy Lavry, 2000.

Averintsev, S., ed. *Khristianstvo: Entsiklopedicheskiy slovar'* [Christianity: Encyclopedic dictionary]. 3 vols. Moscow: Bol'shaia rossiyskaia entsiklopediia, 1995.

Avvakum. *Zhitie Avvakuma i drugie ego sochineniia* [Life of Avvakum and his other writings]. Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiya, 1991.

Archbishop Georgiy. *Obozhenie kak smysl' chelovecheskoi zhizni* [Theosis as the meaning of human life]. Izdanie Vladimirskoi Eparkhii, 2000.

Archbishop Ioann (Shakhovskoi). *Izbrannoe* [Selected works]. Petrozavodsk: Sviatoi ostrov, 1992.

Archpriest Valentin Sventsitskiy. *Dialogi* [Dialogues]. Moscow: Pravoslavniy Sviato-Tikhonovskiy Bogoslovskiy Institut, 1995.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Monastyr' v miru* [Monastery in the world]. Moscow: Lestvitsa, 1999.

Bockmuehl, K. “Sanctification,” in: *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by S. Ferguson. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988.

Bondarenko I. *Tri prigovora* [Three verdicts]. Odessa: n.p., 2006.

*Biuleten' Soveta Rodstvennikov Uznikov Evangel'skikh Khristian-Baptistov v SSSR*, 21 (1975).

Bychkov, A. “100-letie ob"edinitel'nykh s"ezdov” [The centenary of the uniting councils]. *Bratskiy vestnik*, 6 (1984).

\_\_\_\_\_. “110-letie russko-ukrainskogo bratstva ECB” [The 110th anniversary of the Russian-Ukrainian brotherhood of ECB]. *Bratskiy vestnik*, 5 (1977).

Bychkov, A. *Moy Zhiznenny Put'* [My Life] (M.: Otrazhenie, 2009).

Chernopiatov, M., Vasiliev A. “Pravoslavnaia Tserkov'” [The Orthodox Church]. *Bratskiy vestnik*, 3 (1988).

the latter was imprisoned in the 1960s, there was even a Russian Orthodox “stylite” who sat, telling the beads of his rosary, on the upper plank bed for several years, ignoring any work and roll calls. As spiritual kin, he and Zdorovets were on friendly terms.

<sup>[110]</sup> See: SDP, #42, p. 35; PV, #68, p. 46.

<sup>[111]</sup> SDP, #62, p. 48. See also: SDP, #36, 43, etc.

<sup>[112]</sup> PV, #77, p. 51. See also: #7, 86, etc.

- Erickson, M. *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1998.
- Fadiukhin, S., “Bog Vsemogushchiy blagoslovlia menia” [God Almighty blessed me]. *Bratskiy vestnik*, 5 (1982).
- Fedotov, G., *Sviatye drevney Rusi* [The saints of old Russia]. Moscow: Moskovskiy Rabochiy, 1990.
- Gnida, I., “Dukhovno-patrioticheskoe sluzhenie” [Spiritual and patriotic ministry]. *Bratskiy vestnik*, 6 (1984).
- Istoriia ikonopisi: Istoki, traditsii, sovremennost’. VI-XX veka [History of icon painting: Origin, traditions, the present. 6th – 20th centuries]. Moscow: ART-BMB, 2002.
- Iurkov, S. *Pod znakom groteska: Antipovedenie v russkoy kul’ture, 11 – Nachalo 20 vv.* [Under the sign of the grotesque: Anti-behavior in Russian culture, 11th – early 20th c.]. St. Petersburg: Letniy sad, 2003.
- Ivanov, S. *Vizantiyskoe iurodstvo* [Byzantine foolishness for Christ]. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 1994).
- St. John Climacus. *Lestvitsa* [The ladder of divine ascent]. Svyato-Uspenskiy Pskovsko-Pecherskiy Monastyr’, 1994.
- Karev, A., “Golgofa” [Calvary], *Bratskiy vestnik*, 3 (1964): 24; 2 (1974).
- \_\_\_\_\_, Somov, K. *Istoriia khristianstva* [History of Christianity]. Moscow: AUCECB, 1990.
- Khrapov, N., ed. *Dom Bozhiy i sluzhenie v nem* [God’s House and its service]. The Council of Churches of ECB, 1972-1974, <<http://www.blagovestnik.org/books/00280.htm>>
- Kliuchevskiy, V. “Istochniki russkoy istorii” [Sources of Russian history]. In: V. Kliuchevskiy, *Sochineniia* [Works]. 9 vols. Moscow: Mysl’, 1989, v. VII.
- Kolesnikov, N., *V pomoshch’ propovedniku: Sbornik konspektov* [Assistance to the preacher: A collection of sermon notes]. 2 Vols. Moscow: Zlatoust, 1995-1996.
- Koval’kov V., Sokolov E. “I. G. Riaboshapka.” *Bratskiy vestnik*, 6 (1981).
- Kriuchkov, Iu., *Vnutritserkovnoe dvizhenie ECB v byvshem Sovetskom Soiuze* [Within the church movement of the ECB in the former Soviet Union]. Sacramento, CA: n.p., 2001.
- Kuksenko. “Nashi besedy” [Our conversations]. Kazakhstan’s Baptist Union Archives, 2002.
- Likhachev D, Panchenko, A., Ponyrko, N. *Smekh v drevnei Rusi* [Laughter in Old Russia]. Leningrad: Nauka, 1984.
- Lopukhin A. “Zhizn’ i trudy Sv. Ioanna Zlatousta” [Life and writings of St. John Chrysostom]. In: *Polnoe sobranie tvoreny Sv. Ioanna Zlatousta* [The complete works of St. John Chrysostom]. 12 Vols. Moscow: Pravoslavnaia kniga, 1991. v. I, part 1.
- Losskiy, V. *In the Image and Likeness of God*. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1974.
- Markicheva, O., ed. *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia* [Orthodox encyclopedia]. Moscow: AST, 2007.
- Monasheskaia zhizn’ (Vypusk 1)* [Monastic life, Issue 1, 1885]. Sviato-Uspenskiy Pskovo-Pecherskiy monastyr’, 1994.
- Nadporozhskaia, O., ed. *Nebesnye pokroviteli Sankt-Peterburga* [The patron saints of St. Petersburg]. St. Petersburg: Izdatel’skiy dom “Neva,” 2003.
- Panchenko, A. *Ruskaia istoriia i kul’tura* [Russian history and culture]. St. Petersburg: Iuna, 1999.
- Pesn’ vozrozhdeniia* [Song of revival] (Izдание CCECB, 1978).
- Podberezskiy, I. *Protestanty i drugie* [The Protestants and others]. St. Petersburg: Mirt, 2000.
- Podrazhaite vere ikh: 40 let probuzhdennomu bratstvu* [Imitate their faith: 40th anniversary of the revival brotherhood]. Moscow: Sovet tserkvei ECB, 2001.
- Prokhorov, C., ed. *Podvig very: Unikal’nye svidetel’sтва o zhizni khristian v SSSR* [Battle for faith: Unique testimonies about the life of Christians in the USSR]. Pacific Coast Slavic Baptist Association, 2009.
- Popov, V. “Isikhazm kak chaianie dukhovnosti: Opyt istoricheskogo analiza [Hesychasm as the aspiration of spirituality: An attempt at historical analysis]. *Al’manakh “Bogomyslie”*, 2 (1991).
- Pospielovskiy, D. *Ruskaia Pravoslavnaia Tserkov’ v 20 veke* [The Russian Orthodox Church in the 20th century]. Moscow: Respublika, 1995.

- Rak, P. *Priblizheniia k Afonu* [Approaches to Mount Athos]. St. Petersburg: Satis, 1995.
- Raimer, I. *Missionerskaia deiatel'nost' drevnerusskogo monashstva* [The missionary works of the Old Russian monks]. Germany: Izd-vo "Logos," 1996.
- Russell, N. *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition*. N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Riabinin, Iu. *Russkoe iurodstvo* [Russian foolishness for Christ]. Moscow: RIPOL klassik, 2007.
- Savinskiy, S. *Istoriia evangelskikh khristian-baptistov Ukraini, Rossii, Belorussii, 1867-1917* [History of the Evangelical Christians–Baptists of the Ukraine, Russia, and Belorussia, 1867–1917]. St. Petersburg: Biblia dlia vsekh, 1999.
- Sawatsky, W., *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*. Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1981.
- Sbornik dukhovnykh pesen evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov* [Songbook of the Evangelical Christians- Baptists]. Moscow: AUCECB, 1968.
- Sedletskiy K.S. "Vospominaniia" [Memoirs]. Personal files of P. K. Sedletskiy, Omsk, Russia, 2007.
- Shkarovskiy, M. *Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov' pri Staline i Khrushcheve* [The Russian Orthodox Church under Stalin and Khrushchev]. Moscow: Krutitskoe Patriarshee Podvor'e, 1999.
- Struve, N. *Christians in Contemporary Russia*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967.
- Sviatyni drevney Moskvy* [Sacred places of ancient Moscow]. Moscow: Nikos, Kontakt, 1993.
- Cloistress Taisiya. *Russkoe pravoslavnoe zhenskoe monashestvo* [Russian Orthodox women's monasticism]. Minsk: Izd-vo Belorusskogo ekzarkhata, 2006.
- Tatarchenko, I. "Dukhovnaia lestnitsa" [The spiritual ladder]. *Bratskiy vestnik*, 6 (1969).
- Toporov, V. *Sviatost' i sviatye v russkoi dukhovnok kul'ture* [Holiness and saints in Russian spiritual culture]. 2 Vols. Moscow: Yazyki Russkoy Kul'tury, 1995-1998.
- Trofimov S. *Chetki* [The Beads]. Moscow: AST, 2001.
- Vlasov, A. *Ot izbytkha serdtsa* [From the heart's fullness]. Idar-Oberstein, Germany: Titel Verlag, 2000.
- Zenkovskiy, S. *Russkoe starobriadchestvo* [Russian Old Believers]. Minsk: Belorusskiy Ekzarkhat, 2007.
- Zhidkov, Ia. "Preobrazhenie Gospodne" [Transfiguration of the Lord]. *Bratskiy vestnik*, 5-6 (1962).
- Zhitiia svyatykh, na russkom iazyke izlozhennye po rukovodstvu Chet'ikh-Miney Sv. Dimitriia Rostovskogo* [Lives of the saints, in the Russian language, retold according to cycle of readings of St. Dimitriy of Rostov]. 12 vols. Moscow: Sinodal'naiia Tipografiya, 1903-1911.
- Zhuravlev, V. *Velika vernost' Tvoia, Gospodi: Svidetel'stva iz zhizni* [Great is Your faithfulness, My Lord: Life testimonies]. Steinhagen, Germany: Samen Korn, 2006, v. I. \_\_\_\_\_ . *Sila v nemoshchi: Svidetel'stva iz zhizni* [Strength in weakness: Life testimonies]. Steinhagen, Germany: Samen Korn, 2008, v. II.
- Zinchenko, V. "Prodolzhenie podviga" [Continuing the exploit]. *Vestnik istiny*, 2 (1986).
- Author's interviews:*
- Abankin, P. M., Sacramento, California, USA, 2006.
- Bgatov, V.Ia., San Diego, California, USA, 2006.
- Bondarenko, V. D., Los Angeles, California, USA, 2006.
- Kaplenkov, I. M. and Kaplenkov, A. M., Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan, 1997.
- Khot'ko, V. N., Petropavlovsk, Kazakhstan, 2000.
- Kovalenko, L. E., Sacramento, California, USA, 2006.
- Kunda, P. F., Sacramento, California, USA, 2006.
- Litovchenko, V. P., Los Angeles, California, USA, 2006.
- Mazhnaia, N. F., Fresno, California, USA, 2006.
- Meleshkevich, Ia. A., Bishkul, Kazakhstan, 2003.
- Odariuk, S. G. and Odariuk, N. M., Everett, Washington, USA, 2006.
- Vasiliev, M. A. and Avdeeva, Everett, Washington, USA, 2006.
- Zdorovets, B. M., Spokane, Washington, USA, 2006.