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**СИМБИРСКИЕ
МОЛОКАНЕ И ДУХОБОРЦЫ.**
Simbirsk Molokans and Doukhobors

Chapter XXIV

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III

**Doukhobor Psalms.—Their Meaning and Significance.—Doukhobor Prayers.—Public
Worship.—Some Worship Rites.—Their Spiritual Symbolism.—Doukhobor Tradition.—
The Book of Life.—The Dogmatic and Moral Teachings of the Book of Life.**

The German scholar-traveler Baron Haxthausen ⁹⁹⁾, who surveyed the Doukhobor settlements in Russia, received from the Doukhobors the following psalms, which they sing in churches, assemblies, and in private conversations.

I

Who will save us, if not John, the new Moses, born of the incorruptible Virgin, from the Word of God, Jesus Christ? God has proclaimed to us great wisdom; the flesh must be crucified and man redeemed, says the new Moses about the temptation of humanity, but for eternal temptation it is necessary that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, become man, and that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God and man. The Lord speaks with human lips: heed, now the kingdom is at hand, look to the East, where Mount Zion is located, go there and look upon it! From the midst of the mountain flow springs and wash the impurity from the sons and daughters of Israel. The heavens upon Mount Zion are covered with benefactors. O children in white robes, adorned with fiery stars! Those very heavens proclaim the glory of God, their sound spreads throughout the earth, and their voice to the ends of the Universe. When the end of this world comes, the heavens will open, thunder will roar and lightning will flash, people will be terrified and the kingdom will be set in motion.—Then all nations will gather in the country where the kingdom of the Most High King is; there the throne of the new David will appear.—Great terror will be in the house of David, when the Lord descends from Heaven and sits on the throne to judge the living and the dead.

⁹⁹⁾ Haxthausen, Studien über Russlands, Band. I.

Then the Archangel Michael will sound the great trumpet; he will enter into battle with the ancient serpent; the serpent will fall, Abel will strike him with the living scripture, will cast down Satan, who introduces sin into the world, from his throne, and will destroy his throne, and his glory will perish. — Then the Lord will say: amen, amen, open up, O heavens! The Lord, recognized by his servants in spirit, and not in dead ritual, will then reign in his sons forever and ever!

II

What else is a Doukhobor, if not the one depicted by: John, Moses, and Christ? What is said about the incarnation of Christ has been fulfilled in him. Divinity dwells in the flesh, which is the word of God, in which and through which He speaks and utters great wisdom.— Although the flesh here endures oppression from people, the inner being through change will pass into a better body and through that will be redeemed; it is necessary for this supreme being, this Son of God Jesus Christ, to bear flesh and to also be man, for God speaks with human lips. By the Eastern kingdom and Mount Zion is understood the society of Doukhobors, the midst of the mountain signifies the one found among them, a man armed with the highest wisdom and power. From him emanates a source of bliss for his faithful, whose virtue is covered with benefactions; they are adorned with magnificence and their whiteness shines.—These virtues spread glory among people devoted to worldly vanity, whose end will come, but the faithful will appear at that time in great power, and will spread light among people who understand only dead ritual... Now the Doukhobors are afflicted with sorrow and need, but they will overcome the world with their inner strength; the spiritual battle is great for them, but they will prevail and the world will listen to their spiritual understanding of the Christian religion...

The Doukhobors have, among others, the following prayers, which they sing in church assemblies.

I

Whither shall I go from Thy presence, O my Lord, to whom shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in Sheol—Thou art there also! If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me! To whom shall I go, to whom shall I turn, O eternal life, if not to Thee alone, my Creator! Whither shall I flee and where, apart from Thee, shall I find consolation, joy, refuge, and peace for my soul? Whither shall I go from Thee, O Lord my God, for Thou art the word of eternal life, which is in me, Thou art the source of life, the giver of great good. My soul thirsts for Thee, O God of my life! Gladden us with Thy Holy name, our sweet Lord Jesus! My soul, my heart is wounded, in all my life there is nothing more pleasant to me than Thy most Holy Spirit. — Thy words to my throat and my lips will be sweeter than honey, Thy justification, O Lord, will be for me more precious than gold and precious stones, and much sweeter than honey and the honeycomb...

II

Whom shall I acknowledge, whom shall I love, if not Thee, O Lord my God? Thou art my life, Thou art my salvation, my honor and glory! Thou art my wealth, Thou art my eternal treasure, Thou art my hope and expectation, Thou art my joy, my eternal rest! Would I really love a vain, unknown, perverted, ruinous, false thing more than Thee, my true life? Thou art my life, my salvation, and therefore on Thee alone I place my hope, all my trust, all my desires, all my prayer. Thee, O Lord, I seek with all my heart, with all my soul, and with all my strength, from the depths of my heart I cry out to Thee; my heart pours itself out to Thee alone, and I shall be entirely in Thee and Thou in me! — I call upon and acknowledge in Thee the one true God and, whom Thou hast sent, Jesus Christ, in Thy light we shall see the light of the grace of Thy Holy Spirit 1010. Amen!

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The Doukhobors, like the Molokans, have no visible sacraments, and strictly speaking, they should not have them, just as they should not have any public formal worship; nevertheless, at their church gatherings, mutual instruction in the word of God and singing are performed, as among Protestants. Clearly, the innate human impulse for community is stronger than principles! Thus, the Doukhobors in practice have, in their own way, public worship. In the Simbirsk province, where we recently encountered a small handful of them on the border of the Saratov province [11]), they have prayer rooms, without any decorations or icons; in these rooms there is neither a cross nor any other symbol. In the middle of the room, as far as we managed to see, stands a table, on which bread and salt are placed. The Doukhobors gather in such a room on appointed days.—The Doukhobors in general, and as it turned out, the Simbirsk ones in particular, do not recognize the Sabbath, nor Sundays and holidays, but despite this, they have a mysterious division of time and festive days. During worship, the men stand in rows on one side according to seniority of age, the women on the other side, and they begin first of all with a church chant to sing a hymn composed of individual fragments, mostly from the prophets.—All their hymns, psalms, and prayers are borrowed from the Bible, but they are all composed of individual verses from the Psalter of David. After the singing, the second man approaches the first eldest, both make two low bows to each other, kiss, and make a third bow, then the third bows to the first two and does the same; then the fourth does the same, and so on until the last. After that, the women among themselves repeat the same rite, in which, according to their hints, should be contained the confession of the divine Trinity, as well as the recognition of this Trinity in each of them.

In the same way they greet each other during visits, uttering the words: "I am the Lord thy God,

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thou shalt have no other gods before Me." Some Doukhobors, as Haxthausen testifies, perform their worship in the open air, but in this case the men and women form two separate circles. — During the assembly gathering, the greeting is performed such that the men and women take each other's right hands, bow to each other three times and kiss three times, while they utter some sacred words. These three bows and three kisses they call a reminder of the Trinity, and the taking of hand in hand a sign of the covenant of love, the good news, the knowledge of wisdom,

the knowledge of the hidden God. Haxthausen remarks that some, closely acquainted, admitted by the Doukhobors as spectators to their assemblies, noticed at a religious meeting in Novgorod in 1800, that the then psalm-reader of the Sophia Church, who was the elder of the Doukhobors, Ivan Ivanov, read the gospel to them. After reading a chapter, everyone began to sing. Then reading and singing followed again, and this alternated four times. Then they bowed to each other and asked for mutual forgiveness from one another and finally, twice each, they tasted something from a cup, which, however, the spectators could not ascertain. When they inquired about this from the psalm-reader, he gave them an evasive answer.

The Doukhobor sect attributes great significance to its "tradition," which is based on the words of the psalm (Ps. 44:1). *We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us.* The tradition is called by the Doukhobors the *Book of Life*, or the book, living in the memory and hearts of the Doukhobors, in contrast to the Bible, which is contained, according to them, in dead letters, which one must learn to understand. The "Book of Life" is composed of the so-called psalms of the Doukhobors; the psalms are composed of fragmentary verses and words from the psalms of David, sayings from the Old and New Testaments, prayers and petitions of the Orthodox Church. The Doukhobors have an innumerable multitude of psalms; it is impossible for one Doukhobor to know all the psalms. Therefore, the "Book of Life" is kept in its entirety not in each Doukhobor individually, but in their entire kin, being distributed among their hearts, so that, by combining all the memories and hearts of the Doukhobors, the complete

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"Book of Life" emerges from them. The book is passed down from generation to generation, successively from father to son, through oral teaching.

The beginning of the "Book of Life" is traced back to the times of the earthly life of Jesus Christ. Then, say the Doukhobors, one of his disciples, listening to Christ's teaching, wanted to write it down in due time and, due to forgetfulness, wrote it down incompletely and inaccurately (these are the Evangelists), others did not write it down, but preserved the teaching in its entirety in their memory and hearts, and also transmitted it in its entirety to subsequent generations. This is the true teaching of Christ in its spirit and direction! In the kin of the true Christians, the Doukhobors, according to their opinion, Christ himself invisibly abides and, consequently, will not allow the "Book of Life," i.e., the true understanding of the spirit of Christ, and not of external letters and rituals, to be damaged, or anything from it to be forgotten. Jesus Christ, after his resurrection, has remained and will remain until now and will remain in the true Christians forever, enlightening and instructing them in all truth. In the Doukhobor psalms, there are truths taken word for word from Holy Scripture and consistent with the spirit of its teaching; for the most part, they are filled with biblical sayings and narratives. In the "Book of Life," the theoretical teaching contains truths of unconditional faith and theological reasonings, constituting something like philosophical-mystical traditions.

Such, for example, are the main subjects of theological reasoning in the "Book of Life":

a) There is a God. He is the creator of the world, the sustainer, the redeemer of man, the punisher of sinners, and the rewarder of the righteous. God is one, but in three persons: Father, Son, and

Holy Spirit. God is spirit, God is word, God is man. The Father God is memory, the Son God is reason, the Spirit God is will. It seems that the Doukhobors represent God as residing unitedly and inseparably with the chosen kin, so that without this kin He could not be glorified;

b) There are Angels of God; there is the devil, the cause of the fall of the first people and of sin in the world. There are holy saints of God—Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and other Old Testament patriarchs and prophets, and

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New Testament Apostles. But the veneration of saints should consist not in praying to them, but in imitating their lives.

c) The saints of God are higher and closer to God than the Angels. Of the former it is said: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God, and of the latter it is said: Upon whom the angelic ranks dare not gaze.

d) Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He was born of the Holy Mary and the Holy Spirit, for the destruction of sin, for the destruction of the kingdom of the devil.

e) Jesus Christ suffered and died on the cross not by His own will. (Father! let this cup pass from me); the purpose of His suffering was solely to give us an example of suffering for the truth.

f) The Jews crucified Christ, and now their descendants continue to crucify Him, that is, those who began to worship Christ dead, i.e., the cross and His wooden icons. And the living Christ, hiding from them, moved into the kin of chosen Christians, who thus worship Christ living, and not sacrifice to letters and rituals.

g) After the death of the Apostles, Christ passed into the Apostolic successors—the chosen Christian kin. Since then, He constantly abides in the truly faithful, spiritual Christians, passing from ancestors to descendants, and will abide until the end of the age—invisibly, and after the end of the age—visibly.

h) At the end of the age, sinners will be destroyed from the face of the earth, cast into Hell for eternal torment, while the righteous will live with Christ.

i) There will be no resurrection of these mortal bodies, only the souls will remain alive, and the world will not end, but will remain forever.

j) Baptism is suffering; as Christ was baptized not by water, but by suffering, so the truly believing are baptized, following the example of Christ, by suffering, and if not by suffering, then by the word of God.

k) There are many faiths on earth, but salvation is possible in any faith, provided there are good deeds.

The moral teaching of the "Book of Life" does not exist separately; it is interwoven with its dogmatics. The Doukhobors recognize all the ten

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commandments of the law, but they read them not in sequence, but piecemeal, through the psalms. In these psalms, there is neither an expression nor a word whose meaning and significance would contradict the principles of pure morality. Gross vices are strictly denounced: drunkenness, debauchery, theft, and all unrighteousness; punishment is assigned to the wanton woman of Babylon, and to similar sinners; evil thoughts and desires are condemned; piety in thoughts and deeds is prescribed; deeds of mercy are preached: to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, etc.; meekness and temperance are praised. The Doukhobors try to uphold such teaching by communal measures, at least in those cases where it is undermined by public scandal or some coarse, overt vice. For example, the divorce of a husband from a wife is permitted due to the bad, incorrigible moral qualities of the husband, although the entire community beforehand gives exhortation to both to forget their grievances, reconcile, and not separate; in case of divorce—the sons remain with the mother, and the daughters under the care of the father. Someone caught more than once in theft, depravity, intemperance, disobedience to the authorities, after useless exhortations to reform, is rejected by the whole community and handed over to our civil authorities.

Jesus Christ said: "there shall be one flock and one shepherd," and His word will undoubtedly come to pass. Under what conditions and circumstances of time? After what upheavals in the destinies of humanity? Known to Him alone; but that it will come to pass, there is sufficient guarantee in His words: "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away!"

And Christianity of all times and places has not been devoid of aspirations for mutual unification. True, in the majority of cases, they strove for this not in the spirit of the new commandment given by Christ to humanity, not in the name of love, but stirred by human passions and the most pernicious of them—the passion for domination;

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and these strivings led, therefore, to the disunity of Christians among themselves, whereby not only was the commandment of love forgotten, but all the rights of humanity were trampled, and mutual bitterness reached implacable hatred, unsatisfied by any bloody sacrifices. Nevertheless, the thought of the mutual unification of all humanity in the name of Christ and on the principles of the Gospel never died among people, nor could it die, because only in this thought can humanity, divided by all sorts of strivings, find some reconciliation. We must marvel that the Doukhobors, these simple Russian people, preach a doctrine—that salvation is possible in any faith, provided there are good deeds and moral perfection—a principle which even those considered civilized confessors of Christ—self-interested Catholics—do not recognize. The thirst for religious truth among the Molokans and Doukhobors is too deep and strong for anything to stop them when there is an opportunity to satisfy this thirst: under such conditions, is the transition from words and reasoning to action itself difficult? The future historian of these sects will have, on the basis of various researches, in which we have made a start, to look more deeply

into the entire structure of their religious life, to indicate to what extent their religion influences their entire way of life, family and communal, their upbringing, their works of charity, etc., to study also those aspects of life and national characteristics which especially promote or hinder the development of religious aspirations; in a word—to convey a full picture of the religious life of these sects with a detailed clarification of the bright sides and an impartial indication of the dark sides of such a distinctive life. There is no doubt that woman gives the village its true significance. But nowhere in Russia among the common people is woman held in greater esteem than among the Molokans and Doukhobors, and nowhere, perhaps, does she so deserve this... The striving to be a tireless housewife in no way prevents her, upon leaving the kitchen, from studying the word of God and being an ornament to the religious assembly... What is this phenomenon? Why has this handful of sectarians surpassed, in terms of views on women, 50 million of the Orthodox mass? Why has America surpassed all of Europe on this question,

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and as for us, sinful Russians, who do not withhold our fists from a woman's face and do not let go of the whip from our hands, there is nothing to say!.. In America, women get into a public carriage, and all the men stand up offering her the best seat. A young girl can travel through all the states there, in all possible directions, in the immense railway carriages, which have only one class and one compartment—without the slightest risk of hearing even one unpleasant or improper word. She is under the best protection—under the protection of the whole society. If some European, still accustomed to our ways here, dared to somehow express a lack of respect for her, he would be put off at the very first station, or even in the open field. Understandably, the foundation for all this lies in biblical strictness and reasonableness, and this strictness is the result of their unshakably strong religious convictions, which have penetrated into the habits, feelings, and the entire inner life of the nation... With the exception of Washington and New York, these two almost European cities, the cities in America breathe an atmosphere of innocence, completely unknown in our Old World, and about Russia there's nothing to say!.. From this point of view, the biblical way of life of the Molokans and Doukhobors is instructive and worthy of being noted by us...