EARLY RUSSIAN EVANGELICALS (1874-1929): HISTORICL BACKGROUND & HERMENEUTICAL TENDENCIES BASED ON I. V. KARGEL’S WRITTEN HERITAGE

by

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PROMOTER:
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The author is going to argue that Russian evangelical bodies – Stundists, Baptists, Pashkovites, Mennonite Brethren, and Evangelical Christians – had their origins in Western piety; likewise Molokans – in Russian Orthodox piety. Biblical piety became the key factor which united these otherwise different movements. I. V. Kargel’s life was a crossroad of these influences. Having become a key figure among Russian evangelicals Kargel actually embodied many features of these movements long before they united historically. Thus, his writing would qualify as a good source for studying Russian evangelical hermeneutics.

The hypothesis for this study is that since Russian evangelicals were primarily pietistic at their roots, their theological hermeneutic is expected to be of pietistic and devotional nature. This means that Scripture would have prime authority. Personal and group studies of the Bible would be carried with the purpose of believers’ edification. The Holy Spirit would be expected to use the pages of Scripture to speak directly to the believers. There would not be much theologizing but rather a desire to “live Christ” in practical life.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................... 2  
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .......................................................................................... 3  
TABLE OF CONTENTS ....................................................................................... 4  
ABBREVIATIONS .................................................................................................. 10  
TABLE OF TRANSLITERATIONS USED IN THIS PAPER ................................... 11  
GLOSSARY ........................................................................................................... 12  
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................... 13  
1.1 The Need for this Study ............................................................................... 13  
1.2 The Purpose of this Study ........................................................................... 14  
1.3 The Scope of this Study .............................................................................. 15  
  1.3.1 The period of the time under consideration .......................................... 15  
  1.3.2 Varieties of Russian evangelicalism ....................................................... 15  
1.4 The Design of the Study: Brief Description of the Chapters ....................... 17  
1.5 Bibliographic Foreword on the History of Russian Evangelicalism .............. 18  
  1.5.1 Sources on the Russian Evangelical Movement ..................................... 19  
  1.5.2 Pre-Revolutionary Orthodox literature ............................................... 21  
  1.5.3 Post revolutionary period .................................................................... 25  
  1.5.4 Foreign literature .................................................................................. 26  
  1.5.5 Periodicals ........................................................................................... 28  
  1.5.6 Memoirs .............................................................................................. 29  
  1.5.7 Fiction ................................................................................................ 31  
  1.5.8 Recent Studies of the Subject ............................................................... 33  
1.6 The Research Problems .............................................................................. 34  
CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY ........................................... 36  
2.1 History ......................................................................................................... 36  
  2.1.1 Philosophy of History: Definition and Epistemological Basis for Historical Studies .................................................................................................. 36  
  2.1.2 History and Objectivity: Canons of Evidence and Truth ....................... 38  
  2.1.3 The Author’s Presuppositions ............................................................... 42  
2.2 Hermeneutics ............................................................................................... 43  
CHAPTER THREE: BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES ..................................... 46  
3.1 Historical Context ......................................................................................... 46  
  3.1.1 Socio-Political conditions ..................................................................... 46  
  3.1.2 The monopoly of the Russian Orthodox Church .................................... 49  
  3.1.3 Publishing the Bible in Russian Vernacular ........................................... 57  
  3.1.4 Evangelical movements in nineteenth century Russia .......................... 61
3.1.4.1 Molokans .........................................................................63
3.1.4.2 Stundists ..........................................................................66
3.1.4.3 Baptists ............................................................................72
3.1.4.4 Pashkovites .....................................................................76
3.1.4.5 Mennonite Brethren .........................................................79
3.1.5 Conclusion .............................................................................82
3.2 Foreign Evangelical Influences .....................................................85
3.2.1 Movements .............................................................................85
3.2.1.1 General tendencies in British evangelicalism by 1870s...87
3.2.1.2 The Brethren movement ..................................................91
3.2.1.3 Keswick influence ..........................................................101
3.2.2 Preachers and Missionaries, their Theological Roots and
Influences ....................................................................................104
3.2.2.1 Lord Radstock (1833-1913)........................................... 104
3.2.2.2 Dr. Baedeker (1823-1906)............................................. 119
3.2.2.3 Otto Stockmayer (1838-1917) .................................125
3.2.2.4 George Müller (1805-1898) .................................127
3.2.2.5 Reginald Radcliffe .........................................................132
3.2.2.6 Jessie Penn-Lewis (1861-1927) ............................134
3.2.3 Conclusion ...........................................................................136

CHAPTER FOUR: RUSSIAN EVANGELICALS (1874-1929). A
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ........................................................................138

4.1 The Rise and the Initial Stage of the Evangelical Movement in St.
Petersburg (1874-1884) ........................................................................138
4.1.1 The First Converts among the Upper Class .........................138
4.1.1.1 Prominent Women.........................................................139
4.1.1.2 Colonel Pashkov (1831-1902) .......................................151
4.1.1.3 Count Korff (1842-1933) ................................................168
4.1.1.4 Count Bobrinskiy (1826-1890) .......................................172
4.1.2 Domus Ecclesiae—Social Setting for Establishing a Church
........................................................................................................175
4.1.2.1 St. Petersburg’s Mansions as Church Meeting Halls....176
4.1.2.2 Social Makeup of the Church – Crossroads of Upper and
Lower Classes ......................................................................................179
4.1.2.3 Theological and Practical Peculiarities of the Church in St.
Petersburg............................................................................................183
5.1.1 Kargel's background and the early years: Influence of Russian Baptists .......................................................................................................................... 275
5.1.2 Kargel's studies: influence of German Baptists .............................................. 278
5.1.3 Kargel in St. Petersburg: from “a German Baptist Pastor” to a Pashkovite leader .............................................................................................................. 282
5.1.4 Kargel and Dr. Baedeker: Brethren Influence ................................................. 295
5.1.5 Back to St. Petersburg: Kargel and Prokhanov – two evangelical leaders .......................................................................................................................... 299
5.1.6 Late Years ........................................................................................................ 305
5.1.7 Conclusion ........................................................................................................ 312
5.2 Brief Review of Kargel's Written Theological Heritage ................................................. 313
5.2.1 Confession of faith .............................................................................................. 314
5.2.2 Theological works .............................................................................................. 316
5.2.2.1 Svet iz teni budushchikh blag [The Reflection of Glories to Come] ................................................................................................................................. 316
5.2.2.2 Vetkhozavetnye proobrazy [Old Testament types] ........................................ 317
5.2.2.3 V kakom ty otnoshenii k Dukhu Svyatomu? [Where do you stand in your relationship to the Holy Spirit?] .............................................................. 318
5.2.2.4 Gde, po Pisaniyu, nakhodyatsya mertvye [Where are the dead according to the Scripture] ................................................................................................. 319
5.2.2.5 Khristos osvyashchenie nashe [Christ is our sanctification] ................................. 320
5.2.2.6 “Se, gryadu skoro…” [“Lo, I am coming soon…”] ........................................... 321
5.2.2.7 Grekh kak zlo vsekh zol v etom mire [Sin as the greatest evil in the world] ......................................................................................................................... 322
5.2.2.8 Izliyanie Dukha Svyatogo i pyatidesyaticheskoe dvizhenie [The outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the Pentecostal movement] ................................................. 323
5.2.3 Commentaries .................................................................................................... 325
5.2.3.1 Tolkovatel' Otkroveniya svyatogo Ioanna Bogoslova [Interpretation of the Revelation of St. John] ................................................................................. 325
5.2.3.2 Zakon Dukha zhizni: Tolkovanie glav 5,6,7,8 Poslaniya svyatogo apostola Pavla k Rimlyanam [The law of the Spirit of life: Commentary of the chapters 5,6,7,8 of the Epistle of Saint Apostle Paul to the Romans] ................................................................................. 326
5.2.4 Lectures ............................................................................................................ 327
5.2.5 Sermons and discourses ................................................................. 330
5.2.6 Letters ......................................................................................... 332
5.2.7 Conclusion .................................................................................. 335

5.3 Inductive study of Kargel’s hermeneutics .............................................. 337

5.3.1 Case study 1. Based on a section from the book, "Where do you stand in your relationship to the Holy Spirit" .......................................................... 340
  5.3.1.1 Biblical pattern of promise and fulfilment ......................... 341
  5.3.1.2 Apocalyptic approach .................................................... 342
  5.3.1.3 “Latter rain” expectations ................................................. 344
  5.3.1.4 Importance of application ............................................... 345
  5.3.1.5 View of the Scripture and its study ................................ 346
  5.3.1.6 Immediacy of the scriptural message ................................ 348

5.3.2 Case study 2. Based on the book “Christ is our sanctification” .......................................................... 350
  5.3.2.1 Scripture as the Word of God ........................................ 351
  5.3.2.2 The role of the Holy Spirit and studying the text ............ 352
  5.3.2.3 Scripture and doctrinal matters ...................................... 354
  5.3.2.4 Personal searching of the Scriptures ............................ 357
  5.3.2.5 Obedience as a prerequisite for understanding .............. 360
  5.3.2.6 Continuity between the Testaments .............................. 363
  5.3.2.7 Extra scriptural revelations ............................................ 365
  5.3.2.8 Conclusion ..................................................................... 366

5.3.3 Case study 3. Based on “Sin as the greatest evil in this world" .......................................................... 367

5.3.4 Case study 4. Based on “The Reflection of Glories to Come” .......................................................... 368
  5.3.4.1 Christological approach .................................................. 371
  5.3.4.2 Continuing Brethren tradition of the interpretation of Pentateuch .................................................. 372
  5.3.4.3 The usage of typology .......................................................... 374
  5.3.4.4 Conclusion ..................................................................... 377

5.4 Theological Presuppositions in Kargel’s Hermeneutics .............. 378

5.4.1 Scripture and the Holy Spirit ......................................................... 378
  5.4.1.1 Inspiration and Inerrancy .................................................. 378
  5.4.1.2 Illumination by the Holy Spirit ......................................... 381
5.4.1.3 Scriptural Authority ........................................................384

5.5 Pietism as the main “root” of Kargel’s hermeneutical strategy ....386

5.5.1 Is it legitimate to call Russian evangelicals Pietists? ........386

5.5.2 Four features of Pietism .........................................................387

5.5.3 Kargel’s hermeneutics of Pietism .........................................392

5.5.4 Critique of pietistic hermeneutics .........................................395

5.5.5 Common ground for understanding: A word in defence of
Kargel’s hermeneutical approach ...................................................396

5.5.6 Conclusion ...........................................................................398

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS .............................403

6.1 Summary of the Discussion ........................................................403

6.2 Kargel’s hermeneutical guidelines ..............................................410

6.3 The Contribution of this Study .................................................... 411

6.4 The Prospect for Further Study ..................................................412

BIBLIOGRAPHY ...............................................................................414

Sources and Literature .................................................................414

Articles ............................................................................................428

Dictionaries and encyclopaedias ......................................................431

Electronic Sources ..........................................................................432

Archival Sources ............................................................................434

Primary Sources on CDs ...............................................................434

APPENDIX .....................................................................................435

Table 1 ..........................................................................................435

Table 2 ..........................................................................................457

Table 3 ..........................................................................................500

Table 4 ..........................................................................................523
ABBREVIATIONS

AUCECB – All-Union Congress of Evangelical Christians-Baptists;
BFBS – the British and Foreign Bible Society;
ECB – Evangelical Christians-Baptists;
GPU – State Political Administration (the Soviet secret police from 1922 to 1923);
KGB – the Committee for State Security (the former Soviet secret police, founded in 1954);
M. – Moscow;
MVD – Ministry of State Security; the Soviet secret police from 1946 to 1954;
NKVD – People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (the Soviet secret police from 1934 to 1943: the police from 1943-46);
OGPU – the Soviet police and secret police from 1923 to 1934;
RBS – the Russian Bible Society;
SPb. – St. Petersburg, Russia’s capital from 1712 to 1914;
SESER – the Society for the Encouragement of Spiritual and Ethical Reading, sometimes referred to as “the Society”;
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
**TABLE OF TRANSLITERATIONS USED IN THIS PAPER**

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GLOSSARY

Chief procurator (*ober-prokuror*)  Chief lay official of the Orthodox Church in Russia, appointed by the emperor

Colportage (*knigonoshy*)  The book-carriers who walked thousands of miles distributing Bibles across Russia

diocese (*eparkhiya*)  Main administrative unit of the Orthodox Church and usually identical to the province

district (*uezd*)  Subdivision of diocese and province

disfranchised person (*lishenets*)  A Soviet citizen deprived of elective rights and food cards (up to 1936)

Edict (*ukaz*)  A law or regulation issued by a tsar or his government

Living Church (*Zhivaia tserkov’*)  Extremely liberal clerical organization formed in the early 1920s that collaborated with the Bolsheviks

Old Belief (*staroobryadchestvo*)  Religious movement of Orthodox dissenters in the seventeenth century

province (*gubernia*)  Main administrative unit in civil administration

renovationists (*obnovlentsy*)  Liberal clergy who since early 1900s demanded radical reform in the Orthodox Church