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## TRANSFORMATION OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT IN RUSSIAN BAPTISM

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### *Abstract*

The work is devoted to the analysis of the history of the movement of evangelical Christians-Baptists, accompanied by divisions, schisms, divisions. The lack of unity is due to conflicting interpretations of theologians and ordinary believers of various issues. Such issues were the relationship between man and society, man and the state, society, and the state, as well as the associated idea of salvation and personal faith. The traditions of the reform movement of M. Luther and J. Calvin live in the mindsets and theological constructions of modern leaders of Baptism and especially among the supporters of the “initiative” movement that arose in 1968, advocates of independent activity in illegal conditions. The half-century existence of this movement testifies to deep contradictions in Baptism, to reformist sentiments and an open struggle for freedom of conscience, for restricting government interference in the affairs of religious organizations, for free propaganda of religions and the right to book printing. As a rule, in conditions of underground existence, religious movements position themselves as extremely conservative. Moreover, they are fundamentally not registered with the authorities, do not enter into dialogue with the state. This state of affairs makes it impossible for constructive interaction of religious organizations, as integral elements of civil society, with the state, which in conditions of legal statehood seems vital.

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## **1. Introduction**

Next, 2020 marks 60 years of a peculiar phenomenon, exclusively Russian - the Protestant movement in Baptism. In modern science, this movement is called differently: "reformers", "proponents", "separatists", "schismatics". Over the years, both religious scholars, theologians, and members of the public comprehend this phenomenon. The causes of Baptism, the nature of protest movements, the figures of leaders, and their role in the split processes of the Church of Evangelical Christians-Baptists are investigated. The historical background and political decisions influenced the occurrence of this phenomenon. Therefore, a revision to history, the current state of the International Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and the prospects for its development are relevant. Can we talk about the Council of Church's movement as a continuation of the traditions and development of the ideas of the Reformation, which gave rise to Protestantism in general? Or is it a product of exceptionally erroneous decisions of the Soviet government? Today, more than 70 thousand followers of the International Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists are in "underground" communities that are not registered with the judiciary. At the same time, the activity of supporters of the International Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists has acquired an international character. These circumstances determine the need and relevance of the study of the movement of "initiative".

## **2. Problem Statement**

The solution to social and humanitarian problems ensures the unity of the state and society. At all times, the acute question is the normalization of relations between religious organizations and believers, on the one hand, and society and the state, on the other hand. The believer's attitude to society and the state is determined by his place in the system of public relations, legal protection, and the ability to realize his social and spiritual needs. These opportunities can be ensured only by consistently safeguarding the right to freedom of conscience, suppressing illegal administrative methods of influence on religious organizations and believers. The unresolved state-legal aspect of this problem puts believers in a position of confrontation concerning the state and society and infringes on the rights and freedoms of believers. The history of the issue indicates the absence of dialogue, both intra-confessional and state-confessional, in resolving contentious issues, and they have an organizational, intra-church, and state-administrative character. The following issues are of particular interest: the transformation of the theological doctrines of Protestantism in modern globalization processes, preservation of Arminian traditions, fundamentalism under the influence of postmodernism on the sociocultural environment.

## **3. Research Questions**

This work is based on an analysis of materials from the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. Based on these materials, various issues are investigated: issues of state-confessional and within the confessional dialogue and the reasons for the appearance of illegal religious groups and organizations, the forms of their functioning. The Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists is the most significant follower and influential Protestant organization in Russia. It is a breakaway party, the Council of Churches of

Evangelical Christians-Baptists, is a rebellious, illegal movement of Baptism, uniting more than 70 thousand believers in the Russian Federation.

Recently, the central philosophical, political, and theological issues are the problem of man, his historical purpose, place, and prospects of existence, rights, freedoms, and duties. The role of religion has increased dramatically at the turn of the XX–XXI centuries throughout the world. In this regard, the activity of religious organizations, especially Protestant ones, has significantly increased. Christian theologians note that the global problems of the modern world have been and are the primary motive for churches to increase their activity. In 1984, theologians claimed to be responsible for strengthening the moral consciousness of humanity, which should reflect the spirit of the gospel.

Protestantism took the principal place in the development and implementation of these ideas in its various directions, and especially among evangelists and evangelical Christians-Baptists. This assessment is held not only by domestic science but also by world religious studies. The fact that Baptism is focused on attention to a personal relationship with the "world," and God explains this situation. That is why its central issues are the problem of freedom, purpose, and predetermination of his existence in the historical process. As a result of increasing the prestige of evangelical Christian Baptists in society and the eyes of young believers, the activities of Baptist religious organizations in international social movements for the salvation of humanity in the context of the global crisis have intensified.

The development of theology, the emergence of new religious concepts of a renewed sense, are associated with the growth of religious contacts, the study of the experience of missionary work in other countries, the inclusion of young believers in these processes. The society created the conditions for the development of democratic freedoms and human rights, the initiative of independence and creativity. Theologians, responding to these aspirations, rethought some of the principles of Baptism, the content and methods of activity.

It follows from the previous that, in general, under the conditions of modern globalism, Baptism not only did not exhaust the possibilities of its development but also managed to fit into the modern context of history, demonstrating its modernity, ideological, and social mobility.

However, for decades, since 1961, it was not possible to overcome the internal schism in Baptism. The sixty-year existence of the Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, and today the International Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, suggests that this split has essential reasons. These grounds are foundations not only of an organizational and managerial sense but also of a dogmatic nature (which is consistently denied by the church leadership).

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

The study aims to the investigation of the schism history in Baptism, the causes of the non-alignment movement as a continuation of the Reformation traditions in modern globalization through the modern concept formation of the man and society relationship.

In addition, it is planned to consider the main provisions of the Baptist doctrine developed at different stages of historical development. Moreover, the Baptist doctrines influenced the processes of schism, the separation of some believers from the mother church. Particular attention will be paid to the new rationale for the existence of the church of the "initiators." The aim of the work is also to justify the

need for the legal regulation of this conflict. The issue of legal regulation makes it possible to overcome the schism and return the church and believers of the International Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists to their rightful course, and therefore, to the legal field.

## 5. Research Methods

The study based on various research methods, given the complexity of the object of study. The comparative method is in the analysis of the works of Russian and foreign theologians. The method of analogy is in understanding the fundamentalist concept of man and the world in Baptism. The modern schismatics of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists offer an interpretation of the religious interpretation of the “correction” of the sinful world through the gift of divine grace.

The primary method of studying the claimed topic is the analysis of scientific and theological literature relating to the studied problem in a historical context, modern scientific and theological literature. This study is based on an analysis of the materials of the Congresses of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, congresses of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, publications in the magazines “Christian”, “Baptist”, “Word of Truth”, “Morning Star”, “Fraternal Messenger”, lecture course “Moral Theology”, “Protestant” newspapers, Newsletter of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Baptist Christians, the book “History of Evangelical Christians Baptists in the USSR”, other religious literature, including handwritten, circulated among believers, the Church of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists and the Council of Churches of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

## 6. Findings

The search for the split reasons in Baptism leads to an understanding of the concept of Baptism about a person, his individual and social activities, and the earthly life evaluation in general sense. At the same time, the peculiarity of Christianity as a world religion, which combines the sanctification of existing orders with their denial, is essential. The basis of this provision is a system outside of world values as the priority orientations of human life: the salvation of a soul resting on the dual nature of man (sinful and divine), the denial of peace in the name of eternal life beyond earthly existence. The main thing on the scale of values is salvation. The idea of salvation can be filled with different contents. Therefore, there is always the opportunity to use different religious ideas to justify social protest or, conversely, support social activity. Baptism manifested a supranational and supranational character of people's equality and democratization of life. Baptism has undergone peculiar processing of the problem of salvation and the boundaries of human free will. Therefore, "many researchers call Baptism the second edition of the Reformation, which grew up on the Protestantism of Luther and Calvin (as cited in Luther, 1883) and developed their ideas in the historical conditions of the New Age" (Yembulaeva, 1989). "he Reformation was an attempt to recreate Christianity from its primary principles and its initial conditions, not obscured by subsequent historical layers"(Lazarev, 1987). Maybe the phenomenon of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists is the third edition of the Reformation, only in the context of globalizing humanity?

In the Baptist worldview, the doctrine of "salvation" is greatly influenced by the doctrine of "good deeds." In 1989, the 43rd Congress of the Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists amended the interpretation of this doctrine formulated by Luther (1883). It is noteworthy that the provision on the inner freedom and equality of people in their possibility of spiritual appeal to God is combined in his teaching with the denial of free will. It is known that M. Luther denied the possibility of social equality. Hence the denial of free will, and the consecration by Baptism of social inequality. However, in many currents of Baptism, the requirement of social justice and social equality is derived from Luther (1883).

Moreover, in the conditions of a modern globalizing space, the thesis of the equality of people before God has become the religious and ideological slogan of uniting people. These theological propositions in Baptism are the most confusing and difficult to understand and interpret. It is no accident that the founder of Baptism in Russia, Pavlov (2012), noted: "You can find many texts in the Holy Scriptures both in favor of predestination and in favor of free self-determination of a person ... but how to combine both of them is above our mind, you just need to believe that both are true" (para 2).

Because of the different interpretations of these doctrines, two currents appeared in Baptism: general and private Baptists. There were private Baptists; they rely on the teachings of Calvin (1989), who developed the ideas of Luther (1883) in new historical conditions. They are based on two ideas – absolute predestination (excluding the free will of man) and divine non-interference in the laws of the world. An insignificant number of people will come to salvation, which is incomprehensible why God chose, without any merit. Moreover, otherwise: a man should not hiccup the reason for what and why it was decided about him in heaven, he should hope for belonging to the elect and prove it with his life and productive work. The measure of chosenness is a success, which has divine power. Thus, the fatalistic idea of Calvin (1989) about the chosenness of people has become a form of social activity. Otherwise, in the words of Mitrokhin (1966), "the idea of human powerlessness becomes a form of affirmation of bourgeois activity" (p. 141).

The doctrine of Calvin (1989) in the past and today expresses the interests of the boldest, most daring, young part of the Baptists, represented by the Council of Churches, who went on schismatic actions. They declared their non-alignment with a loyal state part of the Church of the Evangelical Christians-Baptists. It is in Calvin's ideas that the conclusion is that man's submission to the will of God should give rise to a consciousness of righteousness in him, and if earthly powers go against the commandments of God, then resistance should be put forward. The justification of earthly power lies in obedience to God.

The duality of Baptist fatalism, embodied in the idea of salvation, was transformed at different periods of development into slogans of active activity, sometimes leading to alienation from society and the state. It is these trends that are found in the life of evangelical Christian Baptists and their schism.

It is noteworthy that in Baptism, from the very beginning, the practically secular principles of the religious organization were approved. At the head of the communities were authoritative elders and preachers selected by believers. They were considered the most trained, theologically robust, and had a high level of religious joy. The authority of such ahead of the community led to unquestioning submission, the demand for strict discipline. These facts are recorded by researchers in the communities of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

As noted above, along with private Baptists, there were communities of familiar Baptists, whose functioning was built on democratic principles, in many ways secular. Following the Arminian tradition, they otherwise solve the problem of predestination and free will: a person has free will and the possibility of choice. People can be moral by their choices and, therefore, can ensure their salvation. God has granted salvation to all. In their teaching, predestination plays the role of foreknowledge. This idea is an entirely different solution to the question of the appointment of man. This tradition is followed by evangelists of the Church of Evangelical Christian Baptists.

From the very beginning, Baptism in Russia was not socially uniform. The specificity of Baptism was that the mood in the communities was unstable and was aggravated by the doctrine itself, outlined in the traditionally Calvinistic spirit of private Baptism. This spirit was reinforced by the views of the Molokans, who practically captured leading positions in the communities. Authoritarianism, isolationism, asceticism, and severe discipline are the features of the first Baptists ("private Baptism"). At the same time, the mood of a specific part of the believers led to opposition actions and the transition of the most "dissatisfied with power" "elders" of believers to familiar Baptists. Dissatisfaction among private Baptists often led to a break with Baptism in general.

It was after the World Baptist Congress in 1905 in London than the Russian Baptists began active missionary work. They began to disseminate religious literature, conducted powerful sermons, and held public events.

It is noteworthy that during periods of social storms, revolutions, crises, and reforms in the communities of evangelical Christian Baptists, interest in faith decreased, and spiritual life lost its tone. The leadership of the communities tried to neutralize the influence of the world on the lives of ordinary believers. Moreover, the main Baptist issue is the problem of participation or non-participation in the life of society and the state.

After the October Revolution of 1917, conflicting processes took place in the Baptist and evangelical Christian communities. On the one hand, liberal-minded believers, inspired by the slogans of freedom of conscience, turn to the ideas of the "social gospel" and actively participate in socialist transformations. On the other hand, conservative forces in private Baptism reinforce the sentiments of isolationism, fuel antisocial sentiments. The activity of the Baptist magazine is being activated, where materials are published urging immersed in prayer, isolate themselves from the world and think about salvation and holiness.

The reasons for the appearance of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists lie not only in theological constructions. History of the development of the church under conditions of socialist construction in the policy of the Soviet state concerns the church and religion.

Throughout the entire Soviet history of evangelical Christian Baptists, a call has been made today for the unity of the church, for fidelity to the canons of faith. Already in the 30s and 40s, administrative pressure on the religious sphere intensified, repressions began, and communities were removed from registration. In 1935, the Baptist Union was closed, and its leadership was repressed, the leadership of the evangelical Christians suffered the same fate. Some of the prominent representatives of the Evangelical Christian Baptists left the country. At this time, the theological thesis was rejected powerfully, rejecting the Union of a religious organization with the state. As a result, the theological substantiation of the

opposition of the believer to the surrounding world takes shape; he must completely subordinate himself to the gospel, and oppose the world. The author of this trend in Baptism was the authoritative preacher and theologian Kargel (1913), whose views were based on eschatological and mystical traditions and the ideas of holiness and consecration of Luther (1883). Supporters Kargel (1913) was preached by the spiritual self-estrangement of man, detachment from earthly life, and a profound departure into the world of religion.

These ideas, as well as the ideals of the Church of the Saints, are still alive today, especially in the tradition of private Baptism, to which we include the communities of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists.

In 1944, a union of Baptist churches and communities of evangelical Christians took place, the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists was formed, headed by the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. The creation and functioning of this Union, as well as its history and vicissitudes, carried a powerful fermentation charge. Disagreements, differences on many issues: organizational, disciplinary, theological – always shook the newly created Union.

The development of the anti-religious struggle characterizes the socio-political situation in the country associated with the Khrushchev thaw. During this period, the pressure of the religious leadership authorities increased in order to limit activity and strengthen control over the church life. The leadership of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in these problematic conditions adopts two normative acts, which were supposed to regulate the life of communities in a new way. The Plenum of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in December 1959 was forced to adopt the Regulation on the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists in the USSR and the Instruction Letter to the Senior Elders of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists. These documents and phenomena that arose in the fifties and early sixties led to a storm and led to a division in the fraternity" (A History of Evangelical Christian Baptists, 1989).

The majority of communities rejected the materials received, expressing disagreement and indignation. Some communities generally declined to answer. Only a small part of the communities registered with the authorities agreed with the provisions of these documents. "The fallacy in the adoption of these documents was recognized by the then leadership of the Union. At the All-Union Congress in 1963, they canceled them, and at the Congress in 1966, they brought open repentance" (A History of Evangelical Christian Baptists, 1989).

Restrictions on the canonical and spiritual life, gross state interference in the internal life of the church, and violation of religious freedoms led to thousands of people moving into an illegal situation, and communities began to refuse registration. Thus, a religious underground was created, and the painful split beginning, which has not been overcome so far. During this period, Baptism lost the collective meaning of its historical existence; it lost the ability to design the future (Baumgarten, 2007) independently. The emergence of the initiative group led to accumulated problems that have become sustainable. Among them, one of the main issues was the question of the low efficiency of managing the life of a religious organization in the face of increasing, unceremonious state interference in church affairs.

1961 is the birth year of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists. Of the protesters against the new documents on the church of the Evangelical Christian Baptists in mid – 1961, an initiative group of 11 people was created to convene an extraordinary congress of Baptists. However, actions agreed upon with the Union of Evangelical Christian Baptists were not achieved, and the group began to act independently, distributing critical articles across the communities. The "initiators" set the task of dividing the fraternity on an organizational basis, accusing the leadership of the All-Union Council of Evangelical Baptist Christians of "cowardice," "deviation from the truth," "connection with the world," "conducting an atheism program"

To strengthen the effectiveness of the separation from the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the "proponents" excommunicated a large group of members of the Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists from the church. Moreover, this action was supported by some experienced and reputable members of the Union. Besides, the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists declared the registered local churches "perishing," and the churches supporting "proponents" were called "rescuing".

The All-Union Congress of Evangelical Christian Baptists in 1963 did not bring the brotherhood to unity. The Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists launched a robust information campaign against the registered church. In September 1964, the enlarged Plenum of the All-Union Economic Council of the Bolsheviks stated that the split was not overcome, that about 4 thousand people, 15 thousand Christians of the Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals) and Mennonites were outside the Union. Also, it was stated that the process of leaving local churches and groups from the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists was ongoing. The initiative group was transformed into the Organizing Committee for the convocation of the All-Union Congress, which would represent all communities in the USSR. This venture failed. Then, the authorities and the leadership of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists decide to create an independent Union of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, which establishes the Herald of Salvation magazine, which was printed by hectograph ("blue"). Then the magazine changed its name to the "Herald of Truth" and exists in this form today.

Historians of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists give impressive statistics on the split: by 1965: 283 churches and groups with a total number of believers of 8,686 people left the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christian Baptists. By the end of the year, another 20 groups of 1329 people were added. According to Mitrokhin (1966), the total number of movements by the end of 1965 was approximately 20–30 thousand people (Yembulaeva, 1989). In 1965, the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists was elected as a permanent governing body, which negotiated with authorities on the registration of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists as a centralized religious organization. However, this proposal was rejected by the authorities. The leaders of the split were well aware that the government, willingly negotiating, would do its best to discredit them. Then there is a fundamental provision on the refusal of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists to register with the judiciary, which gave them advantages on issues of Baptism, the participation of children in liturgical gatherings, and others. In 1966, after the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, after repeated appeals to the authorities on the publication of the Gospels and collections of spiritual hymns, the Christian publishing house and printing house were opened.

## 7. Conclusion

During the existence of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, a specific ideology, culture, ethical principles, and norms of behavior have been formed. The separation processes themselves revealed the main problem in Baptism, revealed the orientation of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists towards isolation, towards the cultivation of mysticism and fanaticism. Besides, the Non-Aligned Movement consisted predominantly of young believers who expressed open protest against government interference in church affairs. Young believers opposed outright pressure on the leadership of religious organizations against the restriction of the influence of the church on people's lives, especially on the younger generation, against the ban on publishing and missionary activities and all spiritual creativity.

Note that such organized disobedience to the authorities was an incredible event in the USSR. Disobedience was expressed in open speeches, numerous letters of protest to party, Soviet and international instances, the creation of the Council of Relatives of Prisoners of Conscience (today renamed the Department of Intercession), and other public organizations. The authorities first encountered fierce resistance and were not ready for such events. These circumstances explain the repression that hit the leaders of the movement primarily. At that time, quite useful modern tools for regulating conflicts in the religious sphere were still not used – dialogue, tactics of mutual concessions, agreements, work of permanent Councils to resolve disputed positions, work with authorities, leaders.

As notes Popov (2019), indirectly, the Baptist-Initiative movement contributed to the development of socio-political processes in the country. Indeed, religious organizations received new opportunities and freedom of confession, the law on freedom of conscience was changed, a real separation of the church from the state was achieved, and a cooperative model of state-church relations was developed and introduced. The history of the Baptist Non-Aligned Movement compels both religious scholars and functionaries from the government to carefully study the prerequisites for the occurrence of such phenomena, the causes, and circumstances leading to tragic schisms. The significance of this study is in creating the possibility of preventing splits, overcoming the separation consequences in the Baptist church, and legalizing all community activities.

For this, it is necessary to carefully study the doctrinal foundations of the creed of Baptism in general, and in particular – Baptism. It based on the "Church of Saints" idea, where any union of a religious organization with the state is rejected, and the world is theologically substantiated. Man must submit himself to the gospel. It is no accident that in the communities of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists, the works of the famous preacher and theologian of the Baptists I.V. are widely known. Kargel (1913) defends the "purity of the word of God" and rejects all worldly things, "condemns the churches that move away from the" foundation of God "and put their decrees in its place" (p. 33). Kargel (1913), based on mystical and eschatological traditions, fall on fertile ground – on the minds of supporters of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists. These ideas do not contribute to the social activity of initiative believers; instead, they predetermine isolationism, isolation in their history, especially the history of martyrs for their faith. Hence, the ultra-conservative position regarding issues of state-church regulation noted in the studies of the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists.

One cannot fail to note the inconsistency of the schismatic actions of the initiative group. Confessing the "divine foundations" of faith and the church, they call for disobedience to the authorities, applying administrative pressure on the spiritual life of believers. They openly, courageously, fearlessly demand freedom of religion, freedom of conscience, and require freedom of religious preaching, religious education, and separation of church and state. These are political, socio-political requirements by nature. How they echo the ideas of the first reformers, how related spiritual searches of contemporaries are with their predecessors. They say history repeats itself. It is only essential to learn from it on time. Unfortunately, Protestantism, with its revolutionary and reformist spirit, with its enormous potential for social action, is not in demand in our country, mainly due to the incompetence of the authorities and the lack of concerted actions for the benefit of society.

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