On the Russian Origins of Dukhobors and Molokans

An excerpt from:
Livanov, F. V. "*Raskol'niki i ostrozhniki: Ocherki i rasskazy*"
Schismatics and Prisoners: Essays and Stories.

VOLUME I - FOURTH EDITION
St. Petersburg 1872.

An AI-assisted Russian Language Translation,
Facilitated by John J. Kalmakov 2025

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VIII.

The Formation of Dukhobors in Russia. — Existence of Dukhoborism before the 18th century as religious rationalism generally. — The mysticism of Quirin Kuhlmann of Silesia in Moscow. — Mystics Daniel Filipovich, Ivan Tikhoniev Suslov. — The False Christ Prokopy Lubkin and his apostles. — Relationship of Dukhobors to Khlysts, "People of God," etc. — Distinctive tenets of Dukhobor doctrine. — Relationship of Dukhobors to Quakers. — Conditions under which Quakerism could have spawned Dukhobors. — Quakerism not the sole source of Dukhobor origins.

Prior to the 18th century, there were few Russian Orthodox church heresies, other than the rationalistic ones, which were progressively critical of the church, and which, after [the teachings of] Tveritinov, finally became manifest in the form of Molokanism across Russia.

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The idea of Dukhoborism, not yet named as such, also expressed itself in the same rationalism. And generally speaking, Molokanism and Dukhoborism, as doctrines were similar in principle, and initially existed inseparably. They only later branched into two distinct separate entities in the 18th century: the Molokans retaining their rationalism, with the Bible and reason as the foundation of their faith, while the Dukhobors also adopted the mystical characteristics of other sects, such as the Quakers, Anabaptists, Jansenists, and other similar sects.

We must now identify when this hybrid Dukhobor fusion of Russian religious rationalism with Western mysticism first occurred—that is, pinpoint the Russian genesis of Dukhoborism.

The distinctive character of Dukhobor doctrine is its emphasis on special revelation from the Holy Spirit; the idea of inner spiritual perfection is the core of their dogmatic and moral teaching. Understandably, mysticism merging with rationalism produced a unique hybrid movement unrelated to prior Russian heresies.

Who introduced mysticism to Russia? Church and civil records point to the Silesian mystic Quirin Kuhlmann, burned in Moscow in the late 17th century [170]. His execution prompted stricter controls on foreigners entering Russia. Kuhlmann, a follower of Böhme's teachings,[171] taught that Jesus Christ must return to the world as a prophet with great signs and miracles to guide humanity to truth and establish His kingdom. Dukhobors similarly preach not Christ's external, visible Second Coming, but His internal and gradual

[170] Execution occurred in 1689. See *First Complete Collection of Laws*, Vol. III, No. 1358.
[171] Böhme (Jacob Böhm), a shepherd in Lusatia, after reading the Bible and Paracelsus, deemed himself inspired, described divine raptures, and wrote prolifically under "inner compulsion"...

descent into every human soul.[172] Kuhlmann, as a mystic, was likely the progenitor of sects known here as "People of God." Kuhlmann inspired the "Man of God" Danila Filipovich (a retired soldier), who claimed divine revelation and declared Ivan Timofeevich Suslov the "Son of Christ." Suslov cohabited with a woman he called the "Mother of God" and "Daughter of God," chose 12 apostles from his followers, and traveled along the Oka and Volga rivers preaching. In the village of *Rabotki* on the Volga, he held prayers in a dilapidated church and received veneration. He died in Moscow in 1716, transferring his "Christ" title to Prokopy Lubkin. Soon after, a man named Karaulov reported four Moscow houses hosting nocturnal gatherings where elders and others venerated leaders, kissed their hands, collected money, and prophesied. This led to the arrest of 78 people, including Nastasya (an elderly nun) and two female elders who prophesied and replaced communion with pieces of bread and kvass/water.

Lubkin (a *streltsy* soldier), declaring his wife the "Mother of God" and appointing 20 apostles, spread his mystical teachings across Nizhny Novgorod, Vladimir, and Yaroslavl provinces. Caught with apostles in Uglich in June 1716, he was mysteriously acquitted and lived in Moscow until 1732. His inspired disciple Agafya Karpovna founded a society in Vyazma (1713), discovered in 1724, and later released for a bribe...

Mystical sectarians swore oaths of secrecy and, seeking divine inspiration, spun, jumped, waved arms ("like angels"), screamed, and beat themselves with sticks during frenzied dances, which induced

[172] About the Dukhobors, work of Novitsky. *Experiments/Exercises in Education* [published by the] Kiev Spiritual Academy, p. 11, in the St. Petersburg Public Library.

trance states. They taught that humans could achieve "mystical resurrection" through divine inspiration and "mystical death," whereupon God indwells them and acts per His promise: *"I will dwell in them and walk among them"* (2 Cor. 6:16).

Sectarians called this divine indwelling *"radeniye"* (spiritual fervor), forming a doctrine of personal deification akin to pantheistic apotheosis... Unlike Christ's teaching to embody His spirit, they sought to incarnate Christ's *person*. Trance was called a "second baptism," rendering water baptism unnecessary. They rejected marriage and Eucharist, distributing their own bread instead.[173] Their mysticism attracted many, including Bishop Dosifey of Rostov. Defrocked and renamed "Demil",[174] he was brutally executed before Peter I on Moscow's Red Square: executioners tore his abdomen apart with pincers.[175] By Supreme Council's decree, 116 sectarians (including one Swede) were knouted and exiled to Siberia. Agafya Karpovna ("Prophetess and Mother of God") and prophets Fyodor Muratov/Timofey Strukov were executed.[176] Suslov's followers claimed he was later tried and crucified at the Spassky Gate but "resurrected" and ascended to his "father" Danila Filipovich.[177] However, records show Lubkin was buried near Suslov in Moscow's Ivanovsky Monastery. When their graves attracted pilgrims, Empress Anna ordered (Oct. 15, 1739) their bones exhumed and discarded beyond the city—possibly subjected to posthumous desecration like False Dmitry or Miloslavsky.[178]

[173] Filaret Chernigovsky, *History of the Russian Church*, Period V, p. 61.
[174] *History of the Russian Church*, Part 1, pp. 122–123; I. Snegirev's article, p. 325 in *Orthodox Review* (1862, Book VIII).
[175] *Ibid.*
[176] Filaret Chernigovsky, *History of the Russian Church*, Period 8, p. 61.
[177] See I. Snegirev's article, p. 325 on Suslov/Lubkin.
[178] *Russian Antiquities* by A. Martynov, Year 2 (1857), p. 12.

Seven years after Lubkin, a new False Christ, Andrei Petrov, appeared in Moscow, feigning folly.[179] But Dukhobors likely did not emerge directly from these ecstatic mystical movements

("People of God," Khlysts, Skoptsy) because: Dukhobor doctrine is rationalist (akin to Molokans); and Dukhobors scorned these "leaping and self-flagellating" mystics.

Most plausibly, Dukhoborism shared roots with the Khlysts/"People of God" but developed independently into a stricter, rational form.[180] Evidence confirms Quaker missionaries were in Russia: in 1743, authorities monitored Orthodox conversions to Quakerism, and a 1745 commission uncovered 600 Quaker followers in central provinces. However, Dukhoborism engaged *critically* with Quakerism—preserving Russian-grown rationalism while borrowing Quaker ideas of inner spiritual perfection and illumination by the "God-Word" within each soul. Dukhobor divergences from Molokanism in the 18th century were:

1. The Trinity: God is One: Father (memory), Son (mind), Holy Spirit (will).
2. Christ: In the Old Testament, Christ is divine wisdom clothed in nature; in the New Testament, He is the spirit of love and integrity incarnate. As a historical figure, Christ was the supreme human—still approachable. His temptations/sufferings prefigure humanity's spiritual struggles. He

[179] Filaret Chernigovsky, *History of the Russian Church*, Period 8, p. 62, note.
[180] *We note: Our judgments about sects refer only to the 18th century, when they remained consistent. Later, Dukhoborism/Molokanism diverged under various leaders, altering doctrines.*

is eternally born, preaches, suffers, dies, and resurrects *spiritually* in every believer's heart.
3. Salvation: Requires living knowledge of Christ via the "Inner Word" in the soul's depths. Scripture (as external word) directs us to the inner Teacher, Christ.
4. Soul: Pre-existed and fell before the visible world's creation. Adam's sin is personal.
5. Equality: All are equal in Christ. Oaths and war are crimes. Tsars/bishops are ordinary people.
6. Universalism: Jews, Muslims, and pagans may be saved by the Inner Word within them.

Otherwise, Dukhobors and Molokans shared identical rejections of: church buildings, sacraments, hierarchy, icons, saints, relics, fasts, etc. The *difference*: Molokans based denials on Scripture; Dukhobors on rational principles. Despite minimal differences, mutual hostility existed: When Molokans from Tambov were resettled near the "Molochnaya River" (1803–1805), Dukhobors fiercely resisted proximity to these *"spiritual half-brothers"*...

Dukhoborism likely emerged from Russian rationalism clashing with Quaker mysticism. Comparing doctrines confirms this: Dukhobors mirror Quakers on Christ, justification by faith, the Inner Word, resurrection, and ethics. Quaker foundations are:

a) The sole source of faith is direct inner revelation by the Holy Spirit—the "Inner Word/Christ" within each soul;
b) Religion requires turning inward from external distractions to heed this Inner Word;

c) Scripture is an external "dead letter" but useful for pointing toward the Inner Christ;
d) Non-Christians (Muslims, Jews, pagans) lack Scripture but may be saved by the Inner Word;
e) Christ's earthly works/history symbolize the *spiritual* birth/suffering/resurrection of the Inner Christ in the heart;
f) Anyone (even women) feeling inner illumination may teach. Thus, clergy/hierarchy are unnecessary. Worship must be spiritual;
g) Bodily resurrection is allegorical; true resurrection is spiritual;
h) All people are equal. Quakers refuse oaths/military service (e.g., in North America, 300,000+ Quakers affirm verbally instead of swearing oaths and pay fines instead of enlisting);
i) Quakers practice severe asceticism: simple dress, plain food, no formal greetings, no hat doffing, etc. [181].

[181] See *Entsiklopedicheskiy Slovar* by Kray, Vol. VI, p. 629.

In the latter case [refusal of oaths], Dukhobors emulate Quakers: official records show Dukhobors refusing to swear oaths before officials. Notably, both Quakers and Dukhobors are industrious, moral subjects known for practical skills in crafts/trade—hence their widespread prosperity.

But Quakerism could not have taken root abruptly in Russia without pre-existing rationalism... Quakerism coincidentally aligned with Russian freethinking already prevalent in the 18th century. Russian converts were exclusively rationalists—heirs to Tveritinov's legacy. This *critical engagement* with Quakerism prevented pure mysticism from dominating. By contrast, Khlysts/Skoptsy/"People of God" absorbed Quaker mysticism *uncritically* on the "primitive soil" of the uneducated masses, lacking rationalist development...

Universal law: New religious teachings succeed only when they meet societal readiness. Luther's ideas triumphed by falling on prepared ground...[182]

[182] *Notes of the Fatherland*, 1853, Vol. 145, Sec. 8.