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## Aleksandr Koval'kov: between orthodoxy and masonry

**Annotation:** Aleksandr Koval'kov was a 19th century civil servant who was keenly interested in theological issues and he expressed his views in the four books he published. His beliefs are summarized in the statement that true Christianity lies in inner conversion, pure love, true faith, and repentance. He described arduous and lengthy path to spiritual rebirth. Although he strongly emphasized the inner life of faith, he also found place in spiritual life for the church, its tradition, and its rites. Human reason in his view has a negative impact on man since it only leads to the fall by inciting pride. In trying to find theological foundations for his spirituality, Koval'kov turned to masonry by trying to make Christianity in the masonic image.

**Keywords:** Koval'kov, Lopukhin, masonry, salvation, rationality, Orthodoxy

Александр Ковальков: между православием и масонством

**Резюме:** Александр Ковальков был государственным чиновником в XIX в. в России, который очень интересовался богословскими вопросами, и выразил свои взгляды в четырех опубликованных им книгах. Его убеждения обобщены в утверждении, что истинное христианство заключается во внутреннем обращении, чистой любви, истинной вере и покаянии. Он описал трудный и продолжительный путь к духовному возрождению. Хотя он сильно подчеркивал внутреннюю жизнь веры, он также нашел место в духовной жизни для церкви, ее традиции и ее обрядов. Человеческий разум, по его мнению, отрицательно влияет на человека, поскольку он только привел к падению. Пытаясь найти богословские основы для своей духовности, Ковальков обратился к масонству, пытаясь сделать христианство в масонском образе.

**Ключевые слова:** Ковальков, Лопухин, масонство, спасение, рациональность, Православие

**Aleksander Kowalkow: między Prawosławiem a masonerią**

**Streszczenie:** Alexander Kowalkow - urzędnik w XIX-wiecznej Rosji - był bardzo zainteresowany zagadnieniami teologicznymi i wyraził swoje poglądy w czterech wydanych przez

niego książkach. Jego przekonania zostały podsumowane w twierdzeniu, że prawdziwe Chrześcijaństwo polega na wewnętrznym nawróceniu, czystej miłości, prawdziwej wierze i pokucie. Opisał trudną i długą drogę do duchowego odrodzenia. Chociaż mocno podkreślał wewnętrzne życie wiary, znalazł także miejsce w życiu duchowym dla Kościoła, jego tradycji i obrzędów. Jego zdaniem ludzki umysł negatywnie wpływa na osobę, ponieważ doprowadził ją tylko do upadku. Próbując znaleźć podstawy teologiczne dla swojej duchowości, Kowalkow zwrócił się ku masonerii, próbując nadać Chrześcijaństwu obraz masoni. **Słowa kluczowe:** Kowalkow, Łopuchin, masoneria, zbawienie, racjonalizm, Prawosławie

Ivan Lopukhin was a high ranking civil servant and a prominent mason in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia. A son of his wife's sister was Aleksandr Ivanovich Koval'kov, like Lopukhin's wife, of peasant origin, born in 1794. Lopukhin took particular care about Koval'kov who lived in Lopukhin's house where he received an education.

In 1807, Koval'kov worked in the same sixth department in which Lopukhin had previously worked. Before his death, Lopukhin asked Aleksandr Nikolaevich Golitsyn to take Koval'kov under his wing. Golitsyn was a powerful figure, a friend of the tsar Aleksander I, the procurator of the Holy Synod, a minister of Spiritual affairs and of education, the head of the bureau of postal service, a vice-minister of internal affairs. Golitsyn created a circle of like-minded believers who frequently met to discuss religious matters. Koval'kov was part of this circle and, in fact, he appeared to be Golitsyn's favorite who treated him like his son.<sup>1</sup> Golitsyn secured for Koval'kov a governmental position in his department and then in the bureau. Koval'kov ended his service as chamberlain and secret counselor. He died in 1852.

As a writer, Koval'kov started in 1808 with publishing translations of religious and historical texts in *The Friend of the Youth* (Друг юношества).<sup>2</sup> Soon, his own books appeared through the sponsorship of Lopukhin. Two of them are basically devotional books: *The fruit of the heart that fell in love with the truth, or a collection of short reflections on its essence written by ardent love for it* (1811) and *Jesus the Good Shepherd of His flock, the Light and the Rock, the Head, the Priest and the Offering of His church* (1815) which largely repeats what can be found in *The fruit of the heart*. The other two books are of a more theological leaning, *Creation of the inner church and the kingdom of the light of God. Spiritual fragments* (1815) and *Thoughts about mysticism and its writers* (1815). A long article appeared in the meantime, "A peaceful rest in the orchards of the Savinskii village at the time of the invasion of an enemy,"<sup>3</sup> which is a description of Lopukhin's theme garden on the Island of Young (the poet Edward Young is meant) with statues of many religious personalities. Later he published some articles in *The Mesanger of Zion* (Сионский вестник). His last publications appeared in 1817 and 1818. But this is not all. Apparently, Koval'kov was a compulsive writer and only a small fraction of his writings

<sup>1</sup> As he stated in one of his letters, Koval'kov was "a nice young man, how I love him! Like my own son! Truly, the Lord Himself gave him to me," Князь А.Н. Голицын (в его письмах), Русский архив 1905, vol. 3, p. 399.

<sup>2</sup> These translations also appeared in Наука полезным быть себе и ближним, или мысли и желания доброй души, Москва: В Университетской типографии 1810.

<sup>3</sup> Мирное отдохновение в садах сельца Савинского, во время нашествия врагов, Друг юношества 1813, no 2, pp. 1-126.

appeared in print. Lopukhin wrote in 1814 that after publishing *The fruit of the heart*, Koval'kov prepared two manuscripts, one having 1314 pages and another 1142 pages.<sup>4</sup> In 1841, Sakharov, who worked with Koval'kov in the bureau of postal service, wrote that Koval'kov showed him over 10 volumes of his unpublished works.<sup>5</sup>

### A cry of the heart

Koval'kov was a sickly teen and at one time he was so ill that he was delirious for several days. In preparation for his death, a priest was called. After confession and communion, Koval'kov expressed his readiness to meet his Maker. However, after a couple of days the illness receded and it was then when Koval'kov started writing (P 5-6).<sup>6</sup> At the age of 17, his first book was published followed by three more books, all published in the same year, at the age of 21.

*The fruit of the heart* is a book-long expression of gratitude to God and an encouragement to others to find truth and thereby peace in Christ. His beliefs are summarized in the statement that true Christianity lies in inner conversion, pure love, true faith, and repentance (P 13). What is important in faith is the heart and its sincere belief in Christ. To be a Christian, a person has to be born in Christ (26). "Man is born in Christ when he perfectly conquers the flesh and lewd passions in himself, when evil plants die out in his heart, when the spirit will be a perfect conqueror and will be in command of the flesh ... and [when man] completely reject his selfhood" (27). The inside of the true Christian is like a room in which constantly dwells and acts the Holy Spirit (17). However, this room must be prepared before Christ enters there. The heart is purified by repentance and reform (40). "True repentance lies in rejection of all selfhood, in admitting that one is unworthy of God's goodness, in childlike humility, and in the cry of the heart and the soul" (44). Efforts in purifying the heart gradually elevate a person to God. At first, the path is full of crosses; man relies on faith and is guided by love, but Christ lightens the load. This leads to new spiritual birth in Christ. Then the path is followed in submission to Christ (41). Man carrying the cross and yoke of Christ gradually approaches rebirth; however, God invisibly helps him on this path (47, 123).

The soul should go through three levels: the path of purification, when it mortifies its sin and is made alive on the cross by the Spirit; the path of sanctification, when Christ lifts off the burden from man and the soul is born again; and the path of union when it moves to the center of the Holy Spirit (P 214-215). Saving crosses are the starting and ending point of this path (223). The impurity of sin is crucified on the purifying cross (222). The first starting cross is the cross of repentance; the last ending cross is the victorious cross and purifying crosses; mortifying crosses, bitter crosses, outer, and in-

<sup>4</sup> Letter to Runin, 10 Jan. 1814, Русский архив 8 (1870), col. 1222.

<sup>5</sup> И[ван] П. Сахаров, Записки, Русский архив 11 (1873), col. 962.

<sup>6</sup> The following references to Koval'kov's books will be made:

I - Иисус пастырь добрый своего стада, свет и камень, глава, жрец и жертва своя церкви, Орел: В Губернской типографии 1815.

М - Мысли о мистике и писателяхъ ея, Орел: В Губернской типографии 1815.

Р - Плод сердца полюбившаго истину, или собрание кратких разсуждений о ея сущности, написанных пламенной к ней любовью, Москва: В Университетской типографии 1811.

С - Созидание церкви внутренней и царства света Божия. Духовные отрывки, Орел: В Губернской типографии 1815.

ner crosses are in-between. These in-between crosses are necessary since people cannot conquer sin only through repentance since the root of sin still gives its fruit after repentance and the road from repentance to victory is strewn with crosses (224).

This omnipresence of crosses may have been inspired by Lopuhkin's "Explanation of allegorical table representing the temple of Nature and of Grace" that was included as an appendix in the French version of his *Some characteristics* (Russian versions did not include it). In this table or an image, man's life proceeds along the way of the cross covered with thorns (§1) which is essential in human life (§3) on which a person can be born of water and of spirit (§7) and this road is left for a new, vivified earth (§18). Lopuhkin also very briefly mentioned inner crosses,<sup>7</sup> but no outer crosses. In such a wide array of various crosses, Koval'kov may have been inspired by Douzetemps who wrote, among others, about the cross of hopelessness, the cross of penitence, and the cross of sanctification and redemption, about inner crosses, and also about outer crosses (sickness, poverty, etc.).<sup>8</sup>

Following Lopuhkin (*Some characteristics*, ch. 7), Koval'kov saw the path to rebirth as arduous and lengthy. Although Christ washed human sin with His blood (P 81), although He opened the door to the kingdom of heaven (56), and freed man from deadly sin (57), it does not appear that this salvation is available just for the asking. Salvation must be earned; it is by human efforts that it is acquired. Who wants to be a child of God and love God, he should mortify in himself the old Adam, purify his heart from all selfhood, constantly pray, and ask God so that He enflames in him pure love (34). Man is an enemy of himself (77), so he should battle with himself, and Christ will give him victory. He should not be discouraged if he does not immediately succeed (78). The heart will turn into an inner temple where Christ will be Melchizedek (80). "Turn to Him, fervently repent before Him and try with all power to remove your fault and deserve His love" (95). After a battle with the body and its passions, the greatest reward is rebirth given by Christ: He will baptize such a person with the Holy Spirit and will cloth him with Himself as in living water (171). Only then, Christ, the true church, will be in a person through the Holy Spirit (172).

After rebirth, it does not get any easier. Following Christ requires self-denial, which is the cross of Christ (P 25). One's own will should be renounced (59); sin should be fled, which is accomplished by living in the fear of God and thinking about death and the afterlife (63). This life should not be spent on taking delight of earthly things but on imitating Christ, (I 41) to be perfectly united with Him (42). A follower of Jesus should imitate Him in his life and constantly live under inner crosses (135).

If the prospect of the afterlife is presented only in nebulous terms and the path of life is strewn with crosses, why enter it? There are two very briefly avenues presented. First is self-knowledge: know yourself and ask Christ to help you to see your nothingness and vileness so that you come to Him for salvation (P 34-35). This appears to mean that self-knowledge does not necessarily lead to the recognition of one's own nothing-

<sup>7</sup> *Some characteristics* 8.28; also, Массонские труды И.В. Лопухина, Москва: Товарищество типографии А.И. Маионтова 1913, p. 2.72.

<sup>8</sup> [Melchior Douzetemps], *Mystère de la Croix de Jésus-Christ et de ses membres*, Lausanne: François Grasset 1791 [1732], pp. 31, 95, 119. A Russian translation was published by Lopuhkin in 1784 as Таинство креста Иисуса Христа и членов его. Cf. Thomas à Kempis, *The imitation of Christ* 2.12.2.

ness and sinfulness. In fact, it can be claimed that in the sinful state, man sees only his greatness. How can such a man begin to ask Christ to see otherwise? There has to be faith in Christ, to begin with, to make that happen, but whence this faith? It does not appear that Koval'kov could answer that besides stating that the beginning of faith is mysterious (I 28). That is, faith comes from God who induces it in a person and upon its beginning the person should, as it were, take over and make it grow, ostensibly, through prayer, self-denial, etc. After all, man has nothing of his own except for sin and death (P 162-163); therefore, faith is one of the many gifts of God.

Another avenue that may lead to faith is the traditional physico-theological argument. Observation of nature shows unsurpassable wisdom of the Creator (P 91). And yet, incongruously, investigation of nature to admire God's works without love is useless (121) since it does not offer anything to purify the heart (122). Uselessness may only mean here that observation of nature does not lead directly to the spiritual renewal, but Koval'kov could claim that it leads to the recognition of the need for such a renewal. At least it may lead to the recognition of the existence of the Creator. Thus, in this spirit, Koval'kov urged his readers: after you will see God's wisdom in the makeup of your body, prayerfully thank God for it (140). However, the investigation of nature has only limited spiritual impact, since without God's help, human reason is confused and "without a special supernatural nod ... it will not discover marvelous divine care and His secret actions in the souls and in Nature" (M 7). Reason by itself would be unable to detect laws that bind physical nature with divine laws (123). Worse yet, the mind has a built-in impulse to investigate nature in order to use the gained knowledge "to spread the most dangerous poison" motivated by selfishness (47).

Induced mysteriously or otherwise, faith is an indispensable companion on the path strewn with crosses. It is hardly possible that humans on their own could make it through it. Therefore, in all that, prayer should accompany the way through life. People should ask Christ to open their eyes and enlighten their reason so that they can see His omnipresence (P 82), majesty, holiness (83); ask for His help to turn to their inner life, to feel how far away they are from Him; recognizing their blindness in their sin, they should ask for help to turn them away from their sinful path (85). Therefore, arduous as the path of the cross is, people's progress on it can be accompanied by divine assistance. This progress appears to be a joint venture of human efforts and divine prodding. Sometimes even the borderline between the work of God and man is blurred: Koval'kov recommended this prayer: "help us, Lord!, to purify ourselves from all that is contrary to you, to renew ourselves in the bath of eternal life, Jesus Christ, and make ourselves worthy to see Your Kingdom in heaven and in us" (175-176). That may be interpreted to mean that God provides strength and endurance, but the work of purification and rebirth is man's, whereby he makes himself worthy, i.e., he earns the entrance to the Kingdom of God. This reliance of constant assistance of God in human life is much more pronounced in Koval'kov than it was in Lopukhin.

In all this, Koval'kov constantly called attention to the inner renewal: the renewal of inner life, the life of the soul and the heart, whereby the inner temple (P 69, 75-76) is created, and the inner church – a cue obviously taken from Lopukhin who constantly spoke about the inner church, most prominently, in his most renowned work, *Some*

*characteristics of the inner church* (written in 1789).<sup>9</sup> For him, an inner man is simply a true believer, i.e., a committed Christian, whereby he could say that inner man does things from pure heart and from love for God (11), that inner man loves only God (32), and that Christ dwells in the soul of the inner man and Christ is his guide. The outer man is guided by the flesh and blood of Adam (22). Is there an inner man in an unbeliever? The statements just made would suggest that unbelievers are just outer men, empty shells, as it were. However, they do have inner life: they think, they have emotions, they have feelings. However, reason is altogether dismissed by Koval'kov and senses, emotions, and passions are consigned to the outer man and the inner life seems to be dissolved, by definition, in the outer man. And yet, the inner man, defined as the soul-man or as the soul and the heart, is said to be reborn by receiving the Spirit of Jesus (S 134; P 153). Every person has a soul and a heart, even unbelievers, who only need divine regeneration since their heart is like a wild desert (P 39). Thus, the inner man is the inner life of every person, but, confusedly, Koval'kov frequently identified the inner man only with the inner life of the born again. To compound the confusion, he also stated that the inner life begins when the Spirit of Christ begins to act inside the soul (I 106). Would that mean that the Spirit of Christ is active in the soul of all unbelievers, as well? If not, are unbelievers devoid of any inner life?

The innerness permeates all; it becomes a key word, which has its roots in the New Testament concept of the inner man (Rom. 7:22; Eph. 3:16). Koval'kov grasped onto this concept and constantly used it to describe numerous aspects of the inner man. There is inner light (I 14), inner motions of the soul (103), inner presence of Christ (147), inner word (154), inner depth of the soul (159), inner death (169), inner teaching (M 12), inner secret (18), inner speech (69), inner winter (102), inner laws (123), inner peripheral, inner circle (138), and inner point (151), inner interaction with pure spirits (S 43), inner adoption (68), inner poverty (130), inner service (253), inner justification (271), inner Christian (P 26), inner paths (129), inner weeping (137), inner novelty (154), inner battle (201), inner prayer (206), inner eyes (226), inner impurity (226), inner drought (235), even the innermost chamber of the heart (207). There is the inner Kingdom of God (cf. the motto on p. 8 from Luke 17:21) as the highest level of happiness, inner Eden and heaven, since Christ lives in the heart (P 249-250). The soul is said to be transformed into inner heaven (S 173) and into inner Eden (P 250) to have inner peace (50) and inner joy (51). The reborn soul is said to truly imitate the inner infancy of Christ by being care-free, devoted, and perfectly simple (S 199), where spiritual infancy is the inner purity (71). Conscience is, of course, the inner judge of human deeds (P 136). There is also the inner philosophy that works on purifying the heart and soul (118), and this inner philosophy is the Christian philosophy (124).

With such a strong emphasis placed on the inner life of faith, Koval'kov did not turn his back on the church, its tradition, and its rites. Following Lopukhin (P 4), he stated that "external rites are needed since they can transform [someone] into an inner man" (11). Believers are encouraged to go to church to pray and receive the word (147). All rites of the church are designed to show people that they have in their souls a temple in which "the door is Jesus himself whose rites and laws consist only in *the*

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<sup>9</sup> Adam Drozdck, Lopukhin and the spiritual renewal, *Wiener Slawistischer Almanach* 70 (2012), pp. 31-52.

worship with the spirit and truth and fulfilling with pure love the will of the Head of the inner Church" (I 94). In all eternal rites of the church, it should also be an action of the inner church to spiritualize these rites (120). In particular, since the Eucharist of the inner church is the closest union with Christ (117), "the Eucharist of the outer church should be spiritualized and transformed into substance by the activity of the inner [Eucharist], which is Jesus Himself and in which His *body* is the true food and [His] *blood* is the true drink of the soul" (122). In this, "the outer Eucharist mysteriously unites through love with the inner Eucharist of the reborn inner Church" (123). Where does it place the doctrine of transubstantiation? It appears that the action of the inner church performs this miracle. Therefore, it seems that according to Koval'kov, if communion is given to someone who is not reborn, the bread remains plain bread. In the case of a regenerated Christian, the transformation of the bread into the body of Christ apparently takes place and Koval'kov may claim that this is possible because of the living presence of Christ Himself in the believer, not because of some superhuman influence of the believer.

### Anti-intellectualism

Man is a special creation of God, created to be happy in the Eden (P 94, 132) and everything was created for man who proved to be ungrateful (92, 156). Man differs from other creation by reason, immortal soul, and the image of God (131). This suggests that the image of God is something different than human reason and his immortal soul, all the more, that after the fall, the image of God is expunged from man altogether (S 20, 32). And yet, human reason remains in man and so does the immortal soul. What the image of God is, is unclear from Koval'kov's deliberations. It may be the ability to be a ruler over creation, as designed by God. God is love, but it is not an ability to love that constitutes this image, since even in fallen man there is "a spark of love" (P 105). It may be an ability to have perfect knowledge, the knowledge acquired by intuition rather than by reason since reason has a very lowly position in Koval'kov's vision of the human being.

Reason has decidedly a negative impact on man. Reason only leads to the fall since it incites pride, turns man from God, and strives to know what God concealed (P 120). The soul left only to its thinking or to its reason separates itself from true knowledge (S 152). Such a soul has no knowledge of its own and it finds true divine knowledge in the wisdom of Christ through which it knows immensity of Love and its own nothingness (219-220). Therefore, only the reborn believer can have true knowledge.

It appears that Koval'kov could not decide how bad he should make the human reason. On the one hand, he stated that there is an inner part of the soul, reason being its outer part that disappears on the cross (I 66-67). The soul united with Christ separates the natural and rational in man, which leads to the pure spirituality that has no trace of thinking by being only living faith (S 204). Thus, after the rebirth of the soul, humans return in the afterworld to the primal ideal state in which Adam was created. If in this state the rational side of the human soul disappears, so it appears that Adam was not a rational being receiving all knowledge by direct divine infusion. In this way, reason would be one of consequences of the fall: humans are rational because they are sinful and because of its sinful provenance, rationality is in the service of sin. That is why Koval'kov recommended to renounce all rationality now, on earth and to rely on faith alone; stronger yet, in his view, Christ should be followed guided by blind faith (I 23) not by thinking about it nor by one's own knowledge. Blind faith is most alive since it

has no admixture of reason and will and is based on love alone (24). Blind faith seems to be Koval'kov's answer to the spiritual needs of humans, in which he seems to have followed Schwarz, a mason, who stated that God expects from people their blind obedience, and thus they should accept everything from God, regardless of whether they consider it by the limitedness of their reason to be good or bad.<sup>10</sup> However, Schwarz did not condemn reason altogether; he only wanted it to be seen as having a limited value since knowledge is also God's gift so that it can be used for the fallen man to be brought to salvation.<sup>11</sup> Douzetemps stated that reason is an enemy of the Cross; it was designed to regulate corporeal and external matters, but it wants to dominate the spirit;<sup>12</sup> "reason is really the eye of the temporal horizon that should regulate things external and corporeal of which time and body take part."<sup>13</sup> According to Dutoit – his name was among only four non-Biblical names mentioned by Koval'kov<sup>14</sup> – human reason "a fruit of the fall or at least an effect and the consequence of the fall."<sup>15</sup> More specifically, reason, whose highest point is the astral spirit, is an inferior substitute of the spirit of God that illuminated Adam before the fall. A higher principle than reason has to be regained, purer than reason that because of the fall became an inferior substitute of this principle. However, reason should not be simply rejected. Reason is necessary for this world, useless for heavens, but it can be used to arrive indirectly at God. On earth, reason serves as a torch 1. in affairs of life, 2. in sciences and arts, 3. in natural virtues, 4. in arriving to evangelical faith, different from true faith, and 5. in discovering the literal sense of the Scripture.<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, in Koval'kov's view, "mysticism or, more clearly, an outpouring of the Spirit with the human tongue should have pure Love as its permanent law" so that its voice could "stifle any voice of one's own mind" (M 5-6). Such mysticism "is not a work of the weak human mind, but a strong proclamation and inspiration by the creative Wisdom" (14). The mind provides only theory – which is a theory of virtues and vices (17) – mysticism also provides praxis. Human philosophy lacks "pure and secret rhetoric or Harmony" and resorts to logic and syllogisms which are just tinkling cymbals (16), although it is unclear why Koval'kov would reject logic as a way of imposing harmony at least on one's thoughts. In any event, teachings of the mind are unable to uncover secrets needed for the soul to recover its primal condition (18).

The requisite mysticism can be found in the union with Christ. On the other hand, "philosophy of this world and of one's own mind is the most dreadful, rotten, contrary, vile food of the soul and the outpouring of the spirit of uncleanness" (M 20). This is

<sup>10</sup> Lectures given in 1783, circulated in manuscripts, Иван Г. Шварц, *Беседы о возрождении и молитве; Записки; Речи; Материалы для биографии*, Донецк: Вебер 2010, p. 62.

<sup>11</sup> Иван Г. Шварц, *Лекции*, Донецк: Вебер 2008, p. 30.

<sup>12</sup> Douzetemps, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

<sup>13</sup> Douzetemps, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> M 115; the other three names are Madame Guyon (26-29, 31, 69, 103, 105, 115), Fénelon (29-30), and Boehme (31-35, 103, 104, 106, 115).

<sup>15</sup> Keleph ben Nathan [Marc Ph. Dutoit de Mambrini], *La philosophie divine, appliquée aux lumières naturelle, magique, astrale, surnaturelle, céleste et divine*, 1793, vol. 1, p. 151. Lopukhin mentioned in his letter to Speranskii, 19 June 1806, *Русский архив* 8 (1870), col. 617, that he published the French original of this book in 1799.

<sup>16</sup> Dutoit, *op. cit.*, pp. 11 note 5, 73, 75, 76; "reason illuminates us in the absence of grace," vol. 2, p. 178.

because the mind in a sinful man is “an abyss of unbelief, evil Viper fatally poisoning the soul” (44) and death is its essence (45). Only those who do not have the light – divine, supernatural light, that is – need reason, which is the play of the senses and imagination that are limited only to the physical world (33). Knowledge that comes from created beings is weak, even dead (36, 57) since it stems from reason. Before man becomes a temple of God, his reason is an enemy of Wisdom, is motivated only by the corrupted will, subject of the body and sin (41). In mystical cognition, reason of the reborn man enlightened by Wisdom is working, or rather Wisdom through reason (42). Whatever reason does without the help of Christ and His wisdom is falsehood, weakness, poison (57). Teachings of such a mind are the food for the body (58). Such teachings are characterized by three things: 1. rage, the result of unbelief, materialism or atheism, when reason becomes poisonous (62); 2. submission to one’s passions and to the lust of the eyes (65); 3. inadequate knowledge of truth (68). Mysticism provides perfect knowledge of all things which is possible through magic by which things were created (130). Only those who are enlightened can know this force (132). All of it would mean that reason does have its uses, but only in the reborn man. Rationality, when enlightened from above, can give positive results after all.

How far would Koval'kov be willing to go with this denunciation of reason? Unbelievers are able to express themselves in speech and writing quite understandably; they are able to exercise their clerical duties, or complete technical tasks. Is it because of their rationality or in spite of it? If rationality could be salvaged by restricting it to non-religious matters, then there is no way that physico-theological argument can even become reality.

In his view of the human reason, Koval'kov joined Douzetemps’ sentiment that reason is an enemy of the Cross and Dutoit’s opinion that reason is the result of the fall – the view which will later be forcefully advocated by Shestov – and radicalized Lopukhin’s ideas, for whom reason was a very important part on the way leading to spiritual rebirth (*Some characteristics* 7.7) and should know its limits and just not strain itself too much in its quest for what rationally cannot be reached (8.14). However, he joined a very long tradition in Christian thought that reason should be in the service of faith by being submitted to the mystical side of the mind.

### **Masonic underpinnings**

What precedes can be considered as being largely an outpouring of the heart, a cry of the heart that found its anchor in the Christian faith, and as a call to others to join Koval'kov in his spiritually enriched state. However, Koval'kov apparently thought that it is not enough and tried to provide some theological and ontological foundations to his spirituality.

The fall of Lucifer caused chaos, after which, he was thrown into a hellish, fiery world. The earth was created between heaven and hell and man was created to become a boundary between them. Man was ruling over the earth. He could bring anything into motion (S 11) with magical power, i.e., with thought or word with which he could bring from within himself beings like himself, uniting in himself the male and female, i.e., active and passive matter. Because of the subtlety of his body and its aethereal nature, he could transport himself everywhere, but never could he distance himself from the Spirit of God. His will was in tune with the will of God (12), whereby he was united with God

(13) and received from God secret knowledge of nature (14). Man was perfectly free. The devil convinced him to separate the female matter from himself (16) to multiply himself not in magical, but in animal fashion; thus, God created Eve from him. Lucifer succeeded in tempting Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, after which the human body became rough, heavy, and sickly, and man lost his unity with God (17), his majesty, his control of elements, and his knowledge of nature (18). Fiery matter from fiery world united with Adam and perfectly expunged the heavenly image in him (20). Adam became naked since the Holy Spirit was until the fall his clothing after which the Spirit departed (21). God was before man's food; now it was rough food (22). The spirit of the fiery world united with Adam creating gradually in him the kingdom of darkness (26). He was separated from the Aether in the Spirit of God (27). Lucifer poured into Adam fiery matter (31); his soul became fragmented since only in God unity of the soul can be maintained. The image of God was completely removed from him (32). However, man can regain life turning from natural, bodily man to the soul-man, i.e., a man striving to create an inner church of Jesus and to destroy the anti-Christian church (23).

Spiritual rebirth from God begins when man dies to himself and to the world (S 40). Christ tinctures by His blood all of nature and thus man should tincture himself with the purifying tincture (45). Through tincturing, the hardness of the heart suppressed by impure matter is broken (121), which produces softening and then warmth of the heart, which prepares the ground for repentance (123). The tincturing light comes from the soul to the heart (126). The soul teaches the heart, purifies it, pours into it thirst of the cross, and the light enters the heart and leads it down the path of crosses. This light causes rebirth of the heart (127), changes its nature, and breaks its unity with the matter of darkness (128).

Koval'kov's story of creation comes from Haugwitz<sup>17</sup>: Lucifer's rebellion (67) and emergence of chaos as its result (71); the aethereal nature of Adam's body (75); his androgynous nature; the possession of creative powers (82); creation of Eve as the result of the fall (93). In it, he was not concerned about a contradiction between considering the body of Adam to be of the dust of the earth made alive by the Spirit of God (P 155), as the Biblical account states, and this body being in ethereal in its primal state (225).

The idea of the blood of the Lamb being the tincture of salvation (S 262; P 187) comes directly from Lopukhin (*Some characteristics* 1.9) and from Douzetemps,<sup>18</sup> and a more general idea of the tincture as a purifying entity comes from Boehme.<sup>19</sup> The concept of the tincture is of alchemic provenance. Welling, a hermetic writer of the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, wrote about tincture in its technical-al-

<sup>17</sup> [Christian A.H. von Haugwitz], *Hirten-Briefan die wahren, ächten Freymäurer alten Systems*, [Leipzig: Vöhme] 1785, also published in German in Moscow in 1786. The first Russian translation made in 1785, Пастырское послание к истинным и справедливым свободным каменщикам древней системы, was distributed in manuscript; the second Russian translation, Пастырское послание к истинным и справедливым философам древней системы, was published in 1806 in Наставления ищущим премудрости; cf. pp. 126-135.

<sup>18</sup> Douzetemps, *op. cit.*, p. 161; the view of "the heavenly tincture, Christ in man, the gate, the root of life," is mentioned by Шварц, Лекции, p. 50.

<sup>19</sup> He said, for instance, that tincture is nothing other than a spiritual fire and light, Jakob Boehme, *The way to Christ* 7.3.22 and the soul-fire eats from the heavenly being changed in the tincture into heavenly being (9.17, cf. 3.32). A Russian translation was published in 1815 as *Christosophia, или Путь ко Христу* and was available earlier in the manuscript.

chemic sense as a liquid with particular healing properties,<sup>20</sup> although once he did use it in a religious sense.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly, Lopukhin used the term only once in *The zelosopher*, when he mentioned a glass filled with some tincture as part of the induction ceremony.<sup>22</sup> This work, although it describes some masonic rites, is very low key when it comes to specific masonic content focusing upon the spiritual side of the rites and the many prayers and songs of Christian content to be used in them. Generally, Lopukhin, a master of a masonic lodge, used masonic concepts very sparingly; in particular, he used the concept of tincture in its religious context only twice.<sup>23</sup> Koval'kov, however, could not restrain himself from using and overusing "tincture" in his works. He became particularly enamored with conjugating the verb "to tincture" (ТИНГИРОВАТЬ) and "to tincture oneself" (ТИНГИРОВАТЬСЯ) that have very ungainly ring in Russian. He started fairly slowly in *The fruit of the heart* (P 187, 193, 216, 231, 237, 245) and in *Jesus the Good Shepherd* (I 80, 98, 158, 159), but in the *Creation of the inner church* it is used on almost every page and at the end of *Thoughts about mysticism* it is used just as generously. This is an interesting and somewhat paradoxical situation. Lopukhin was a high ranking mason and he, like Novikov, another mason, was very restrained in his writings in using specifically masonic content, even in writings specifically addressed to masons (*The zelosopher* and his masonic catechism). As far as it can be determined, Koval'kov was not a member of a masonic lodge,<sup>24</sup> and yet masonic philosophy became the theological foundation in his writings. It appears that for Lopukhin and Novikov (also for Schwarz and Gamaleia), masonry was a detour that led to the reawakening of their Orthodox convictions, a place where they met people for whom the spiritual aspect of Orthodoxy was critical. They, in effect tried to Christianize masonry. Koval'kov, on the other hand, just as Elagin, another important figure in the Russian masonry, was captivated by specific masonic philosophy and tried to make Christianity in the masonic image. However, the results are not very interesting. Koval'kov's writings are interesting as a testimony of the heart immersed in new-found spirituality, in living faith that became the ruling principle in his life. However, relentless repetitions, insensitivity to numerous contradictions in his statements, the lack of some moderately precise terminology, a lack of any profundity, a mere repetition of views of others,<sup>25</sup> and general ineptitude in theological reflection

<sup>20</sup> Georg von Welling, *Opus mago-cabbalisticum et theosophicum*, York Beach: Weiser Books 2006 [1719], pp. 199, 204-206, 212-215, 318, 329, 337, 517, 521, 541; equated with philosopher's stone: pp. 327, 506. There was a quest in the 17<sup>th</sup> century for a universal tincture, see, e.g., [Johann Siebmacher], *Wasserstein der Weisen, oder, Chymisches Tractätlein: darinn der Weg gezeigt, die Materia genennet, und der Process beschrieben wird, zu dem hohen Geheimniss der Universal-Tinctur zu kommen*, Francofurti: Lucas Jennis 1619.

<sup>21</sup> Christ as tincture, Welling, *op. cit.*, p. 161; cf. Christ being tincture in Boehme, *Mysterium magnum* 37.31, 38.23.

<sup>22</sup> Масонские труды И.В. Лопухина, p. 1.16.

<sup>23</sup> Масонские труды И.В. Лопухина, pp. 1.7 and 57 (this is the same statement made twice = *Some characteristics* 1.7).

<sup>24</sup> Юрий Е. Кондаков, Розенкрейцеры, мартинисты, и "внутренние христиане" в России конца XVIII - первой четверти XIX века, Санкт-Петербург: Издательство РГПУ им. А.И. Герцена 2012, p. 394.

<sup>25</sup> Koval'kov's "works are mere imitations of the European mystical books that at that time were popular in Russia," Юрий Е. Кондаков, Либеральное и консервативное направления в религиозных движениях в России первой четверти XIX века, Санкт-Петербург: Издательство РГПУ им. А.И. Герцена 2005, p. 96.

make his writings of negligible theological and philosophical value. It is, however, an important testimony of the times when Russian intellectuals were seeking for genuine spirituality outside the official, rather petrified, Orthodox church.

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