

ADAM DROZDEK

MAKSIM NEVZOROV, THE FRIEND OF THE YOUTH

Maksim Ivanovich Nevzorov (1762/1763-1827) is remembered today primarily as an editor of *The Friend of the Youth and [the People] of All Ages* (the title was at first just *The Friend of the Youth*), a journal filled with articles on history, science, with poetry, and with a fair share of Nevzorov's reflections.¹ The overall goal of the journal was the spiritual edification of the youth and the people of all ages. The journal was not a commercial success, but, still, in years 1807-1815, Nevzorov managed to publish 100 issues in the form of small books in which he promoted the Christian message of the way of life and of salvation, as he understood it.

History

From the beginning, Nevzorov, formed by the Novikov circle, adamantly promoted Christianity in pure form, as he understood it, in theory and in practice. Christian ethics was for him the only guide in the life of every person and his flagship *The Friend of the Youth* was devoted to the promotion of this idea.

Nevzorov, well-versed in history, did not see much of Christian precepts manifested among the great figures. In his view, history shows that the majority of firm believers are simple people and the majority of famous artists and scholars are godless, freethinkers, and blasphemers (1814.5.23).² It is among simple people that virtue, the

(¹) By the friend of the youth Nevzorov meant Mikhail Murav'ev, after whose death, by the friend of the youth and the people of all ages he meant Ivan Lopukhin, but Nevzorov himself was the most fitting for this designation, as stated by his biographer, П. А. Безсонов, *Максим Иванович Невzorov*, "Русская беседа", (1856), bk. 3, p. 102.

(²) References are made to the year, issue, and page of *Друг юношества и*

respect for authorities, and the fear of God can be found (24). Among famous people, there is a disrespect for social norms, for authorities, and there is pride (25). For instance, Horace, Raphael, Pope, and Voltaire, in spite of their fine work, were hardly good examples of family life. Voltaire and Friedrich II, in spite of their great knowledge, were insufferable individuals (26). Also, because of their lifestyle and accomplishments, “we curse the memory of ... Voltaire, d’Alembert, Helvetius, Diderot and such fine minds” (27).

Since history should be the school from examples of people from whom young people can learn how to serve the wellbeing of their brothers and how to turn their back to vice and to what is useless (1814.9.63), Nevzorov presented in his journal biographies of exemplary characters, but also of individuals of unpalatable conduct. In particular, he wanted to show that “great Greeks and Roman were, in fact, God-fearing, virtuous, committed to [their] Religion, opposed to their passions and weaknesses and they used their property for the good of others” (1811.9.36).

All laws bringing happiness to people have been brought by “people who do not serve their passions but learn how to control themselves and who praise God by their Faith and truth,” good examples being virtuous Lycurgus (1814.9.67), Solon (68), and Zoroaster (73) who ascribed the laws to the merciful and powerful Creator of all. In Rome, Numa received his laws from God (76). In all times, God is the true lawgiver and only those who worship Him can (76) govern well their state (77). The best example is the new Numa, Christ-loving Alexander I (79) about whom Nevzorov even stated that he was depicted in the Book of Revelation as the angel that bound satan for 1000 years.³

Napoleon and Russia

The best example of what a ruler should not be was Napoleon, whose invasion of Russia Nevzorov painfully experienced when he

всяких лет.

⁽³⁾ Quoted in Т. А. Драгайкина, *Наполеон в оценке М. И. Невзорова*, in Е. Е. Приказчикова (ed.), *«И вечной памятью двенадцатого года...»*. Издательство Уральского университета, Екатеринбург 2013, p. 23.

had to flee Moscow and then restore his life as a publisher in Moscow. When editing for a couple of years *The historical, statistical and geographic journal or the contemporary history of the world*, Nevzorov filled entire issues with the news about Napoleon and some of his articles were even published separately as *Napoleon's politics*. Nevzorov's hatred of Napoleon is understandable from the patriotic perspective, but to him, Napoleon was among the most nefarious figures. Many considered Napoleon to be the antichrist of the Book of Revelation and Nevzorov came fairly close to this view.

Napoleon was an envoy from the darkness of hell.⁴ When subjugating Toulon, he himself calmly loaded canons in the midst of chaos, at which time "his cruel nature started to show black/dark light" (18). In 1795, he washed with no mercy the streets of Paris with the blood of the French (19). Publisher Palma was shot since he did not reveal the author of a book criticizing Napoleon (54). He sacrificed his life for someone else, whereas Napoleon sacrificed and adversely affected millions of lives for his pride (55). He intended to be the earthly god (61), an inhuman tyrant who allegedly tortured his first wife Josephine (62). An idea was proposed that Napoleon should be worshiped and through him, God (72). Napoleon despised God and before the battle of Borodino he said to his troops, Russians pray to God for victory, but I pray to you, my friends. He is an antichrist. Nevzorov heard that some soldiers had a tattoo of a woman on their chest or their arms as a sign of their allegiance to Napoleon; thus, antichrists like himself are stamped with an image of a woman. Napoleon was inwardly the first antichrist and the head of antichrists.⁵

Presenting Napoleon as primarily an anti-Christian figure, Nevzorov also saw the anti-Napoleonic war through a religious lens, as the war between good and evil with Russia firmly rooted in the former. When the Russians "chased the Gauls / The Holy Spirit led

(⁴) Максим Невзоров, *Наполеонова политика, или Царство гибели народной и состояние европейских государств до начатия французской войны 1812 года*. В Университетской Типографии, Москва 1813, p. 11.

(⁵) Максим Невзоров, *Пребывание Французов в Москве*, "Исторический, статистический и географический журнал, или современная история света", 4 (1812) 2-3, pp. 106-107.

them” (1814.4.122). In his book, Nevzorov said that “God coming from the North stopped gigantic steps of the new Nebuchadnezzar and Napoleon put off to a more opportune time the homage to himself as God”.⁶ This was phrased much more strongly in the original article: “Europe awaits salvation from Northern Heroes. God is the Savior of the North and all the ends of earth! The triumph of Russia saved from the destructive plague of the Western viper was multiplied at the end of last year by the victories in the East ... It can be decidedly stated that from the North will not only come to many nations the salvation from the yoke of the new Nebuchadnezzar, but it *will come bright ray/light and will spread the light of the true enlightenment* to Europe and to other lands of the world. *Let’s sing to the Lord since he has triumphed gloriously* [Ex. 15:1]”.⁷

Why Russia? Nevzorov contrasted the sophistication of the West with the simplicity of Russia and said, for instance, that German ambition is a poor stronghold against various temptations. Russian adherence to God, His law and faith, to the Sovereign and Fatherland, the adherence based on simplicity and purity of heart, is much superior (1809.1.ix). In wars, Russian soldiers are guided by the Christian faith of forefathers that instills in them the true attachment to the Sovereign and to the Fatherland (1809.4.108). In an 1800 poem of Nevzorov, Russia said to God, “Your power and glory / Go with me everywhere; / Famous through You is my Dominion / And nowhere is any obstacle for me / To my majestic walk. You care for my happiness / As my God, Father, Defender: / No one would dare to rise against me, / And has no power / To undermine my peace.” “My fertile borders You / enlarged in this century, / And by the power of Your hand / [You] made bow before me the heads / That before overcame me / And had power over Europe” (1810.7.4-5). Under my power are “Finns, Crimeans, the Polish land” (6). It is interesting that a decade before the Napoleonic invasion of Russia, Nevzorov did not have any problem to praise his country for the subjugation of “Finns, Crimeans, the Polish land”; would it be because they were

⁽⁶⁾ Максим Невзоров, *Наполеонова политика*, p. 75.

⁽⁷⁾ Максим Невзоров, *Заключение*, “Исторический, статистический и географический журнал, или современная история света”, 4 (1812) 2-3, p. 239.

Protestants, Muslims, and Catholics, and thus ostensibly on the wrong side of religious beliefs?

There remains a theodicy problem: how to explain that the providential God allowed Napoleon to arise and to inflict so much damage everywhere? The answer can only be given in religious terms, and Nevzorov did just that. He said that sometimes God allows people like Napoleon to act because of our sins, but merciful God will finally stop them. “It seems that the just God allows such [evil] people to fulfil their evil plans to test kingdoms and nations and often to punish [them] for [their] treachery and aggression”.⁸ The Providence temporarily subdues some nations to Napoleon to test their will and the wisdom of governing.⁹

Knowledge and the Enlightenment

Nevzorov wrote a lot about science and appreciated its accomplishments. “I love and respect sciences” because of their usefulness, “but I would like that they would have as their principle that Sciences should be guided by Christian teaching without which they do more harm than good” (1814.5.36).

Traditional Orthodoxy required that to paint icons, it is not enough for the iconographer to have talent, but he also must be spiritually prepared for the task. It appears that Nevzorov accepted this view when he stated that art should be used to beautify churches, but when looking at a picture of the Mother of God one should see the pure Virgin, not lustful Venus.¹⁰ More interestingly, consciously or otherwise, Nevzorov applied this view to science. Reason is the greatest gift of God, but it is nothing without the rules of the Christian faith (1809.7.10 note). Therefore, a Christian scholar is better suited to see the mysteries of nature than philosophers enlightened

(⁸) Максим Невзоров, *Наполеонова политика...*, cit., pp. 82, 11.

(⁹) Максим Невзоров, *Наполеонское безстыдство*, “Исторический, статистический и географический журнал, или современная история света”, 3 (1813) 3, p. 213.

(¹⁰) Максим Невзоров, *Путешествие в Казань, Вятку и Оренбург в 1800 году*, часть первая. В Университетской Типографии у Люби, Гария и Попова, Москва 1803, p. 166.

by some pagan wisdom (1813.6.98). History shows that all useful discoveries, tools, and arts were made by the lovers of men whom today's philosophers call stupid and fanatics (1809.7.51). Nevzorov attributed medical successes of the English Hippocrates of the 17th century, Thomas Sydenham, primarily to his love of neighbor (50). "All people and Physicians in particular should know the secret that love of neighbor and the desire to bring to people un hypocritical help not based on profit alone opens eyes more to the knowledge of things and to all inventions and to discovery of helpful and comforting means than pride, love of money, and other passions regardless of the screams against it of the sworn enemies of morality, the new Philosophers" (51). This sentiment is not limited to Christians alone. About Hippocrates Nevzorov stated that due to his love of God and of neighbor he was more successful with few medical means to his disposal than today's physicians with the entire apothecaries they can access (1814.6.130-131).

As to the knowledge of nature, the principle should be: know yourself, and in other things people should seek the knowledge of things that are necessary for one's life and for helping others (1810.11.86). Nature should be investigated to discover the ways allowing people to live in the world and to help one another; also, to see the glory of God and the secrets of His creation (77). Not much is needed to do the latter. See the seed from which a plant sprouts. Look at the ant, bee, beaver, and other animals to see that the Providence gave to each kind a particular way of living. Look at an insect and the way it multiplies itself (78). "Improve yourself, reject bad inclinations, throw pride, selfishness, greed of possession and crude feelings and make good soul out of evil: then the entire Nature will appear to you in a new form and millions of its mysteries will be revealed which otherwise you would trample upon with your feet without seeing them" (79).

With all these statements, Nevzorov blended together two aspects of art and science: invention and application. It is not too controversial that the same things can be applied to many uses depending on someone's goals, praiseworthy or nefarious, but it may be difficult to defend the view that someone's religious leanings determine a scholarly success in, say, theoretical physics or marine biology.

In any event, Nevzorov appreciated the knowledge that came to Russia from abroad. Russia owes plenty to foreigners; Germans taught Russians many crafts (1811.11.99) and brought a lot of useful knowledge; the French had an impact on Russian morals, but it is a question whether they brought more good than evil (100). It is good to use knowledge and skill from abroad, but it is also good to keep the good that is one's own (108). One thing is the influx of technical knowledge, quite another is the inflow of new mores and lifestyles. And Nevzorov could not endure the latter. He bitterly criticized the poison of French philosophy spread over Europe and the foothold it got in Russia (100). And the consequences were dire: the invasion of 1812 was God's punishment for the sins of Russia. People should repent and "restore the fallen inner religion and show it through deeds different from the deeds stemming from the false enlightenment"; however, people "provoke Him [God] by retaining only an appearance of religiosity, keeping altars of the false enlightenment" in all educational institutions.¹¹ God was appalled with what was shown in theaters and He started to burn them: in Paris, London, Berlin, Saint-Petersburg, Moscow. "God decided to clean the earth from impurity!!!" (274). And Nevzorov himself found a lot of such impurity. In fact, what was hailed as the greatest accomplishments of the Enlightenment, he very easily included in this category.

Literature was of lamentable quality: it was fashionable, said Nevzorov, to write about ancient travels (1810.5.97 note) in which ancient sages pronounced absurdities of Helvetius and others and thus to wise Pythagoras, known for his morality and piety and true knowledge, who offered to the gods 100 oxen for his solution of a mathematical theorem, there were ascribed ideas that were fitting a French author, godless Lantier (Étienne-François de Lantier, the author of *Voyages d'Antenor*), a lover of pleasure who remade ancient mythology according to the French taste (98). The fashion came to Germany where robbers were presented in a positive light like in Schiller's tragedy (99). In fact, Nevzorov analyzed at great length Schil-

⁽¹¹⁾ А. Гробов, *О нестроениях общественных (Письма М. И. Невзорова князю А. Н. Голицыну в 1820 г. и митр. Серафиму в 1824 г.)*, "Голос Минувшего", (1913) 12, p. 271.

ler's *Robbers* (1811.2.94-154) stating that Schiller presented some vices in such a way that they appeared to be excusable or even acceptable. Theater was bad for presenting virtue (114). In his view, writers should not write mindless, seductive, and inciting destruction/suicide pieces for the youth. May all be for the benefit of people and for glory of God (1809.6.119).

If literature was bad, philosophy was even worse. Nevzorov criticized Bernardin de Saint-Pierre for treating on equal footing Molière, Voltaire, and Fénelon, which was wrong: Molière was only an actor and comedian, Fénelon preached the word of God, he was a defender of truth, whereas Voltaire's fame came from ridiculing God and religion and all that was pure and holy. Saint-Pierre went even further in his mindlessness by saying that Voltaire and Rousseau surpassed Fénelon in the scope and depth of their investigations (1814.6.110). However, Voltaire was simply "an all-around blasphemer and was well-deservedly cursed by everyone" (111). Incidentally, Voltaire managed to do some things right in Nevzorov's eyes since he showed in his play in the true light Mohamed as a deceiver, seducing maidens, turning sons against their fathers and making them killers of their fathers; he spoke about God not believing himself.¹²

Speaking about Helvetius' absurdities, Nevzorov considered his work *On the mind* to be "a product of a flippant mind infected" with 18th century philosophy which under the disguise of enlightenment spread principles pleasant to our body, blood, selfishness, in opposition to the truth (1811.3.37), and devoted to its rebuttal a long article (23-104), in which he stated that for a Christian, the book is worthless since it saw the goal of this life only in physical satisfaction (38). His philosophy was "a disordered and muddy mixture of most untrue statements contrary to the experience of the passed centuries and of contradictions of all kinds" (55). There was nothing in his book that was based on common sense and on virtue (68). The statement that passions animate the moral world was just blasphemous (69). Helvetius glorified greed and pride which resulted in building

(¹²) Максим Невзоров, *Путешествие в Казань, Вятку и Оренбург в 1800 году...*, cit., pp. 228-227.

pyramids (75). But how useful are they? (76). Helvetius said that strong passions led to the development of science and were the main principle of great works (80; 1814.6.116-117). No, it's the need and the love of mankind that are the source of anything useful (1811.3.80).

Philosophy does not only impact human minds, but it has serious political consequences. Saint-Pierre's claim that philosophy was not guilty of revolution but passions not satiated with power, fortune, revenge, prideful education (1814.6.106), Nevzorov considered to be a pitiful explanation and an idle talk. After all, Saint-Pierre himself saw philosophy as the teacher of passions (118). And thus, after all, the French revolution, was a consequence of selfish and perfectly absurd philosophy (1813.4. 94-95), or, as expressed with more fervor, the French revolution was "a monstrous production of the blood-sucking, philosophical politics of the Enlightenment".¹³

Education

Nevzorov considered his *Friend of the Youth* to be an avenue of instilling in particular in young people the proper attitude to life by publishing articles presenting exemplary lives and lives that diverted from the right place. He considered his journal to be one such element in the educational crusade, but he envisioned the entire educational system in which the moral upbringing would be of primary importance. "Full truth is that without education of the heart, the education of the mind means nothing and all our works as many as we would write, poetic or in prose, will be nothing but gibberish (*трень-брень с бирюльками*)" (1810.6.79).

Nevzorov criticized the materialism of Franz Joseph Gall, the father of phrenology, who, for instance, claimed that the large brain gives humans the preeminence of mind and of will among living beings (1810.9.119). Following Gall, some organs/parts should be removed from the brain if need be, some added in childhood (124). However, Nevzorov saw that upbringing changes a bad child into good and even adults can change their ways. He said that he did

⁽¹³⁾ *Отрывок из послания М. И. Невзорова к О. А. Поздееву, "Библиографическая записка"*, 1 (1858) 21, p. 652.

some sinful things in his childhood, but he straightened out later. He also gave an example of Jean-François de La Harpe, a follower of Voltaire, who became a Christian after the revolution. “Was he lacking an organ of religion before the revolution which after the revolution suddenly developed?” (125). “I don’t want to believe that feelings have some place in the brain, but it is something different than the body known under the name of animal soul that feels, which is surpassed by its attributes, i.e., by the will and mind, by the spirit that is in man and oversees his actions” (129). The human spirit that rules over the body is not in the brain but acts through the brain just like a musician who presses keys or pedals of the piano (132). This rather marginally made remark about the makeup of the human being is interesting since Nevzorov seems to have opted for the tripartite division: the body, soul, and spirit, rather than traditionally Orthodox bipartite division into the body and the soul/spirit.

Of course, the involvement of parents in the educational process is critical, and Nevzorov, for instance, urged parents that they should watch what children read and avoid romances, seductive, even depraved books that do not develop mind nor feed the heart whereby children become pupils of the French Minerva unfit for professional nor family life, unfit for public service (1810.11.28).

Educators should instill in the youth the love for virtue, for the virtue itself, not for a reward. A reward can come from God if needed (1809.9.71 note). It was clear that moral upbringing should be based on religious faith, and not just on any faith, but on Christianity since in all things, the only path is the true faith of Christianity, the only one that teaches true love of man, fatherland, the only one that illuminates reason/mind, and gives true knowledge about everything (84 note). Only Christianity teaches that we should avoid passions and provides means to accomplish it: don’t do to others what you would not want them do to you, the first natural law since the law of our being is to do what we want (1809.10.103); only the Christian school can teach people how to improve their own nature with the help of God, to defeat passions (81), and how to endure misfortune (1809.11.82). Also, although virtue is always connected with some loss of property and this offering is often unpleasant and the sweetness of fruits can be tasted after some time; thus, teaching of morals

that is based on pleasure only is useless and Christian morality at the first glance appears to our nature bitter thereby defeating all romantic teachings (1814.5.35-36).

Education should shape the pupil into a virtuous person, other-directed, a good citizen, and selfless. However, religious basis was necessary here to motivate a person by heavenly help and, ultimately, heavenly reward. God always rewards for good deeds if only with enhancing patience in bad situations (1809.9.113 note). For those who endure hardships and complain about it, Nevzorov envisioned God Himself say, “Unreasonable creatures that I love! / You do not know the part designed for you, / That I prepare happiness for all your labors / And lead you through crosses to heavenly peace” (1810.2.97).

Masonry

Nevzorov was a committed Rosicrucian; he joined a masonic lodge very early on and was influenced particularly by Lopukhin who also was his benefactor who financially supported Nevzorov during his studies abroad,¹⁴ secured him a state position after his release from the hospital, and let him live in his house for years. He spoke about his masonic leanings in his correspondence, but there is very little that may be considered masonic in his publications. In fact, one publication that refers to masonry explicitly could be viewed as anti-masonic since it disparages alchemy and by implication, masonry.¹⁵ In 1810, he published a translation of a dialogue between nature,

(¹⁴) Cfr. the exchange of letters between Nevzorov and Lopukhin published by Я[ков] Л. Барсков, *Переписка московских масонов XVIII-го века 1780-1792 гг.* Издание Императорской Академии Наук, Петроград 1915. His name appears in Novikov's letter in 1784 as Maximus Newzorow, a petitioner (пети́т) for the acceptance to a masonic lodge, А[лександр] Н. Пыпин, *Русское масонство; XVIII и первая четверть XIX в.* Издательство Огни, Петроград 1916, p. 352; *Письма Н. И. Новикова.* Издательство имени Новикова, Санкт-Петербург 1994, p. 41.

(¹⁵) This publication is also considered the only place in which mysticism is expressed, Н[ил П.] Колюпанов, *Биография Александра Ивановича Кошелева.* Типо-литография И. Н. Кушнерева и Ко., Москва 1889, vol. 1, pt. 1, p. 190; however, very little of mysticism can be found in it.

mercury, and an alchemist by Sendivogius, Michał Sędziwój,¹⁶ an author recognized by masons.

In this dialogue, an alchemist tries to produce the philosopher's stone by mixing mercury with a variety of materials (1810.11.91). An old man in his dream says that he is using the wrong kind of mercury (92). In another dream, the old man says that the alchemist's mercury is fine, but he has to use a proper spell (94), upon which mercury began to complain that it is weak since it has been being mixed with various substances contrary to its constitution (96-97). Mercury is mocking the alchemist; however, it does not know itself how to make the philosopher's stone from itself (98). Afterwards the alchemist asks nature for help. Nature summons mercury, but mercury says it cannot obey fools (101) and says that the right way is "to mix Nature with Nature," but the alchemist mixes mercury with various foul substances such as dung (104) and what he reads in books he understands "literally, but not according to reason or meaning or content" (105). A series of quite cryptic statements of mercury and nature follows and at the end, the alchemist admits that he knows nothing, but he will continue to act as though he did (120). What Nevzorov wanted the reader to take from this dialogue was the statement of understanding alchemical books not literally, but metaphorically. And so, he said that "the best and the most truthful, in my opinion, among such Writers are the ones who in the books of such kind hid an allegory of the human morality for the reason only known to them, and if I am not mistaken, under the form of chemical operations they understood the course and turns of improving and perfecting the human spirit and the mysteries related to it" (84). It is enough to love God and people (85). People should run from those who promise that they can turn some metal into gold or can provide general philosophical medicine (86). If God wanted anyone to be able to turn something into gold, He would have shown to someone a way of doing it (76).

Nevzorov wrote to his fellow mason Pozdeev that all of the rituals used by masons and the alchemic theory represent the process

⁽¹⁶⁾ First published in 1607 in Latin as *Dialogus mercurii, alchymistae et naturae*, but Nevzorov translated it from a German translation.

of resurrection. All books published by masons – magical, kabalistic, alchemic – speak about the same. Other interpretations are made by charlatans. The goal of masonry is the imitation of Christ.¹⁷ This, in fact, was the spirit that permeated the Moscow Rosicrucians from the Novikov circle. Novikov himself ridiculed the outlandish forms of masonic rituals;¹⁸ Lopukhin stated that the practitioners of alchemy – and thus those who literally interpret its precepts – do the work of dark forces.¹⁹ For them, masonry was a way of the Christian revival, the revival of the living faith manifested in one's everyday life. After his return to Moscow, Nevzorov was invited to join a masonic lodge, but he did not since the heads of these lodges did not have a good reputation. As it turned out, these lodges were far from what he was used to; they heard very little about the nature of Christianity and members spent their time of some “mysterious kabalistic and alchemic knowledge,” which they did not understand themselves and only led others to sin and this was a type of masonry about which he warned his readers when publishing Sendivogius' dialogue and his own comments to it. In his mind, this type of masonry brings more harm than good.²⁰

Why was such an escape to masonry even needed? Nevzorov, with many of his masonic brothers, was dissatisfied with the state of the official Orthodox church. Many things changed over centuries, some principles were diluted or even abandoned. For example, the state of monasticism was deplorable from the religious perspective. In Nevzorov's view, monasteries were just “huge and rich buildings, a lot of silver and gold, brocade, pearls and precious stones! And all monks are ironed up, dressed up, handsome, young, stout, in a word: charming to the taste of many!” Today “nuns instead of hoods spread a long silk down to heels.” Cloisters were a fashion show. Nuns

(¹⁷) *Отрывок из послания М. И. Невзорова к О. А. Поздееву...*, cit., pp. 647-648.

(¹⁸) A 1783 letter to Rzhevskii, *Письма Н. И. Новикова...*, cit., p. 22.

(¹⁹) *Некоторые черты о внутренней церкви (1798)*, ch. 3, §2, in *Масонские труды И. В. Лопухина*. Товарищество типографии А. И. Майонтова, Москва 1913, p. 16.

(²⁰) *Отрывок из послания М. И. Невзорова к О. А. Поздееву...*, cit., pp. 658-659.

kissed the hand of the igumena/abbess which only contributed to her pride.²¹ Moreover, “the clergy have become genuine tradesmen; they try only to multiply their profits by renting [to others] houses, cellars, gardens, and the like. The proof of it are all the archbishopric and monastery buildings in Moscow, which became lairs of inns, taverns, coaching inns and shops, which serve only for luxury. They limit the religion of Christ and reverence of God only to the increase of gold, brocades, and pearls of the church, whereby the real robbers who make donations to monasteries and churches become their best Christians; but true followers of Jesus Christ, who try to spread the true evangelical spirit are considered by them to be fools, fanatics, and are subject to persecution”.²²

Nevzorov’s Christianity is the Christianity of the Novikov circle, the Christianity rooted in the firm inner conviction in the truth of the precepts of Christ, the Christianity which Lopukhin theologially outlined through his concept of the inner church. The human person is the center of Christ’s church, the inner church is where Christ lives in those who turn with belief to Him. Nevzorov himself spoke about the inner worship of God.²³ He also fairly explicitly contrasted this understanding of Christianity with the official Orthodoxy when he wrote to metropolitan Serafim that “in our Greek church, the most recent times showed the mistreatment of the true Christians”:²⁴ our, i.e., the Russian official church, is not on the same religious course

(²¹) *Письмо Макс[има] Ив[ановича] Невзорова, к митрополиту Серафиму, “Вестник Европы”, (1868) 12, pp. 766-767.* “He was a mason of old breed ... The search for the truth was generally a characteristic trait of the older generation of masons; they looked for this truth in heaven, with which they united in the moments of mystical experience, and on earth, to which they tried to ingraft ‘the heavenly [realm]’ in the form of pure Christian teaching untouched by ‘the outer church’”, Н. К. Кульман, *Максим Иванович Невзоров*, in С. П. Мельгунов, Н. П. Сидоров (eds.), *Масонство в его прошлом и настоящем*. Задруга, [Москва] [1914-1915], reprint 1991, vol. 2, p. 224.

(²²) Quoted in Н[иколай Ф.] Дубровин, *Наши мистики-сектанты*, “Русская старина”, (1894) 10, p. 116; Raffaella Faggionato, *A Rosicrucian utopia in Eighteenth-century Russia: the masonic circle of N. I. Novikov*. Springer, Dordrecht 2005, pp. 105-106.

(²³) *Письмо Макс. Ив. Невзорова, к митрополиту Серафиму...*, cit., p. 766.

(²⁴) А. Гробов, *О нестроениях общественных...*, cit., p. 276.

as the true Christianity. He also commented on the publication of Lopukhin's book *Some characteristics of the inner church* that it contains "the core of the true Christianity" (1811.3.108) and recommended this book to anyone who was dissatisfied with superficiality of Christianity and wanted to be a participant of its inner treasures (112). Also, when he criticized the vices of the West, he most often was guided by Western authors rather than by church fathers or teachers of the Orthodox church.²⁵

Nevzorov found these treasures through masons in Christ, the Christ who says: "Don't despise anyone: / Love [your] neighbor, love [him], / And put down your soul for him, / May all that is yours be his" (1810.5.9). "I see love on the cross, / I want to be captive only of it / And bow only before it / In all the spiritual purity" (11). "I fall, God! before You, / And in simplicity I pray: / Father of love! Rule over me / Be the owner of my will! / So that Your law, Your commandments / Moderate my aspirations / And so that in all my love / Was in agreement with your love, / Which You consecrated with [Your] blood, / And with which I am saved!" (13-15).

In his insistence on true Christianity, he did not limit the core of religion to the historical Christianity. He said that the ancients brought offerings to God under various form and worshiped Him which shows that the light of divine knowledge shone equally in all nations (1811.11.30). In his view, God thought about the entire humankind and allowed the true light to reach every nation which is hidden in pagan mythology and in their rituals (1811.6.126). In this, Nevzorov joined the masonic conviction that historical Christianity was the last, the most developed state of religion which started, in fact with Adam. Such a belief did not limit the scope of saved people to Christians, but salvation was available to all people who responded to God's inner call or those who through their investigation of nature came to the conviction of the existence of God, the Author of this nature.

(²⁵) П. А. Безсонов, *Максим Иванович Невзоров...*, cit., p. 124.

ABSTRACT

Oggi Nevzorov viene ricordato soprattutto per *L'amico dei giovani e [della persone] di tutte le età*, che è stato la sede principale per la promozione delle sue vedute. La sua preoccupazione primaria è stata l'avanzamento delle sue vedute cristiane in particolare tra i giovani come mezzo per l'istruzione di membri di famiglie e cittadini retti. Uno dei modi scelti era la presentazione delle biografie di figure storiche esemplari, ma anche di quelle di individui che servivano da controesempi. Il più illustre tra questi era Napoleone, il cui comportamento come visione politica fu aspramente criticato da Nevzorov nel libro a lui dedicato. Nevzorov fu educato dai rosacrocce di Mosca, membri del circolo di Novikov, che vedeva nella massoneria il luogo per un rinnovamento spirituale attraverso la forma pura della Cristianità.