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## **MONK-RIGORIST DIMITRII ROSTOVSKII**

Daniil Tuptalo, known today as Rostovskii, was born in 1651 in Makarov near Kiev. His father was a Cossack officer Savva Grigor'evich Tuptalo. He was first home-schooled, and then from 1662 to 1665 he was a student in Kiev Bratskaia College (renamed later Kiev Mohyla Academy). He continued his education in the Kirillovskii monastery, to which his father was a donor, in Kiev, where in 1668 he became a monk and assumed the name of Dimitrii. He was invited to Chernigov as a preacher by archbishop Baranovich. In 1677 he moved to the Novodvorskii monastery in Belarus and then to the Spasskii monastery to preach in all of Belarusian eparchy. In 1679 he returned to Chernigov and then to Baturin, the capital of hetmanate to become the preacher of hetman Ivan Samoilovich. In 1681 he became an igumen of the Maksakovskii monastery near Chernigov, and the next year, an igumen of the Krupitskii monastery in Baturin. In 1684 he returned to Kiev to be a preacher in Pecherskaia lavra. In 1686 he was again an igumen of the Krupitskii monastery and a preacher for hetman Ivan Mazepa, until 1692. In 1694, he became an igumen of the Petropavlovskii monastery near Glukhov, in 1697 – an archimandrite of the Uspenskii-Eletskii monastery in Chernigov, the next year – of the Kirillovskii monastery in Kiev, and in 1699 – of the Spaso-Preobrazhanskii monastery in Novgorod-Severskii. In 1701 he was consecrated in Moscow as a bishop. By insistence of the tsar, he became in 1701 a metropolitan of Tobolsk in Siberia, but because of his illness, the location was changed to Rostov. In 1702 he left the Ukrainian soil to continue his ecclesiastical work in the Russian heartland until his death in 1709.

In 1752, when Rostovskii's grave was opened after 42 years, his body was intact, his clothing barely touched by time. People came in droves to visit his grave, and many miracles were attributed to him. In 1757 he was canonized as a saint of the Orthodox church, the first Russian saint of the synodal period, a rare event considering that in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries only four saints were canonized in Russia.

Rostovskii considered it his ecclesiastical duty to write: "to my rank (of which I am not worthy) belongs to preach the word of God not only by speaking, but also by writing. This is my work, this is my calling, this is my duty" (Pi 167)<sup>1</sup>. And write he did, prodigiously. His *opus vitae* is *The lives of the saints*, on which he worked for twenty years. It was a Herculean effort resulting in publishing descriptions of some 750 lives of the saints for each day of the year and published first in four enormous volumes (5800 pages); in later editions the editors left out some portions which did not appear to be credible; in the nineteenth century, *The lives* were published in twelve large volumes, one volume for each month. At the end of his life, he wrote *An investigation of the schismatic faith*, published posthumously in 1745, and *The chronicle*, which was a description of Biblical history starting with the creation of the world. The work was intended to end with the birth of Christ, but Rostovskii managed to reach only the times of Jacob. Rostovskii left ca. one hundred and twenty sermons and speeches, plays<sup>2</sup>, poetry, and smaller devotional and dogmatic writings. In all this, Rostovskii intended his writings to be an expository work on conservative Orthodox religion, with no intention of introducing new elements into the traditional faith. His expository

<sup>1</sup> The following abbreviation of Rostovskii's works will be used:

A – *Алфавит духовный*, Москва 2010.

KL – *Келейный летописец святителя Димитрия Ростовского с прибавлением его жития, чудес, избранных творений и Киевского Синописа архимандрита Иннокентия Гизеля*, Москва 2000; references are made to *Келейный летописец*, p. 41-398; *Краткие вопросы и ответы*, p. 568-598; *Зерцало православного исповедания*, p. 600-613.

P – *Проповеди и поучения святителя Димитрия Ростовского*, Киев 2005.

Pi – *Письма*, in: М.А. Федотова, *Эпистолярное наследие Димитрия Ростовского: исследование и тексты*, Москва 2005, p. 61-224.

R – *Розыск о раскольнической Брынской вере, о учении их, о делах их и изъявление, яко вера их неправа, учение их душевредно и дела их не Богоугодна*, Москва 1847.

<sup>2</sup> Ascription of some plays to Rostovskii is not altogether certain, since he never mentioned in his writing having written any plays, Е.В. Жигулин, *Декламация "На Воскресение Христово" в ростовской школе Святителя Димитрия*, in: *Святой Димитрий, митрополит Ростовский. Исследования и материалы*, ed. Л. Янковская, Москва 1994, p. 144.

tion of the dogmas by necessity stresses certain aspects of Orthodoxy more than others and adds some interpretative coloring to particular elements of that faith. There are no departures from traditional Orthodoxy, but there are certain elements in his exposition that can be found interesting, even puzzling.

## Man

The human being is a unity of the soul and body. The body is mortal, the soul is an invisible image of God, immortal, incorporeal, rational, giving life to the body (R 338). The soul dwells in the entire body (KL 583) and constitutes the true personhood of each man. However, although Rostovskii thought that the soul has three faculties, he could not decide what they are. He wrote that the three major faculties of the soul are mind, heart/emotion, and will (ум, чувство, воля, A 1.2.10, ум, сердце, воля, 1.4.9), the mind, word, and spirit (in which he followed John of Damascus, KL 582); memory, reason, and will (KL 56; R 292). The soul is even identified with the mind and thoughts (R 171). Moreover, in his view, the mind is created as part of the soul, and reason seems to be the result of education; it is “the reason of external learning,” that is, human or secular learning and as such is polluted (A 1.3.9). However, this would be the external or outer reason; there is also an inner reason which should search for the teaching of God and for Christ (1.4.1). On the other hand, following the traditional Orthodox teaching, Rostovskii distinguished the image of God that is received when the soul is created, in which similarity to God lies in reason and in autonomy, from likeness which is received during baptism, whose similarity lies in the will and in virtues (R 293). Each human being is an image of God; only a Christian has likeness to Him (294). It would appear that the will – free will, that is – is a faculty of the soul and so is the mind which seems to be merged with reason, although reason may be understood as only part of mind. Rostovskii frequently distinguished the two, although he did not provide a clear explanation of how he understood the mind and reason. As to emotions, some of them may be of carnal nature and thus can be consigned to the body. However, this cannot be done with the heart, i.e., with love, the highest emotion of all and an indispensable, even the main, element of Christian life. Memory can also, like reason, be made part of the mind, and thus the tripartite division of the soul into the mind, heart, and will may stand.

Rostovskii also distinguished between different reasons: spiritual, psychic, and corporeal, with the spiritual reason being perfect (A 1.3.1). The

saints possessed spiritual reason, and they learned it from the Holy Spirit by absorbing the teachings of Christ (1.3.2). They were dissatisfied with outward actions only and became habituated to inner actions, that is, to mental purification (1.3.4) or to illumination and purification of reason (1.3.5), to the union of Christ with the soul in reason, which is accomplished by keeping Christ's commandments (1.3.6). The three reasons seem to be three different levels of development of one reason with which all humans are endowed. For Rostovskii, all people should strive for reaching the level of spiritual development of reason, although only a few – only the saints – will reach it. Also, spiritual reason seems to be the inner reason, corporeal reason – the outer reason, and the psychic reason – and intermediary step between the two, a mixture of the two, as it were. The highest level seems to be reachable by one's efforts accompanied by the divine help and illumination, since, as picturesquely stated, the soul "that is not salted with the salt of grace of the Holy Spirit will completely stink with stupidity" (1.3.10).

Adam's fall was caused by unreasonableness (неразумие) and by not analyzing all consequences of his actions (A 1.1.1). The first commandment was to work the garden of Eden and to take care of it, which Rostovskii took to mean, "to work with reason to understand well and keep the commandment ... but since he did not work with reason, he did not keep the commandment because by not acting reasonably, first of all, unbelief emerged in Adam," and from this, the fall (1.1.2). "If Adam understood the Benefactor and thought about the commandment, he would not disbelieve this commandment" (1.1.3). The lesson for us is that "we cannot be united with Him in any other way but through reason and through knowing all things. Since who truly knows himself, he knows God, and who knows God, he knows himself" (1.1.4). This sudden transition to self-knowledge is justified by the fact that "no one can know God until he knows himself; but, he does not know himself as he should if he first of all does not know the creation and does not scrutinize all things" (1.1.5, 1.2.9). The latter should focus on the origin of all things, and the investigation of what is earthly should precede the investigation of what is heavenly (1.1.6). "From reason and understanding comes faith" (1.1.7) and faith grows in proportion to the flourishing of reason (1.1.8). These statements would lead to a conclusion that the more intelligent and the more knowledgeable a person is, the more strongly he should believe in God. Such extreme intellectualism is unsustainable and Rostovskii well realized that. If it were the case, most university professors should be believers, and most people with low IQ and with little school knowledge should espouse atheistic views. Therefore, Rostovskii qualified

his initial statements by saying that he really meant not reason in general, but true and just/right reason, where just reason develops through wise action and through keeping God's commandments (1.2.1.) since "even devils can be considered rational" (1.2.2) and so can heretics, but the latter cling to their heretical views since "they do not want to remain in truth, since their reason gets dimmed and they become blind because of their lie" (1.2.4). Also, simple people can acquire spiritual wisdom by wise actions and keeping the commandments of Christ (1.3.8). Therefore, God's commandments have to be accepted before any action is undertaken, and thus not only the belief in God has to be sufficiently strong for the reason to be considered true and just, but also the belief in His commandments. Reason can feed belief if it is first based on belief. How can reason base its workings on a belief? If the will prompts it in this direction. Therefore, there has to be some interplay between will and reason: the will directs reason to faith so that reason can enhance this faith. How can will accomplish it? How is it that will directs reason toward truth not toward the lie as, in Rostovskii's opinion, it happened to heretics who were blinded by "their lie"?

"Someone desiring just reason (разум) should constantly act wisely (умное) since someone not illuminating his mind (ум) with reason and not taking care of that does not draw any benefit from it, although he would have natural reason educated by external wisdom" (A 1.2.8), which, by itself, is a vacuous statement: to have proper reason, one should be wise and thus act wisely and yet this mind should be illuminated by the very reason that should be a consequence of the mind. Even if Rostovskii meant illuminating reason with mind, the question is in the provenance of wisdom of this mind. And, in fact, in a disjointed statement, Rostovskii provided an answer: "reason not illuminated by the reason of God remains fruitless or bears bitter fruit" (1.2.8). This seemingly identifies mind and reason, but it also points to God's reason as the source of wisdom. God's reason? Rostovskii provided a very specific answer: who wants to know creation, oneself, and God, should read as frequently as possible a particular devotional book (седьмодневник, 1.2.10). However, reading does not suffice: the reason of God should be learned through prayer, tearful contrition, learned "from God through wise action." Also, just reason is acquired through fasting (1.6.1), and yet, the divine things can be known only through God's illumination, not through human learning (1.4.1).

The outcome appears to be that one should fast, pray, and read a devotional book to become a good Christian. This very well may be true as a matter of spiritual advice; however, it provides no philosophical guidance

into the dependence between faith, knowledge, self-knowledge, and, on the other hand, the mind and will.

By the investigation of earthly things, Rostovskii might have meant the proof from design: the complexity and the harmony of nature points to the creator, but such a proof would point to the existence of God, and Rostovskii did not raise the problem of the existence of God, which in the Eastern tradition was rarely touched upon, unlike in the Western Christianity. However, how the growing reason – the reason acquiring more and more knowledge about the self and the world around – could lead to Christian beliefs is completely unclear from Rostovskii's brief and confusing philosophical remarks.

### **Life of sorrow**

Rostovskii in his writings and sermons devoted most of his attention to moral teaching, to proper conduct of Christian life. He condemned murder, thievery, cheating, adultery, and hypocrisy. People should be humble, since through humility self-knowledge and the knowledge of one's nothingness is gained (A 2.4.9) and should suppress any trace of pride, the pride that invariably goes before a sin (2.3.10). They should work and not be lazy. They should drink and eat in moderation, dress to protect the body from the elements, not to show off. In all that, people should remember that all that is here, is temporary, that the carnal side of life has no lasting value. They should always remember that they will eventually die, so the *memento mori* maxim should be always in their minds (2.2.10). Without bread, the body weakens; without the thought of death, the soul weakens (KL 164). That should eventually lead them to what is lasting, what is eternal, and holy, to God, and to the realization that God is the creator of everything and what they can claim as theirs is but the direct gift of God or is accomplished through their talents which they also possess through the grace of God. This should lead to the realization that “without God's grace you are not greater than a dry stick, fruitless tree, dried out grass [good] for burning in fire, a rag thrown into dung, a vessel of sin, sizable container of all nasty and foolish passions, a chalice full of all lawlessness, you have nothing good in yourself, nothing virtuous except for sin and delinquency” (A 2.4.3).

With the view of the worthlessness of the world, Rostovskii urged believers to turn away from the world as much as possible. The world is but dust and ashes and any interest in the things of the world turns believers

away from God. Such a vision applies to men as well. On the one hand, Rostovskii proclaimed that reason should have an upper hand over carnal desires, where, to be sure, he meant the just reason, and it should guide people in their daily life (A 1.5.3, 1.8.1), since just reason is the beginning and the root of the good just as stupidity and lack of self-knowledge is the beginning of all sins (1.5.5); on the other hand, he declared that there is nothing good in a man, only sin and lawlessness (A 2.4.3). This extreme statement should probably be treated with the grain of salt. If there really had been nothing good in men, the earth would have been true hell with no hope for salvation. However, there is at least one good thing in men: the image of God. Without it, it would be impossible to convince anyone to abandon his sinful ways, and without it Rostovskii's urging to know oneself would be meaningless. There is something good in humans, something which makes humans human only because it is, in a way, a divine part in them, because it is the reflection of God. The divine in man makes man human. This cannot be changed, only obfuscated, covered with layers of sin to make it almost invisible.

Rostovskii, however, insisted that nothing good can come from man, only sin (A 2.5.1). Man cannot even have a good intention without God's prompting (2.5.2). Man needs divine help to conquer sin, but he needs to realize first that something is a sin and, as such, needs to be conquered. If there is no shred of autonomy in a human being in respect to goodness, even to good intentions, then an important question arises, how man can be penalized for anything if even an intention to fight a sin does not come from him? All the more that not only man cannot do anything good without God's participation, but he cannot even do anything bad without God's permission (2.4.5). People's good deeds are not theirs; they are God's doing – through people. How then can it be claimed that these deeds are of any redeeming value for people if they are not theirs? Moreover, how can sin be blameworthy, if it is the result of divine permission to sin? How can all of it be reconciled with human freedom, an important aspect of human personhood? Rostovskii did not ask these questions, leaving his readers baffled. Instead, he unraveled a rather ascetic vision of human life.

Talking should be limited to what is necessary; no small talk since that can lead to "cursing and all that is evil" (2.7.6). "Silence is the beginning of the purification of the soul" (2.7.7). Maybe talking with someone wise, with a spiritual advisor can be such a beginning.

Rostovskii urged man to cry over his own sins day and night not forgetting even the smallest infraction (2.8.1). This encourages man to maintain

a downtrodden spirit day and night by dwelling on the evil. Where is the thinking about the good; where is the joy in the Lord? Paul did urge Christians in Philippi to rejoice in the Lord – always. Although, incongruously, Rostovskii encouraged people to rejoice in Christ and be not sad (3.4.3), to not grieve inconsolably even in respect of the greatest sins (3.4.1), he reverted to the need of crying at all times by stating that God wants that people always grieve in this world as a way leading them to Him so that they would not grieve in the next (3.4.10).

Even laughter is prohibited: laughter is “something childish, a sign of a weak and noncourageous soul; in all cases laughter is not needed” since it kills the remembrance of death and dims the memory of the final judgment (A 2.7.1). Rostovskii thus advocated the life of constant doom and gloom, the life of an incessantly downcast spirit. It is questionable if such a life will be considered by many an expression of God’s blessing and a sign of His providential care. After all, Ecclesiastes did mention that there is time for laughter. Just as eating and drinking is necessary for a balanced life, so is laughter. Rostovskii called for moderation in eating and drinking, even moderation in all things (A 1.6.5), and so he should have done with laughter instead of trying to suppress it altogether. Rostovskii himself quoted approvingly Chrysostom’s saying that wine is made so that we rejoice and laugh (P 577). He said assuredly that no one saw Christ laugh (2.8.4), but how did he know it? The New Testament does not record it but if, as John concluded his gospel, everything were recorded, the whole world would not contain all the books on the subject. Incidentally, the psalmist pictured God Himself as laughing.

Enjoying beauty is also prohibited. For example, the beauty of a face is grass, shadow, and dung (A 1.9.1). However, instead of seeing in beauty found in people, art, and nature something that will turn into ashes, people can see in it a manifestation of God’s creative power, and a faint reflection of the divine beauty. After all, Rostovskii admitted that beauty was created by God (1.10.5) and, also, it is written that the Creator can be known from the beauty of His creations (Wisdom 13:5). Why denigrate it as dung – and thereby denigrate God’s creation – rather than see it as a window to heavens, just as Rostovskii instructed his readers that icons should be viewed? Even he did not view all beauty as dung. As he interpreted one Biblical event, Sarah was pretty for Abimelech although she was old since after she learned that she could not have children with Abraham, she abstained from intercourse with him, and thus she retained her beauty, as some interpreted, but most of all, it was due to her holy life since the soul “lighted by love for

God shines with good works and the face of such a person is bright and beautiful” (KL 290). Therefore, it would appear that admiring the beauty of Sarah’s face could be tantamount to the admiration of her exemplary life and of the workings in her of God who made her good works shine through her beauty. How would the attitude proposed by Rostovskii spell to the coherence of marriage? Would it strengthen a marriage if a husband saw only ashes and dung in the face of his wife, judged by the unspiritual to be beautiful? But maybe the maintenance of the coherence of marriage is a priority. After all, in the paradise there was “no lust and no carnal desire” which appeared after expulsion from the paradise and will disappear in the hereafter (A 1.11.5)<sup>3</sup>; Rostovskii followed here the fathers of the church who said that Adam and Eve were virgins in paradise and did not experience any sexual desire (KL 69, 104). When a man unites himself with a woman, he dies with his soul to God. Marriage is a necessary evil permitted by the law, but chastity is much more preferred since, in Rostovskii’s opinion, Adam was originally marked for such a life (A 1.11.6). Incidentally, this poses an interesting problem – not investigated by Rostovskii – of procreation in the paradise (possibly by creating more people) and the physical endowment enabling it which would appear to be redundant in paradise. However, God did command Adam and Eve to multiply themselves and populate the entire earth before the fall, so at least, they may have been free from sexual drive, but the procreation was destined to be part of their lives, even in the paradise. Rostovskii was silent about this problem.

### The hereafter

“Blessed is who does not laugh in this life, but cries, does not rejoice over perishing goods, regrets his sins, does not seeks vain sweetness, but the bitterness of death, bears in mind the judgment and gehenna and cares about how to please God and be worthy of eternal blessing and joy of his Lord” (KL 232). The life on earth is but a transitory stage in the life of an immortal soul and two avenues are open to it after the death of the body: the eternal

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<sup>3</sup> Elsewhere, Rostovskii stated that Adam and Eve felt sexual desires at the moment of eating the fruit (KL 68), i.e., when still in the paradise. At about the same time, Milton expressed an opinion that in the paradise, Eve did not refuse “the Rites / Mysterious of connubial Love”; “Whatever Hypocrites austerely talk / Of purity and place and innocence, / Defaming as impure what God declares / Pure, and commands to some, leaves free to all” (*Paradise lost* 4.742-747).

bliss or the eternal damnation. The individuality of a person is retained after death; the earthly existence is not forgotten, at least, not completely. The memory of sins goes with the departed to the hereafter and in that sense "sin is an infinite evil": it has an infinite dimension since an unrepented sinner will eternally remember his sin in hell, suffering eternal punishment; a saved sinner will eternally remember it in heaven to praise God's mercy (177).

Although death means death of the body, the bodily remains are touched by the sin of man and, as it were, radiate with their sinfulness after death as well. Bones of a sinful man, an enemy of God, are sinful; bones of a saint, a friend of God, are sacred. Bones of sinners spread over hell (Ps. 141 [140]:7) (R 218) since they are united with souls after general resurrection to stay in hell for eternal torment. Bones of saints are protected (Ps. 34 [33]:21). The body is the clothing of the soul and the soul takes off this clothing when the body goes to the sleep of death. The body of the saint is like costly royal purple in which the soul will clothe itself to rule with Christ. Among the graves of sinners dwell demons (R 219), even in the graves of sinners, by their bones, but they are afraid of graves and relics of the saints (221). By graves and relics of the saints there is the grace of God and God's angels are present there (222). Graves of sinners are full of "stinking bones and all [kinds of] impurities"; graves of the saints are "clean, containing imperishability, giving out aroma" (223). Just as the remains of the saints can have a beneficial influence on those still living, so the remains of sinners can have an adverse effect on the living through the demonic forces that linger around these remains. Therefore, the sins do not die with a person but retain their noxious effect even in the grave.

Until the day of the last judgment, there is only partial reward for the righteous, the reward of the soul only, and partial punishment in hell; afterward, there will be the full reward, of the body and the soul, similarly with punishment.

During the second coming of Christ souls released from hell will be united with reconstituted bodies; they will see the bodies differently then, deformed and vile, faces blackened with tar and ashes (P 33). Before being thrown into hell they will have traces of infernal suffering. The soul will not want to enter its body, but it will, while cursing one another: the soul cursing the body for pulling it to sin, the body cursing the soul for not guiding it with reason given by God (34).

Hell is not a uniform place. There are compartments fitting the sins of the condemned. There is fire, which is as much worse than regular fire, as regular fire is worse than painted fire, so that even demons are afraid of hell

fire (KL 140). It is a dark and terrifying place with unquenchable fire and constant torment of conscience (581). Fire will be burning adulterers and those who are angry. There is also severe cold which causes grinding of teeth (Lk. 13:28), a place for the merciless to the poor and for those who did not provide shelter to the homeless; worms will eternally tear bodies of those who through usury extort money from others; eternal longing will oppress those who only entertain themselves by food and dance and give no thought to God; complete darkness will surround those who turn away from the poor; those who do not feed the poor and hungry will suffer hunger and from thirst those who do not give drink to the thirsty. There will be very crowded because of the great number of sinners. The general principle is that punishments will be according to the kind of sins (P 158-160).

As to the eternal bliss, even now Christ prepares in heaven a place for every saved believer: for those who love God – among seraphim; for theologians – among cherubim, for those proclaiming God – among thrones, for good lords – among lordships, to valiant worriers fighting for their fatherland – among powers, for various authorities – among dominions, for all leaders ruling over their domain in a godly manner – among principalities, for those consoling their friends and suffering and help them in their misery – among archangels; finally, for those who live on earth in an angelic manner – a place in heaven among angels (P 283).

### Preaching

Rostovskii advocated demanding ethics, urged believers to conduct lives which, in effect, would not be unlike the life fitting his own station, namely the life of a monk.<sup>4</sup> His condemnation of sins was as it would be expected from a clergyman of a Christian church. He did not propose anything new in that respect; he pressed to the extreme what many preached before him proposing, in effect, a depressingly bleak life of silence, constant crying, and sadness. His sermons were a very important avenue of bringing his point home to believers. Not infrequently, however, the message is entangled in the thicket of the flourish of his language.

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<sup>4</sup> It has been said that in his *Diary* Rostovskii presented himself as a monk-rigorist, М. Корпанюк, *Літописна спадщина Дмитра Туптала*, in: *Дмитро Туптало у світі українського бароко: збірник наукових праць*, ed. Богдана Криса, Львів 2007, p. 184; however, his monkish rigorism is certainly not limited only to the *Diary*.

As many in his times, Rostovskii used metaphors and similes very generously in his sermons – too generously. The Bible, of course, encourages the use of metaphors, which is particularly clear in Christ’s use of parables. Thus we read about the Kingdom of God depicted through the imagery of a mustard seed, a costly pearl, a fishing net, or a man sowing good seed. However, Rostovskii felt obligated to treat everything in the Bible as a metaphor, including descriptions of events. He was convinced that the literal, the historical interpretation of Scriptures describes something, and the spiritual interpretation sees in what was so described a type/prototype of something else. The spiritual sense of the Scriptures is mystical, secret, distant, not apparent in narrative words. The words of narration indicate something (R 366), and this thing means another, secret thing (367). Very artificially, he proposed three types of interpretation: allegory which corresponds to faith, anagogy that corresponds to hope, and tropology that corresponds to love (368). Anagogy is a higher reason, an interpretation from the eternal perspective; tropology is an interpretation that considers some good in life (370). For example, Jerusalem is literally a city; allegorically, it is a militant church; anagogically – the triumphant church; (371) tropologically – a human soul (372).

However, some of his interpretations are quite puzzling. For example, he said that the wound on the right hand of Christ has a power to love the good, the wound on the left hand has the power to love sinners, the wound on the right leg has the power to set us on the right path, the wound on the left leg has the power to prevent us to go down the wrong path, and the wound of the heart has the power of the highest love (P 559-560). It is simply inscrutable to fathom how he arrived at these particular meanings all the more that in one poem he stated that the five wounds of Christ (in the chest and in the limbs) represent five human senses<sup>5</sup>. When presenting Rebecca’s stratagem, when her husband wanted to give a blessing to Esau, he said: “Just as Rebecca put goat skin on Jacob, so did Mother of God put in her womb the body on the Son of God. Jacob was a type of Christ. Just as Jacob made himself resemble Esau by putting on his arm and neck goat skin, so did Christ took upon Himself the image or likeness of a slave and took human sins on His body” (KL 358). The interpretation is very artificial and quite dubious considering the fact that Rebecca and Jacob were deceiving Isaac to extort from him a blessing he intended for Esau.

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<sup>5</sup> *Українська поезія. Середина XVII ст.*, eds. В.І. Крекотень, М.М. Сулима, Київ 1992, p. 287.

Although various events from Christ's life can be interpreted metaphorically, this does not deprive them of their authenticity (R 379), yet Rostovskii was appalled that schismatics interpreted Christ's miracles metaphorically, which is "a stupid interpretation and harmful to the soul" (354).

The metaphoric interpretation of events not infrequently makes an impression of arbitrariness since anything can signify anything. Rostovskii appeared sometimes at a loss as to which possibility to choose for an interpretation and simply listed some of them. For example, he gave three allegoric interpretations of the boat in the midst of storm (Mt. 14:24): "The sea is the entire world; the boat is the church of Christ or a Christian fatherland, as, for instance, speaking generally, the Russian empire. In particular, the boat is each man in the world" (P 505); three interpretations of the flood: 1. Noah is an image of Christ, the ark – the church, the flood – persecution of the church, Noah's children – good Christians, animals – bad Christians, the raven – heretics, the dove – the Holy Spirit, olive branch – God's mercy (KL197); 2. Noah – Christ, the ark – Mother of God, the flood – universal curse into which the world is sinking, the dove – the Holy Spirit, animals – the sinners saved by Mary's prayers; 3. the ark – the man, Noah – the soul, the flood – the world, animals – human passions, the raven – evil thoughts, the dove – conscience (198). In a similar vein, he provided two allegoric interpretations of animal offerings made by Abraham (252-253), five interpretations of the ladder from Jacob's dream (372-373), and two interpretations of Jacob's limping after his struggle with an angel (396).

Playing on a name is not beyond Rostovskii's interpretative efforts. In his view, in Greek, Adam means microcosm since the name comes from the first letters of geographical directions ἀνατολή (east), δύσις (west), ἄρκτος (north), μεσημβρία (south)<sup>6</sup>. "And so, in Adam's name is depicted the four-directional world, which Adam was about to populate with the human race, and in this name also was an image of the 4-pointed cross of Christ" (KL 59). When providing this interpretation, Rostovskii was apparently directed by the fact that Orthodoxy recognizes the Septuagint version of the

<sup>6</sup> In Rostovskii's transliteration: *anatoli, disis, arktos, mesimvria*. A comment that this is an example of when "letters do not lose their own 'distinct' ideology even in the framework of a word, structuring its ('through letters') semantic modus" (Л. Ушкалов, *3 історії української літератури XVII-XVIII століть*, Харків 1999, р. 145) is far from illuminating, and so is the statement that we have here an attempt to "understand the noumenal world by shedding light on the symbolic nature of a word" through the means of "developed philosophy of name," Н. Левченко, *Біблійна герменевтика у творах Дмитра Туптала*, in: Крива, *op. cit.*, 94; where was this philosophy developed?

Bible as the sacred text, which is all in Greek; but the Old Testament is a translation of the Hebrew original: the name of Adam is Hebrew, and yet it presumably can be read as an acronym of Greek words. Similarly, he described five attributes of the mother of Jesus based on the letters of the Russian name *Maria*<sup>7</sup> almost oblivious to the fact that this Hebrew name is given in the Bible in Greek spelling. Rostovskii criticized the schismatics for, in his opinion, their thinking that the Bible was written originally in Russian: for example, they complained that the name of Christ is written now *Ӣс*, not *Ӣс̃*, whereby another Jesus is introduced, and they did not honor icons with such a modified name. “Mindless wise men, babbling slanderers.” exclaimed Rostovskii, “open blind eye of your mind,” the name of Jesus was not revealed in Russian (R 41-42). Let it be added that the name of Adam was not first revealed in Greek and the name of Miriam was revealed in Greek as *Mariam*.

Even one single letter can serve as a vehicle of imaginative inventiveness. Iota is the smallest letter in the alphabet. Also, iota with a horizontal stroke above it signifies the number 10, which is “the end of the law” (P 695). In Rostovskii’s opinion, by referring to the iota, Christ pointed to the Old Testament and the New Testament: the iota understood as number ten points to the ten commandments. The stroke above the iota points to the New Testament, which is the completion of the Old Testament just as the stroke is the completion of the iota. Through the iota “the Lord taught us that we know that if we do not keep all the ten commandments of God and on top of it, if we do not keep the evangelic commandments and advices, we cannot be perfect” (696).<sup>8</sup>

Not infrequently his metaphors are simply in bad taste. Rostovskii said that during Christ’s entry to Jerusalem, the donkey symbolized the Jews; the colt symbolized the pagan (P 146). “The One who in heavens rests on cherubs, rests on earth on sinners.” “His true rest consists in saddling the sinner like a donkey, i.e., in putting on him the law of the fear of God; in sitting on him, i.e., in submitting him to His lordly will; and in riding him as He wills

<sup>7</sup> МАРИА: Мудрая Дева (Wise Virgin), Агница Христова (The Lamb of Christ), Раба Господня (Lord’s Servant), Источник Жизни (The Origin of Life), Апостольский Венец (The Apostolic Garland), А. Титов, *Проповеди святителя Димитрия, митрополита Ростовского, на украинском наречии*, Москва 1909, 55-75.

<sup>8</sup> In manuscripts, letters could have a stroke above them to indicate numerals (e.g., *ῑ*), two dots around them (*ι·ι*), or two dotted vertical lines (*ι:ι*), which could open whole new vistas to interpretation.

and where He wills, i.e., in setting him on the road of commandments that leads to heaven" (147).

Although allegoric interpretation was quite popular in Rostovskii's times, because of a largely impressionistic connection between the literal and allegoric meaning, it did not remain unchallenged, and Prokopovich was the first to criticize the use of an allegoric interpretation<sup>9</sup>. It is interesting to read in one of Rostovskii's sermons that God "cuts off gratuitous care for rhetorical proclamation in preaching God's word, and rejects debates about faith with sophistic syllogisms" since such a proclamation is "gratuitous cunning, intellectual bragging that puts trust not in God, but in sophistry and one's own opinion"<sup>10</sup>. Not only rhetorical devices, such as metaphors are of ungodly nature, but even the use of reasoning should not have a place in preaching, yet Rostovskii violated this precept in almost every one of his sermons using metaphors, allegories, similes, analogies, etc. sometimes beyond the level of endurance<sup>11</sup>. Good and interesting literary devices they may be, but they are of dubious theological and pastoral value.

### Schismatics

The last years of his life, when he was in Rostov, Rostovskii devoted himself to writing a book against schismatics. There were many different schismatic groups and Rostovskii named several of them. They sometimes had contradictory beliefs, e.g., one group recognized priests, whereas another did not, one group recognized marriage, another did not, one group rejected new icons, another rejected all icons, etc. (R 67, 598-610). Rostovskii knew many of these groups and their beliefs only from hearsay. However, because of their popularity, Rostovskii felt compelled to address the heresy issue to the extent that he did not do in his Ukrainian years, although he played down their popularity by saying that the Orthodox church is universal and schismatics exist only in a small corner of Russia, 10-20 thousand people (125).

There are, at least in some cases, some theological differences between the Orthodox views and the views of schismatics, and Rostovskii particularly

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<sup>9</sup> M. Berndt, *Die Predigt Dimitrij Tuptalos: Studien zur ukrainischen und russischen Barockpredigt*, Bern 1975, p. 11, 187 note 9, 194.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Berndt, *op. cit.*, 107.

<sup>11</sup> Berndt, *op. cit.*, 194, spoke about "a contradiction between Dimitrii's general statements and the style of his sermons."

targeted his criticism at the pronouncements of Avvakum. Rostovskii claimed that Avvakum wrote about “tri-essential Trinity,” whereas it is one-essential (R 51) and that he urged believers to cut one being into three beings, which is a heresy. Orthodoxy, of course, believes that there are three persons in the Trinity that is one in essence (52). “Stupid Avvakum” also said that there are three separate seats for the three persons of the Trinity (54). Moreover, he claimed that “Christ seats on a separate seat, equally reigning with the holy Trinity.” In this, next to the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, he introduced a fourth person, the Christ; it is a heresy that brings joy to the devil (56). Rostovskii, however, based his criticism on a very shaky foundation and on over-interpreting some statements he attributed to Avvakum.

Theology forms very small part of Rostovskii’s criticism of schismatics. He devoted much more attention to ritual issues. One issue was the way of making the sign of the cross. Schismatics considered making the sign of the cross with three fingers to be the seal of the antichrist (R 485). Another issue was the shape of the cross representing Christian faith. Schismatics called the 4-pointed cross the Roman cross (386); Avvakum called it “the Roman whore” and said that Russians were duped by the devil to believe in it and were headed to perdition (387). For schismatics, only the 8-pointed cross is valid. However, an Orthodox believer does not bow to the cross, but to Christ. It simply does not matter whether the cross is 4-pointed or 8-pointed, said Rostovskii (20, 435), and the cross should be honored, 4-pointed or 8-pointed (KL 603). If it does not matter, then there is nothing heretical in recognizing the 8-pointed cross even with an exclusion of the 4-pointed cross, the way schismatics did, and schismatics should not be called heretics because of that, and yet Rostovskii did just that (R 388).

Another issue was the age of icons. Schismatics recognized only old icons. Rostovskii said that an Orthodox believer does not honor an icon when bowing in front of it, but to the original depicted in the icon (R 16), that is, a believer bows before an icon, not to the icon. In that way, if the age of the icon is important, then bowing is to the material object, to the creation of human hands (16). However, Orthodoxy has quite strict rules about creating an icon, and not every image of Christ or of the saints will be recognized as an icon. Therefore, the material side of an icon is also important for an Orthodox believer. Old Believers simply added the attribute of age to such a recognition.

Having described in great detail the schismatic views, Rostovskii’s stated that only God knows who believes in God and who does not, whether his belief is correct or the reason of unbelief of nonbelievers, and he asked rhe-

torically, how schismatics can say that there is no faith in us? Paul said that belief can be recognized by confession of faith and by works (R 289). By the same token, how could Rostovskii say that schismatics have no faith and trust that only God can assess correctness of their faith? Rostovskii foresaw this problem and solved it, by redefinition of faith. About schismatics it can be said that they have no faith since they reject the church, thereby rejecting Christ; they have a wrong idea about the Trinity, and they blaspheme about the Incarnation (290). It is not faith, but heretical unbelief (291). If anyone does not confess faith the way Rostovskii understood it, his faith is no faith; it is unbelief. Thus, if schismatics confess faith, they really confess unbelief, and that counts for nothing. And good works? Rostovskii had an answer here as well. On occasion, he had good words to say about them, by stating that many schismatics lead pure lives (594) and that they do many good things: fasting, long prayers, many bowings, abstinence, not eating meat and fish (535), and living in desolate places. However, they also reject the official church and brag about fasting and prayer (536) and, as Chrysostom said, there is no reason to brag about not eating meat since cattle do not eat it either; no reason to brag about sleeping on the ground, since cattle do the same (539). Moreover, we fear because we do not know whether we will be saved, whether we are worthy of God's love or hatred (cf. Eccl. 9:1). However, believers know that their good works will also be judged since even in their good works there is some sin since no one is perfect (541-542). Good works done for show are bad because they are in reality a manifestation of prideful vainglory and thus are done in vain (546). Schismatics should check their conscience and their works if there is evil under the cover of their good works (550-551). Good works that bring no salvation are those that are done not because of love of God, but because of self-love, and if they are done outside the Orthodox church (551) since who separated himself from the church separates himself from Christ (556). No one can be saved outside the Orthodox church (557). Those calling themselves Christians who reject the Christian church will perish along with their good works (558). Good works of schismatics "not only will not bring them salvation, but will also bring eternal torment" (559). Thus, in Rostovskii's opinion, schismatics make their eternal perdition more assured, since they do their works outside the church. Since they do not recognize the official church, they are surly enemies of God who established this church on earth through Christ and His apostles, and thus they do good works because of their egoistic self-centeredness. By this logic, their good works are not so good anymore.

After all these condemnations, it is rather puzzling to read that Rostovskii wrote: “myself being sinful I do not judge them [schismatics], but only my flock entrusted me by Christ my Lord” (R 551) and “who judges others is judged [to be] an antichrist,” since it is written in Christian books that who judges his brother is an antichrist (549; P 23, 39)<sup>12</sup> and those who judge others are like dogs barking at everyone (P 19). And yet, he did not just dispassionately describe schismatic views but also repeatedly stated how worthless these views are and how assured the schismatics’ unenviable fate after death will be. Rostovskii, as expressed in choice words, had no doubt that schismatics are “mindless, blind, in error, with the mind blackened by black soot” (R 9) and are like pagans who believe in the divinity of the sun (KL 584). Schismatics reject the church and sacraments, so they reject the Holy Spirit and thus their teachings cannot be true (R 91). They “secretly, like pigs, burrow with their snouts, undermine the church” (536). They are sent by satan himself, the father of lies (92). Schismatics are antichrists, enemies of Christ since all enemies of the Orthodox church and its dogmas are enemies of Christ (106). Schismatics are “mindless, have clouded reason, do not want and cannot judge, see, and understand the power of the holy Scripture, constantly stumble like the blind” (126). For a long time they carry the demon “in their hearts and listen to him and taught by his spirit, they insultingly and mendaciously use sophistry about the church of Christ, but the Lord, the God of vengeance will repay them according to their works and will destroy them according to their tricks” (490), those “shameless and devilish dogs” (492). Surly, Avvakum and his pupils come from the devil (488). “Their blasphemies indicate that they have “putrid mind and mouth” and thus “they will be thrown with their leader, the devil, into the bottomlessness of gehenna” (531).

If heretics are condemned to fire – or to freezing – of hell, who can be saved? Rostovskii, of course, could not treat seriously the schismatic claim that people live now in the last days and only those living in their communities can be saved (R 233). According to Rostovskii, a person that was not baptized cannot be saved (KL 569). A person cannot be saved without receiving the eucharist (L 593). Salvation is reached only through faith and good works (R 344), although even this is not quite a full picture since good works of schismatics count for nothing (Pi 214), and devils also believe (P 298) and yet are consigned to hell. There must be love of God that mani-

<sup>12</sup> Based on the verse “Everyone who judges his brother is an antichrist,” which is a mistranslation of Rom. 2:3 (P 39).

fest itself through a contrite spirit, through repentance, since repentance cleanses one from sin (P 50). Sinners, on account of their repentance, are counted among the saints (376). Resurrection of the body will be only once; resurrection of the soul can be many times: any time when repentance is made (189). Repentance also has an impact on the here and now, not only on what will come after death. In Rostovskii's words, a human soul before an unrepented sin is thus: "God lives in it, the Holy Spirit rests in it, holy angels protect it, rivers of mercy of God fill it, spiritual fruits multiply" (KL 283). Presumably, this state is restored after repentance, and yet there is a formal aspect of repentance when it is understood as forgiveness of sin through absolution of a priest (594) after the sins were confessed by a truly contrite person and a penance was assigned (595).

Incidentally, an infernal future is not limited to schismatics. Rostovskii believed that each sinner living without repentance is possessed, since the devil lives in an unrepented sinner (P 520). How many of such possessed sinners are there? Most people. There are many people who are baptized, but only a few in whom Christ lives as in His true church (217). That is why schismatics are very successful with converting people to their heresy, since there are very few people now who keep the true faith (708). Worse yet, Christ is seldom found among the clergy, since everyone is looking out for himself, not for his flock (223). It is difficult to find Christ among deacons, too. It is not any better in monasteries (225). Hell, therefore, as envisioned by Rostovskii, will really be quite crowded.

On the other hand, he stated in a letter that "God in His mercy elevates from hell those, whom people send to hell with their tongues. Who hoped for the thief to be in the paradise, a tax collector to be among the righteous, a harlot to be in a heavenly chamber?" (Pi 101). This, actually, could be a fitting and compassionate approach toward the schismatics. Even if Rostovskii was correct about his assessment of Avvakum's theology, all schismatics were not subscribing to Avvakum's theological principles. In many cases – maybe in most cases – the principal tenets of the schismatic theology were the same as in the official Orthodoxy, in particular, the belief in the Trinity and in the salvific work of Christ, the incarnate Son of God. This may easily disappear from the view when so much ink was spilled over controversies whether one should cross himself with two fingers or how many points the cross has. Even if schismatics considered the official church heretical because of such ritual differences, the official church should not consider them heretics on account of these differences, since they are not a matter of dogma. However, from the Olympian heights of his ecclesiastical po-

sition Rostovskii wrote a book-long judgment of the entire movement and at every occasion sent the participants wholesale to the flames – and to the ice – of hell all too frequently forgetting his own statement on God’s mercy. It has been observed that the tone of the *Investigation* is harsh<sup>13</sup>. True, “an inborn gift of empathy and peculiar geniality”<sup>14</sup> attributed to him did not quite shine there.

In sum, Rostovskii presented himself as very quick to judge and promptly designate someone to flames for the smallest infraction. As a cure, he urged people to live a depressingly gloomy life which somehow should translate into otherworldly joy and an elevation to ineffable spiritual dimension.

He is frequently hailed as a philosopher and a theologian, but he very likely would be surprised by this designation. His theology is limited to quotations from the Bible, the church fathers, and to stock phrases of catechetical nature from church books.<sup>15</sup> He offered no new insights into the profundity of Orthodox beliefs, no new perspectives on traditional theology. Also, his philosophy is limited to very few statements, which are disconnected, frequently difficult to reconcile with one another, and a far cry from forming a meaningful whole<sup>16</sup>. However, he shined in his devotional writings and in his monumental composition of the still popular *Lives of the saints*, a great legacy of his hagiographic efforts.

<sup>13</sup> И.А. Шляпкин, *Св. Димитрий Ростовский и его время (1651-1709 г.)*, Санкт-Петербург 1891, p. 450.

<sup>14</sup> W. Soból, *Пам’ятна книга Дмитра Гуптала*, Warszawa 2004, p. 94, 100, geniality, which he is said to have considered as the foundation of Christianity, p. 127. This geniality is hardly exuding from a letter to children in his short-lived school in which he said that unruly children will be trained like gypsy horses and treated with a knout (Pi 183).

<sup>15</sup> Rostovskii wanted to write commentaries to Psalms, and in a letter he stated about this planned work: “not that I am wise enough for it, but with God’s help I will collect [these commentaries] from existing interpretations” (Pi 168). His theology is limited to such kind of collecting existing statements.

<sup>16</sup> About his slim *Spiritual alphabet* that contains a few confusing philosophical statements it was said that it is the most profound work in the Ukrainian literature (Ларіон [І. Огієнко], *Святий Димитрій Гуптало. Його життя й праця*, Вінніпег 1960, p. 196). Such an adulatory statement goes far beyond the boundaries of exaggeration; not far behind is the opinion that in the *Alphabet* there is “strong religious philosophy that cannot be found in other authors,” В. І. Белашов, *Стислий огляд життя, діяльності та творчої спадщини й святого Димитрія митрополита ростовського (Данила Савовича Гуптала (1651-1709 рр.))*, in: *Діяння святителя Дмитрія Ростовського (Данила Гуптала) і традиції православного світосприйняття: матеріали міжнародної науково-практичної конференції*, ed. С.Л. Жукова, Суми 2007, p. 10.

## STRESZCZENIE

### Mnich-rygorysta Dymitry Rostowski

Rostowski zaliczany jest do świętych kościoła prawosławnego i pamięta się go dzisiaj głównie ze względu na jego monumentalne *Żywoty świętych*.

W swych pismach Rostowski pragnął ograniczyć się do przedstawienia tradycyjnych dogmatów kościoła prawosławnego, nie zamierzając wprowadzać nowych elementów wiary.

Jego zdaniem dusza dzieli się na trzy elementy: umysł, serce i wolę, co prowadzi do dyskusji o zależności między wiarą a wiedzą.

Rostowski uważał świat za bezwartościowy i nakłaniał wiernych do odwrócenia się od niego, gdyż każdy objaw zainteresowania światem oznacza odwrócenie się od Boga. Wierni powinni płakać dzień i noc nad własnymi grzechami; powinni nawet unikać śmiechu, gdyż zabija on pamięć o śmierci i o sędzie ostatecznym. Podziwianie piękna jest również zabronione. To zainteresowanie śmiercią prowadzi do szczegółowego opisu piekła i nieba.

Rostowski uważał, że wszystko w Biblii powinno być traktowane metaforycznie, nawet najzwyklejsze wydarzenia życia codziennego, co prowadziło go czasem do wątpliwej wartości interpretacji.

Dużo uwagi poświęcił krytyce schizmatyków, jednakże teologia stanowi niewielki tylko wycinek tej krytyki, większość uwagi poświęcona jest kwestiom rytualnym, takim jak sposób żegnania się, kształt krzyża czy wiek ikon.

