

ADAM DROZDEK

Duquesne University Pittsburgh, USA

drozdek@duq.edu

Religious aspects of Kheraskov's poetry

Mikhail Kheraskov was one of the most important literary figures of eighteenth century Russia. He was also a mason. To what extent did masonry mold Kheraskov's worldview? In this article only shorter poetry of Kheraskov is considered with only occasional references, if any, to his epic poems, plays, and novels.

Creation of the world

There is no doubt in Kheraskov's mind that God exists. He is an eternal, omnipotent, omniscient God, incomprehensible for the human mind, Creator of the universe, the providential God who is constantly present in the affairs of the world. In the spirit of physico-theology, Kheraskov advocated turning one's eye to nature to see God in it and through it. People look for wisdom in books, but in vain; "There is always before us / The open book of Being; / In it, with fiery words / Shines wisdom of the Divinity"¹ (*Ode xxxi*, 7.389).² "Nature, His beautiful daughter, / Proclaims to each nation: / The Father is the only Lord of all" (*Ode to God*, 7.75).³ "Rays of heavenly light / Proclaim to us from all directions / How great is the power of God / And how wise, how glorious He is. / Great is the Lord in glowing stars, / Great in dark clouds; / Great is He in grains of sand, / Great in

¹ Всегда у нас перед очами / Отверзта книга Естества; / В ней пламенными словесами / Сияет мудрость Божества.

² References are made to collected works of Kheraskov, *Творения*, Москва: В Университетской Типографии 1796–1803, vols. 1–12.

³ Прекрасна дщерь Его, Природа, / Гласит для каждого народа: / Господь единый всем Отец!

the smallest worms” (*Ode xxi*, 7.390).⁴ Observation of nature shows harmonious orderliness in it: “Winter follows fall, and summer follows spring / An hour follows an hour, day is after night / And everything in this universe orderly goes on; / We see God in all, everything shows You to us.”⁵ In this way, “infinite wisdom” can be seen working in nature and “the shadow of ennui” can be dispelled (390) since meaningfulness can be seen in all this.

Out of love, God created the world. Kheraskov’s version of this cosmic event was most fully expressed in his poem *The universe* which, as he stated, was inspired by spiritual books, particularly by the Bible (3.25). Surely enough, there are some extrabiblical elements included in the poem, which stem from Kheraskov’s association with Rosicrucians.

God has no beginning, so a particular person does not have a beginning either, because all people existed since eternity in His mind (3.28). The universe proclaims that God is pure light, self-moving and self-knowing, in three persons, the Trinity that is one God (28), the Tri-hypostatic Lord (37), the triune Oneness (45). Spiritual beings were created first (29). Subtle water and fire that praised God (31) were two original principles; air and earth stem from them (32). This reflects one version of masonic teaching, according to which God’s *fiat* became vapor, fog, and fume; vapor became dense turning into chaotic water out of which natural and supernatural worlds were created.⁶ The teaching is not alien to Orthodoxy; according to *The Russian primary chronicle*, in the speech given by a Byzantine sage to prince Vladimir to convince him about the truth of Christianity, the sage stated that “first was created water.”

According to Kheraskov, the first of angels, Satanael, out of pride, wanted to separate himself from God (3.45). He abandoned God and having been the one who carried light, he lost divine light. There was no evil before, but pride was born and evil arose (46). Some other angels followed him. Satanael’s soul acquired a dark body; other angels (49) looked like animals (50). He attacked God (58) and God threw them to the abyss of gehenna with eternal fires (59). Then God created the world in six days (74); on the sixth day, “Taking a particle of earth, God said: walk and think!” (76).⁷ When man was created, “God poured [into him] the living

⁴ Лучи небесного светила/ Вещают нам со всех сторон, / Коль Божия велика сила, / И сколь премудр, сколь славен Он. / Велик Господь в звездах горящих, / Велик во мрачных облаках; / Велик в песчинках Он лежащих, / Велик в малейших червячках.

⁵ За осенью зима, и лето за весною, / Час идет за часом, за ночью идет свет, / И все в вселенной сей порядочно течет / Во всем мы Бога зрим, Тебя нам все являет, М.М. Херасков, Стихи на страшный суд [1792?], in: В.И. Сахаров (ed.), *Масонство и русская литература XVIII–начала XIX вв.*, Москва: Эдиториал УРСС 2000, p. 245.

⁶ Phlebochron, [Anton Joseph Kirchweger], *Annulus Platonis oder physikalisch-chymische Erklärung der Natur nach ihrer Entstehung, Erhaltung und Zerstörung*, Berlin: George J. Decker 1781, pp. 12–15.

⁷ Частицу взяв земли, Бог рек: ходи и мысли!

soul; Adam became a little God!" (77).⁸ At about the same time, Dutoit wrote about Adam being a microgod who after the fall became a microcosm;⁹ this is an expression of a masonic teaching that Adam was created as a small subordinate god;¹⁰ however, this teaching is not completely alien to Orthodox thought considering its doctrine of deification, whereby the paradisiacal state of the human body and soul will be restored after resurrection.

Adam ruled in Eden. His body was out of light; he was clothed in an imperishable garment; he was immersed in God (3.77). According to masonic teaching, Adam had an aethereal body that allowed him to move easily through elements;¹¹ Midrash Rabbah's commentary on Genesis 20:12 states that Adam's garment was made out of light; similarly in Zohar Bereshith/Genesis and Shemoth/Exodus; Orthodoxy sticks to the literal interpretation of the creation story; Rostovskii stated that God created Adam from base matter.¹² Kheraskov, actually, stated the same by referring to "a particle of earth" and saying that God "created us from dust";¹³ apparently this dust might have been turned into light or at least clothed in light.

God put man to be a king over all creation (3.78). Man, an image of God — although Kheraskov did not say in what respect, which is a contentious theological issue — was created for eternal joy (79). He ruled over the solar world, was never sick, nor sad (80). In his sleep, God pulled out a beautiful woman from Adam's heart (81), whereby Kheraskov gave an interesting twist to the creation story; however, the rib from the Biblical account was not rejected altogether since Kheraskov did mention the darkness of chaos being a weakness harmful for Adam's rib (65), an apparent circumlocution referring to Eve. When Adam, foolishly, concentrated his attention on created things, he "Descended to lower circles and fell asleep, / The sleep, part of lower creation, soothed Adam / And cost the father of nations the entire rib" (81)¹⁴: Adam saw animals living in pairs (and thus mating) and wanted the same for himself. Having read his thoughts, God "took a rib from him" (82).¹⁵ In this way, Eve became a result if not of an outright sin, then of turning Adam's sight away from God.

⁸ Живую душу влил; Адам стал малым Богом!

⁹ Keleph ben Nathan [Marc Ph. Dutoit de Mambrini], *La philosophie divine, appliquée aux lumieres naturelle, magique, astrale, surnaturelle, céleste et divine*, 1793, vol. 1, pp. 30, 219, 220, 222.

¹⁰ [Christian A.H. von Haugwitz], *Hirten-Brief an die wahren, ächten Freymäurer alten Systems*, 1785, pp. 79, 151.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 87.

¹² Д. Ростовский, *Келейный летописец*, Москва: Паломникъ 2000, p. 59.

¹³ Херасков, *Стихи на страшный суд*, p. 245.

¹⁴ Прешел в нижайший круг, и погрузился в сон, / Сон, низших тварей часть, Адама успокоил, / И целого ребра отцу народов стоил.

¹⁵ Cf. Christian A.H. Haugwitz, op. cit., pp. 92–93; on the other hand, Kheraskov also used "rib" in a purely metaphoric sense when he said, "The Source and Creator of the world / Took a rib from Alexander / Let it be — He said — Elizabeth!" (Источник и Создатель света, / От АЛЕК-

Adam now saw Eden in Eve; everything else was less important (3.83). Feelings give life, but are fatal when they go beyond boundaries. Eve was tempted by the fallen spirit to eat the fruit and Adam, blinded by love, wanted to share death with her, and followed her in breaking God's prohibition concerning eating the fruit (84, 91). Augustine had already suggested that Adam's fall was not caused by his belief in the tempters words, but "he was compelled by the social bond" (*sociali necessitudine paruisse*, *The city of God* 14.11) and Adam's friendly kindness (*amicali benevolentia*) toward Eve whom he did not want to make sad (*The literal meaning of Genesis* 11.42.59). Milton expressed it more forcefully by saying that Adam "resolves through vehemence of love to perish with her" (*Paradise lost*, abstract of book 9) and this likely was Kheraskov's source of the idea of the fall caused by love (Kheraskov mentioned Milton, "the British Singer," in his introduction to *The universe*, 3.25).

After their sin, Adam and Eve were exiled from Eden (3.85) and the disaster spread over the entire world resulting in the emergence of sickness (86), mortality, and the flood (87). God, however, prepared the way out from the calamitous prospects for humanity, by making Himself in the person of Christ to be this way out. The message was known from the beginning of time, Adam knew it, and so did Moses, the prophets, and the apostles who proclaimed it (*The consolation of sinners*, 7.29).

Christ

Kheraskov's poem, *The consolation of sinners* is basically a delineation of the Christian message of salvation through Christ, the Savior of the world and of each individual who accepts His own offering on the cross as the expiation of anyone's sin, thereby fulfilling His commitment: "I will consume death and will return life to the Universe" (*The universe*, 3.39).¹⁶

The recurring statement in *The consolation of sinners*, a poem about "Jesus, a friend of sinners," is "The Savior will accept a sinner! This truth thunders through the ages" (7.29).¹⁷ "He accepts sinners and forgives them, / Those who repent have no doubt; / Heaven proclaims that day and night / And sings praises to the Lord" (31).¹⁸ This truth is nailed to the cross (32). "Jesus will accept all sinners": even the worst of them (33) since He "Died on the cross for all / The Savior, who poured

САНДРА взяв ребро, / Да будет — рек ЕЛИСАВЕТА!, 7.188), when he spoke about Alexander I and his wife, Elizabeth (Louise of Baden).

¹⁶ Я смерть вкушу, и жизнь Вселенной возвращу.

¹⁷ Спаситель грешного приемлет! / Та истина гремит вовек.

¹⁸ Приемлет грешных и прощает, / Сомненья кающимся нет; / То небо день и ночь вещает / И Господу хвалы поет.

His blood" (35).¹⁹ And so, "Who turns to the Son with his heart / He will call him His friend, / And comes to meet everyone. / Sin does not conquer generosity / The Savior will accept everyone!" (42).²⁰ "The door to salvation is open to all / No nation is excluded: / Be it a pagan, a Jew, an atheist, / The path of salvation is open to all" (43).²¹ In darkness are those who do not try to know Christ. They will be lost; they cannot be saved. "The Savior will accept those who seek": "Who has no need of God / Will not succeed in happiness; / Those who don't think about Christ / Won't be saved. / But [the One] who makes peace between sinners and God, / The Savior will accept all" (47).²² The Savior will accept those who cry, have fear of God, are ashamed of their deeds, do not dare to come close to God, are in despair, and whose conscience accuses them. God forgives those who confess their sins (48). The Savior helps those who have no hope (49). Who wants to be purified of sin, he should just call upon God who surely will save him (50). The Lord will accept someone who thinks that sin destroys the soul, but God cannot accept anyone who feeds his sin and does not look for a healer. "Open your heart to Him / So that the Savior can rule over it; / He'll listen to spiritual prayer / And will accept suffering hearts. / Who falls before Him on his knees in sorrow / Pouring streams of tears; / [Who] fleeing fatal shadow of vices / Cries out for help; / Who is stung by suffering [caused by] sins, / Prays only by sighing / The mouth being silent because of sorrow, / But inner feelings proclaim: / The Lord hears [his] silent wish / And He accepts the crying" (51–52).²³ "The riches of his priceless blood / He poured for the entire universe / For salvation from sins / He took [upon Himself] the debts of His sons" (55).²⁴ He will be the guide; He will wake up a slumbering soul. He wants no reward for His bounty (56). For those who come to the cross will the golden age begin; they will live in God with the Lamb; "God will accept sinners in [His] womb!" (59).²⁵ "He is a Shepherd, Man and Word / That is always ready / To save a sinner from Hell / To protect [His] sons like mother

¹⁹ За всех Он умер на кресте, / И пролил кровь Свою Спаситель.

²⁰ Кто к Сыну сердцем обратится, / Того Он другом наречет, / И всем во сретенье течет.
/ Несть грех щедроты победитель; / Приемлет всякого Спаситель!

²¹ Для всех отверзта дверь спасенья, / И нет народам изключения: / Язычник, жид, безбожник будь, / Для всех отверзт спасенья путь.

²² Кто в Боге нужды не имеет, / Во благодати не успеет; / Не мыслят кои о Христе, / Спасенными не будут те. / Но грешных с Богом примиритель, / Приемлет каждого Спаситель.

²³ Откройте сердце перед Ним, / Да правит весь Спаситель им; / Молитве Он душевной внемлет, / И страждущи сердца приемлет. / Пред Ним кто в скорби на колени, / Лия потоки слез, падет; / Бежа пороков смертной тени / О помощи возопиет; / Ужален кто грехов страданьем, / Единым молит воздыханьем, / Уста от скорби хоть молчат, / Но чувства внутренни гласят: / Господь немую просьбу внемлет, / И плачущего Он приемлет.

²⁴ Он кровию безценной / Богатство пролил всей вселенной / Для изкупленья от грехов; / Долги приял Своих сынов.

²⁵ Бог в недра грешников приемлет!

[protects her] child” (61).²⁶ “The Lord suffered / To save sinners like children” (63).²⁷ With soft voice He calls people to come to Him to see Edenic garden. He is always with sinners, invisible, softening human hearts to bring them to salvation (64). He wants to take upon Himself the suffering of the dead sinner when they are led to the gates of hell (65). “May not love of Jesus be for nothing for us” (66).²⁸

This is a profoundly Christian message, expressed in an ecumenical fashion; no claim is made that a particular denomination is a true path to heaven and that a person can be saved in a particular church. The emphasis is placed on the person of Christ, the sole avenue to the heavenly gates. There is nothing specific about masonic teaching in that, either. Maybe one thing, namely, that the salvation message was known at least from Adam’s time and was transmitted throughout the ages. Importantly, masons were the participants of this transmission process, so that they knew well before the birth of Christ what type of salvation was prepared by God.²⁹ Christianity made this message known to everyone who wanted to hear it. Before that, it was transmitted through secret channels. In that sense, Kheraskov could agree with Lopukhin, his masonic colleague, that the goal of the order of masonry was the same as the goal of true Christianity.³⁰

Working on salvation

Christ prepared a way, but there is also a part that each person needs to play in the salvation process and it is not an easy part. Less systematically than Lopukhin, Kheraskov mentioned what this part includes. It has to be the entire life of a person that is directed toward salvation. This is a message that Kheraskov gave in most of his works.

An overall message is: the only proper way of life is the life of virtue and very early on in his life, Kheraskov saw promotion of virtue to be his life’s task: “Small gift nature / Gave me: / For the good of people / [Nature] brought me to verses. / I try to extol / Virtue in verses, / I’m ardent about it, / This is my glory.”³¹ And

²⁶ Он Пастырь, Человек и Слово, / Которое всегда готово / Из Ада грешника изъять; / Сынов хранит, как чадо мать.

²⁷ На то Господь терпел страдание, / Да грешных, как детей, спасет.

²⁸ Да не будет любовь Иисусова тщетна для нас.

²⁹ It is possible that when Kheraskov stated through a Byzantine sage in the *Vladimir* that God “has a small flock / That feels and understands this Creator” while “the rest of the world slumbers under the shadow of death” (2.133), he meant masons, cf. И. Розанов, Михаил Матвеевич Херасков, in: С.П. Мельгунов, Н.П. Сидоров (eds.), *Масонство в его прошлом и настоящем*, [Москва]: Задруга [1914–1915], vol. 2, p. 47.

³⁰ И.В. Лопухина, *Нравоучительный катехизис истинных Ф-к М-в [франкмасонов]* (1790), in his *Масонские труды*, Москва: Товарищество типографии А.И. Маионтова 1913, § 3.

³¹ Дар малый природа / Иметь мне дала: / Для пользы народа / К стихам привела. / Тружусь добродетель / В стихах превознестъ. / Того я радетель, / То ставлю за честь, Михаил

thus we read, “[Your] Maker has sent you / To live in the world / To love virtue / And honor God” (*Ode xviii*, 7.356). “Protect virtue / And be a friend to [your] neighbor: / Then [your] Maker will / Show you the path to happiness” (*Ode xx*, 7.359).³² For what reason have we been created if our existence has no meaning? “Such mysteries are hidden / From my understanding; / But I know that the Creator / Commands [us] to love virtue” (*Ode xxx*, 7.388).³³ What in particular can a virtuous life include? “Be merciful, humble, pious, meek; / The whole world will collapse, but your spirit will live on” (*The country Muse*, 7.408).³⁴ Earthly life has to be the life of action, the life of spreading goodness through good deeds, which has eternal consequences: “When we die, / We encounter in the future life / Our previous deeds / In the book of good and evil,” as stated in a late poem, *The past* (1806).³⁵ Therefore, life should be active; it is not enough to avoid evil; one has to do good (*Pilgrims*, 3.304). Rosicrucians swore to conduct such a life, although this is not a message specific to masonry; Orthodox ecclesiastics advocated the same: sin is to do evil and not to do good.³⁶

Humility is one of the most prominent virtues since pride comes before the fall. This includes a judicious — or religiously acceptable — use of the human reason.

Man has one advantage over other creation: his reason through which he rules over animal kingdom (*Ode ii*, 7.235). Showing off one's own rational superiority is just unacceptable. “When we shine with our reason / To demean weak minds, / We are worse than animals / And this reason is sadder than darkness.”³⁷ God endowed people with reason so that they can lead others to the light of truth and to promote virtue (*Ode xxii*, 7.364). Reason should glorify itself by fortifying truth and by loving neighbor (365). It should be used to recognize who the lawless are to stay away from them (*Ode xv*, 7.282), and by seeing their unreasonableness, to improve ourselves. Also, reason should be used to distinguish ourselves from animals “and to rise up to God” (283). Reason differentiates people from other creation on earth, but, in reality, what really makes them different is their good deeds (*Ode xxvii*, 7.379).

М. Херасков, “Не пышною славой...” [1761], in his *Избранные произведения*, Ленинград: Советский писатель 1961, p. 131.

³² Храни ты добродетель, / И ближним другом будь: / Тогда тебе Содетель / Покажет к счастью путь.

³³ Такие тайны сокровенны / От рассужденья моего; / Но то я знаю, что Содетель / Велит любить добродетель.

³⁴ Будь кроток, милосерд, смирен, благочестив; / Разрушится весь мир, но дух твой будещ жив.

³⁵ Когда мы век скончаем, / В жизни будущей встречаем/ Наши прежние дела / В книге добра, и зла, Михаил М. Херасков, Прошедшее, in his *Избранные произведения*, p. 140.

³⁶ Т. Задонский, *Об истинном христианстве* (1777), § 42.

³⁷ Когда мы разумом сверкаем, / Пороча слабые умы, / Вреднее зверя мы бываем, / И разум сей скучнее тьмы.

To successfully live the life of virtue, a constant battle has to be waged against one's own passions: "it is dangerous to serve passions" (*Pilgrims*, 3.247) and thus one has to become a ruler over one's own passions (*Ode xxii*, 7.364), whereby "Happy, o happy is the one whose intellect is able / To harness its rebellious passions / Who made chastity his only pillar / Not to become a slave of worldly vanity" (*Pilgrims*, 3.312).³⁸ Although God is inaccessible to the mind, He is accessible to the heart; however, passions can obfuscate the need to search for God, thereby hiding God, with fatal consequences (*Ode to God*, 7.73).

The outcome of the life of virtue is the eternity spent with God. As Kheraskov phrased it in his poem *The world*, after the world ends, he "who hates vices / Will see a new heaven / Clothed in spiritual body / And will live where the Lord is. / The universe will be clothed / In the ray of Divine lights / And the light will never end. / The throne and the staff he'll forget / And among Seraphim will / Shine a sinless man. / O the Guide of my fate! / My soul is filled with You: / Creator, my Maker, and God! / Make an eternal palace for me" (7.28).³⁹

Religion and politics

Religion becomes the most important aspect in personal life, but on the social level, Kheraskov's view of religion completely changes by assigning it a subsidiary role to politics, although he apparently started from the primacy of religion.

According to Kheraskov, the best form of government is monarchy, even stronger, an autocracy.⁴⁰ Any other political idea is unacceptable. In particular, the idea of universal equality as attempted in France is but a daydream, and Kheraskov devoted to this particular problem his book-long poem, *Tsar, or saved Novgorod* (1800), in which he told the story around a brief report in the *Russian primary chronicle*, according to which Varangian prince Rurik was invited by the Slavic tribes of the Northern territories. In probably the most often quoted statement of the *Chronicle*, they said, "Our land is great and abundant, but there is no order in it. Come to rule and reign over us." In Kheraskov's version, a feeble nobleman Gostomysl — having been heavenly prompted by personified Wisdom (*Tsar* 32–33) — said among others something similar: "I and wise Noblemen / Call upon Rurik

³⁸ О! шастлив, шастлив тот, рассудок чей во власти / Обуздывать свои бунтующие страсти! / Кто честность учинил единственным столбом, / Дабы сует мирских не сделаться рабом.

³⁹ Но кто пороки ненавидит, / Тот небо новое увидит; / В духовну облеченный плоть, / Вселится там, где есть Господ. / В лучи Божественного света / Вселенна будет вся одета, / И не погаснет свет вовек. / Престол и посох позабудет, / И в лике Серафимов будет / Сиять безгрешный человек. / О Правящий моей судьбою! / Моя душа полна Тобою: / Творец, Создатель мой, и Бог! / Созижди вечный мне чертог.

⁴⁰ [Михаил М. Херасков], *Царь, или спасенный Новгород*, Москва: В Университетской Типографии 1800, p. 246; cf. *Cadmus and Harmonia*, 8.105; *Numa Pompilius*, 12.110, 113.

to rule" (35; "over us" was probably a bit too much for Kheraskov),⁴¹ "Our fields abound with splendid harvest" (36).⁴² The reason was an anarchy caused by the revolt of people under the leadership of villainous Ratmir, who appears to have represented Robespierre (who was also mentioned, 149) just as the entire revolt represented the French revolution. Novgorod's revolt, just like the revolution, was a result of "illusory freedom," "deception of liberty" (6), of an erroneous idea that national happiness can be found in "absurd equality" (7).⁴³ However, nations without monarchs are blind (26). A crowd — a mob — cannot be trusted: "When people do not know authority / And follow their daydream / Then sudden passions are stirred / Like animals off the chain" (72). "Robbery, not government, is where / There is no lawful Tsar; / Only Autocracy / Gives freedom to the subjects" (122).⁴⁴ This harsh political statement is somewhat softened by including a personal dimension. In spite of a statement that "There is no equality in the world," Kheraskov also said that "People are born equal to live," which can be understood to mean that people have the same right to live; however, "their attributes are different" (93). Also, "We have freedom in our feelings / To be good or evil" (94);⁴⁵ more forcefully, the only freedom we have is "to create good or evil" (246).

The monarchical political system has a divine sanction since God is the ruler of the universe, and the reflection of this cosmic arrangement is a political system of a particular country in which a monarch is one and the highest political authority, thereby becoming an image of God (*Song* (1797), 7.217) not in the same sense as each person is considered to be an image of God, but in a special political sense in which only monarchs are images of God in respect to ruling. This direct connection between God and a monarch is reflected in this analogy: "If there is creation, it cannot be [that there is] no Creator: / If there is fatherland, there must be a Father / Under the name of Creator we understand God / And there is a fatherland where we have a Tsar" (*Tsar*, motto). The providential God is personally involved in choosing and crowning a monarch, and in royal activities, so Kheraskov could say that Catherine II was crowned by God Himself (*Ode* (1763), 7.95) and when she wrote her *nakaz*, "God Himself guided Her hand; / Heavenly Spirit soared above Her" (*Ode* (1793), 7.187).⁴⁶ If God is so intimately involved in the execution of royal duties, then whatever a monarch does acquires divine sanction and

⁴¹ я и мудрые Вельможи / На царство Рюрика зовем.

⁴² наши зланные поля / Обилуют роскошной жатвой.

⁴³ A similar message is given in the story in Kheraskov's novel *Cadmus and Harmonia* of a social experiment conducted by worldly philosophers who on an uninhabited island wanted to establish a new society. Some wanted a republic, some aristocracy, some anarchy, rejecting only monarchy (8.70), which resulted in the predictable disaster in which only one person survived to tell the story (65).

⁴⁴ Разбои там, не государство, / Законного Царя где нет; / Единое Самодержавство / Свободу подданным дает!

⁴⁵ Свободу в чувствах мы имеем / И добрыми и злыми быть.

⁴⁶ Сам Бог водил Ее рукою; / Небесный Дух над Ней летал.

no complements are sufficient to express that. And so, Catherine is “the Goddess of peace” (*Ode* (1791), 7.181), “Minerva [who] triumphs in glory / Radiates with chastity, truth, judgment” (*Ode* (1775), 7.155)⁴⁷; “If to Her heavenly character / Feelings of all could be similar, / Then long ago the Russian Empire / Would be considered paradise on earth; / Rivers would flow with milk and honey, / People would not know sorrows” (*Ode* (1791), 7.176).⁴⁸

Since Catherine has such a close tie with heaven, her aggressive policies become acceptable, even heavenly appointed. And thus, this goddess of peace “Pointing to southern Poland / She proclaims: these people for [their] tranquility / I will include in my Empire!”⁴⁹ Can anyone be unhappy when included in an empire of glory (*Ode* (1793), 7.184)? The aggressive policy of Catherine got the divine sanction explicitly: “The King of ages appeared to me [Kheraskov] in [His] glory” and said that He will send Catherine to Russia and “Millions of various peoples / I will include in Her Empire” (185).⁵⁰ That is, the partitions of Poland were divinely appointed, and, consequently, it would be quite unseemly for the Poles to begrudge this blessed event; they simply should rejoice: “You, by Catherine’s scepter / Included today to the flock of Eagle, / You have become our brothers / And sons of one Mother; / Exult, be renown along with us / By marching to the temple of blessing!” (186).⁵¹ Aggressive policies become divinely justified for all Russian monarchs, which received an affirmation in the epic poem *Rossiiada* in which Ivan IV, turned beyond recognition into a saintly figure, conquered Kazan. Religious approval is given to the tsar’s policy of expansion; religion serves national interests. This is done very much in the spirit of the policy enforced by Peter I when the position of patriarch was abolished and the church became, effectively, a governmental department. Not once did Kheraskov say a word concerning this situation of the church in Russia, although he repeatedly spoke about Peter, of course, always in the most exalted terms, to the point of divinization: Rurik saw Peter in a vision invoked by personalized Russia: “I see God! Says the prince; — / This is God! — answers Russia, / This is your Offspring, Peter the First!” (*Tsar* 239),⁵² which is later indirectly slightly softened by saying that kings are “the Gods for their subjects” (245).

⁴⁷ Минерва в славе торжествует, / Сияет честность, правда, суд.

⁴⁸ Когда б Ее небесну нраву / Всех чувства сходны быть могли, / Давно б Российскую Державу / Признали раем на земли; / Текли б млеком и медом реки; / Не знали б скорби человеки.

⁴⁹ На южну Польшу указав, / Вещает: — сих людей к покою / Причислю Я моих Держав!

⁵⁰ Мне Царь веков явился в славе ... Народов разных миллионы / К Ее Державе приобщу.

⁵¹ Вы скипетром ЕКАТЕРИНЫ / Включенны днесь в стада Орлины, / И братия вы стали нам, / Единой Матери сынами; / Ликуйте, славьтесь купно с нами, / Блаженства шествуя во храм!

⁵² Я Бога вижу! ... Князь вещает; / Се Бог! — Россия отвечает, / Се твой Потомок, Первый ПЕТР!

In all this, the national interests of Russia have priority over everything else and religion is used as a justification of not infrequently unpalatable policies. Will the subjected peoples and territories really see that their subjugation was motivated by love of the Russian monarch and that a new golden age arrived for them, as Kheraskov would want them to (*Ode* (1793), 7.187)? If they do not, they are not only ungrateful, but by being contrary to the will of the Russian monarch, they are rebelling against the will of God who so directed the monarch's decisions. This becomes easier for Kheraskov to state by an unseemly elevation of the status of the monarch: being God (with the capital G), the monarch becomes an equal to God Himself and thus the difference between decisions of the monarch and of God are blurred. Whatever the monarch wants, automatically acquires a divine authority and woe to those who think otherwise. With such a position, Kheraskov aligned himself with other intellectuals of his, and not only his, age. Sumarokov sang equally exaggerated praises and pretty much all other poets of the age. Ecclesiastical figures were not exempted from it to mention only Prokopovich, who, after all, was instrumental in subjugating the Orthodox church to the tsarist rule, and the metropolitan Platon with his many sermons extolling virtues of Catherine II and even of not altogether sane Paul (Kheraskov was not far behind by considering Paul to be "firm in faith and pious," *Ode*, 7.212).

There are thus two sides in the presence of religion in Kheraskov's poetry. On the social and political level, religion serves him the interests of the state, just as the organizational structure of the Russian church indicates. His patriotism did not shun from acceptance of aggressive policies, which strangely enough did not seem to him to contradict the irenic mode of Rosicrucians and Christianity. On a personal level, however, religion becomes the most important element of anyone's life and should become the foundation for the virtuous life Kheraskov repeatedly and strenuously advocated.

His masonic association had a rather benign influence on the Christian worldview he espoused. The core of this worldview — morality, a morally acceptable life, a preeminence of ethics — is very much of Christian character. The greatest influence of masonry on Kheraskov's worldview was the understanding of Christianity itself. Kheraskov never discussed doctrines specific to the Orthodox church. From his voluminous writings the reader would never know what Orthodoxy is, what distinguishes it from other Christian denominations, and what Orthodoxy considers to be unacceptable elements of doctrine that other Christians readily accept. The reader would never learn even about rifts within Russian Orthodoxy since schismatics are completely absent from Kheraskov's literary scene. Such an approach makes Kheraskov's understanding of Christianity more ecumenical, but there is also a danger to make this version too generic. And, in fact, it appears to be such a tendency in Kheraskov that except for the Christ-centered, moving poem *The consolation of sinners* and the poem *The universe* Christ is hardly present anywhere else, very seldom mentioned and His salvation message

is sidelined. The moral message is constantly in the forefront, and the emphasis is on one's own efforts to lead a virtuous life and the heavenly reward that should follow. In this, the accent shifts to a particular person, to good deeds, one's own works, one's own exertions in attempts to reach moral perfection. Such struggles striving for moral perfection are not at all contrary to Christianity, quite the opposite. However, traditional Christianity would constantly emphasize the need for divine assistance and the necessity of constant reliance on the help of Christ who, having experienced first-hand the life of a human being, can in His glorified state as God-Man best assist all who ask for it.

However, the overall attitude in respect to the masonry vs. Christianity issue is fairly clear in Kheraskov. Masonry was for him — just like for Novikov, Lopukhin, Gamaleia, and Schwarz — a way to rejuvenate the life of the official church as he saw its state to be in his times. Masonry was a way for revival of Christianity, not a way of replacing it. If some specific masonic elements were added (as in the creation story), they in no way distorted the salvation message of traditional Christianity.

Aspekty religijne poezji Chieraskowa

Streszczenie

Chieraskow był masonem i elementy masońskie znaleźć można w jego interpretacji dziejów stworzenia. Jednak jego poglądy w kwestii osobistego zbawienia są głęboko chrześcijańskie, szczególnie w *Pocieszeniu grzeszników*. W swej poezji Chieraskow podkreślał konieczność życia skierowanego na zbawienie, to jest życia zasadzającego się na cnotach moralnych. Religia staje się najważniejszym aspektem w życiu osobistym, ale na poziomie społecznym pogląd Chieraskowa na religię całkowicie się zmienia przez przypisanie religii jedynie roli podległej wymogom politycznym.

Słowa kluczowe: Chieraskow, masoni, religia.

Религиозные аспекты поэзии Хераскова

Резюме

Херасков был масоном и несколько масонских элементов можно найти в его интерпретации истории создания. Однако он дал глубоко христианское сообщение относительно личного спасения, особенно в *Утешении грешных*. Во всей своей поэзии Херасков подчеркивал необходимость жизни направленной на спасение, которой является жизнь добродетели. Религия становится наиболее важным аспектом в личной жизни, но на социальном уровне, зрения Хераскова о религии полностью меняются путем назначения ей только вспомогательной роли в политике.

Ключевые слова: Херасков, масонство, религия.