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TATISHCHEV AND NECESSITY OF THEOLOGY

Vasilii Nikitich Tatishchev was born in a noble family in 1686 in Pskov. Educated by his father, he entered state service in 1704 and since then he frequently met Peter I. In 1706, he joined an army regiment with his brother. In 1711, he participated in the Prut campaign during which he befriended Feofan Prokopovich, and next year he was sent to Western Europe to study the military and engineering systems. In 1716, he entered the Moscow Artillery School. In 1717, he was in charge of constructing the armory in St. Petersburg, which included cannon casting and artillery repairs. In 1719, he directed the state metal factory system in the Urals, which significantly improved in efficiency under his direction, and Tatishchev was even involved in designing machines. At that time, Tatishchev established two elementary schools and two professional schools others for training metallurgists and miners. In 1724, he traveled to Sweden to make arrangements for the education of future metallurgists and to investigate the Swedish industrial system. In 1727, he worked in Moscow on the currency reform. In 1730, he became the master of ceremonies for empress Anna. Accused of embezzlement, he was removed from the state service in 1731. In 1734, he returned to the administration factory system in the Urals. In 1737, he became a privy councilor and headed an expedition to make a geographical exploration of the South Urals and administration of this region, where he skillfully dealt with rebellious Bashkirs and brought Bashkiria under the authority of the state. After he returned to St. Petersburg in 1739, he submitted a project for a geographical survey of the country to the Senate and made plans for a regional reform of Russia. In 1740, he was imprisoned under the suspicion of accepting bribes. His reputation was ruined, he lost his rank, and was dismissed from state service. Released from prison, he became in 1741 the head of the Kalmyk Commission for the restoration of peace among the Kalmyk tribes, and

then he became the governor of Astrakhan appreciably increasing the Russian authority in the region. Found guilty of embezzlement in 1745 he was relieved of his duties and sent to his estate in Boldino near Moscow where he stayed under house arrest for the next five years until his death in 1750.

Tatishchev is remembered today primarily as an author of the monumental *Russian history*. He collected sources for that project from his very early years and worked on it on and off all through his life and full time during his last years in Boldino. The opus presents the history of Russia from its early years to the beginning of the seventeenth century. The work is meticulously documented with sources and is still in use today, particularly as the source of material which is no longer extant. Tatishchev also contributed to the cartography of Russia by preparing various maps that include maps of the Urals and of the Astrakhan region. Moreover, he was writing a *Geographical lexicon* which remained unfinished.

Although in a self-deprecating manner Tatishchev considered himself to be unschooled in philosophy (IR 1.preface.6)¹, he discussed certain philosophical and theological issues particularly in *A conversation of two friends on the usefulness of knowledge and on schools*, written probably in 1734, which consists of 121 questions and answers. Some remarks pertaining to philosophical and religious issues can also be found in the *Russian history*, particularly in the first part, and in his *Testament* written for his son Evgraf.

KNOW THYSELF

The first European philosopher, Thales, said, according to Diogenes Laertius, “know thyself,” which was also an inscription on the wall of Apollo’s temple in Delphi. The sentiment expressed by this maxim was

¹ The following references to Tatishchev’s works will be used:

D – *Духовная*, in his *Собрание сочинений в восьми томах*, Москва 1994–1996, vol. 8, 133–145.

IR – *История российская*, in his *Собрание сочинений*, vols. 1–7.

NSh – *Наказ шихтмейстеру* [1735], [in:] Н. И. Павленко, „Наказ шихтмейстеру” В. Н. Татищева, „Исторический архив” 6:1951, 210–228.

P – *Произвольное и согласное разсуждение и мнение собравшегося шляхетства руского о правлении государственном*, in his *Собрание сочинений*, vol. 8, 143–152.

R – *Разговор двух приятелей о пользе науки и училищах*, in his *Собрание сочинений*, vol. 8, 51–132; in references, the first number indicates a page, the second a question number.

U – *Учреждение, коим порядком учителя русских школ имеют поступать* [1736], [in:] Н. Ф. Демидова, *Инструкция В. Н. Татищева о порядке преподавания в школах при уральских казенных заводах*, „Исторический архив” 5:1950, 167–177.

accepted by Tatishchev at the beginning of his *Conversation* when he stated that “the principal teaching (наука) is that man can know himself” (R 51/3)².

Man consists of eternal soul and perishable body (R 52/5), in which statement Tatishchev was inspired by the religious teaching of the Bible, which he strongly emphasized (53/13), rather than by Descartes, although he did know Descartes and even recommended studying his writings (108/79). Somewhat confusedly, he stated that the property of the soul is spirit that is incorporeal and has no parts; thus, the soul is indivisible, and hence immortal (54/14). This may indicate that the spirit is the spiritual substance as distinguished from matter that is the substance of all bodies (cf. 54/15; 65/27; 90/50.5). This could pose an ontological problem in making the spirit or rather the spiritual substance indivisible and yet allowing for it to be divided into separate souls. On the one hand, Tatishchev seems to have treated the soul and the spirit synonymously: he defined pneumatics (which he even equated with metaphysics [54/14.4]) as the domain of knowledge investigating “attributes and forces of spirits”, in the plural (94/55; 54/14.4). He also treated the soul and spirit synonymously in the *Testament*. However, he also seems to have accepted the possibility that the spirit is just the mind (58/22), for which he pointed to the use made by some unnamed ancient philosophers and also to the apostle Paul, although the two verse references he made (Rom. 8:1, Gal. 5:7) have nothing to do with that. Although he made a passing reference to 1 Thes. 5:23, he did not raise the problem stated in this verse of the tripartite composition of humans: body, soul, and spirit. In any event, he considered the soul to be indivisible, and, therefore, immortal, which was an argument used quite forcefully by Descartes, although it can also be found in Plato’s *Phaedo*, although in a less pronounced way.

Tatishchev mentioned very briefly various opinions concerning the location of the soul, one of them stating that this location is the blood, which seems to have the biblical support (R 54/14.2). He also referred to the traditionally difficult problem of the origin of the soul and listed several theories; however, he did not commit himself to any of them, leaving it to pneumatics (54/14.4).

According to Tatishchev, in the soul we can find the mind and will (R 55/15). Mind is a force/faculty of the soul called intellect (смысл) – although one manuscript reads: thought (мысль) – and not only “the stupidest people [have it] by nature”, but even animals. All minds are not the

² When Rudolph L. Daniels, *V. N. Tatishchev, guardian of the Petrine revolution*, Philadelphia 1973, 45, translated it as “the proper study of man is man”, he actually used the words of Alexander Pope from his *Essay on man* (2.2): “The proper study of Mankind is Man”

same, or rather, different minds can be on different levels of development, and a trained or educated mind is called reason (55/16; IR 1.preface.10).

Tatishchev accepted the view expressed by some authors that the mind's faculties are: understanding or imagination (поятность), memory, intellect (догадка or смысл)³, and judgment (R 55/17). These faculties are perfect in all people since the soul in man is perfect. However, the soul acts through the body, that is, through various bodily organs, and their condition determines how well the soul can act. For instance, heavy food can harmfully affect these organs and "through the flow of fluids narrows or widens connections and makes them unsuitable for understanding, or for preservation of memory and representations, or for orderly judgment", and so does sickness, old age, and emotions such as sadness. However, since the soul has no parts, it cannot be harmed. Therefore, our body has to be trained to do things right (65/27). It is not the soul that has to be trained into proper exercise of its faculties, but the body (66/27). In this way, all apparently mental exercises, say, trying to learn something by rote, are really exercises of the body to allow for better manifestation of these faculties which are stifled by the body. In this way, the mind tries to subjugate the body so that the mind can have a better passage through the body. Therefore, stupidity is not a deficiency of the soul – the mind is already a fully rational faculty, the reason, perfect faculty in the perfect soul – but of the body. In stupid people the body is more constricted and its inner passages more mingled than in intelligent people, but their stupidity lies in the fact that they do not want to do anything about it or take inadequate countermeasures. For Tatishchev, it is not the healthy soul that is in the healthy body, but the healthy manifestation of the soul in the healthy body. The mind is healthy at the very outset. In this, Tatishchev accepted the ancient view that the body is the prison of the soul. When the soul is in the body, all attempts should be made to turn this prison into a relatively comfortable dwelling place, which is the goal of the entire educational process – not only in school, but also in a social environment: at home, in the working place, and, of course, in church. Truly, "it is necessary and beneficial for man that he should learn from the beginning of his life until old age" (69/33). Because learning is inextricably connected to the proper maintenance of the body, moderation should be the leading principle. For example, eating should be done in moderation – not too much, but also not too little, and thus moderation should also be practiced in fasting (64/26). Moderation is not limited to eating. In a rather sweeping statement Tatishchev said that "everything

³ Догадка or смысл = Verstand, Н. Попов, *Ученые и литературные труды В. Н. Татищева*, „Журнал Министерства народного просвещения” 6:1886, 222.

used in moderation is useful and necessary for us" (60/25). Everything? Tatishchev may just as well have understood that literally: even a proper dose of poison can have a healing effect.

The moderation principle certainly extends to inborn faculties of the soul. According to Tatishchev, love of honor (любочестие), that is, the desire to be famous, love of possessions (любоимение), that is, the desire to be rich, and care for the body (плотиугодие)⁴, are such innate attributes of the soul, and since what God creates is good, they are beneficial for people when exercised in moderation (R 58/23). For instance, love of honor prevents people from an unseemly behavior and leads to courage. Love of possessions leads to supporting ourselves, family, and others; it also leads to diligence since possessions cannot be had just by wanting them – people have to work on them. The care for the body encourages healthy behavior and includes nourishing the body and conjugal relations (59/24). Giving free rein to any of these internal promptings is sinful, and God's law metes out punishment for it (60/25). With this view, Tatishchev restricted the religious view that man is evil by nature. All the inborn instincts and desires are by themselves not sinful; only their unrestrained exercise is. The evil of man does not lie in the faculties man possesses, but in their use. Tatishchev saw the solution in keeping the will in check by the mind. The mind should control the will. Evil or sin is a situation that disturbs perfection, i.e., deprives the body of its inner powers and tools and of their proper use, thereby shortening people's lives and depriving them of happiness (58/23). The more men know about injudicious exercise of natural powers, the less likely they would be to misuse them. Thus, in the Socratic spirit, Tatishchev claimed that the ethical dimension lies in the mind, or rather in reason which is an educated mind: goodness stems from knowledge. However, the knowledge that the mind possesses must be of the proper kind: just the possession of a great amount of information by itself does not guarantee that the mind will steer the will properly and that the ethical conduct will prevail. Therefore, education is indispensable for ethics, which effectively leads to religious education.

GOD'S LAW AND NATURAL LAW

Tatishchev held a widely accepted view of the existence of two laws. The natural law has been put in people's hearts by God and is understood by the mind and felt by the senses. There is also the law given in the

⁴ For Tatishchev's terminology, cf. М. М. Персиц, „Разговор двух приятелей о пользе наук и училищ” В. Н. Татищева, как памятник русского свободомыслия XVIII века, „Вопросы истории религии и атеизма” 3:1956, 286 note 2.

Scriptures through prophets and through Christ. Both laws are in accord since they are based on the same principle: “love yourself with reason,” which is the principle of rational self-love. Loving God and loving neighbors constitute the foundation of the scriptural law. This, in Tatishchev’s view, is the same foundation as in the case of the natural law but expressed differently. That is, the love of God and love of neighbor is but a different formulation of rational love of oneself. If considered carefully, reasonable love of oneself requires love of others. Love for others is caused by two things. “Since man by nature wants to be happy, but this in no wise we can accomplish and preserve without help of others, thus we should love in return those, from whom we get any love and favor, or when we hope for getting from someone any favor, help and benefit, we should do in return the same to him” (61/26; 60/26, different redaction). Moreover, “since through natural mind I can say that God is one and everything that exists came from Him and is sustained by Him [...] so I should in turn love the Father and the supreme Benefactor”. Also, rational love implies love of neighbor since love of oneself comes first, which is clear from the Mosaic statement, “love your neighbor as thyself”, and natural and scriptural laws cannot be in contradiction (62/26).

To see the equivalence and a mere rewording between rational love on the one hand and the love of God and neighbor on the other is very strained and far from convincing. Natural law can be found directly in the Bible (cf. Rom. 1:20–21, 2:15) and in that respect there is no contradiction between natural law and scriptural law. However, this does not mean that there is an equivalence of the two laws and a facile way of deriving one from another. Self-interest may lead to gratitude for what others have done for us, but not infrequently help of others leads to resentment and envy. There is no automatism between received help and loving the ones who helped us. Tatishchev in a way recognized it by saying that we *should* love them, but there is no guarantee that this will be the case. Also, recognition of the dependent status as a created being does not lead automatically to the love of the Creator. It may be said that if it is not the case, then self-love is not rational. Therefore, the rationality of love has to be determined independently of one’s own reasoning powers, and this is the role of the revealed law, which exceeds the scope of human rationality.

Tatishchev’s argument that self-love implies love of neighbor as testified by the Biblical pronouncement, “love your neighbor as thyself”, uses the erroneous principle, *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, after this, therefore because of this. The biblical injunction does suggest that self-love precedes love of neighbor, but it does not say that the latter is the consequence of the former – at least in a rational person – but only that love of

neighbor should be of the same intensity as self-love. It may very well be that the two kinds of love are independent of one another: one is ingrained in a natural person, one is in a person of regenerating faith, but there is no automatism leading from one to another. They may fortify one another, but it is rather that love of neighbor strengthens self-love by putting it in a less self-centered light than self-love strengthening love of neighbor.

Tatishchev spoke about loving benefactors, divine and human, for good things done by them to us, but how about those who did nothing to us, good or bad? Can the reasoning power force us to love them? The most paradoxical of all is the Christian urging to love enemies. How rational is that? Tatishchev did not even address the problem focusing on loving benefactors. If we love only those who love us – those who express that love by being our benefactors – what reward do we deserve, as asked in the Sermon on the Mount.

If Tatishchev wanted to derive Christian precepts from self-love, he was far from successful. Indirectly, Tatishchev admitted the impossibility of such a proof when he stated that man is by nature bent toward evil and disobedience (R 70/37), unless it is assumed that the sheer power of reasoning can direct the will toward good by harnessing emotions and using the guided lights of reason. However, this is a lifelong, arduous process. “Man has to live for a century and for a century educate himself and stay away from evil, since until old age he is unable to naturally learn about true good. However, the old age is not limited to the number of years” since even a person of young age can have such knowledge – e.g., Solomon – although it is not a common occurrence (68/33). A part of this process is the way humans grow and mature. Man is the finest creation, and yet, animals can live on their own right after they are born, but not human babies who require years-long care and protection. In Tatishchev’s view, God created man that way “so that he always can see the need and necessity of help of others and so he should try to show love to others and care most of all about his own happiness” (66/28). Human helplessness, particularly in childhood, is seen as the divine way of igniting in humans love for others, particularly, for parents. This should also instill love for God. If we cannot be happy without help of others, all the more we should love God more than ourselves as a Father who gave us life and all that we have with the hope of receiving from Him the greatest grace (60/26, different redaction).

Tatishchev also claimed that the Church teaching about salvation is included in the knowledge of oneself. When man knows of what he consists (body and soul), he gains knowledge about the Creator and about what is good for him (R 53/11–12). It could be claimed that the enlight-

ened egoism may lead someone to God for help, but it is rather inexplicable how the principle of rational self-love can possibly lead to the teaching of the Church concerning the salvific work of Christ on the cross.

SOCIETY

Just as lives of individuals are designed by God to fill them with love for Him and for other people, so is the development of humankind.

At the beginning, people were virtuous, and God, who cared for them, spoke to them directly, guided them toward good, and it was easy then for people to be saintly. The law was fairly small then and it was fairly easy to keep it. However, people were “blinded by folly and carnal passions” and the saintliness of people soon became a rare occurrence. Between the creation of the world and the law of Moses (4015 years according to the Greeks, 2492, according to Romans), there were some 100 virtuous people. Between the law of Moses and the coming of Christ (1485/1478 years) – many times more; after Christ, in the first 300 years, 1000 times more than since the creation of the world (R 71/38). These jumps in the number of virtuous people Tatishchev attributed to three critical historical events (70/36; IR 1.preface.10). The first enlightenment of mind was accomplished by the invention of writing, which, in Tatishchev’s estimation, took place in the times of Abraham (R 72/39). Since our ancestors could hardly learn without writing about distant and invisible works of God and retain their own history in memory for the good of others (70/37), the invention of writing provided the means of increasing the knowledge about God’s providential work and thus increasing love for Him. Moreover, through writing, in many countries laws were enacted bringing “rays of faint light” (72/39). The light was indeed faint, since, for instance, the Greek and Roman laws were short and full of unbecoming elements (73/39). Jewish law by the time of Christ became “vicious and vile”, although it was much better than pagan laws. Jewish laws were compromised by human additions; however, they at least recognized the true God (IR 1.2.1). Also, rampant idolatry led people away from true God (R 72/39). That led to the second enlightenment in human history, the birth and teachings of Christ who taught “moral love of neighbor” (76/42). With the coming of Christ not only came spiritual salvation, but also “all sciences began to grow and multiply” and idolatry disappeared (IR 1.3.1). However, because of love of power and money, heresy soon encroached in the Western church leading to the introduction by “Roman archbishops” of new principles and suppressing old ones, to burning and

condemning books, and to the prohibition of reading the Bible (R 77/42). This was countered by the third most significant event in world history, which was the invention of printing (70/36). Through printing, all books could not be burned, and through printing, knowledge was widely spread (78/43).

EDUCATION

It is a joy for a parent when the child has a rich mind and the ability to do good and to turn away from evil, but the mind does not turn into reason without education, and the ability to do good does not exist without a habit or an art of acquiring it. Without the latter, the child remains in “natural evil and unbelief” and by his misbehavior brings sorrow to others and fear of eternal perdition to himself, but through knowledge, he will bring eternal joy to everyone (R 51/1). Acquiring knowledge is important for personal development and for better recognition of God’s work, whereby a wiser person should normally be a better person, that is, loving more others and God, and hence becoming more helpful to others. What should education really be? Is acquiring any type of knowledge beneficial?

Tatishchev did not place any limits on the scope of knowledge that should be acquired and by being against the burning of books, he saw potential usefulness in all of them. For example, although philosophical sciences have little to do with the law of God (R 77/42), philosophy should be studied. Just as food is not prohibited, only an excess of it, so the study of philosophy is not prohibited either, but only its misuse. It can lead to the knowledge of God and be beneficial for men (79/44). Apostle Paul studied philosophical books and so did church fathers. “True philosophy is not only needed, but also necessary for faith” (80/44). True philosophy – and what about false philosophy? Only philosophy that turns man away from God is harmful, philosophy that argues against the Bible, encourages worship of pagan gods, and promotes pagan views such as the view that the world exists by itself, belief in reincarnation, the soul is derived from the world soul. However, not philosophy per se is at fault here, but particular circumstances or its misuse, just as heretical teaching that can be derived from reading the Bible (79/44). That is, there has to be guidance in the proper use of philosophy, and since man brings with natural law no knowledge but only an ability to acquire it, this guidance should come from the outside – from the divine law and Church teachings which, in particular, prescribe the correct reading of the Bible and allow for pruning heretical teachings.

All knowledge is not equally good, and there is knowledge which is undesirable. Tatishchev divided sciences or types of knowledge into spiritual – theology, and corporeal – philosophy, and limited himself mainly to the latter. Another division categorizes knowledge as 1. necessary, 2. useful, 3. entertaining, 4. curiosity type, and 5. harmful (R 89/49). Necessary sciences/knowledge include: 1. speech; 2. knowledge needed to preserve the body (food, clothing, dwelling) (89/50), that is, economy; 3. medical science; 4. ethics, since man by nature is biased toward evil, knowledge of the law, military knowledge for nobility; 5. logic; and 6. most important, man's exercise of care for his soul and for its eternal wellbeing. To that end, man has to know his Creator, which is only possible by nature. Although the mind cannot comprehend God's attributes, this is not necessary; it is enough to believe and know that He is the creator and lord of all and believe "that he is only one eternal, unaging, merciful, omniscient, and everywhere present, all that is from him and exists by his will, without his will nothing can be created. For this, we have to know his will written in his divine laws and try, as much as possible, to fulfill them" This is theology, a necessary science. Thus, necessary knowledge is needed for the proper upkeep of the spirit and of the body (90–91/50).

Useful sciences include 1. writing, including grammar; 2. rhetoric; 3. foreign languages; 4. mathematics, physics and astronomy (R 91/51); 5. history, genealogy, geography, and cultural anthropology; 6. botany and anatomy; and 7. physics, chemistry, and material science (92/51). Entertaining knowledge consists of 1. poetry, 2. music, 3. dancing, 4. horseriding, and 5. drafting and painting (92/52). Curiosity knowledge, that is not useful and has very little truth in it, includes 1. astrology, 2. physiognomics, 3. palmistry (92/53), and 4. alchemy (93/53). Finally, harmful knowledge includes divination, oracles, fortune-telling, casting spells, and witchcraft. Physicists and theologians showed that man can do nothing through the devil (93/54), which seems to mean that this type of knowledge is not harmful because spells bring harm and witchcraft causes injury, but they are harmful by deluding people that this type of knowledge is effective and thus pulling them away from beneficial knowledge and, of course, from true faith. Incidentally, many philosophers say that it is not sinful to punish people who exercise harmful knowledge by death, but, in Tatishchev's view, they certainly deserve corporal punishment (93/54). Therefore, all knowledge is not good, and if fortune-tellers, witches, and the like miscreants should be punished by lashes or branding, wouldn't it encourage burning the books that include such type of knowledge?

Tatishchev grieved over the fact that some church officials prohibit reading books to maintain their power, which is facilitated by maintaining

people's ignorance (R 80/44). Presumably, such prohibition should be lifted. However, the reading of books should be regimented. Since faith is the most important thing, we should learn God's will through reading the Bible, the catechism, books of the fathers of the church, commentaries on the ten commandments, Prokopovich's *Primer*, the *Virtuous mirror of the youth* by Jakov Brius (Bruce), and the lives of saints. After gaining knowledge of the divine law, books of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics can be read to avoid being duped by them when discussing matters of faith (D 137). As gracefully stated by Tatishchev, heretical teachings are believed by stupids and ignorants like Anabaptists, and, in Russia, by schismatics assenting to the teaching of Avvakum (R 81/44). So it could also be said that the books containing harmful knowledge should also be read by the prepared mind so that the views contained in them can be refuted. Burning should probably not be practiced, but almost certainly there should be no spreading of such books. Would it make rational sense to spread harmful knowledge?

Proper preparation of the mind is thus critical and properly executed education is indispensable for the adequate development of individuals and societies. The law of God must be instilled in a child from the earliest age and be taught and reinforced all through the life. Tatishchev criticized Cadet school for poor quality and infrequent religious education (R 106/77). He considered mathematical schools – which included Admiralty College and Engineering school – deficient in not having religious education (107–108/78).

Education of the clergy was critical for the proper molding of the society. Generally, “the clergy is held in contempt because of its vile conduct and insufficient learning” (R 102/69). Clergy by God's law should teach this law and lead people to the path of salvation, but there are so few learned men among them; one in a thousand knows divine and civic law and can teach it and explain that murder, robbery, hate, fornication, drunkenness, gluttony, etc. are not only mortal sins, but, by nature, they are harmful and lead to perdition since these sins will not be left without punishment. However, priests teach by human tradition and outward piety, whereby there is so much sin in Russia, which they often do not even consider as sin. If they do, they refer to God's mercy, prescribe as penance that people should light a candle before an icon, put a silver frame on an icon, eat fish, not meat, and give money to a priest for absolution, so that people think the sin is blotted out and in this hope continue to sin. In a country in which science blooms, such things seldom happen (86/47).

In all this, Tatishchev recognized the fact that “the beginning of knowledge is the knowledge of God” (52/6). “Man can naturally know

God if clearly and diligently thinks about it” (74/41). However, this leads to a vicious circle. The will must motivate the mind for the search of knowledge; willingness of being diligent in exercises of the mind leads to acquiring knowledge and thus to the knowledge of God and His works. But the will is torn by passions that push it toward evil rather than toward good and, therefore, the will has to be bridled by reason. The mind has to lead the will, the will has to lead the mind, but the will is inherently unreliable, and the mind that is not yet reason, is blind. How can this circle be broken? The task can be accomplished either by reliance on beneficial influence of others who impose educational discipline, which may be resented by the pupil, or by reliance on the providential guidance of God, or both, since the latter could be done by the former. Since humanity left to its own devices hardly steers toward good, the providence of God must be assumed as the starting point. In this, deism would not be a solution since if God left humanity to its fate, that would spell for it a disastrous end. Therefore, a supposition that Tatishchev was a deist⁵ is a serious distortion of his views⁶

ORTHODOXY

Tatishchev stated that he never doubted the existence of God (D 137). He was an Orthodox believer and occasionally defended the church’s teachings. For example, he discussed at length in his *Russian history* idolatry in general and of the early inhabitants of Russia in particular, but stressed that the veneration of icons so strong in the Orthodox church has nothing in common with idolatry. “Idolaters honor the very essence of the visible entity, put their hope in it, they asked it for mercy. On the contrary, we give glory and honor not to the visible object standing before us but to the being that can be visualized in thoughts and able to perfectly manifest mercy and wrath, we put our hopes in it and ask it for mercy; and the icon, as a sacred object, we honor for the remembrance of what it represents, we put it in an honored place and adorn it out of love for what it represents; similarly, we honor the Bible, the book of God’s laws and mira-

⁵ C. Grau, *Der Wirtschaftsorganisator, Staatsmann und Wissenschaftler Vasilij N. Tatishchev, 1686–1750*, Berlin 1963, 152, 202; Л. А. Петров, *Общественно-политическая и философская мысль России первой половины XVIII века*, Иркутск 1974, 10, 135, 144, 149, 184, 266. Tatishchev was a deist also according to Аполлон Кузьмин, *Татищев*, Москва 1981, 188, which, why not, led him to pantheism, “a form of materialism” (189). He was “a freethinking rationalist and deist” in view of Перциц, *op. cit.*, 283.

⁶ Moreover, suspicions about his freethinking “can in no wise be cast on Tatishchev’s religious views”, Попов, *op. cit.*, 220.

cles, but we do not put our hopes in it, nor are we afraid [of it], nor do we ask it for mercy, which the seventh Ecumenical Council strongly prohibited under the danger of an anathema, as shown in the Catechism and the explanation of God's commandments. But we do not represent everything on icons to honor, but sometimes only for remembrance, for instance, an image of Christ's sufferings is, according to apostle Paul, necessary to always keep in mind [His] name, but we do not honor the depicted tormentors" (IR 1.2.12). In the arguments used here Tatishchev largely followed Prokopovich⁷

Tatishchev treated the Orthodox faith very seriously, and this is reflected in his instructions to industrialists and factory managers. He urged them that the church should be built next to each factory and the church should have a competent priest (NSh 223). On Sundays and holidays no work should be done and everyone should attend a church service. If anyone does not go to confession, he should be fined, and the money from fines should fund the church and school (224). In each factory there should be a school (224). The day of classes should start with reading from the New Testament, with a prayer, and, on two days, also with a reading from the catechism, and each day should end with "Our Father" said by all together (U 169). Education should include learning by rote and in writing fragments of the Bible, learning how to read from, among others, Prokopovich's *Primer* and Brius' *Virtuous mirror of the youth*, "which will teach both God's law and virtuous life". The Psalter would be even better "to teach fear of God and virtuous living", but the existing translation makes it frequently incomprehensible even to adults (170). On holidays, the teacher should take all his pupils to the church service (174).

Tatishchev, like Prokopovich, severely criticized Catholicism. In his view, Catholics are in principal points of faith so distant from Orthodoxy, that they can hardly be considered Christians and certainly not Catholics (D 137). Rather unaccountably he stated that celibacy of the Catholic clergy was caused by the desire of riches of the world, but they do not stay away from women and consider their visits to be consecrations of women and do not consider them sinful (R 100/67). In this, Tatishchev seems to have directed his criticism against domestic, Orthodox clergy under the disguise of criticizing Catholicism, if we consider the fact that in 1728 he wrote a letter to the Synod to grant him divorce from his wife, who in 1714 had a liaison with an abbot, Iosif Roshilov⁸

⁷ Cf. M. T. Znayenko, *The gods of the ancient Slavs: Tatishchev and the beginnings of Slavic mythology*, Columbus 1980, 95–96.

⁸ Я. А. Гордин, *Хроника одной судьбы: художественно-документальная повесть о В. Н. Татищеве*, Москва 1980, 64–65.

Although Tatishchev never doubted the existence of God and the truth of God's law, he was sometimes accused by those knowing only the laws of men of heresy or even atheism and suffered because of it (D 137). After he brought his *Russian history* to St. Petersburg, some accused him of rejecting the Orthodox faith and law, although archbishop Ambrose of Novgorod did not find in it anything contradictory with Orthodox faith (IR 1.preface.6). However, Tatishchev did hold some unorthodox views, which he could have expressed more or less openly, which were then exaggerated to the level of atheism. In 1745, one doctor Johann Lerch(e) wrote from Astrakhan that "in matters of religion, he [Tatishchev] held peculiar convictions for which many did not consider him to be an Orthodox" believer⁹ At one occasion described by Prokopovich, Tatishchev questioned in a discussion the canonical status of the *Song of songs*, since "everyone can see that Solomon inflamed by lust to his fiancée, an Egyptian queen, wrote it"¹⁰ This fact was lovingly mentioned by Soviet authors to show how little religion meant to Tatishchev¹¹. However, Tatishchev's opposition to the canonicity of the *Song of songs* was motivated by his religious beliefs, not by his freethinking in the matters of religion. It is worth mentioning that Luther questioned the inspired character of the *Letter of James* because, in his view, it did not agree with his, Luther's, understanding of the basic principles of Christianity, in particular the salvation by faith alone, and yet it would be impossible to qualify Luther as an unbeliever.

Tatishchev was not detached from the problem of different shades of Orthodoxy and aligned himself with Prokopovich. He had a very high opinion about Prokopovich and believed that in philosophy and history Prokopovich did not have an equal in Russian history. Aspersions cast on his faith were due to envy and ill will (R 110/80). Prokopovich was accused, not without reason, of interpreting Orthodoxy from the Protestant perspective as opposed to the traditional view of Orthodoxy promoted by Stefan Iavorskii and his monumental *Rock of faith*. Stefan Iavorskii attended Catholic schools and was filled with "the teaching from the chalice of the woman on seven-headed beast". In *The Rock of faith* he criticized not only Protestants, but also schismatics, but did not criticize Catholics for the dogma of the eucharist, "in which they are directly opposed to the teaching of Christ", did not mention the dogma of the purgatory, nor criticize the dogma of the procession of the Holy Spirit that Protestants share

⁹ Quoted after Гордин, *op. cit.*, 187; Кузьмин, *op. cit.*, 301.

¹⁰ И. А. Чистович, *Феофан Прокопович и его время*, Санкт-Петербургъ 1868, 614.

¹¹ Кузьмин, *op. cit.*, 187–188; Персиц, *op. cit.*, 283–284; 146.

with Catholics (109/80). He did not know philosophy well, nor mathematics and church history. Iavorskii “mindlessly used unbecoming proofs and accusations so that sometimes it is pitiful and ridiculous to read” “Most regrettably, he shamelessly wrote, although indirectly, against his lord and father of the fatherland”, Peter I, for which reason the tsar prohibited the publication of his book. “Simple and uneducated people consider it to be very learned [book] and money-loving, superstitious and senseless clergy soured by the popish drink try hard to affirm it, but because they are afraid, they do not do that openly. But the wise and people knowledgeable in the Holy Scriptures will not consider it to be such” (110/80).

Tatishchev said that although he was not able to judge the theological side of *The Rock of faith*, but could at least say that “contrary to his [Iavorskii’s priestly] rank, his duties, and propriety of a decent and judicious man he used unbecoming and malicious name-calling” (R 110/80). Tatishchev should have taken these words to heart, since he was just as guilty as it can be seen from his ill-spirited attack on Iavorskii. No such reproach was addressed to Dimitrii Rostovskii – whom he considered an authority (74/41, 112/84; IR 1.2.12) – or to Prokopovich, although their writings are replete with name-calling directed against Catholics and schismatics. Also, although Tatishchev mentioned that Prokopovich was educated in Catholic schools in Rome and Florence, he did not hold it against Prokopovich as the fact of drinking from “the chalice of the woman on seven-headed beast” It must be remembered that Prokopovich, just like Iavorskii, changed his faith from Orthodox to Uniate before heading West for education and then converted back to Orthodoxy after a return to Russia, and yet this action did not raise Tatishchev’s ire.

Tatishchev also criticized the Orthodox clergy for a low level of education, in which criticism he followed Prokopovich. He lamented the fact that some clergymen were involved in fake miracles to extort money from people (R 94/54). He also criticized them for baptizing people from certain tribes without explaining the significance of the baptism, since they did know the language of the tribe. Therefore, without such teaching, baptism is just bathing (103/73; IR 2.18 note 413). However, regardless of what deficiencies are found in one’s own church, one should not abandon the church and the faith since that cannot be done without affecting virtue (D 137).

Tatishchev was undoubtedly a believer: it cannot be believed, he said, that there would be a man so stupid or so evil that he would not believe in God (R 74/41). However, he was not entirely orthodox in his Orthodoxy. He assented to the Protestantizing wing of the Orthodox church, and that

is quite clearly expressed in his statement that “according to the Holy Scripture, faith and trust in God are sufficient for our salvation” (IR 3.31 note 626). No mention of good works. He certainly accepted most of church teachings, but, as his doubts about the canonicity of the *Song of songs* indicate, his own theology sometimes veered from that of the official church. In the spirit of relaxed orthodoxy, he believed that the best philosophy is in France, in the Catholic country!, although he so disdainfully spoke about Catholicism; incidentally, the best philosophy, in his view, was in England, in the country of the Anglican church (R 112/84). In an ecumenical spirit, certainly not to be found in Prokopovich or Iavorskii, he said that among wise people there are no religious conflicts, since “for a wise person, faith of someone else is none of his concern and for him a Luther[an], Calvin[ist], a Catholic, Anabaptist, a Muslim or a pagan are all the same; for he does not look at faith but at his merchandise, at his conduct and character, and deals with him accordingly, since God as the just judge will not punish him for someone else’s bad faith” (87/48). However, this is probably not a call for the disregard of differences in religious convictions, but a simple statement that the true convictions are manifested in someone’s conduct, in lifestyle, in the way everyday problems are solved. Differences in beliefs are not to be disregarded, but in dealing with others we are interested in the seriousness and intensity of these beliefs, in their impact in the way people live their lives.

Tatishchev mentioned briefly the fact that controversies between different faiths are caused only by “priests for their own benefit and also by superstitious bigots or foolish pious people” (R 87/48). It probably should not be understood that any controversies should be out of the question including discussions concerning theological differences between various branches of Christianity. Tatishchev himself did not spare caustic words against Catholicism, Protestantism, and, with particular vehemence, against schismatics. He certainly would not have considered himself a bigot or foolishly pious, and yet his words of criticism against various religious denominations can hardly be classified as other than religious controversies.

THEOLOGY AND POLITICS

Tatishchev was not an overtly religious man; however, he saw the relevance of religion in the public square, particularly in the matter of justification of the tsarist rule.

In Tatishchev’s view, presented particularly clearly in his *Free and orderly argument and opinion of the assembled Russian gentry on state*

government (1730), there are three possible political systems: democracy, the rule of aristocracy, and monarchy¹². Democracy is fitting for small political units, such as a city. Oligarchy would be fitting for areas with natural defenses, such as islands, and for communities with high level of enlightenment when laws are followed without compulsion. For large areas with population not sufficiently educated, population following laws out of fear rather than out of conviction that the laws are beneficial, the best political system is monarchy (P 147–148; R 119/100), and one of the best exemplifications of such system is the rule of Peter I (R 112/87). Tatishchev believed that a monarch is appointed by God, in which belief he agreed with forceful arguments made by Prokopovich and Iavorskii. It is said that giving rule to one man is not without dangers, since one man cannot excel in all areas. However, the ruler has advisors and also does the best for his country. If the ruler is inadequate and does not care about the country, this should be a punishment of God, and thus the political system should not be modified (P 149). In this, Tatishchev assumed the inborn benevolence of the sovereign who has primarily the good of the country and his subject in his heart. The limitations of the mind – insufficient information, inadequate reasoning, etc. – are rectified by a retinue of advisors, which only makes the absolutist rule perfect. When the sovereign turns out to be unduly severe, incompetent, disinterested, and thus causing disorder, etc., so much the worse for the subjects, since this is their fault, not the sovereign's. Such inadequacy of ruling should call the attention of the subjects to their own sins and cause the change of their sinful behavior. The sovereign, if he has any deficiencies, will answer for them before his Maker, not before his subjects. This is true on the societal level as well as on the individual level. Tatishchev warned his son by saying that if he incurs the wrath of the sovereign, he should consider that that is his, son's, fault and accept it with gratitude as a punishment sent by God (D 140).

Apparently, when it comes to theology on the political scene, it is trumped by politics, which, paradoxically, is given a theological justification, which basically, is summarized in the statement that a sovereign is appointed by God and he can do whatever he pleases. Any attempt to elevate ecclesiastical power over secular power should be squashed. The popes sought power over kings, and so did Nikon in Russia, but thankfully, he did not succeed, and Peter I closed such a possibility by creating

¹² A suggestion was made that Montesquieu, who spoke about republican (democracy and aristocracy), monarchical, and despotic systems, was influenced by Tatishchev, since he could have known about Tatishchev's ideas from Antiokh Kantemir, who played a role of the Russian ambassador in Paris, Daniels, *op. cit.*, 42.

the Synod (R 81/44). For this and other reasons, Tatishchev spoke about Peter I to the end of his days with the highest reverence¹³ In fact, this reverence, his obedience to all Russian sovereigns, and an the explanation of the existence of an evil or at least incompetent sovereign by blaming subjects, not the sovereign, cannot be otherwise explained as by Tatishchev's serious assent to theological underpinnings of the politics. The almighty God is just as present in the lives of individual people as He is in the lives of entire nations. This belief in the providential and loving God was a constant in Tatishchev's long and fruitful life.

Tatishchev attempted to reconcile traditional religious views with the new winds of science by claiming that principles of Christianity can be derived by reason from enlightened egoism, but in his own attempts to provide such derivations he was unsuccessful, even inept. He wanted to restrain the scope of revelation needed to justify Christian claims, but he did not get very far with it. He still believed in basic principles of Christianity – Christ's death as the avenue for salvation, the golden rule, the need for good works as the manifestation of the reality of Christian faith – even if he did not succeed in rationalizing them. To his dying breath Tatishchev was a faithful Orthodox believer¹⁴, even if at times somewhat unorthodox, and his criticism of Orthodox clergy was in the interest of purity and grandeur of Christian faith.

¹³ Here is a typical adulation: “The Russian expander of immortal fame and usefulness, Peter the Great, the true father of the fatherland”, whose “unexpected death [will be] remembered [by] entire Russia for centuries” (IR 2.8 note 243).

¹⁴ In 1886, Aleksandr Dmitriev published *An admonition of the dying father to his son* (Ал[ександр А.] Дмитриев, Предсмертное увещание В. Н. Татищева сыну, *Журнал Министерства народного просвещения* 1886, no. 4, 227–237), an admonition of Tatishchev to his son, Evgraf. Tatishchev's biographer, Nil Popov, stated that “generally, it does not contradict the character and convictions of Tatishchev” (Попов, *op. cit.*, 247 note 1), although Popov detected some inconsistencies which were promptly refuted by Dmitriev (Александр [А.], Дмитриев, В защиту “Предсмертного увещания В.Н. Татищева сыну,” *Исторический вестник* 26 (1886), no. 12, 668–670). Later authors usually ignored the “Admonition” Kuzmin dismissed it simply because “there was nothing Tatishchevian in it” (Кузьмин, *op. cit.*, 328). Valk rejected it because of “the puzzling mystery of [its] origin” and because of “cautious explanations of the one who wrote down the admonition” (С. Н. Валк, *О составе издания*, [in:] Татищев, *Собрание сочинений*, vol. 8, 20). The “Admonition” has very strong religious accents, unpalatable particularly for Soviet authors who did their best to present Tatishchev as a deist and almost an atheist. However, Popov's statement still stands: there is nothing contradictory in the “Admonition” to what Tatishchev said before and strong religious accents would be quite understandable when spoken by a religious man at the time of approaching death. The “Admonition” is used as a legitimate source by Daniels, *op. cit.*, 95–96 and was considered as such by В. А. Оборин, *Археографическая деятельность А. А. Дмитриева*, [in:] *Уральский археографический ежегодник за 1970 год*, Пермь 1970, 185.

TATISZCZEW I NIEZBĘDNOŚĆ TEOLOGII

Streszczenie

Tatishczew był zdolnym administratorem, lecz pamięta się go dziś głównie ze względu na monumentalną *Historię rosyjską*, wydaną dopiero po jego śmierci. Zalicza się go głównych przedstawicieli Oświecenia w Rosji. Choć uważał się za niekompetentnego w dziedzinie filozofii i teologii, rozważał zagadnienia teologiczne i filozoficzne w *Rozmowie dwóch przyjaciół o pożytku wiedzy i szkół*, w *Historii* oraz w *Testamencie*. Wierzył, że dusza jest doskonała i że ciało jest przeszkodą w ujawnianiu jej doskonałości, że wszystko, co Bóg stworzył, jest dobre, a zło płynie z nieumiarkowanego użytkowania tego, co stworzone. Wierzył w istnienie dwóch praw – naturalnego i objawionego – i próbował bez powodzenia obydwie prawa pogodzić. Podkreślał wagę edukacji jako drogi do porządnego życia, a podstawą edukacji miała być znajomość praw boskich, a więc teologia. Miał wielki respekt dla Piotra I i dla wszelkiej władzy, nawet niekompetentnej, co wynikało z jego przekonania, że wszelka władza pochodzi od Boga. Wyraża się w tym jego wiara w opatrnościowy wpływ Boga na losy poszczególnych ludzi i całych narodów, w czym zdecydowanie był przeciwnikiem deizmu.