

Adam Drozdek

Pittsburgh, Duquesne University

## FEDOR DMITRIEV-MAMONOV, THE NOBLEMAN-PHILOSOPHER

### Fiodor Dmitrijew-Mamonow, szlachcic filozof

STRESZCZENIE: Dmitrijew-Mamonow znany jest przede wszystkim jako autor opowiadania opisującego mieszkańców innych planet. Opowiadanie podejmuje kwestie dotyczące niepochlebnego obrazu duchowieństwa, heliocentryzmu i możliwości istnienia wielości światów. Dmitrijew-Mamonow jest także autorem *Kroniki* oraz wolnego tłumaczenia części *Psalterza*, w którym zawarte są niektóre z jego poglądów teologicznych.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Fiodor Dmitrijew Mamonow, szlachcic-filozof, prawosławie, *Psalterz*, astronomia

ABSTRACT: Dmitriev-Mamonov is primarily known for his story that describes inhabitants of other planets. The story contains some controversial elements including an unflattering image of the clergy, heliocentrism, and the possibility of multiplicity of worlds. He also authored a *Chronology* and a free translation of part of the *Psalter* in which he included some of his theological views.

KEYWORDS: Fedor Dmitriev-Mamonov, nobleman-philosopher, Orthodoxy, *Psalter*, astronomy

Fedor Ivanovich Dmitriev-Mamonov (1727-1805) was a military man who served in the army for some two decades and was released from duty in the rank of brigadier in 1770. After his release from service, he lived in Moscow and then for the last two decades of his life in his property in Baranovo near Smolensk.

### The story

Dmitriev-Mamonov is primarily known for his story with a rather uninformative title: *The Nobleman-Philosopher. An Allegory*, (*Дворянин философ. Аллегория*) which may also be considered to be just “allegory”, the nobleman-philosopher being its author all the more that he repeatedly signed his work and his translations as the nobleman-philosopher. The story has three parts: 1. a model of the Solar System; 2. listening to inhabitants of three planets and of a star; 3. refusal to accept a miraculous ring. The second part builds upon the first, but the third is rather independent of the two.

In the first part of the story a nobleman-philosopher with a lot of time on his hands created on his estate “a plan of the world”, an estate-wide model of the heliocentric system, since “he has always respected Copernicus’ system that agreed with the state of affairs (сходная с делом)”<sup>1</sup> (3)<sup>2</sup>. He put various inhabitants on five planets: swans on Saturn, cranes on Jupiter, beetles on Mars, Venus, and Mercury; he also put ants on Earth and the Moon (6).

In the second part of the story, he invited some guests to show off his showcase; when they admired his handiwork, he wished they could also “understand thoughts of these nations” (7), upon which a mysterious philosopher appeared wearing a coat with an image of the Sun and the Moon and a hat with an image of a dove with spread wings. The guest philosopher gave the guests a ring that allowed them to understand the speech of any creature. He caused the star Sirius represented by a small island on a lake on the estate to become populated by ostriches (8). He also stated that “philosophy is neither a sin nor is it contrary to the law” and the greatest philosopher was Solomon who praised wisdom in the Book of Wisdom 7:17-20 and 22-25 (11). As to the miraculous appearance of ostriches, he invoked some miraculous precedents. According to church tradition, St. Anthony of Rome was transported in 1106 on a stone through the sea from Rome to Novgorod; as the guest philosopher commented, this was truly a philosopher’s stone that was elevated above all hollow philosophy.

<sup>1</sup> With time, he proposed his own two versions of the planetary system. In the first version, Earth and the Sun have circular and overlapping orbits. In the second version, the orbits of the Sun are elliptical and non-overlapping; other planets circle around the area inside of which there are orbits of the Sun and Earth (a simplified diagram is in Figure 1), *Система Феодора Иоанновича Дмитриева Мамонова Дворянина-философа*, Баранов 1779.

<sup>2</sup> Page numbers are from the first edition: [Федор И. Дмитриев-Мамонов], *Дворянин философ. Аллегория*, in: [Жан] де ла Фонтен, *Любовь Психи и Купидона*, [Москва]: Печатана при Императорском Московском Университете 1769. Other editions: [Федор И. Дмитриев-Мамонов], *Дворянин философ. Аллегория*, Смоленск: Типография Приказа общественного призрения 1796; Ф[едор] И. Дмитриев-Мамонов, *Дворянин-философ (Аллегория)*, in: Л.Б. Светлов, *Русский антиклерикальный памфлет XVIII в.*, „Вопросы истории религии и атеизма” 1956, № 4, с. 399-412; a sanitized version: Ф[едор] И. Дмитриев-Мамонов, *Дворянин-философ. Аллегория*, in: *Смоленская земля в памятниках русской словесности*, т. 10: В[асилий] А. Лёвшин, Ф[едор] И. Дмитриев-Мамонов, *Избранное*, Смоленск: Маджента 2012, с. 235-243.

Also, St. Iliia/Joann of Novgorod flew on the back of a demon from Novgorod to Jerusalem and back; he had a spirit of wisdom and erected 7 churches in Novgorod. Moreover, apostle John wrote in the Book of Revelation about a book sealed with 7 seals and Solomon founded wisdom on 7 pillars [Prov. 9:1]. And so, “it is fitting that the true philosopher is a true saint/chosen (угодник) in [the eyes of] God.” The guest philosopher wanted to use parables, just as it is done in the Scriptures, to show “the incorrectness of some secular/worldly views” (12-13).

With the magical ring, the guests visited three planets and a star and heard their inhabitants’ conversations. The mock earth was inhabited by ants. All of them were ants-cattle of gray color, the enslaved workers, except for twelve of them that were black ants, who, judging by their appearance, were “judges or teachers” (14) “who in this world are the only rational creations and other ants are cattle”. One of the twelve had a speech to all ants. The ant reported its conversation with “the one who does not care more about anything than only about us ... who enlightens us from afar and who is no one else than also an ant, just like us”. This super-ant said, “my greatest joy is to live on your planet,” but if anyone offends me “I’ll eat your flesh and I’ll suck your blood. The great light,” the Sun, which is all gold, “I made not for myself and not for my enjoyment, but only so that you can have light”. Other celestial lights are just reflecting the sunlight. The super-ant also ordered the black ant to take annually from the ordinary ants “the tenth part” of their possessions to be promptly delivered to the super-ant. Also, for their happiness, the ordinary ants “should kiss your and your [eleven] colleagues’ behind (задница)” (15). In fact, the Sun “was created only for ants” so that they could see what they kiss (16), thereby assuring their happiness. The guests who heard the speech were appalled and called the ant a deceiver (16). But then, one ordinary ant had a speech and claimed that Earth and the Sun made themselves. Other celestial bodies were shining with their own light and there were around them worlds inhabited also by ants, some of them thousands of times larger than earthly ants. Ants found this speech disappointing since it did not offer the hope the speech of the black ant did; the ant was pronounced a heretic and it would end its life on the stake if it were not rescued by people watching it (17-18). The ants that witnessed the event, considered it to be a miracle by which the heretical ant “was taken alive to heaven” (19).

On Jupiter the guests heard cranes who “have no leader, they don’t labor and they have everything they need since they feed on what soil and water produce for them” (20). They considered their planet to be older than Earth (21). They bragged that they had wings and could get anywhere, even to the lord of the planetary system (20), i.e., the nobleman-philosopher, who “sees us, shines [upon us], gives [us] growth and life” (21) and who “is nothing like us” (22).

The swans on Saturn considered Jupiter to have been created “for laughs” because of its not perfectly spherical shape (23). About the ants from Earth they disdainfully said that, although unable to fly, they “want to prescribe the composition of all other worlds according to their own [ant-like] makeup”.

Ostriches on Sirius saw thousands of varieties of compositions of other worlds, “all of them” ahead of their own in some respects. For instance, ostriches cannot

hear (25). They also criticized “absurdities of the ants” concerning the ants’ ideas about the stars (26).

In the third part of the story, the guests returned to the house of their host, returned the ring to the guest philosopher who then wanted to give it for good to the host philosopher listing six advantages of owning the ring, all six being rejected by the host. 1. The ring would allow the host to extend his knowledge (27); a somewhat incongruous answer was that the ring did not give immortality. 2. The ring could extend one’s life tenfold; the answer: but thereby the fearful expectation of death would accordingly be prolonged. 3. The ring would open all treasures of Earth; the answer: riches would only be used “to bring the world to amazement”; “why should I step beyond the limits of my desires?” 4. “You will be the Pope” (28); the answer: out of jealousy, “a half of people would hate me”. Also, “I consider pride to be the most contemptuous vice. [Besides,] which Pope does not want a peaceful life; but he is devoid of it forever, since every time through his food and drink he exposes himself to death”. 5. The ring would allow the host to know his enemies; the answer: but it is better not to know it since it is easy to love people not knowing about their hatred (29). 6. Finally, the ring would give the host control over natural phenomena: thunder, rain, etc.; response: “of what use is for me to disturb the world? I am born with human, peaceful heart”. The guest thus gave up and disappeared with these parting words: “I am not a Philosopher; he is a Philosopher. ... There is no need to teach [him] wisdom. This Philosopher was born wise to this world” (29).

A faint precedent of using one’s house as the center of the Solar System can be found in the antiquity: “Numa built the temple of Vesta, where the perpetual fire was kept, of a circular form, not in imitation of the shape of the earth, believing Vesta to be the earth, but of the entire universe, at the center of which the Pythagoreans place the element of fire, and call it Vesta and Unit” (Plutarch, *Numa* 11.1)<sup>3</sup>. In a more recent example, in his description of the splendor of the Babylonian court Voltaire provided in *The Princess of Babylon*, an oval building was mentioned with a rotating ceiling on which there were representations of “all the constellations and the planets, each in its proper place” (the opening paragraph of chpt. 3). However, the book, *La princesse de Babilone*, was first published in 1768 and it is very unlikely that it reached Dmitriev-Mamonov before he published his own story in 1769.

The genre of science-fiction and a utopia was rather new in Russia and Dmitriev-Mamonov was certainly original in that respect, although he used some literary precedents from abroad<sup>4</sup>. He may have known Voltaire’s novella *Micromégas* (1752)

<sup>3</sup> Kheraskov did not mention any of it in his novel on Numa, although he did briefly describe the temple of Vesta, М[ихаил М.] Херасков, *Творения*, Москва: В Университетской Типографии 1796-1803, т. 12: *Нума Помпилий, или процветающий Рим* [1768], с. 12-13.

<sup>4</sup> Egorov saw in the allegory “a striking novelty,” but in the same breath he asked, “some strangeness in the description ... compels [us] to be alert: was he [Dmitriev-Mamonov] fully in the right mind?”, Б.Ф. Егоров, *Российские утопии: исторический путеводитель*, Санкт-Петербург: Искусство-СПБ 2007, с. 82.

the translation of which appeared in 1756 in “The Monthly Compositions” (“Ежемесячные сочинения”) journal<sup>5</sup>. However, there are very few connections between this story and his allegory. One is the idea of proportionality: large celestial bodies are inhabited by large inhabitants. However, the rather vague descriptions Voltaire provided would indicate that all inhabitants of Sirius and of Saturn looked much like oversized humans. Another possibly common element is the claim the earthlings made to gigantic visitors from space that the universe was created solely for the use of them, the earthlings. A similar claim was made by the allegory’s ants inhabiting Earth that the Sun was created only for the ants<sup>6</sup>. It seems, however, Fontenelle’s book *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds* affected Dmitriev-Mamonov more than Voltaire. Fontenelle claimed that other worlds, if inhabited, were inhabited by beings of different kind of humans and they could have vastly different physical and social makeup. He pointed to the bees whose social structure could also be found in other worlds<sup>7</sup>. However, his ruminations about the bees have been added in 1742 and were not included in the Russian translation. So, if Dmitriev-Mamonov knew them, he knew them from the French original. In any event, this may have been a cue to go all the way and use insects and birds as inhabitants of various worlds – and allegory being what it is – including Earth. Fontenelle also said that the distance of planets to the Sun influenced the character of their inhabitants (105-106/106-107, 130/132)<sup>8</sup>. Dmitriev-Mamonov’s ostriches observed that this distance influenced the inhabitants’ “makeup and sensitivity” (26-27). Moreover, Fontenelle referred to the Sun, if only tongue in cheek, as “the molten gold” (111/112) and the allegory’s ants in all seriousness claimed that the Sun was all gold (15-17).

There is also a somewhat curious reference to the Pope. The Pope was not the most powerful figure on the political European scene and by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century his power would be considerably diminished. It seems that the Pope stands in the allegory for Empress Catherine II and what was potentially offensive was a suggestion that half of population hated her, so Dmitriev-Mamonov disguised her in his allegory as a Pope. He apparently was on the side of haters and he was in a good company at that: many people hated the fact that a German princess was on the Russian throne. In four short years since the publication of the allegory this sentiment would violently erupt in the Pugachev rebellion.

<sup>5</sup> [Вольтер], *Микромегас*, „Ежемесячные сочинения” 1756, № 1, с. 31-61.

<sup>6</sup> It is, thus, at least an exaggeration to say that the allegory is “completely full of borrowings from Voltaire” as claimed by В.В. Сиповский, *Философские настроения и идеи в русском романе XVIII века*, „Журнал Министерства народного просвещения” 1905, № 5, с. 71, and it is also rather difficult to see how the allegory is “the *Micromégas* in reverse,” as claimed by V. Svyatlovskii, *Русский утопический роман*, Петербург: Государственное издательство 1922, с. 32; the phrase was repeated after Sipovskii, с. 72.

<sup>7</sup> B. de Fontenelle, *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes*, Paris: Librairie Marcel Didier 1966 [1686], pp. 98-101.

<sup>8</sup> Page numbers from the French publication of the *Entretiens* are followed by page numbers from Kantemir’s Russian translation, [Бернар де] Фонтенель, *Разговоры о множестве миров*, Санкт-Петербург: При Императорской Академии Наук 1761 [1740].

### Publication

The allegory was first published as an appendix in Dmitriev-Mamonov's translation of La Fontaine's story of Cupid and Psyche. La Fontaine couched the story in a meeting of four friends one of whom authored the story, read it to others, and sometimes they all discussed it. Dmitriev-Mamonov removed everything pertaining to these friends and their conversations and retained only the story. It is told in prose with occasional verse. The translator followed quite closely La Fontaine's text but included many small insertions and modifications.

One reason for publishing the allegory as an appendix could be purely commercial: a story published by an unknown author would have a much lesser chance to be sold than a popular story by a well-known author. Thus, attaching the allegory to the work of La Fontaine would increase a likelihood for a large readership.

Another possibility for using an appendix as a publishing venue could be that the allegory drew on La Fontaine's story, thereby constituting, as it were, its extension. However, the connection between the two is at best very tenuous.

In a side-story there was "the first Philosopher" (171/114)<sup>9</sup> of a royal court whom circumstances forced to live as an old fisherman in solitude with his grand-daughters. In one conversation with Psyche he stated that "The true greatness as to philosophers ... is to reign over oneself; and the true pleasure is to enjoy/analyze (*jouir de/разсуждать о*) oneself. This takes place in solitude" (177/121). If this did not inspire Dmitriev-Mamonov to fashion his own philosopher as a solitary figure living on his estate, it surely reinforced such representation. La Fontaine's fisherman-philosopher also advised Psyche, "Stay at least for a few days in this place. You'll be able to apply yourself to knowing yourself and to the study of wisdom" rendered as "for some time" "You'll have here time to know yourself better than in in any other place. Also, living rather simply, you'll have better way to learn wisdom" (170/114), which is pretty much the moral of answers to the guest philosopher from the allegory.

Ants, so important in Dmitriev-Mamonov's allegory, made only a brief appearance in La Fontaine's story as Psyche's helpers who separated four kinds of seed, a task given her by Venus (259/181). Swans also appeared fleetingly to help Psyche to cross a river to conclude another of her tasks (251/174). In sum, there is virtually no connection between Dmitriev-Mamonov's and La Fontaine's stories.

The third reason for publishing the allegory as an appendix could be to use La Fontaine as a vehicle to, almost literally, smuggle Dmitriev-Mamonov's own story because of possible objections of the censor. It worked the first time, but it did not the second time when the allegory was published separately<sup>10</sup>. There could be little doubt that some objections could be raised.

<sup>9</sup> A page number from J. de La Fontaine, *Les amours de Psyché et de Cupidon*, Paris: P. Didot l'Ainé 1797 [1669] is followed by a corresponding page number from the Russian translation.

<sup>10</sup> The 1796 edition was withdrawn from bookstores, [Петр К. Щебальский], *Историческая сведения о цензуре в России*, Санкт-Петербург: В Типографии Ф. Персона 1862, с. 6.

### Controversial elements

First are the twelve black ants. This appears to be an allusion to the Orthodox ecclesiastical system in which there are the so-called black priests from whom celibacy is required but who can advance to the highest posts of the church, and the white clergy who can marry, but can only occupy lower ranks in the church. The black ants, described as “judges or teachers,” appear to be no other but the top priests. After Peter I’s reform, the highest church office was the Synod. According to the 1721 *Spiritual Regulation* (*Духовный Регламент*), there should be eleven members of the Synod, but a year later an ober-procurator, a secular eye and ear of the tsar, was added, bringing the number to twelve. Over time, this number fluctuated. At the beginning of Catherine II’s reign, there were ten members to which six had been added<sup>11</sup>. Maybe number twelve was retained in the allegory out of special veneration Dmitriev-Mamonov had for Peter I that was quite often expressed in this age: he considered the tsar to be “the father of the fatherland, famous lawgiver” to whom “the great Alexander is no equal”<sup>12</sup>.

One of the twelve ants made pronouncements which sounded just like an outright trickery: claims were made about having a face-to-face conversation with the creator of this all, who was also an ant, but much bigger. This super-ant allegedly required all the gray enslaved ants to pay a tithe for the needs of the super-ant itself. In a statement that borders on bad taste, the super-ant dictated that the happiness of ants-workers lay in kissing the behind of the twelve black ants, a phrase used three times in the story<sup>13</sup>. However, when not taken literally, the phrase means sycophancy, trying to earn favors by flattery. Undoubtedly, this is often effective in any historical period in any society and, consequently, it does bring a measure of happiness to the flatterer.

Another controversial element is putting on equal footing the guest-philosopher’s miracle of populating Sirius with ostriches through his magic ring with Solomon’s wisdom and miracles ascribed to some revered figures from ecclesiastical history<sup>14</sup>. This may not have been an all-out attack against miracles but only against false miracles and against superstition. After all, Stefan Iavorskii in his staunch defense of miracles performed through the means of relics and icons admitted that false miracles do exist<sup>15</sup>. A 1716 ukase ordered priests to watch the attribution of false miracles to icons, which

<sup>11</sup> Т.В. Барсов, *Святейший Синод в его прошлом*, Санкт-Петербург: Товарищество “Печатня С.П. Яковлева” 1896, с. 260, 291-292.

<sup>12</sup> [Федор И. Дмитриев-Мамонов], *Слава России или собрание медалей дел Петра Великого и еще некоторые*, [Москва 1770], с. 2; Ф.И. Дмитриев-Мамонов, *Слава России или собрание медалей, означающих дела Петра Великого и другие некоторые*, Москва 1783, надпись VI.

<sup>13</sup> The phrase used in this context was too much for the most recent editor of the story and was excised from the published version, *Смоленская земля в памятниках русской словесности*, с. 238.

<sup>14</sup> Four pages of the original pertaining to this issue have also been excised from *Смоленская земля в памятниках русской словесности*, с. 238.

<sup>15</sup> Стефан Яворский, *Камень веры*, [Москва] 1728, с. 45.



ultimately undermined the authority of the church<sup>16</sup>. In the 1722 supplement to the *Spiritual Regulation*, priests were ordered to report false miracles. Archbishop Prokopovich praised Peter for his fight against superstition<sup>17</sup> and metropolitan Platon admitted that there could be some superstition and abuse in Russian church, but the church did not justify them<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, the guest philosopher was not an entirely positive character in the story. The way he was trying to sell to the host philosopher the advantages of possessing the magic ring indicates that he was ready to use these advantages himself and most likely did use them. Thus, his boastful speech about wisdom and philosophy could be considered a way of elevating himself over others by putting his wisdom on equal footing with Solomon's. Therefore, this part of the story can be read as the author's warning about those who make claims similar to the guest philosopher's; more than that, against those who elevate their own competence over Solomon's wisdom – and, one way or the other, the Age of Enlightenment was replete with just such claims, whereby it considered itself enlightened.

As to who the guest philosopher was, the signs on his coat and hat – the Sun, the Moon, and a dove, which were masonic symbols<sup>19</sup> – indicate that he was a masonic figure. There is an isolated report that Dmitriev-Mamonov was also a freemason – his name is included in a list of members of a masonic lodge from ca. 1756<sup>20</sup>; however, there is nothing known about his masonic activities. A rather negative image of the guest philosopher *vel* freemason would indicate that Dmitriev-Mamonov was not a member of the Craft in 1769 and that his masonic membership was probably a stage in his quest for spiritual fulfilment, the stage of disenchantment abandoned after seeing it as not very promising path to reach his goal. It would not be the only case of disappointment with Freemasonry: Karamzin abandoned Masons, because “he did not find there the goal that he expected [to find]”<sup>21</sup>. Elagin complained about finding in one lodge nothing but a clubby atmosphere, strange rites, silly events, obscure teachings contrary to reason, and “service that started for Minerva [but] ended as a holiday for Bacchus”<sup>22</sup>. Elagin, however, did not abandon Masonry but found for himself a more suitable brand.

<sup>16</sup> *Полное собрание законов Российской Империи*, Санкт-Петербург: Печатано в Типографии II Отделения Собственной Его Императорского Величества Канцелярии 1830, т. 5, #2985, §6.

<sup>17</sup> Феофан Прокопович, *Слова и речи поучительныя, похвальныя и поучительныя*, Санкт-Петербург: При Сухопутном Шляхетном Кадетском Корпусе 1761, с. 155, 161.

<sup>18</sup> Митрополит Платон, *Православное учение* [1765], [in:] *Поучительные слова*, Москва 1780, т. 7, 2. § 28а.

<sup>19</sup> В.И. Сахаров, *Иероглифы вольных каменщиков: масонство и русская литература XVIII-начала XIX века*, Москва: Жираф 2000, с. 17, 172; “the Sun and the Moon are considered in the lodge to be emblems of the Truth that was revealed to the first man”, according to one masonic manual, с. 177.

<sup>20</sup> М. Алсуфьев, *Донесение о масонах*, [in:] Н. Тихонравов (ed.), *Летописи русской литературы и древности*, Москва: в типографии Грачева, vol. 4, 1862, pt. 3, с. 51; Г.В. Вернадский, *Русское масонство в царствование Екатерины II*, Санкт-Петербург: Издательство имени Новикова 1999 [1917], с. 35.

<sup>21</sup> М.А. Дмитриев, *Мелочи из запаса моей памяти*, Москва: Грачев 1869, с. 58.

<sup>22</sup> И[ван] П. Елагин, *Повесть о себе самом*, „Русский архив” 1864, № 1, col. 100.



Yet another controversial element of the allegory is the heliocentrism and the claim of existence of life on other worlds, on the planets in the Solar System in particular.

In 1756, the Synod issued a decision that Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Man* translated in the Moscow University should not be published, since it contained many statements contrary to the Sacred Scripture. "Publishers of this book, not taking anything either from the Sacred Scripture nor from the laws of our Orthodox church, base all their opinions solely on natural concept adding to it the Copernican system and the view on the multiplicity of worlds which is entirely inconsistent with the Sacred Scripture". The same year, the Synod prohibited "to write and to print anything concerning the plurality of the worlds" and requested Fontenelle's *Conversations on the Plurality of Worlds* translated by Kantemir to be confiscated<sup>23</sup>. The next year, the Synod asked Empress Elizabeth to prohibit such kind of publications and confiscate Fontenelle's book<sup>24</sup>. Thus, when publishing his allegory in 1769, Dmitriev-Mamonov must have been well aware of the controversial character of the supposition that there are other inhabited worlds beyond Earth. Including his story in the publication of La Fontaine's book was one such precaution, another being the use an allegory format.

The official opposition to the claim of the existence of other civilizations to be considered contrary to the Scriptures could be turned on its head and could be presented as a proof of God's omnipotence and glory. In fact, even Russian ecclesiastics made a claim to that effect at about the time of Dmitriev-Mamonov's attempt to reissue his allegory: Ivan Kandorskii wrote, that God created stars "hanging on the celestial vault out of which each perhaps has the world similar to ours, similar inhabitants, similar beauty and splendor"<sup>25</sup> and Apollon Baibakov stated that if it is true that there are inhabited worlds like Earth, "how much should we wonder about the wisdom of the one who having created their innumerable amount rules over all of them"<sup>26</sup>? Such statements indicate that Dmitriev-Mamonov's allegorical claim that there was extraterrestrial life was not necessarily of an anti-religious character. In fact, when considering his other publications, he can hardly be suspected of harboring an anti-religious sentiment.

---

<sup>23</sup> Полное собрание постановлений и распоряжений по ведомству Православнаго Исповедания Российской империи, [second series:] Царствование государыни Императрицы Елизаветы Петровны, Санкт-Петербург: Синодальная типография 1899-1912, vol. 4, с. 1507, 1532; See also Т.В. Барсов, *О духовной цензуре в России*, „Христианское чтение” 1901, № 7, с. 111-112, 124-126.

<sup>24</sup> Доклад Святейшаго Синода Императрице Елисавете Петровне о книгах, противных вере и нравственности, „Чтения в Императорском Обществе Истории и Древностей Российских при Московском Университете” 1867, № 1, pt. 5, с. 7-8.

<sup>25</sup> Иван Михайлов [Кандорский], *Образование духа и сердца в непрестанном богомыслии*, Москва: В Университетской Типографии у Ридигера и Клаудия 1779, с. 140.

<sup>26</sup> Аполлос [Байбаков], *Евгеонит, или Созерцание в натуре дел Божиих видимых дел*, Москва: В Университетской Типографии, у Н. Новикова 1782, с. 78.

### *The Chronology (Хронология) and Psalter (Псалтирь)*

In 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia, it was artistically fashionable to try one's poetic craft on the Psalter. Virtually every poet did it, rendering in Russian some of the Psalms, and so did Dmitriev-Mamonov. He did not versify the entire Psalter but did more than most of other poets, 54 psalms out of 150, or 7 kathismas out of 20 into which *Psalter* is divided for the benefit of the Orthodox liturgy, thus, a third of the Psalter<sup>27</sup>. A versification of the entire Psalter was a rare feat – accomplished in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Simeon Polotskii and in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century by Vasilii Trediakovskii. Most of the Psalter was also translated by Aleksandr Sumarokov. However, the beautifully versified one-third of the *Psalter* of Dmitriev-Mamonov is artistically an equal of Polotskii's, Trediakovskii's and Sumarokov's accomplishments.

Dmitriev-Mamonov used various meters and rhyme patterns throughout *Psalter*; he was consistent in one respect: stanzas in the first kathisma have 4 verses, 5 verses in the next, etc., finally 10 verses in the last kathisma. At least these formal rules required that in many places verses were added and wording was modified in comparison with the original. He tried to be close to the spirit of the Slavonic version also with his own insertions, but, inevitably, they were, in a way, interpretations of the text that preceded or followed them. For example, his added verses say, blessed by God “is everyone, who with the right heart / lives in the bounty of God, / he creates everything with common sense, / he'll succeed in everything and will flourish” (1:25-28). After a fool denies that there is no God, it is added: “Look: fool [is] who doesn't know the One, / the One Who created the whole world! / Is this a small subject for anyone? / Blinded by such foolishness, / he doesn't look at any law, / his morals will be corrupted” (13[14]:3-5). God's power over creation is accentuated: “God in unchangeable law / set a limit to everything, / so as it is convenient to Him” (29[30]:33-35); “God of the world/light and the Creator, / who created the heaven and the earth, / You are the Father of the world” (40[41]:55-57); “O! my omnipotent God! / You are my God, living and existing, / You are stronger than anything in the world, / the goal of desire and of pleasure” (41[42]:6-9).

Some changes emphasize the rationality of humans: “He [God] inflamed my reason for justice / we'll submit to Him” (7:79-80/19). The ending, “how wonderful is your name in the world” (v. 9) is changed to “How rational is everything here! / How wonderful is your name! / We are both spirit and flesh” (8:49-51). Hence the pleading, “may I not fall into foolishness (безуме)” (21[22]:11). The omnipotence and omniscience of God is often emphasized: the call to praise “His dealings among the nations” (v. 11) is rendered as the call to praise the works which “His power generated [His works] in the world / and how the universe flourished” (9:59-60). “Who else is God but the Lord, who is a God save our God” (v. 31[32]) is rendered as “There is no God except for Him: / He is the supreme ruler of the universe, / our true God is one, / the Creator of

<sup>27</sup> Ф.И. Дмитриев-Мамонов, *Псалтирь, переложенная на оды*, Санкт-Петербург: Дмитрий Буланин 2006.

everything and of all fates” (17[18]:146-150). “God who gladdens my youth” (v. 4) became “This is my true God: / He cheers up my spirit. / Only He overcame me, / enflamed my reason with [His] light / and revives my youth” (42[43]:46-50).

These are all heartfelt, vivid images and clearly sincere statements made not just for a poetic effect. The most important in that respect are statements in the first person, pleading for salvation, for peace, for spiritual rest in God, in which we can hear more the voice of Dmitriev-Mamonov than of the Psalmist: “my soul will live for Him” (v. 30) was extended to “For Him the soul lives / and it should always strive / to deserve His mercy / to live eternally in happiness” (21[22]:201-204). After the Psalmist stated that he stretched his hands to the temple (v. 2), it is added, “I enslave my spirit with this building, / and for my salvation / I expect to find my hope in it. / Open the gate, splendid temple! / Oh, the beauty of all desires!” (27[28]:17-21). After “unto your hands do I commit my spirit” he added, “I breathe You here / and on You [like on food] will I live for ages” (30[31]:31-32). The Psalmist’s request to God to be refreshed before he dies is rendered as “allow me to live in quietness my age / and for me to be in peaceful calmness” (38[39]:97-98). In view of the fact that Catherine II considered him to be “outside common sense”<sup>28</sup>, or, to put it bluntly, a madman, very personally sounds the pleading expressed in added verses: “my enemies” say about me, “His heart does not know / about what he thinks and what he says, / he lost all of his mind / and does not recognize people” (40[41]:24, 33-36). At one point he modified the meaning and turned a negative tone about the impossibility of paying a price for one’s soul’s redemption to something positive: “I will open the meaning of the Psalter / the talk of hidden numbers / ... I write the truth and truth of things, / relying on my strength. / What reason blossomed in my thoughts, / I write without blushing. / I’m exalted above all others / by the richness of my reason. / If a brother cannot judge with [his] concept, / can any other help [him]? / Can anyone boast / he has for a price the knowledge of meaning? / ... Did anyone hear that the mind died? / The words and books remain. / Works which with great sound / spread to the ends of the universe / will remain from age to age” (48[49]:15-16, 21-30, 41-45). It seems like Dmitriev-Mamonov spoke here about himself and his literary legacy being not too shy of using a rather boastful tone.

Incidentally, he made rather passing remarks which are theologically puzzling. He said that “evildoers destroy justice / which God created (совершил)” (10[11]:16-17). As mentioned, he said that the soul should strive “to deserve His mercy (милость)” (21[22]:203). Can mercy be deserved? “The assembly of evildoers” (v. 5) is rendered as “the church of the cunning” (25[26]:20); the church of the cunning? In his imagery, the Hades/Hell is “without bottom where is frost and snow” (48:66). Is this the Hell of Dante<sup>29</sup>? Also, his poem on love, ends with an image of lovers in Paradise where

<sup>28</sup> A 1778 letter to Volkonskii, [in:] Петр Вартенев (ed.), *Оснадцатый век*, Москва: Типография Т. Рис 1868, т. 1, с. 152.

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that Rostovskii considered part of Hell to be cold which causes gnashing of teeth (Lk. 13:28) Димитрий Ростовский, *Проповеди и поучения*, Киев: Общество любителей православной

“Although they’re stripped of their body at the moment of death, / But the souls of all loyal hearts are conjoined”<sup>30</sup>. Apparently, the resurrection of the body was not envisioned in his eschatology.

It would be impossible to reconcile the ardent religious tone of *Psalter* that Dmitriev-Mamonov started in 1777 and wrote mainly in the 1790s with the supposedly anti-religious sentiment of his allegory that he tried to republish in 1796. The allegory was written by a believer in the all-powerful, providential God who created the grand universe that is possibly populated with life possibly of a different kind than what can be observed on Earth. This fact would only be a testimony to the majesty of God regardless of whether this fact agrees with all interpretations of the Scripture.

In the early 1780s, Dmitriev-Mamonov produced in the form of questions and answers *The Chronology* that is a synopsis of the world history beginning with the creation of the world. The historical events are culled from many sources, the Bible being one of them. Although he considered Europe to be “the most enlightened part of Earth” (1.[2])<sup>31</sup> and “we are enlightened by the light of reason”, whereby we laugh at the silliness of Greek myths ([4]), he ascribed a prominent place to the authority of the Bible by stating that “we, the Orthodox Christians, enlightened by the true faith”, laugh at the Chinese myths ([6]) and “we, enlightened by sacred writing of the Prophet Moses who saw God, know without a doubt and precisely how God created the world and we believe it” and we laugh at what Ovid wrote about it ([9]). History was divided into seven ages based on “the incontestable testimony of the Sacred scripture” (11). *The Chronology* begins with the account that “God created it [the world] only with His word which is nothing else than the action of His will.” He created the world out of nothing in six days, “the most perfect day” being the last when He created man (23). He created Eve from Adam’s rib. They ate a fruit from a prohibited tree (24), which was followed by their expulsion from the Paradise, and the need to work and to die (25).

The first volume of *The Chronology* is to a large extent the Biblical history; however, Dmitriev-Mamonov was not afraid to add extra-Biblical elements. For example, Cain was killed by Lamech who took him for a wild animal. Cain’s children, “children of man,” were evil, unlike Seth’s “children of God” (26). Ham laughed at Noah and was cursed (31); technically, Ham’s son, Canaan, was cursed. The stone that

---

литературы. Издательство имени святителя Льва, папы Римского 2005, р. 158; cf. Стефан Яворский, *Проповеди*, Москва: Синодальная типография 1804-1805, т. 1, с. 149.

<sup>30</sup> [Федор И. Дмитриев-Мамонов], *Поэма Любовь*, [Москва]: Печатана при Императорском Московском Университете 1771, с. 60.

<sup>31</sup> [Федор И. Дмитриев-Мамонов], *Хронология, переведенная тццианием сочинителя философа-дворянина из науки, которую сочинил де Шевиньёи, дополнил де Лимиер, для учения придворным, военным и статским знатным особам, с прибавлением к тому Китайской Хронологии, подражая Лексикону Г. Морера, и Российской Хронологии, подражая сокращенной Российской Истории Г. Ломоносова, начальным седми книгам Г. Эмина и Несторовой летописи*, Москва: В Университетской Типографии, у Н. Новикова 1782, т. 1-2.

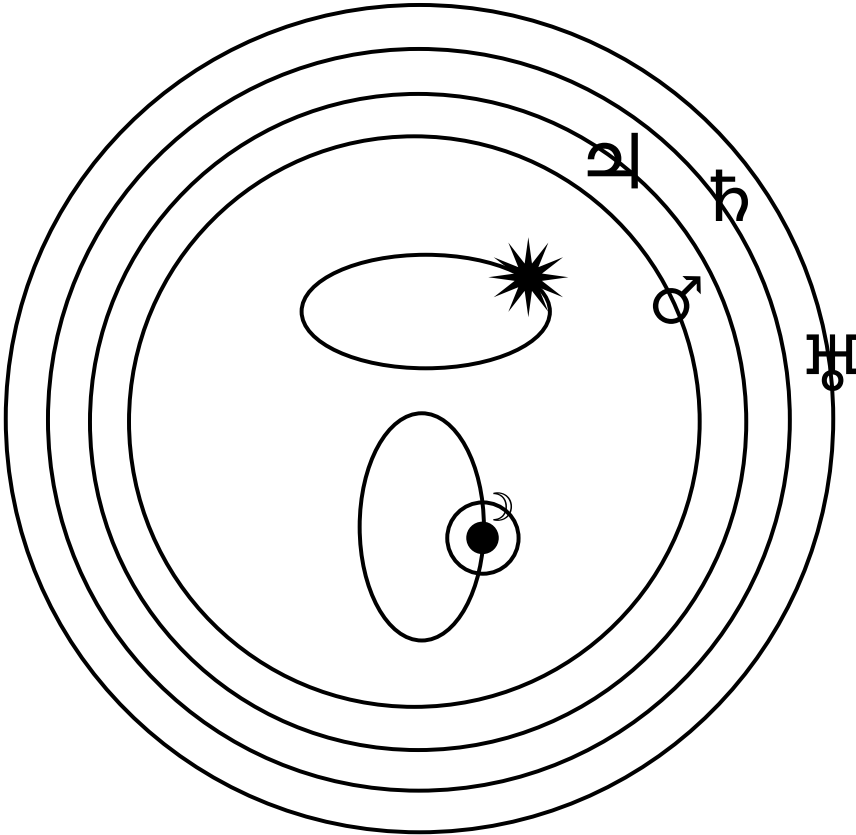
destroyed the statue from Nebuchadnezzar's dream was Christ (34). Hebrew was the common language before the tower of Babel (35). Particularly for the Biblical history, he did not speak about events factually: "this happened, that happened," but in a providential way; for example, God gave strength to Samson (65); God showed His power on Bethshemites (66); God ordered Samuel to appoint Saul as the king (67); God then elected David; "God filled David with his Spirit" (68). When consecrating the temple, "all [people] felt the presence of God" (75). When Alexander wanted to destroy the Jews, "God changed his heart" when Alexander met the high priest Jaddua (111). God warned Joseph and he fled with Mary and Jesus to Egypt (2.5). "Jesus Christ himself appeared" to Constantine (13).

Always an admirer of Peter I, Dmitriev-Mamonov considered him to be "of sharp and perspicuous mind" (2.144), true father of the fatherland; all people should be thankful to him (145). Probably for this reason, he did not consider the end of the patriarchate to be much of an event and thus the death of the last Russian patriarch Adrian was not even mentioned (170) and there is only a curt mention that "the Most Holy Synod" was established in 1721 (246). On the other hand, he reiterated that "no other century was so rich with learned people in Europe as the one in which we live." Importantly, among "the famous people" of the age he mentioned Fontenelle who "was of good and profound reason and [one] of the best and most honest writers" (232); Voltaire did not make it to the list, although he was mentioned elsewhere as a historian (1.21). As the summarizing statement of his sentiment concerning historiography is his pronouncement that the science of his age "can perfectly teach us that there is Divine providence that rules over everything autocratically, looking at the arising events taking place in the Governments and Empires of the world most of which had been prophesized by Prophets and to teach Kings not to place all their glory in expanding their dominions because they can be changed in the twinkle of the eye and become the spoils of barbarians and foreigners" (2.243).

All this clearly shows Dmitriev-Mamonov's strong belief in God's providential presence in human history and in Russian history in particular. The same sentiment can be found in his unfinished and unpublished versification of Russian history<sup>32</sup>.

In sum, Dmitriev-Mamonov had some ideas about what a philosopher should be, as delineated in the third part of the allegory but had a tough time to apply that to himself. The second part, however, contains the criticism of ecclesiastics of his times, but that was not unusual even among ecclesiastics themselves who lamented over the poor level of education among the clergy. In particular, he mocked the way God was sometimes viewed, even among the clergy, i.e., he criticized an anthropomorphic (or ant-morphic) representation of God, but his allegory was not in any way an anti-religious satire. Throughout his life he consistently remained a believer in God present in his life and the lives of others even though he did not quite live up to the way he understood God would like him to.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. В.И. Сахаров, *Иероглифы вольных каменщиков...*, с. 64.



**Figure 1: Dmitriev-Mamonov's planetary system.**

### NOTE ON THE AUTHOR

**Adam Drozdek** – associate professor, Duquesne University, Pittsburgh, USA.

Publications: *Athanasia: afterlife in Greek philosophy*, Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag 2011; with Katarzyna Peoples, *Using the Socratic method in counseling: a guide to channeling inborn knowledge*, New York: Routledge 2018.

ORCID: 0000-0001-8639-2727

drozdek@duq.edu