

Adam Drozdek  
Duquesne University, Pittsburgh

## Pososhkov's narrow path

Ivan Pososhkov was born in the family of craftsmen, silversmiths, in the vicinity of Moscow in 1652.<sup>1</sup> Nothing is known about his education. In 1671 he lived in Moscow as a townsman performing some work for the tsar's household. In the early 1690s, he was involved in some commercial activities in Moscow, designed and built a coining press for the Andreevskii monastery and worked in the Moscow Mint. He tried unsuccessfully to establish some small businesses (mining natural dyes, oil, and sulfur, producing playing cards), worked for a Moscow distillery, then moved to Novgorod where he built a distillery and fountains, printed letterhead paper, but then became a merchant. He was doing financially so well that he was able to buy two estates in St. Petersburg and two in Novgorod.

Pososhkov was an autodidact with a wide range of interests. He was a compulsive reformer seeing deficiencies in all areas of economy, religion, education, etc. and believing that he had solutions for all of them. He put many proposals on paper and was not shy to submit them even to the tsar.

Not all Pososhkov's works survived. He wrote three works about money reform (1700, 1708, 1718), a project about conducting wars (1701), and three letters to Stefan Iavorskii (1704, 1708, 1710) about improving the educational and spiritual level of the clergy. His major works are three books. In 1709, he wrote *The Evident Mirror*, which is his vehement attack on heresy. In 1719, he authored *The Paternal Testament*, which provides spiritual advices for all possible paths of life: for a beggar, a merchant, soldier, etc. In 1724 he finished writing the book for which he is primarily known, *The Book on Poverty and Wealth*, in which he discussed many social, political, and economic problems of his times and proposed some solutions. All three books were published well over a century after his death (in 1863/1893, 1873, and 1842, respectively).

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<sup>1</sup> Craftsmen were counted as peasants so that even he introduced himself in letters to Iavorskii as a peasant (P 1427, 1442).

In 1725, Pososhkov was interrogated on account of “a very important criminal matter” and arrested because of “an important, secret matter of the state,”<sup>2</sup> but very likely because of some of his unconventional views expressed in *The Book on Poverty and Wealth*<sup>3</sup> and the next year he died in the Petropavlovsk fortress at the age of 74.

## The schismatics and the Lutherans

Pososhkov saw two dangers for the church, from the inside coming from schismatics, and from the outside, coming from the Protestants, particularly, the Lutherans. He attacked heretical teachings primarily in *The Evident Mirror*, the largest of his works. Actually, there are two versions of this work. The full version (*Зеркало очевидное*) is three times longer than the shortened version (*Зеркало на раскольников обличение*), the latter being one known at first, published in 1863, the publication of the full version followed after thirty years.

*The Mirror* is directed against the errors of the schismatics. The title, *The Mirror*, refers to the hope that the schismatic reader can see in this work, like in a mirror, his errors, and, hopefully, abandon his erroneous ways by turning back to the Orthodoxy. There was no doubt in Pososhkov’s mind that the Eastern Orthodox church holds the truth, and only through this church is salvation possible.

The schismatics are guilty of blaspheming the Holy Spirit, which means that they “do not believe that He is active in the holy church,” they do not recognize the baptism in the church, they deny that the repentance before the priest cleanses one from sin, and they say that the Eucharist is not holy (Z 1.55).<sup>4</sup> Schismatics say that the church is dead and Christ lives in people, “most prominently, in their schismatic bellies” (Z 1.132). They consider themselves to be saints, calling themselves priests, temples, spiritual fathers, and calling the Orthodox churches sties (Z 1.135). They prohibit reading newly published books and venerating newly painted icons (Z 1.357), although the quality and the age of an icon are unimportant, but only what it represents (ZO 90–91). Some of them are not ashamed to live incestuously with their kin (Z 1.315) pointing to Adam’s children (Z 1.316). In the baptismal formula ‘amen’ is used four times. Schismatics use it only once and perform baptism again, thereby proving that they are characterized by unspeakable mindlessness and are stupider than cattle and that they crucify Christ again (Z 2.1.27).

<sup>2</sup> Б. Б. Кафенгауз, *И. Т. Посошков: жизнь и деятельность*, Москва 1951, р. 138, 139, 199.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, р. 141–142.

<sup>4</sup> The following abbreviations of Pososhkov’s works will be used: К – *Книга о скудости и богатстве и другие сочинения*, Москва 1951; after the slash, the reference is to the English translation, *The Book of Poverty and Wealth*, London 1987; P – Три письма Посошкова к митрополиту Стефану Яворскому, „Известия Отделения русского языка и словесности Императорской Академии Наук” 4 : 1899, no. 4, 1413–1457; Z – *Зеркало очевидное*, Казань, vol. 1, 1895, vol. 2, pt. 1, 1900, vol. 2, pt. 2 (*О иконоборцах*), 1905; ZO – *Завещание отеческое*, Санкт Петербург 1893.

One point of disagreement is the shape of the cross that should be retained as a symbol of Christianity and an object of reverence. The schismatics rejected the 4-pointed cross and called it the Antichrist's seal (Z 1.84). In their view, the true Christian cross is 8-pointed, since the inscription above the head and the support for feet should be considered parts of Christ's cross. They trample on the 4-pointed cross and even throw it into "waste, into vile, human excrement" (Z 1.87). For Pososhkov, it was a blasphemy to desecrate the cross, 4-pointed or 8-pointed (Z 1.89) since there is only one cross (Z 1.91). He even went as far as allowing any number of points and mentioned 3-, 4-, 5-, 6-, 7-, and 8-pointed crosses as a possible candidates (Z 1.95, 103).<sup>5</sup>

Schismatics claim that those crossing themselves with three fingers will be lost and that crossing oneself with two fingers saves (Z 2.1.70), but neither crossing oneself with two nor with three fingers saves, argued Pososhkov; the way of crossing oneself is not a dogma, but a Christian custom (Z 2.1.73), and yet, in his view, the two-finger crossing should not be tolerated since it is the beginning of heresy (Z 2.1.91). The two-finger crossing should be eradicated since the schismatics consider it to be a dogma. Also, if admonitions of the clergy are not sufficient, then people making the sign of the cross with two fingers should be given to the city court and treated without mercy (Z 2.1.83). True, it does not matter whether someone crosses oneself with two, three, four, or all fingers, since God will not ask about it in the last judgment, but "on account of agreement with the Orthodox Christians it is proper to cross oneself the same way, so that there is no disagreement among Christians, but there should be one faith among all" (Z 2.1.85).

In Pososhkov's view, since schismatics are blasphemers and since blasphemy is the greatest sin (Z 1.42), they work for satan and his son, the antichrist (Z 1.48), and the only advice for true believers is to flee all blasphemers like a snake and to have nothing to do with them (Z 1.40). Schismatics "should be despised more than dead and rotten dog" (Z 1.286) since they are worse than mindless cattle (Z 1.327). And yet there is a chance for at least some of them. Schismatics can reconvert; even Pososhkov's own sister Anna was a schismatic, but rejected the heresy (Z 2.1.51). Presumably, only those schismatics can be saved who are not too far gone, who were duped into heresy without heartfelt acceptance of it. There is hope for those who turn away from God and became schismatics because of their lack of understanding (неразумие) or simplemindedness (простоумие) or ignorance (неведение), but those who did that by their free will (произволение) bear the seal of devil (Z 1.90). That is, for those who serve the devil willingly, it is too late; they are sealed with the seal

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<sup>5</sup> Somewhat incongruously, he also stated that if one point is removed from the 4-pointed cross, then it should not be called a cross any longer; similarly, when one point is added do the 4-pointed cross, then the result should not be called a cross, either (Z 1.117).

of the Antichrist (Z 1.337).<sup>6</sup> Those who do not go to confession, do not participate in the Lord's supper, not out of fear of other schismatics, but out of conviction, even if they repent, should not be believed and should be burned (ZO 280). Generally, schismatics should be burned or hanged naked high on a chain so that birds can tear them up (304). When burned, even their bones should be destroyed so that they would not be used as relics (194–195). Schismatics should not be buried, but given to the dogs. If a priest buries a schismatic, and an informant tells about it, all the goods of the priest should be given to the informant (ZO 293; P 1456). Leniency is the primary cause of the spreading of heresy. If a schismatic is buried, the body should be dug out and thrown to the dogs, and the priest who allowed the burial should go to prison and then be burned. If schismatics bury their dead somewhere, then knowing about the death, the priest should call on them and ask where they buried their relative; if they refuse to say, all of them should be burned (ZO 294). The priest should visit all households in his parish with servants, search all rooms, break in when need be, search for schismatic literature, for old books only, and check how they cross themselves. He should burn schismatics quickly, not keeping them for more than three days. If a schismatic is contrite, he should be branded on the forehead and on both hands (310–311). Priests who hide schismatics are also eternally lost (Z 1.189), and they should be defrocked and burned (ZO 282). Also a priest who called a schismatic his spiritual son and took a confession from him should be burned (293) or, euphemistically, should be given to “fiery salvation” (P 1456). Such drastic measures would, in Pososhkov's mind, allow the removal of heresy in one year, whereas just by teaching even twenty years are not enough since Russian people are uncouth and unlearned. Mercy on a schismatic teacher means deadly sin before God (ZO 311).

The punishment of schismatics envisioned by Pososhkov is exceedingly harsh. Although the death sentence was on the books in eighteenth century Russia,<sup>7</sup> Pososhkov seems to relish on meting it out left and right in the name of swift efficiency. Therefore, seeing *The Mirror* as merely an expression of “the holy indignation on all the schismatics”<sup>8</sup> is turning the blind eye on Pososhkov's cruel streak. He certainly

<sup>6</sup> In this, Pososhkov used apocalyptic idea of schismatics that the seal of the Antichrist was already to be found in Russia: among the schismatics, according to Pososhkov, among the Orthodox, according to the schismatics. Cf. А. Царевский, *Посошков и его сочинения*, Москва 1883, p. 133.

<sup>7</sup> According to the Code of 1649, blasphemy was punished by burning. The Articles of War 1716 punished blasphemy against God by piercing the tongue with a red-hot iron followed by beheading, the blasphemy against the Mother of God and the saints by cutting off the tongue or by death, L. R. Lewitter, *Notes* (K 393 note 17). When the *Spiritual regulation* spoke about sentences exacted for blasphemy or protecting schismatics by secular courts, and existing regulations, apparently the Code was meant, J. Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great*, Stanford 1971, p. 192.

<sup>8</sup> Л. И. Зайцева, *Россия державная. Первый русский экономист и мыслитель – Иван Тихонович Посошков*, Москва 1995, p. 13.

is far from heeding his own advice given to his son: "Be merciful to all people" since "there is nothing more pleasing to God than mercy" (ZO 16).<sup>9</sup>

Lutheranism is another source of dangerous doctrines. To Pososhkov, the Lutherans are double heretics, since they are a heresy of the already heretical Catholic church. As such, they attract great deal of venom from him.

What particularly irked Pososhkov was the fact that Luther ceased to be a monk and took a nun as his wife, thereby acting like a dog returning to its vomit (Z 2.2.60). It is impossible for a foul man to be a pure lawgiver, and since Luther fell into lawlessness, so his teaching is lawless (Z 2.2.62). In Pososhkov's assessment, the source of Lutheranism is worldliness of Luther and his adherents. They secularize the church by simplifying it to the extreme, making the church easy, and bring worldly elements into the church. Adherents of Lutheranism like pleasures, they are the weakest people, and people not of Christian, but of a worldly mind; they do not worry about salvation of their souls and want to enter the Kingdom of God by the wide road (Z 2.2.11). They eat, drink, and are merry. However, from pleasures and over-satiation there is only perdition; from restraint there is both temporal and eternal salvation. Luther rejected any fasting and taught people to live like mindless cattle and eat meat, like Mordvians (Z 2.2.16; K 134, 266), that is, like savages.<sup>10</sup> In the Gospels there is no statement that people should not fast and eat, like swine, meat every day the way Lutherans do. No evangelist even wrote about eating meat. The evangelical way is not eating meat at all, only fish and other fasting time foods, since, according to Pososhkov's inscrutable insight, Christ did not eat meat nor milk, but only fish (Z 2.2.17, 2.2.158). Lutherans eat blood (Z 2.2.61; ZO 28), which only shows that they "live like dumb cattle and consider nothing as a sin, but everything is clean to them, like to a swine" (ZO 113). Christ presumably prohibited under punishment of death to have aromatic things and yet the Lutherans use perfumes; they also wear wigs during church service, although man should have nothing on his

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<sup>9</sup> In his "extremely severe" treatment of the schismatics Pososhkov "forgets his evangelical morals" (Н. П. Павлов-Сильванский, *И. Тихонович Посошков*, in his *Сочинения*, Санкт Петербург 1910, vol. 2, p. 57). Such "severe measures against schismatics" are attributed to "the severity of morals of the times" (И. С. Ремезов, *Московский Крестьянин-Мыслитель Иван Тихонович Посошков*, in his *Материалы для истории народного просвещения в России*, Санкт Петербург 1886, p. 16). "It is difficult for us to see things from the point of view of the people of that age, we can only think that passions among the Orthodox and the schismatics were inflamed so much that they forgot about the most important commandment – to love thy neighbor" (И. С. Беляев, *Крестьянин-писатель начала XVIII века И. Т. Посошков. Его жизнь и деятельность*, "Общество Ревнителее Русского Исторического Просвещения" 16 : 1902, p. 74); this includes Pososhkov in whose statements we hear "severe harshness and mercilessness toward those who violated dear to the heart and mind of the Russian man firm foundations, such as faith, life, and property rights" (p. 73). The statement that Pososhkov's "tone of admonition and conviction is generally peace-loving and friendly" goes beyond an exaggeration (А. Царевский, *Посошков и его сочинения*, p. 140).

<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Pososhkov considered the Pharisees as models of exemplary fasting (ZO 113–114). Cf. А. Г. Брикнер, *Мнения Посошкова о религии и церкви*, "Русский вестник" 135 : 1878, p. 475.

head (Z 2.2.64; ZO 123). The Lutherans sit during service, like Jews, and have hats on; pastors conduct services without bowing, kneeling, and taking no trouble with any liturgical elements (Z 2.2.109). The Lutherans do not bow and sit during service out of pride and laziness, but in the evening they are not lazy, since they dance and then sleep until noon (ZO 78–79). Lutherans are merry too much, but Christ blesses those who cry here and punishes those who laugh (Z 2.2.21).

Pososhov's verdict is predictably cruel: if people around Luther had any sense, they would burn him along with his writings (Z 2.2.10, 95; ZO 39) according to Mt 7 : 29 (ZO 38) at the same time getting rid of Luther who "wallowed in lustful smut like a swine in excrement" (Z 139) and of the Lutheran excrement (Z 2.2.26), i.e., the Lutheran teaching. However, by clinging to the latter they only prove that they should not even be called human, but swine (K 134).

What Pososhkov criticized was some caricature of Lutheranism. Attributing its origin to the lustful desire of having a good time with some smudge of religiosity simply shows how little Pososhkov knew about the history of the church in the West. Just like Pososhkov, Luther wanted to reform the church, and thus in his main goal of rejuvenating the church Pososhkov was closer to Luther than he might have wanted to be. In the matter of fasting, Luther was not at all opposed to the idea itself, but he was concerned about the spiritual meaning of it – just like Pososhkov. Thus, Luther wrote that fasting should not be done "according to the character or quantity of the food, or according to the days, but according to the withdrawal or approach of the lust and wantonness of the flesh" (*A treatise on good works*, The third commandment 19). Pososhkov heard from a colonel that the Lutherans do not wash after nocturnal emission (ZO 27) and after intercourse (Z 2.2.61), which was an infraction to which he repeatedly returned (Z 2.2.64, 2.2.139, 2.2.161; ZO 25, 33, 38, 113). True, Paul did not write about washing after intercourse, but it was because it was obvious to the Jews (ZO 27, 30). It is unclear why Pososhkov insisted on retaining this particular Old Testament rule. Pososhkov rejected the heliocentric system of the damned heretic Copernicus, but he erroneously considered Lutherans as supporters of Copernicanism (ZO 129).<sup>11</sup> However, for Luther, Copernicus was "the fool who wants to overturn the entire art of astronomy" (*Tischreden* 70). Also, it was really quite absurd to accuse Lutherans of worshiping Greek gods (Z 2.2.167, 2.2.174).

The Catholic church is of course considered heretical for an Orthodox believer, but Pososhkov made only passing references to Catholicism pointing only to the pope's authority as the doctrine disagreeable to the Orthodoxy. Nowhere did he allude to the *Filioque* controversy. In his disinterest in Catholicism, Pososhkov followed in the footsteps of Stefan Iavorskii, who also was concerned only about suppressing the Protestant heresy. That was starkly different from Prokopovich,

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. Л. А. Петров, *Общественно-политическая и философская мысль России первой половины XVIII века*, Иркутск 1974, p. 248–249.

who, having a soft spot for Protestantism, fought Catholicism in his writings. Interestingly, whereas Pososhkov did not say one positive thing about the schismatics and Protestants, he gave one commendation to the Catholic church. In his opinion, it should be commended for its missionary zeal by preaching the Word of God in the farthest corners of the world; when a missionary died with a martyr's death, he was promptly replaced by another missionary. In that respect, the Eastern church should be ashamed: it has the right faith, but its actions concerning salvation of people are not quite right. "The Romans, although not right in their faith, in this [missionary work] they are more right that we are and gain great benefit for themselves since they turn [people] from idolatry to Christ" (ZO 324); in this statement Pososhkov admitted that by preaching the Word of God and proclaiming Christ to the nations they are not altogether wrong in their faith.

How should one deal with heresy? One way is by punishment, and there is no shortage of that in Pososhkov.

Another way is the missionary work among non-Christian nationalities that should be conducted to convert them to the Orthodox faith and thus prevent heresy. To accomplish it, it should be prohibited to use native languages by linguistic minorities (ZO 322). "Until their languages are not expunged, they cannot be perfect Christians" since they will not understand anything in the church (ZO 326). If children do not know Russian, they should be taken away from their parents, so they can learn Russian and follow the liturgy (ZO 323; K 172/313). Mercifully, Pososhkov also thought about translating liturgy into the languages of non-Russian nations of the empire, but, in the name of efficiency, only when a nation is sufficiently populous, such as Tatars (ZO 326). Otherwise, the Russification should become part of conversion. As an added incentive the tsar should cut the taxes in half for 10 years or less to those members of minorities who want to be baptized and severely punish those members of the tribe who rebuke them. However, such converts apparently will not be equal to Russian believers, since they should wear circles sawn on their cloth (ZO 325).

Another way of dealing with heresy is by prevention, which should be done at the same time on two levels: on the church level by adequately preparing the clergy for the task, and on an individual level by instilling in people the proper level of personal piety.

## The clergy

Pososhkov addressed the problem of the proper level of preparedness of the clergy in his three letters to Stefan Iavorskii, in the first chapter of *The Book on Poverty and Wealth*, and in *The Testament*.

"There is in the world nothing greater than priestly rank, since they have in themselves the image of Christ and God Himself elevated them and gave them the authority that He Himself has" so that they can forgive sins (Jn 20 : 23) and bind

thing on earth (Mt 23 : 18) (Z 1.161). “The clergy [is] the pillar and the bulwark of all piety and all human salvation, since without it in no wise any man can reach the Kingdom of Heaven. They are our pastors, our fathers, our leaders” (K 15/155). “Priests should be the support of all piety and the helmet against heresy and the defense against the infernal wolfs and should pull the people of God away from the gates of perdition. Priests should be like apostles of Christ, so that they do not worry about their health, riches, or their food, but about the salvation of human souls, otherwise God will punish them for all the lost [souls]” (K 22/167). The reality, however, is terrifyingly different from the ideal. The priests frequently do not even know all the fundamental tenets of the Orthodox faith, and there are some who do not know liturgy (25/268; P 1441). The reason is the shortage of books so that priests learn how to conduct the service by observing other priests (K 26/268). Priests also behave in an unbecoming way. Drunkenness was a common problem. A drunk priest who was caught swearing and fighting should be punished by work on a church estate and then fined or even defrocked. Total abstinence is not enforced: when a priest just happens to get drunk, he should not be seen by anyone and should sleep it off in a secluded place. A priest or a monk who gets drunk in a tavern deserves a double punishment (32/172). People see it and dislike it and turn away from the church, do not attend services so that churches are practically empty (21/166) and, worse yet, they turn away from the Orthodox faith and turn to the schismatics or to Protestantism or Catholicism (21/166), since the priests themselves also turn to these faiths because of their ignorance (22/166). This results from the fact that even some priests who live in town “do not quite know in what [consists] sin and in what salvation,” and thus they do not bring people to repentance who, consequently, perish in ignorance (K 38/176).

The church is in danger since many fell victim to heresy. It is all due to ignorance of the clergy unable to defend themselves from heretics (K 22/166). Therefore, schools should be established to teach all children of all clergy and supporting church stuff (24/167). The school instruction should include grammar, rhetoric, philosophy (K 24/167; P 1431), liturgy, and theology. Readings in school should include the Bible, liturgy books, selections from the Church fathers, Biblical commentaries, lives of the saints, Stefan Iavorskii’s *The Rock of Faith*, and even Pososhkov’s own *The Evident Mirror* should be studied (K 27/169; ZO 285). No candidate for priesthood should be accepted for ordination without a proof of his literacy in the church matters (K 30/171). Those who are “unreceptive to learning” but pious should become staff in the church, and those whose behavior was not up to par should be directed to secular jobs (K 31/172; ZO 289–290; P 1433–1434).

The country priests spend most of their time working on their land to make their living, even on Sundays. “Living with such a hustle-and-bustle they not only do not tend the flock of Christ, but they do not even tend to themselves” (K 38/176). Because of their occupation with their work, “many Christians die not only without

an honor of receiving the body of Christ, but also deprive themselves of repentance and die like cattle" (34–35/174). Country priests are country people and do not fully realize the burden concerning the salvation of souls God put on them (35/175). The clergy should occupy themselves with their spiritual duties full time; therefore, they should not work on their fields, but peasants should do that for them and a tenth of their harvest should be designated for priests (34/173).<sup>12</sup>

Priests should dress properly, particularly during the service. Clothes should be always clean, even the undergarment (K 40/177–178). Also, their duties should be executed conscientiously: the liturgy should be minutely followed, the hymns sung in their entirety, and no words should be changed. The sermon should be done "by the natural reason," with simple words that all can understand (ZO 229). A confession should not only be an occasion for a penitent to confess sins, but also for the priest to teach the penitent about how to pray, how to venerate icons, how to live in peace with others, and how to bring up children (K 33/173). Only when priests live exemplary lives, is there hope for Russia, since their example will emanate to all people. "When it is an order among the clergy, so in the entire nation the light of prudence will shine, since all people will wake up like from sleep because of strong and diligent care of their spiritual fathers, since all would simply understand, how to know God, how to pray to Him, how to honor His saints, how to call on them for help, and how to live their entire Christian life" (33/173).

## Personal piety

*The Testament* delineates Pososhkov's vision of the place of piety in the personal life of every person regardless of the age and profession. The instructions are at times very detailed and exacting as fitting the narrow path envisioned by Pososhkov for every person.

An overarching principle on the narrow path to salvation is avoidance of pleasures: "All affairs in this world that bring pleasure to man lead only to perdition, and not only affairs, but things which bring pleasure to human sight, hearing of ears, smell of nose, or human taste." A softer phrasing of this principle states that "all affairs and things bringing pleasure to man are a hurdle to the path of salvation" (Z 12). However, maybe Pososhkov should have considered the words of Gregory of Nyssa: "this is an instance of that extreme narrow-mindedness which is the mark of those who judge of moral good and moral evil by mere sensation" since "to make pains and pleasures the criterion of what is morally good [...] is a characteristic of the unreasoning nature" (*The Great Catechism* 8).

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<sup>12</sup> Later Sumarokov expressed an idea in utopian article, *A Dream: Happy Society* (1759), that the clergy should not worry about maintaining their household, since society takes care for their needs.

A boy should not allow anyone to touch his private parts nor buttocks, should not allow anyone to kiss him nor take money for it (ZO 8). He should watch his language and should not swear (9). He ought not insult anyone. Because the beginning of sin is from a woman, he must not fall in women's net, must stay away from them, and not kiss them since "in carnal kissing great wanton venom is hidden"; he should not even talk with them alone (9–10). In case of committing a sin, the boy should go to the priest for confession and enhancement of his fortitude (11) and behold Joseph who suffered rather than sinned, whereby he was elevated by God (11).

Every man when riding a horse should watch for pedestrians and animals not to hurt any and should love people and animals (ZO 13). No one should fell a tree in a forest without a need (14). No one must ride a horse on a field where seeds were sown (15).

If urges are great, one should get married (ZO 16, 32). A man should not marry a rich woman, since eventually she will despise him. It is better if "she is lower than you since wife is honored by her husband, not the husband by his wife" (17). When looking for a wife, "do not look for needless beauty, so that you will not tempt other men by the beauty of your wife," but look for spiritual beauty, and since spiritual beauty goes very often hand in hand with carnal beauty, the wife will be pretty. However, the man has to make sure that the woman likes him before courting begins (18). Seeking an advice of a magician or wizard is, of course, ruled out, since one's guardian angel would leave (19). Marriage should not be consummated after the wedding for three nights and days, and that time should be devoted to prayer to honor the three members of the Trinity (22). He referred here to a common Christian custom and to the Book of Tobias (21).<sup>13</sup> When it comes to the act, the husband should not begin right away, "do not attack her like an animal," but do some foreplay, "first lovingly kiss her and chat" a bit (24). Pososhkov permitted no intercourse on holidays, Sundays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The couple has to remember always to wash after the intercourse, not to be like the accursed Lutherans (25). Nothing should be done without an advice of the spouse; the husband should treat his wife as his equal, and if she is not too bright, God seeing his humility will give him the right answer through her (57).

Children should be brought up in the fear of God, quite literally: a father should say to his child "do not stick out your tongue, God will kill you for it" (ZO 43). They should be taught to bow before icons with the promise that "God in heaven seeing your bowing will be merciful to you and gives you plenty of this or that." They should also fear parents since "all evil and stupidity comes from parental

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<sup>13</sup> He referred to ch. 6, but Tobias' request for a three-day delay of the consummation of marriage is in verse 8 : 4 and only in the Vulgate version not used by the Eastern church. The practice of chastity for one night only was decreed by the council of Carthage in 398 and subsequently included in the canon law; the practice was later extended to two and even three days, James G. Frazer, *Folk-lore in the Old Testament*, London 1918, p. 497–498.

leniency” (43). “And the man who grows in punishment, he will always be a good man”; therefore, the stern advice for parents: “punish [them] mercilessly” (44). How mercilessly? Breaking a child’s ribs would apparently be permitted in Pososhkov’s parental opinion (44, 46).<sup>14</sup> Children should be dressed modestly (45), fed with modest, unprocessed food, and kept from alcohol, particularly imported spirits (47). Importantly, they should be properly educated, which included languages, reading, writing, arithmetic, and drawing (45).

As to the personal devotional life, the first thing in the morning should be a quiet time spent in prayers detailed by Pososhkov. The time should begin with crossing oneself looking at the same time with “the spiritual eye” at the crucified Christ (ZO 61). Crossing oneself according to tradition, i.e., with three fingers (61), then bowing three times before an icon should be accompanied with appropriate prayers for protection (62). Three Lord’s prayers said when looking “with the eyes of the mind at God Himself sitting on cherubim” should be followed by saying three times words of annunciation to Mary. Then, saying once the Orthodox creed, or, better yet, three times, should be followed by a prayer of one’s own to God, which begins with the request for many blessings for the tsar, followed by a prayer to the Mother of God, then to John the Baptist, apostle John, St. Blasius, St. Spyridon the Wonderworker, St. Onuphrius, St. Barbara, then again the Lord’s prayer, a prayer to God, to the Mother of God, to the guardian angel, to the saint, after whom one is named, and again the Lord’s prayer, a prayer to God, to the Mother of God, and to Christ, all of them punctuated with bowings (62–77). Only these prayers and bowings are acceptable to God, during which the mind is concentrated on Him (78). When a prayer or a bowing is done without the mind wandering off, it should be repeated (82). In prayers, one should not ask God for things of this world, but for opening one’s eyes to the Scriptures, for forgiveness of sins, and for the entrance to the Kingdom of God (83). During prayer, one has to “stand like an immovable pillar,” but unbearable itching can be relieved with scratching, and yet a flea’s biting should be endured. If some interruptions occur, a prayer should be repeated (84). Such prayerful attitude should be maintained throughout the day. When walking, one should say in one’s mind the psalms, the Lord’s prayer, and a prayer to the Mother of God (141).

There are some rules which apply pretty much to everyone, such as being courteous to others, considerate of the feelings of others, being generous, helpful, refraining from cheating, and keeping promises. People should also be humble and unassuming; however, particular applications of this general rule, as seen by Pososhkov, may cause eyebrow-rising. A young clerk working in a judge’s office should, upon seeing

<sup>14</sup> In the Russian translation, θλάσον τὰς πλευρὰς αὐτοῦ (Sir 30 : 12) is rendered as “break his (son’s) ribs,” the verse lovingly quoted also in the *Domostroi* and by Dimitrii Rostovskii (Д. Ростовский, *Келейный летописец*, Москва 2000, p. 202), but the harshness of the translation can be toned down by translating it “beat/bruise him on his sides.”

the judge approach the building, come out and before the front door bow before him and lead him to the office (ZO 172). Even an old clerk should meet the judge before others do and lead him to the office (the bowing was not specified) (175). It is very much doubtful whether the judge and the coworkers are going to see such expressions of servility as a sign of a humble soul rather than an attempt of a low level clerk to curry favor with the judge. If there are two such humble clerks, how should they reconcile their greeting services to the judge? The expressions of humility are carried to the extreme by Pososhkov's literally requiring that people should become slaves of others, whereby one would be liked by everyone (12, 254). When serving in a church as a janitor or a *diak*, one should be like the least slave of the priest (206); if the priest is unjust and underpays the janitor, the service man should still tell all people "I do not find any fault in him" (207). When working for someone, one should serve him as serving God, like a slave (147). Therefore, even a bad lord should be endured without complaints about him, even to God. If someone asks about the lord, one should say that he is gentle and merciful and consider him and his behavior as punishment for one's sins (151–152).

### Pososhkov the teacher

Pososhkov's intention was the defense of traditional Orthodox faith of the official Orthodox church. He accepted the doctrines of the church and did not discuss them; therefore, the reader would actually learn little about these doctrines from his books. There is no discussion of theology, since in many major points the views of the schismatics and the Protestants are the same as in the Orthodoxy, which Pososhkov apparently did not notice. Pososhkov's discussion concentrated largely on ritual issues, and he relished in providing details of ritualistic behavior.<sup>15</sup> Thus, he urged the believer to put a larger candle before Christ's icon than before icons of the saints and to bow lower to the icon of God or Christ than to other icons (ZO 89–90). Also, in the secular life, he knew for pretty much any station of life what should be done. For example, a clerk working in an office should write at least 40 lines per loose page (at least 50 lines, according to K 228), and 60 lines in a scribal book; also, paper must not be used as a bathroom tissue (ZO 175–176)<sup>16</sup> and there is a numbing number of such details very easily distracting the reader from a broader picture.

Pososhkov was in line with the Orthodox church most of the time; however, in respect to at least one issue he differed from the church's position. In his view, the existing iconography is bad since figures are drawn disproportionately (ZO 155; K 145/283). However, realism is not to be expected in icons in order to create

<sup>15</sup> At times, he was leaning toward "thoughtless ritualism, exclusive formalism" (А. Царевский, *Посошков и его сочинения*, p. 218).

<sup>16</sup> "For wiping your excrement," to be exact; Pososhkov was quite fond of using scatological language in his works.

otherworldly atmosphere which results in “sacred realism.”<sup>17</sup> The Council of the Hundred Chapters of 1551 stated that the iconographers should paint icons “according to old models [...] add nothing according to one’s own conception” (art. 41).

It is disconcerting that Pososhkov in his exposition of doctrinal issues was not concerned about contradicting himself.

He fought drunkenness and yet he worked for a distillery and even owned one with his brother. This brings to mind Kantemir’s satire of a wine merchant who complained about the drunkenness of people, and yet he sold them wine: “you sell wine and yet you judge the drunk” (Satire 5.315).

He objected to the fact that the pope considers himself to be an equal of Peter (Z 2.2.3). However, is it so much different from the claim that the Orthodox priest has the same authority as God Himself (Z 1.161)?

“According to the word of Christ, all teachings should be accepted [that come] from those who lived a saintly life, but from people who live in sin absolutely nothing should be accepted since it is prohibited by God” (Z 2.2.109). On the other hand, he showed at length with some real life stories that the gift of the Holy Spirit is even in a drunken priest, and those blessed by a drunk priest receive the real blessing (Z 1.184). Would that extend to a sermon given by a drunk priest? After all, “Who listens to a presbyter, he listens to God Himself” (Z 1.318). Would the sermon be invalidated by Pososhkov’s sweeping principle because it was pronounced by a sinful priest?

Pososhkov accused Lutherans that they spend their time on thinking, “how can they enrich their brethren and themselves” (Z 2.2.110). How credible is such accusation in the mouth of a man who possessed four houses in two cities? Were purchases of these houses made in the midst of thinking how one should become poor rather than rich? Pososhkov wrote an entire book about how to be rich – the subtitle speaks even about “abundant wealth”<sup>18</sup> – and it surely took plenty of thinking about how to get there. In the preface to the book he said that people should seek first the Kingdom of Heaven and other things will be added unto them – wealth and glory, Pososhkov hastened to add (K 14/154). He advised not to seek riches, since wealth easily leads to sin, and, as he wisely said, if someone just happens to be rich, he should have control over his wealth, not allowing his wealth to have control over him (ZO 117). Could the Lutherans claim this advice for themselves or are they inherently incapable of applying it?

God prepared Gehenna for those who call their brothers stupid, and heretics call stupid not only their equals but also their own shepherds, all faithful servants of God and all clergy (Z 1.234), thereby condemning themselves to Gehenna. Does it mean

<sup>17</sup> As phrased by E. N. Trubetskoi, *Icons: Theology in Color* [1915–1917], Crestwood 1973, p. 57.

<sup>18</sup> “The concept of abundant wealth is the central category of Pososhkov’s treatise” (Д. Н. Платонов, *Иван Посошков*, Москва 1989, p. 39).

that when Pososhkov, an Orthodox believer, who called heretics stupid, mindless, etc., can avoid the doom in Gehenna?

Schismatics burn some on the stake and starve others to death. The apostles never burned or starved anyone but only resurrected the dead (Z 1.350), and yet Pososhkov was very generous in allotting death sentence to heretics.

“A lie is from the devil” (ZO 168); hence, “flee the untruth” (179); “to lie in the face of truth and turn righteousness into lie is a mortal sin” (Z 1.63). However, to a soldier, death is better than treason; therefore, even if he is malnourished, he must not complain about it when taken captive, even under torture, but say that everything is good and all soldiers are satisfied (ZO 158). A captured experienced soldier should say that he is a novice since “tell a lie” should be a principle when dealing with an enemy (159). Although lying as a captive could be defensible on moral ground, it is not so easy to defend the need to mendaciously extol the nonexistent virtues of an employer, ecclesiastical or secular, as required by Pososhkov (ZO 151, 207).

In Pososhkov’s view, we should pray so that we do not judge anyone, like schismatics, who judge others (Z 1.79; ZO 16), and yet the entire criticism of heresy is one book-long judgment both in the sense of evaluating the views of heretics and in the sense of consigning heretics to eternal perdition.

He also admonished heretics that “if only your teacher could understand that lay people should not be teachers”; a teacher should be a priest (Z 1.268). It would be difficult not to think that Pososhkov taught his readers in the truths of the Orthodox faith and falsehoods of heresy, and yet he certainly was not a priest.

It is doubtful whether *The Mirror* could be an effective tool to win a heretic over to the Orthodoxy. Generous use of name-calling on every page hardly could work on readers as an enticement for abandoning their erroneous teachings. Pososhkov rationalized the use of harsh, even vulgar, language by stating that whispering is not enough to wake up someone effectively, but shouting is (Z 1.337, 2.2.197). It may, however, be effective for reinforcing beliefs of Orthodox believers by cursing everyone else, seeing others as duped tools in hands of the devil, and sending them to hell for pretty much anything.

Pososhkov did not consider himself a learned man (Z 2.1.20, 2.2.198; P 1427) and this is reflected in his writings in the level of using different sources. He quite generously quoted the Bible and constantly referred to John Chrysostom. Other names, particularly the names of the Church Fathers, appear very infrequently. This is in stark contrast to Iavorskii’s erudite *The Rock of Faith*. Pososhkov wrote a lot of pages, but the level of repetition is almost unbearable. He said the same thing dozens of times, frequently in almost the same words. Thus, his writings require a lot of patience from the reader. Also, he was not quite well informed about certain issues and knew, for instance, the doctrine of the Lutherans from hearsay rather than from studying Lutheran works, and yet he fancied himself as someone on the forefront of the spiritual awakening in Russia. As already mentioned, he wanted

his *Mirror* to be a mandatory reading in schools, and small wonder, he had quite an elevated view about it. "I am not a learned man, and thus I did not write according to learning, but by the grace of God: I wrote as much, as He, the Omniscient, revealed me." "I am a simple man" (Z 198), "I did not write by myself, but by the revelation of God and with the help of His holy Angel and the beloved pupil of the Lord," apostle John. "Yeah, I announce the truth unto you, since sometimes I did not know what I wrote, but then I understood that I had written above [the level of] my understanding" (2.2.199). Pososhkov hubristically saw himself as a latter day equal of the writers of the Scriptures and his writings directly inspired by God and as such deserving attention due to inspired writings. If language, style, arguments, examples, etc., of the *Mirror* do not speak to the reader, there is only one explanation: "If you do not see your sins when looking into this *Mirror*, then you are sons of perdition and you cannot be taught by any other teaching, but only by hacking to pieces by the sword and burning by fire since you are sealed with the seal of the antichrist and cannot come to repentance" (Z 1.372, 2.2.200).

## Summary

### **Pososhkov's narrow path**

The paper presents Ivan Pososhkov (1652–1726). He was a Russian merchant, an entrepreneur, and a landowner. His major work was titled *The Book on Poverty and Wealth* (1724, published in 1842). The author's aim is to show Pososhkov's thought about the schismatics, Protestants, particularly, the Lutherans, and the clergy. One of the parts is dedicated to Pososhkov's vision of the place of piety in the personal life. All these parts show Pososhkov as a self-appointed teacher whose intention was the defense of traditional Orthodox faith of the official Orthodox Church.

## Keywords

Catholic Church, Ivan Pososhkov, Luther, Lutherans, Orthodox Church, Protestants, Russia

