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LUNIN'S SUSTAINING FAITH

Mikhail Sergeevich Lunin was born in 1787 in St. Petersburg in a wealthy noble family. He was educated in his family's estate in the province of Tambov by private tutors, one of whom was Abbe Vouvillier, a zealous Jesuit. In 1803 he joined the regiment of his father, had a distinguished career during the Napoleonic campaign, and with the army he reached Paris. After his return to Russia, he was a founding member of the earliest Decembrist group, the Union of True and Faithful Sons of the Fatherland. He left the military service in 1815. In 1816 he joined the Masonic *Loge des Trois Vertus*, which was more concerned about politics than other lodges. In the same year, he was a member of a secret society, the Union of Salvation. Also in 1816, he left Russia for Paris with Hippolyte Auger, who introduced Lunin in Paris to the Jesuits. He spent much time on discussions with the Jesuit Father Fidele de Grivel and with Abbe Thirias, after which he openly professed his adherence to Catholicism. In 1817 he returned to Russia and settled down on the Tambov estate which he inherited after the death of his father. From 1818 he was a member of a secret society, the Union of Welfare, which planned to assassinate the tsar. In 1822 he rejoined the army. In 1824 he was stationed in Warsaw where he became a favorite of the grand duke Konstantin. When he was in Poland, his name came up in the investigation of the Decembrists, who in 1825 had attempted to overthrow the tsar Nicholas I, Konstantin's brother, and was arrested in 1826. Imprisoned first in Sveaborg fortress on Longgern Island, then in Vyborg Castle in 1827, he was transported to Siberia: in 1828 to Chita, east of lake Baikal, then transferred in 1830 to Petrovskii Zavod,

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a prison-fortress, west of lake Baikal, and in 1836 to the hamlet of Urik, near Irkutsk. In 1841, because of his writings, in particular “A view on the Russian secret society,” Lunin was re-arrested and sent to Akatui near the Chinese border where he died in 1845. Arguably, the most important factor that sustained him through two decades of exile and even incited him to his political writing was his strong religious faith rooted firmly in the Catholic theology.

CONVERSION

Frequently, the discussion about Lunin’s religious life was limited to determining the moment of his conversion. Because only very few Lunin’s letters are preserved from before his arrest, the decision about the time of his conversion is limited to few testimonies about Lunin and to educated guesses. It is quite clear that he went to Siberia as a dedicated and fully committed Catholic, which is clear from his writings, particularly from his *Notebook*, and from his religious rituals and exercises. In Petrovskii Zavod he built a small chapel in which he prayed for many hours on his knees. In Urik, he built a chapel in his log cabin and continued his devotions (S 303).¹ Therefore, a suggestion that he converted to Catholicism in Siberia “probably a little bit by bravado set against the Orthodox government,”² is very unlikely – it must have been before the imprisonment. It was sometimes suggested that his conversion took place in Paris³ or that he was later enchanted by Catholicism in Warsaw, and his stay in Warsaw was “a serious turning point in spiritual biography of Lunin.”⁴ It was also stated that Lunin converted to Catholicism when

¹ The following abbreviations of Lunin’s works will be used: PS – *Письма из Сибири*, Москва: Наука 1987; S – *Сочинения, письма, документы*, Иркутск: Восточно-Сибирское книжное издательство 1988.

² Xavier Korczak-Branicki, *Les nationalités slaves: lettres au révérend P. Gagarin (S.-J.)*, Paris: E. Dentu 1879, 330; more decisively in the Polish version: he converted “in order to vex the Orthodox government,” Xawery Korczak-Branicki, *Narodowości słowiańskie: listy do W.O. Gagaryna S.J.*, Paryż: Drukarnia Polska A. Reiffa 1879, 220.

³ С[ергей] Я. Гессен, М[ихаил] С. Коган, *Декабрист Лунин и его время*, Ленинград: Наука и Школа 1926, 54; “Paris saw the conclusion of a long process, begun by Vouvillier,” Glynn Barratt, *M. S. Lunin: Catholic Decembrist*, The Hague: Mouton 1976, 28.

⁴ Ф[аина] З. Канунова, *Проблемы духовной эволюции М. С. Лунина*, in: Е. К. Ромодановская (ed.), *Русская литература XIX-XX вв.: Поэтика мотива и аспекты литературного анализа*, Новосибирск: СО РАН 2004, 181.

“he was in Warsaw a pupil and an advocate of the well-known de Maistre.”⁵ Joseph de Maistre was already dead when Lunin came to Poland, but, as Svistunov testified, Lunin knew de Maistre from the salons of Petersburg, i.e., from before he traveled to France. Finally, the reality and seriousness of his conversion was sometimes dismissed altogether.⁶

The most reliable sources are testimonies of Lunin's Decembrist comrades, Svistunov and Zavalishin. With Svistunov he spoke about the two Jesuits whom both Lunin and Svistunov knew rather than about his, Lunin's, conversion. This is understandable considering the rather venomous remarks Svistunov made about Jesuits and, in fact, about Lunin's beliefs as well, since he considered it to be “not very easy to be explained” how such a wise man as Lunin could fall into the snares of Jesuit reasoning. Lunin certainly sensed this sentiment, and it would be difficult to expect that he would pour his soul to Svistunov. In any event, Svistunov, who could know it from his mother, a Catholic converted with close connections with the Jesuits in Paris, wrote that “until his departure abroad in 1816 [Lunin] was not at all interested in religious questions,” but after the death of his father “he returned [from Paris] as a zealous Catholic.”⁷

Lunin spoke about religious matters and his conversion with Zavalishin, whom he considered to be the only comrade in exile understanding and competent enough to discuss religion. He also asked Zavalishin to pass his confession to his, Lunin's, sister, if at all possible. Lunin said that he was conquered by the reasoning powers of Jesuits in Paris who showed him that “in atheism it

⁵ Андрей Е. Розен, *Записки декабриста*, Санкт Петербург: Общественная Польза 1907 [1870], 176. The same claim was made by С. В. Максимов, *Государственные преступники* [1869], in his: *Сибирь и каторга*, Санкт Петербург: Н. Стефанов 1891, pt. 3, 196.

⁶ Семен Б. Окунь, *Декабрист М.С. Луин*, Ленинград: Издательство Ленинградского университета 1985 [1962], 33; Okun' also made a questionable claim that Lunin's conversion did not influence his social and political views and actions (p. 34), whereby it was quite pointless. A similar claim was made by В[адим] С. Парсамов, *Декабрист М. С. Луин и католицизм*, „Диалог со временем: альманах интеллектуальной истории” 5(2001), 310, by the statement that politics and religion were for Lunin two domains isolated from one another, although, incongruously, Parsamov did admit that “Lunin's political ideas were illuminated by his religiosity,” and vice versa (p. 316).

⁷ П[етр] Н. Свистунов, *Отповедь*, in: Ю.Г. Оксман (ed.), *Воспоминания и рассказы деятелей тайных обществ 1820-х годов*, Москва: Издательство Всесоюзного Общества политкаторжан и ссыльно-поселенцев 1933, vol. II, 292-293.

is less logic and more absurdity than even in most absurd religion.”⁸ Also, he was disgusted by misbehavior – which included drunkenness – of the Orthodox clergy and by the servile position of the Orthodox Church. Had he stayed in Russia after his return from Paris, mused Zavalishin, then maybe he would have been cured of Catholicism, but “he happened to live in Warsaw and through Polish clergy his Catholicism was consolidated.”⁹

To make matters more confusing, there are two different statements Lunin made concerning his religion. In 1826 during hearings, he said that he was “of Greek-Russian faith [and that] he did not go for confession and holy communion every year.”¹⁰ However, in 1839 he wrote to his sister, “my brother and myself were brought up in the Roman Catholic Faith” (PS 239) and during a 1841 hearing, he wrote, “I was baptized and brought up from childhood in the Roman-Catholic faith by my tutor, abbe Vouvillier” (334).

There seems to be no doubt that he was baptized and raised in the Catholic spirit by his Catholic tutors, but another thing is, to what extent he was saturated by Catholic convictions. For young Lunin religious matters were apparently distant, and his faith was at best lukewarm.¹¹ It is interesting that he wrote to his sister that he was brought up Catholic, as though it were a news for her, and that he asked Zavalishin to inform her about his Paris religious experiences. Before Paris, his Catholicism was at best dormant so that his sister apparently did not see any of it in him. However, he was drawn to the Catholic faith by its intellectual dimension. Always a man of scholarly bent, he was convinced that Catholicism is valid both on an individual level – for each person, and a social level – as a way to improve the wellbeing of societies. However, the intellectual assent was not the last step. Although this step is important, it cannot be the last step. Faith is above reason; faith refers to infinity, reason – to the finite (PS 191). Faith is the matter of the heart and, for Lunin, it may have been the result of a long maturation process. It is possible that the religious atmosphere of the Catholic Poland was a tipping point

⁸ Lunin adopted this view when he stated that “unbelief is a moral malady which begins to pass, just as leprosy passed. If there are still unbelievers, they are the emptiest and silliest people about whom it is better not to speak since it is needed that the hell be populated” (PS 188).

⁹ Дмитрий [И.] З а в а л и ш и н, *Декабрист М. С. Лунин*, „Исторический вестник” 1(1880), 140, 146.

¹⁰ С[оломон] Я. Ш т р а й х, Лунин в процессе декабристов, in М[ихаил] С. Лунин, *Сочинения и письма*, Петербург: Пушкинский дом при Академии наук СССР 1923, 94.

¹¹ Zavalishin even stated that he was an unbeliever, which was “the result of the fad of the day” in high society, З а в а л и ш и н, op. cit., 146.

- Lunin was truly enamored with Poland and spared no words to praise it
- and during his stay in Poland he became a Catholic in mind and heart.

GOD

Lunin himself had little to say about theological issues, and what he did say indicates his assent to the dogmas of the Catholic Church.

Lunin believed in the almighty, everlasting God of Christian faith, i.e., the triune God and he assented to the Catholic teaching on the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son, arguing at length that this teaching is scripturally based (SP 177), confirmed by ecclesiastical councils (178) and by Greek Fathers (179-180).

God, in whom Lunin believed, is a providential God, who created the world and is constantly interested in the affairs of this world with one goal, that the world turns to Him, because only in God can true happiness and solace be found, individually and collectively. Therefore, the people's love should be directed toward God and through Him to His creations; otherwise, the increase of the feeling of love brings more misery. Thus, he prayed, "turn away my sight from perfections in creatures so that my soul is not hindered in its flight toward you. There are attractions in Your works that I cannot see without confusion in my state of disgrace; and the enemy is always there to profit from this moment" (PS 184). "True happiness is in knowing and loving the infinite truth. Everything else is only a relative happiness" (200, 207), and such relative happiness includes all that flows from the perfection in creatures. Quite astoundingly, fortified by such kind of faith he could have said that the time of his imprisonment in Vyborg was the most happy time of his life.¹² Although it may not have been literally the happiest time of his life, the fact of speaking about happiness and prison in the same sentence is rather amazing.

On the social scale, God calls people's attention to Himself through unpleasant events. "Public calamities are warnings that the Providence gives to kings and peoples to enlighten them about the mutual obligations" (PS 136, 146). Also, bad and tyrannical powers are due to God's providence when He decides that people deserve such treatment because of their actions (Prov. 8:15,16; Job 35:30) (172).

¹² Свистунов, *op. cit.*, 304.

The presence of God can also be found on an individual level, and Lunin strongly believed that God was constantly present in his own life, at least through His angelic emissary, rescuing him, among other things, from a deadly bullet and a fatal cut of a sword: “I live with people, [visible beings,] who see me and do not understand me, or with the invisible [being], whom I do not comprehend. The darkness of sins conceals him [but I have an idea of its angelic beauty. I heard the sound of his wings], when deadly lead lodged itself in my body; before me a faint reflection of its look, when the edge of a sword turned away from my head. Who followed me to the depths of prison? Who lightened the burden of my chains and healed my wounds? An invisible protector of my fate. He cannot show [himself] to me before my death, but he surrounds me with the signs of his presence: a hut in exile has for me all the charm of the parental home; I am calm in the midst of dangers; independent in constraints, happy in solitude. Now, I really know that the Lord sent his angel and saved me from the hand of Herod and from all expectations of the Jewish nation” (PS 6, 205-206).

The belief in God is accessible to people of all historical times. Literary studies made it clear to Lunin: “I am applying myself mainly to the Greek ... My studies have as its subject religious doctrines of Homer. One is surprised when going through the traditional world that it unveils to find at each step the altar for the unknown God. The fictions and the fables with which the poet surrounds the truths of the primal Revelation do not obfuscate its brightness and are in turn only the misuse of some truth” (PS 260). Lunin believed that this truth, however, is to be found in the purest form in the Catholic Church.

THE CHURCH

The Church is created by God (Mt. 16:18) and is one since it confesses belief which is the only one existing as truth (Eph. 4:5) (PS 167). It is visible, since it consist of the clergy and the people who believe in their teaching (Rom. 10:14,17); it is free from sin since Christ promised to be with the clergy to the end of days (Mt. 28:20); it cannot be overthrown (Mt. 16:18); it is catholic, universal (Mt. 28:19,20); it is apostolic, since there is a succession of the church leadership; it is a judgment court for people and angels; it is visible in its head, the successor of Peter; there is no salvation outside it (Mt. 18:17) (168); therefore, “whoever wants to be saved, must first of all confess the

Catholic faith: if anyone does not wholly and inviolably observe it, he without a doubt will perish in eternity” (169).

An important characteristic of the church is that it remains the same. “The Catholic Church is the largest and oldest community of Christians. It is spread over the entire world and was always the same. Human institutions change. It has a character of immutability imprinted on the works of the Creator” (175). Immutability of the church, its divine origin point, and the constant God’s protection point to its infallibility. “The Catholic Church infallibly decides the questions concerning faith, discipline, and mores. It cannot create new dogmas since that would be creating truths, which is impossible. It cannot bring the ancient dogmas to the tribunal of reasoning to examine them since that would mean submitting the Revelation or the divine reason to the human reason. But in the matters of faith it proceeds along the way of testimony [thereby] establishing the tradition and the orthodox faith” (PS 168). In Lunin’s view, the church’s infallibility must be comprehensive. “Because faith is incompatible with the smallest uncertainty, the tribunal for the disputes concerning faith should be infallible, otherwise, it would not be competent. In matters of faith, any fallible authority is unlawful. It is a great presumption of man to believe that he could by himself fill the abyss dug up by his sins. To reconcile him with his own conscience, a supernatural power is needed; to reconcile him with God, the greatest of miracles is needed. Only in the Church one can fruitfully believe in such a miracle and that good works by which this faith manifests itself bring profit” (169).

Whence this authority of the Catholic Church? “Without its authority the Sacred Scripture is useless and even harmful” (PS 169); therefore, this authority cannot be based on the Bible, since “the Church always determined what were the canonical books. It is through its authority that we should judge the canonicity of the books of the Scripture” (164). However, it is the Bible to which Lunin referred when justifying this authority. The Church is the pillar and foundation of truth (1 Tim. 3:15); “we should not refuse the obedience and the submission without becoming like pagans and publicans (Mt. 18:17).” “How can we doubt in the infallibility of its [church’s] judgment if the Lord himself promised under oath to always govern it and never abandon it” (Mt. 28:20) (165). The strongest argument is apparently the belief in the fact of direct succession of the ecclesiastical authority from the apostolic times up to the most visible manifestation of this power, the pope. Because this succession

was established by Christ, it has the divine and thus infallible and immutable sanction. Only from this traditional belief is derived the authority of the Bible.

In the matters of religion, faith takes precedence, and a fatal mistake of Protestants, in Lunin's view, lies in their elevating reason to the status of the primal authority. "The sovereignty of the human reason in matters of religion is the fundamental dogma of Protestantism. Faith that embraces the infinite is subordinated to reason that is finite. This refutes itself. Faith surpasses our reason, but the causes of faith are in its province and they should be evident to it" (PS 191). Lunin believed that Protestantism is a religion for limited minds who are unable to reach the ultimate consequences of a principle, and this consequence is atheism. There are so many Protestant denominations and some people reject all of them and all visible authority retaining only the Scripture as a unique source of faith, but the Scripture constantly speaks about the Church (192). Therefore, even the *sola scriptura* doctrine points in the direction of Catholicism.

The Catholic Church represents God on earth and carries the work of Christ, who called people to conversion since the Kingdom of God is near. "The Catholic Church does not act violently; it opens to the one who knocks. The soul has thirst and hunger for the truth. The Kingdom of God here: the Catholic Church. The perpetuity of the Holy See certainly is something of a miracle. The Kingdom of God does not consist only of knowledge and fulfillment of its precepts, which without a doubt is eventually its goal, but also of external means to accomplish it, which is in the Church, that is the authority established to teach, interpret and propagate the same divine laws, and procure for us peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, which is the ultimate goal of this celestial empire." (PS 175).

Freedom is a very important – if not the most important – human endeavor. "Everyone strives for freedom, but they found slavery. As freedom consists in obedience to lawful authority, so slavery is the submission to an unlawful authority" (PS 170). Protestantism was considered favorable to political freedom, which is a mistaken belief, according to Lunin. This freedom was introduced from above by the princes and did not succeed in republican countries, e.g., in Poland (197). There is much talk about freedom of people, but not about freedom of Power, whereby people do not see that, paradoxically, the Russian government is not free (215). These statements seem to indicate that true freedom, a complete independence on anything else, does not exist anywhere. Freedom is an assent to particular authority and the authority of God

would certainly be the correct choice. However, this takes place through submission to the authority representing God, i.e., as Lunin believed, to the Catholic Church. Thus, political powers are not free when they turn away from religious truths, when they push aside the church, and this certainly happened in Russia when Peter I reduced the church to the role of just another governmental department; in Lunin's words, "the Eastern church is a protégé of the state and often a tool of political power" (181). Paradoxically, by suppressing the independence of the church, the secular power makes itself enslaved, enslaved to its own desires and to powers opposing God's authority on earth: tsarist autocracy is really slavery.

As mentioned, Lunin was convinced that salvation can be found only in the Catholic Church (S 297, 325). What about those who had not have a chance should they have wanted to do so? It seems that Lunin found a possibility of saving such souls in the Catholic (and Orthodox) belief of efficacy of prayer for the dead. "Acting only on the body, death does not sever connection between souls. When we pray for the deceased, they beseech through us for divine mercy concerning sins to be forgiven in this or the other world. When we do good on their account, they, so to say, come alive in us and receive double reward, for the good done by them and for what [we did in their stead] and what they suggested (2 Macc. 12). The church is the mediator in these mysterious relations. Who does not belong to it, is separated from both the living and the dead: he exists in separation like a withered twig waiting for fire (J. 15:6)" (PS 166).

As a Catholic, he could see Orthodoxy differently, the faith that has more common traits with Catholicism than elements separating them. As a mature Catholic, in his 1840 treatise on the Polish affairs he argued that Russia and Poland should be united, and one reason was that "religious beliefs are most similar to one another among various beliefs found in the world" (PS 115, 123). Schism between Orthodoxy and Catholicism was a political, not religious, matter: it was about power (180). However, there are actually two points that separate them, namely the theological problem of the procession of the Holy Spirit (the *Filioque* controversy) and the authority of the pope. Interestingly, Lunin's longest theological argument in his *Notebook* is about the former problem – as though he wanted to convince himself – a person living in the Orthodox country – that the Catholic *Filioque* is correct. He also made many remarks concerning the pope and his role as a mediator of peace. Although Lunin never explicitly argued for an introduction of Catholicism on the

national scale in Russia, he probably would not object to it and claims made in his times by Chaadaev (1836) and a decade after Lunin's death by Gagarin (1856) that Russia should become Catholic to pull itself out of social, economic, and religious backwardness.

EDUCATION

Lunin's conviction that the Catholic Church is the true church established directly by God led him to the statement that behavior and education are secondary in the Catholic clergy. "Catholicism does not need any human assistance to be maintained and propagated. What an illiterate and even dissolute Catholic priest says is stronger than what he does since what he says is not from him. Our ideas of progress ... are not applicable to Catholicism: it is indivisible and immutable as its origin" (PS 189). The statement has to be interpreted carefully: Lunin did not want education to be neglected; he only pointed to the fact that education and knowledge are not unimportant, but secondary to the spiritual dimension of the church. However, behavior and faith are much more closely related than education and faith, and particularly the behavior of the clergy can severely undermine the power of the message. Lunin was not blind to some shadowy moments in the history of the Catholic Church, and he even went so far as to commend Luther by saying that he rightly criticized abuses of the church, but he hastened to add that Luther heretically rejected its authority: although members of the Catholic Church are subject to transgressions, the Catholic Church is infallible (194).

Lunin was not at all opposed to education; however, education of young minds should be done with great care. Lunin outlined a curriculum for children from the age of 8 to 14, "The plan of elementary studies" (PS 147-149). He placed great emphasis on learning languages (254, 257); he included science, mathematics, and humanities – with certain religiously motivated restrictions. Education of students between 8 and 10 years of age should include sacred history and among authors to be read, he included Lamennais; for students of ages 10 to 12, the readings include excerpts from Locke; students of ages 12 to 14, should study theology and philosophy; to learn French, readings should include the Bible in French, "the classics, except for Voltaire, in part, and J.J. Rousseau in full." To learn English, "the same, except for philosophers and the clergy," where "the same" seems to refer to the Bible, this time

in English, and Lunin probably found English philosophers and theologians to be too much influenced by rationalization of the Enlightenment to be proper reading for children. Interestingly, Locke was included. To learn Latin, the student should study the Bible – understood, the Vulgate – the Fathers of the Church and the classics. To learn German, readings should include “philosophers of various schools, who are too stupid to be harmful. If is enough to indicate the point of their departure to reverse their systems.” The plan ends with the words, “Ave Maria gratia plena” (149). In a letter written in English (for educational purposes) at the end of his life in 1843/1844 to young Mikhail (Misha) Volkonskii he said: “I have told you in my last letter that the number of good and truly useful books is very small. You must also know, that the best of them are not quite free from faults and errors, and that they should consequently be read with great circumspection. The Work which I send you (*Tales of a Grandfather* [1828, by Walter Scott]), and which is justly held in high esteem, may serve as a proof of what I am saying. It is full of solid knowledge and rational views, concerning the Scottish and English history: but it contains also some useless and false reasoning about the Protestant religion. The worthy author, instead of exposing simply the origin and progress of the English churches, endeavors to vindicate their tenets, and assumes the character of a preacher. As those matters are somewhat hard to understand at your age, and may easily induce you in error, you will do well to pass over the paragraphs, which I have noted down, and direct your attention to the rest of the work” (262, 258-259).

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS

Lunin was a devout Christian, but he was not withdrawn from the affairs of the world nor did he advocate such a withdrawal. Part of Christian obligations is being involved in the political arena using the means appropriate for a Christian; ends do not justify means, and thus, as he wrote, “I did not participate in a rebellion, which is fitting the mob, nor in conspiracy, [which is] proper to slaves. My only weapon is thought” (PS 6). The best example of such involvement is provided by papal actions as seen throughout history. “It is not sufficiently appreciated the advantages that humanity drew from the peaceful influence of the pontiffs of Rome. In the centuries when no other merit was known except that of arms, Europe would have been plunged into

perpetual war if the Popes had not one after another constantly worked either on the preservation of peace or on restoring it. They controlled passions and reprimanded extravagant pretences of sovereigns; their position as a father common to [all] Christians, gave their representation some weight that no other mediation could offer, and their legates did not spare voyages nor efforts to reconcile conflicting interests of courts and to place the olive branch of peace between the swords of rival armies” (164).

Theological justification of political actions is the fact that all power stems from God (PS 212) and as such – as the divine gift – power should be used with caution, for the good of others. How often rulers misuse this power for their own benefit. Autocracy gives man unlimited power, which is limited by the laws of nature; it demoralizes by rendering to Caesar what belongs only to God. And so it is in Russia, whereby its social edifice is founded on sand. The fact that it still stands is due to “the national attributes of Russians and to [their] faith” (65). Other, older nations started with autocracy and ended with constitutional forms more fitting their development (13), and this way was also envisioned by Lunin for Russia, whereby the God-given power would not corrupt and absolute power would not corrupt absolutely.

Rulers can claim divine provenance of their authority to subjugate their subjects (Romans 13 has always been a favorite biblical chapter used to that end), but the subjects are not thereby devoid of religious succor. “Each human authority has limits, since it has obligations to fulfill. When it crosses these limits, it necessitates individual and collective resistance of people based on an authority which also comes from God. To know whether an authority crossed its limits is a fact proven through testimony, and thus it is available to all people. Just as in the case of religious authority, examination of mission is available to all believers, so in the case of political authority an examination of limits of power is available to all citizens. A positive law prescribes man render to Caesar what is Caesar’s. Therefore, he can discern with the help of natural lights in what consist pretensions of Caesar and how far they can go. Otherwise, this law would be impracticable and thus absurd” (213).

Although it can be claimed that the power of the sovereign comes from God, this does not automatically mean that all decisions of this sovereign have the divine sanction. In particular, every true believer should be appalled by the slavery of peasants in Russia since slavery of peasants that is against the laws of God and men (55, 59). Slavery of peasants violated the laws of moral order according to which wellbeing of each man depends on one’s own decision

(18). Slavery, incompatible with the spirit of time, persists because of ignorance, but the rights of man are violated (19). Slavery is, unfortunately, sanctioned by the law, but it is a rich source of immorality for all classes of the society (135, 145). Slavery violates natural laws (217), that is, God's laws as established in nature when He created it.

Lunin took his part in such participation in exile by writing treatises and letters with explicit instructions that they should be copied and distributed "in order to end the general slumber" and even published abroad (238, 241, 243, 246). He wrote his letters "to specify the organic questions of social being that have to be solved, but that are kept hidden and put aside by occupying the mind with secondary matters and little details" (5). Letters to his sister are not subversive; they aim at consolidation of elements of social order and explain organic questions important for the wellbeing of the country (39), although – in an act of little connivance understandable under the circumstances – he wrote to the chief of police that his sister had no other friend except him and thus he gave her advice in his letters, which involve explanation of laws and social issues. He did so reluctantly since these letters interrupt his scholarly work (16). That he did not treat his writing lightly is testified by a prophetic tone of his statement in which he fashioned himself as Elijah addressing El-isha (cf. 2 Kings 2): "My earthly mission came to an end. When going through the crowd I said what my compatriots needed to know. I leave my writings to my lawful heirs of thought, like a prophet who left his mantle for his pupil, replacing his own on the shores of Jordan" (24). The conviction of wearing a prophetic mantle was surely a factor which allowed Lunin to endure his dark Siberian hours.

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Streszczenie

Michał Łunin skazany został na zesłanie na Sybir za udział w ruchu dekabrystów. Podczas swego pobytu w Paryżu i w Polsce Łunin przyjął katolicyzm i odtąd wiara ta stanowiła dla niego źródło siły i intelektualnej inspiracji podczas jego dwudziestoletniego zesłania. Artykuł analizuje wypowiedzi Łunina w kwestiach teologicznych oraz na temat roli Kościoła w życiu jednostek i w życiu społecznym.

Słowa kluczowe: Łunin, katolicyzm, dekabryści.

Key words: Lunin, catholicism, decembrists.