FROM THE APOCALYPSE OF OUR TIMES
Of this work only numbers 8-9 are translated here.
THE APOCALYPSE OF OUR TIMES

A Christian

I t is as though he is ill and suspects everyone of being stricken with even worse diseases than himself. Only of one thing, of power, he feels no suspicion. Power is always good, blessed, and this is exclusively because he is lazy, and power promises to handle him like a cripple.

Charity, which everywhere exists to fill up a gap, is with Christians a normal state. All are engaged in charity towards the “poor brethren,” and poverty of possessions, of body and spirit, is Christianity. “Anaemic people.”

When the Slavs called the Varyags from over the sea to come and rule over them, to rule over their rich and vast land, they showed themselves to be cripples even before they were born. Terrible.

Terrible and true. And up to now, up to our days I have observed that all fine estates, rounded off and conveniently situated, are in the hands of Germans or Jews. “Stoll’s Villa,” “Winkler’s estate.” For 15,000 roubles Stoll bought forests and lands around three huge lakes, and seven years later he was offered 120,000; but he refused to sell. He knew that his grandson would get a million for the estate. It’s precisely like the “history of the Varyags.” There is no doubt that he bought the estate from a Russian squire, who had to provide for his kitchen-maid and her offspring. “She won’t need more than 15,000. Therefore I, too, need no more. I’ll end my days with her. And now and then she’ll
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allow me to have a little game at cards.” A poetical
nation. An artistic nation. It is anecdotic.
And that’s how we live. But let us return to
Christians. There is not a clear, kind, happy eye.
Everyone scrutinizing everyone else, everyone sus-
pecting everyone else. Everyone gossiping of every-
one else. “Christian literature” is almost the
“history of Christian gossip.” Look at our fiction;
at the theatre. It is almost an out-and-out slander.
How very terrible. And how still more terrible
to love it all. I groan and love; I moan and love.
It’s habit, tradition. Oh, my poor dears.

La Divina Comedia

With a clang, thud, and bang the iron curtain is
dropping down on Russian history.
The performance is over.
The public gets up.
“It’s time to put on our overcoats and go home.”
They look round.
But there are neither overcoats to put on, nor
houses to go to.

Odd

There are so many parables in the Gospels, but
where is there a prayer, a hymn, or a psalm? And
for some reason Christ never once took into his
hands a harp, a pipe, a zither, and never once
“cried out.” Why did not He teach people to
pray, having destroyed both the cult and the Temple?
Of the Temple He clearly said that it would be
destroyed; just as of Jerusalem He authoritatively
foretold that it would fall and be ruined. There
was going to be destroyed a centre of prayer and
prayerfulness, such as certainly had never yet been
anywhere else on earth. For some mysterious and
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inscrutable reason it has never occurred to people that the Evangel is a religiously-cold book, not to say a religiously-indifferent book. A book in which there are no songs, no joys, no ecstasies, no looking up to heaven; and in which generally there is "the least likeness to the paradise of the first men." It has never occurred to anyone that, if the Evangel surprises and strikes one most, it is by its religious sobriety, a sobriety akin to rationalism, where its "vapours" go neither upwards nor downwards. Parable after parable—the parable of the sower sowing in the field—it is all as it were ready made for Professor Harnack and for Father Petrov: a story from "everyday" life, with an edifying common "moral." . . . You may add Farraria to Professor Harnack—but where is religion here? Where is it, the psalm, the essence of the matter? And the king, irresistibly singing to God?

"As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God!"

On the great expanse of the Evangel there is only one prayer of seven lines. And how orderly and consecutive it all is. It is logic, not prayer; reminders of this and that, but no exaltation, not an iota of ecstasy. It is a kind of elongated "twice two = God." There is perhaps only "the prayer of the publican," the great, beautiful, solé prayer. But have a good look at it: it is not at all Christ's prayer; but a prayer, by chance overheard by the Evangelist —indeed the prayer of a man and a publican. Should it not strike everyone that in Christ's prayer, "Our Father," there is less of the noûmenon of prayerfulness than in that poor fellow's. And, on the whole, we do not hear prayers and loving heart-outpourings of Christ to His Father, which would be so natural from the Son, which is so much expected of the Son.
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The people pray, but Christ does not pray. Somewhere the Pharisees pray, removed, at a distance, in an evil shadow; and this parallel-wise “justifies,” as it were, the already predestined destruction of the Temple, and of Jerusalem, and of the whole people of Israel. “So they prayed, and what could there be expected of such a people?” Yet now we know of Simeon the Just, of Ben-Iochai, of Rabbi Akiba. They prayed not at all like “that.” . . . Well, take even Jonah: having found himself in the whale’s belly, he rose up to pray and cried out. Surely he was not a Pharisee and did not pray for the sake of Pharisaism. Jonah invisibly and beautifully justifies also the Pharisee. The Jews prayed not at all as it is described in the Evangel, and the Evangel contains a slander on the prayers of the Jews. Those hurrying little Jews, just like Simeon and Akiba, ran about, bustled, called out, lifted up their voices at the people, but never “stood up solemnly in an attitude,” and did not utter mere words, verily cursed words. The only thing in which they sinned against the Evangel was that they loved their Temple, and the city, and the people. . . .

A strange extinction of prayerfulness. . . . What a lot of travelling is done in the Acts and no prayer from anyone who is starting on a journey, and no prayer from anyone who has safely returned from his journey. And such a bustle withal. One can’t help observing chaffingly: “you are bustling too much, Martha, sit you down at the feet of the Heavenly Father.” But the Heavenly Father for some mysterious reason does not occur to the mind of any one of them; only the Son, everywhere the Son, who replaces the Father. . . . Yet what is prayer if it is not the overpowering attitude of the child-man towards God? And this indeed has mysteri-
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ously vanished. There is only arguing. And it occurs to one that David's harp, Apollo's lyre, and Marsyas' pipe—to take just a glance at the ancient world—have now been replaced by theological discussions. And perhaps the secret noûmenon of the Evangel, of the whole Evangelic cause, lay in the replacement of the music of prayer by the "cogito ergo sum" of theology.

Perturbatio Aeterna

"I say unto you: the first shall be last, and the last first."

And the disciples asked Him: "But, Lord, to what bounds and unto what appointed times?"

And He said again:

"The first shall be last and the last first."

"But, merciful Master, if it be so, then what kingdom will endure, and what land will remain safe and stable, if everything is to be put upside down and downside up?"

And He said once again:

"The first shall be last and the last first."

The disciples said:

"But if it be not sounding brass and tinkling cymbals, then how will fruit grow if there be not a stable layer of earth, but only the flashing of the shovel turning the earth from side to side?"

And He said again:

"Verily, verily I say unto you: the first shall be last and the last first."

And the disciples felt afraid. And turning aside they took council. They shook their heads. And kept silent.

* * *

And then history started to be busy: conspiracies, storms, revolutions. Tossing waves of popular
opinion. And everyone trying to rise to supremacy. And no one able to keep it up for long, but sinking to the bottom.

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Verily: "Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the wine of the earth."... (Apocalypse.)

And there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. ...  

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"He [Raskolnikov] was laid up in hospital the whole end of Lent and Passion week. Recovering, he remembered the dreams he had had in his fever and delirium. In his illness he dreamt that the whole world was as it were doomed as a sacrifice to some terrible, unheard-of, and unknown plague, sweeping over Europe from the depths of Asia. Everyone was to be destroyed, with the exception of a few, a few of the elect. There appeared new trichinae, microscopic beings penetrating the bodies of people. Yet those beings were spirits, endowed with a mind and will. People who absorbed them instantly became mad and raved. But never, never did people consider themselves so understanding and so unshakable in truth as the infected ones considered themselves. They never considered anything more unshakable than their verdicts, their scientific deductions, their moral convictions and beliefs. Whole villages, whole cities and peoples became infected and went mad. All were troubled and did not understand one another; everyone thought that in himself alone was contained the truth, and was tormented when he looked at others, beat his chest, wept, and wrung his hands. People did not know whom and how to judge, they could not agree as to what to consider wrong, what right. They did not know whom to condemn and
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whom to acquit. People killed one another in senseless malice. One people rose against another people, armies against armies; but the armies already on the march suddenly began to torment themselves, their lines got disarrayed, the soldiers threw themselves one on another, fought and killed one another, bit and devoured one another. In the cities all day long the alarm sounded; all were summoned to assemble; but who summoned and for what purpose—nobody knew; but all were in anguish. People left their most ordinary occupations, for everyone was proposing his ideas, his corrections; but they could not agree on anything. Work on the land ceased. Here and there people ran together in groups, agreed together on something, vowed never to part—but immediately started on something else than they just recently had agreed on, and they began to accuse one another, they fought and killed one another. Fires began to break out, famine came. Everyone and everything was coming to an end. The plague grew and swept on further and further. In the whole world only a few men could save themselves—those were the pure and elect, destined to start a new race of man and a new life, to renew and purify the earth.” (“Crime and Punishment.”)

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“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the temple.

“And Jesus said unto them: See you not all these things? Verily I say unto you: There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.” (Matthew xxiv, 1-2.)

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And John asked Him: “Lord, who shall betray
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Thee?” And Jesus answered: “He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it.” And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot. And after the sop Satan entered into him. And Judas went immediately out to betray him.

* * *

“That ye be not shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

“Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

“And now you know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

“For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed . . . even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved.” (The second Epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, chap. ii, 2-10.)

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“Thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars.

“I will make them of the synagogue of Satan,
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which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie.” (Apocalypse.)

Crushed under the Bookcase

Without moving the bookcase aside it is impossible to save, or rather to rescue from exceeding eternal torment a whole nation—of five, or eight, or ten million—we don’t know how many there are of them; and yet to crush even one man is so terrible. Lo, he wants to breathe and cannot breathe. “It hurts!” “It hurts!” “It hurts!” And yet who will move the bookcase aside? There is not a single tiny line in the “annals of Christianity” which does not increase the burden of pressure.

Who can move aside St. Augustine? Such a powerful, exceptional mind. And who can move aside John Chrysostom? The very name shows what his words were like. And Paul the apostle? And particularly Christ himself?

Yet the mere fact that there is “a live man under the bookcase” brings a shudder to the heart. “A live man under the bookcase?” “How did he get there?” Well, he’s there. And moreover—who? The most beloved son of God, the son who from the beginning of the world, from the creation of the world, has been the most beloved. And never did God turn his face from him, and he never forgot God.

“A man under the bookcase?”—“A man in the sea!”—and the vessel stops to rescue him from the sea. Nets, ropes, safety-belts are thrown out. “He’s out! Saved!” And all are glad—“a man is saved.” And no one frets because the vessel is delayed and people are kept waiting. Provided the man is saved.

For this alone “the course of the Christian vessel” appears strange: there is “a man in the sea,”

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and no one looks back, all have forgotten him. Man is forgotten. Oh, oh, oh... 

But to start moving the bookcase aside just means to begin again the whole business from the very beginning. "We did not accept Christ, but he is our God." How indeed can we hesitate in accepting Christ?

The whole Christian history has pressed on us and crushed us. So many commentaries. So many "annotations." How can such libraries be moved aside? On the Jews there presses the Imperial Public Library of Petersburg, the British Museum. And in Spain, the University of Salamanca; in Italy, the Ambrosian library of Venice. Lord—all these library cases press on the chest of a little Jew from Shklov. And surely you know how heavy books are.

But the man does not die; he keeps on moaning. Would he did die. Civilization would breathe more freely. For otherwise it is impossible to breathe. Moaning, moaning all the time.

A queer, moaning civilization. Already the evil of Christ's coming is manifest in the fact that there has come a civilization with a moan. Surely he preached the "acceptable year." In this, at any rate, He was mistaken: no "acceptable year" arrived, but there came a civilization with a moan.

What "good tiding" is this if "a man is in the sea" and "the bookcase has fallen down on man."

No. In all Christianity, in Christian history—in the way it has followed, in the way its spirituality has developed—there lies some evil. And here "the little flowers" of Francis of Assisi, as well as Anatole France and Renan, are equally powerless.

"Man has been crushed" and I don't want to hear the Imitation of Thomas à Kempis.
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Three Horoscopes

Is there a connection between the planet and man inhabiting it? And generally "of what does the burning sun speak?" ... "What is there in the stars?" Do the stars whisper? Or do they, dully and emptily, like empty pots, move according to Copernicus?

The horoscopes spoke of all that. "The silly knowledge of antiquity," to which, under the new science, no attention whatever is paid. But the new science did not predict the present war even a few months ahead. And, in a word, Comte's savoir pour praevoire—just in its Comtism, just in its positivism—has come a complete cropper. . . .

What are "horoscopes"? What are they? The demon? God? But even Christians, at any rate in villages, "believe in fate"? That is, they believe in the mysterious power of the stars. And it is astonishing that none of the historians has paid any attention to the three astounding "horoscopes," i.e., the "commands of the stars" which have already been fulfilled; and how well we know those horoscopes from history, and how the historians tell of them in the minutest detail. Loudly. Distinctly. For the whole world to hear.

One horoscope is that of Jesus Christ.
The other horoscope is that of Paul the Apostle.
The third horoscope of Constantine the Great.
One was crucified.
The other was also crucified, but with his head downwards.
The third, Constantine the Great, executed his son, whom he suspected of an intrigue with Fausta, his step-mother. That son was Crispus. And the wife, whom he evidently loved, he burnt in a red-hot bath.
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Dostoevsky, in a certain passage, observes that "the planet did not spare its Creator." . . . Oh, oh, oh! . . . Well now, is the earth evil? But he himself speaks of the glorious "white earth," of the "blessed earth." Did not he himself say "the holy land of Russia"? This, too, is a planet, a part of the planet. Why, whatever may be said, the planet itself is white, pure, right. And we must believe in it. Just simply believe. And for Him and for them that "believed" planet (according to Dostoevsky) has composed such terrible horoscopes, horoscopes unexampled in history, soul-freezing. . . .

Oh, moans. . . .

Moans, moans, moans. . . .

But how truly there is contained in it, like a roaring maelstrom, the greatest vortex of the ocean, the roar of the Apocalypse!

"They call themselves apostles, and are the offspring of Satan. They say they are the church, but are the synagogue of Satan." . . .

Oh, oh, oh. . . .

Terrors, terrors. . . .

The noumena of the planet.

And the foundations of the earth shook. (The gospel account of the moment of Christ's crucifixion.)

"And he went down into the abyss." . . . Terrible, terrible. . . .

How shattered is the planet! And, earth, where are thy fragments?

Horoscopes, horoscopes, horoscopes. Oh, how terrible are their predictions. Is it indeed the whisper of the stars? Run, historians, shut your ears.

"Blessed are the ears which have not heard anything of the history of man."

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On the Passions of the World

The earthly life here already contains the roots of life unearthly. As the poet says:

There is exhilaration in fight. . . .

These are Mars and Ares, the deities of Mars and Ares; they are like gods. . . .

And on the verge of the dark abyss,
And in the roaring of the hurricane,
And in the wafting of the plague . . .
The pledge may be of immortality. (Pushkin.)

What a thought, what a thought flashed, intuitively, through Pushkin’s mind! Just so, “the pledge of immortality and life eternal.” This is the Hades and Eleusis of antiquity: and how can we help not believing in them and in their reality, if the thought of Pushkin, the Christian, of Pushkin, the poet—who at the moment of writing his poem was not thinking of the ancients—suddenly and unexpectedly, suddenly and unconsciously, suddenly and irresistibly approached the Greeks, the Romans, Tartarus, the ideas of Hesiod and of Homer. . . .

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Similarly I thought of nothing when looking at a caterpillar, a chrysalis, and a butterfly, which I saw, on one hand, with one part of my being; but on the other hand I saw them as clearly, as distinctly, and not with one part of my being only.

Then, coming in to my friends who were staying with me, Professor Kapterev, the naturalist, and Florensky, the priest, I asked them:

“I say, in a caterpillar, chrysalis, and butterfly—which is the ‘I’?”

I.e., the “I,” as it were one letter, one scintillation, one ray.
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Kapterev was silent; but Florensky, having thought for a moment, said: "Surely, the butterfly is the entelechy of the caterpillar and chrysalis."

"Entelechy" is an Aristotelian term, and one of the most famous terms which he himself thought out and composed philologically. A certain mediaeval schoolman sold his soul to the devil so that the latter might even in a dream explain to him what precisely Aristotle meant by "entelechy." But, among other sayings, there is also this of Aristotle's: "the soul is the entelechy of the body." Then it became suddenly clear to me—from Florensky's answer (and what else could Florensky have said, if not this?)—that the "butterfly" is really, mysteriously, and metaphysically, the soul of the caterpillar and chrysalis.

Thus happened this, cosmogonically overwhelming, discovery. It may be said that the three of us discovered the soul of insects before it was discovered and proved in man.

Now let us see "what is it doing"?

"It gathers nectar," "it rummages among flowers." This is rather suspicious and reprehensible. But, actually, a butterfly has no mouth, nothing to drink with or to take in solid food. Kapterev, as a naturalist, said then: "they (he did not say all of them) have no intestines." Does it mean then that they have not a stomach either? Certainly! What a strange... being, existence? "It does not eat." Do they live for a long time? There are flies—ephemerides. And at any rate they, and beyond any doubt, all of them copulate. It means then the "world of the future age" is pre-eminently determined by "copulation"; and then light is thrown on its irresistibility, on its insatiability, and—"alas!" or "not alas!"—on its "sacredness," and that it is a

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"mystery" (the mystery of marriage). The further, the more discoveries. But it is obvious that in insects, cows, everywhere in the animal and vegetable world, and not only in man alone, it is a "mystery, heavenly and sacred." And, indeed, it is so, in its central point, in copulation. Then we understand "the shame that attaches to sexual organs": it is the "life of the future age," through which we enter into "life beyond the grave," into "life of the future age."

And, strangely, then becomes understandable also the joy. "Eden, bliss." Yet, more than this: let us examine the "nectar of flowers." Indeed, this particularly is amazing that insects (not butterflies only, but scarabs, beetles, ladybirds, etc.) rummage in the huge—as compared with their own size—sexual organs of trees, and particularly of bushes, roses, etc., oleanders and such like, orchids. How do flowers appear to the butterflies? This is what we must understand, and the understanding of which is noiemenally essential. It is not impossible that to each insect there appears a "tree and flower." A garden and flowers are imagined as "paradise."... And so indeed it is: "summer, warmth, and the sun, into the rays of which they fly; and from the flowers they 'gather nectar.'" Then we can't help seeing the association of "nectar and the soul," and that the soul is for the nectar, and the nectar for the soul. Again, there is the myth: "the gods on Olympus feed on nectar and ambrosia." But previous to the myth and parallel to it: what a flood of light is poured on "why do flowers smell," and why the flowers of plants are so huge that a whole insect can "enter into them." It is perfectly evident that the bigness of the flowers is just designed to allow the insect to enter entire. Then we can accept the idea that
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“plants hear and think” (as in the tales of antiquity), and that they “have a soul”!! Oh, what a soul! . . . But what is still more interesting that a “garden,” any garden generally, “ours and earthly” is yet somehow not “ours” and not “earthly,” but also of the future, of “life beyond the grave.” . . . Then we can understand “winter and summer,” since out of the winter and through the winter, having lain in the earth throughout the winter, the “seed rises from the grave.” Essentially, in accordance with the same law, as does the “chrysalis” of the butterfly.

Thus “our fields” are “fields beyond the grave,” “meadows of the life to come.”

When the yellowing field is stirring . . .
Then in the skies I see God . . .

We understand then the peculiar and agitating feeling, experienced by man in a garden, experienced by us in a field, experienced by us in a forest—which, from a rationalist point of view, is utterly inexplicable. We understand why Antaeus, in touching mother-earth, recovers his former strength. A great many stories of “antiquity” become quite clear; as well as Dostoevsky’s phrase, a phrase overwhelming, worthy of the whole Goethe, the pagan: “God has taken seeds from other worlds and planted them in the earth. And all that could grow, grew. But everything on earth lives through the mysterious contact with the other worlds.” Herein is the whole of paganism. As, for instance, the whole of Egypt, whose temples were just groves, pillars—trees, invariably trees with “flower shaped capitals.” And even a garden of ours is a mysterious temple, and not only does “sitting in the garden give health,” but “sitting there turns one to prayer.” Then we can understand the “sacred groves of antiquity,” “the stillness of the
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night in the woods," and Nature as sacred, not only "sacred theology alone." But let us return once more to the passions and to fire.

Through the passions and "orgies" we get an insight, mysterious yet real, into "the life of the future age." Just look how suspiciously and reprehensibly butterflies caress flowers! Yes, you can't help blaming them. But... there's "the life of the future age"; and well, what's to be done? It becomes clear then wherefrom and wherefore sprang the "orgies of antiquity," and that "without orgies there were no ancient religions." Remember the "nectar and ambrosia" of Olympus; and how in my Oriental Motifs I explained the Egyptian mysteries by means of drawings, not daring to do it with words... Examining now collections of coins—coins of various countries with identical images—I already look at them with a feeling of kinship and with mute understanding. Without articulation and without words, just as I did in Oriental Motifs, the ancients conveyed through them their beloved mysteries, all of which they knew and knew completely; but no one has dropped a single word about "the life of the future age," of which life in this earthly life silence must for ever be preserved.

But... it is thence that "our passions" arise!!?? These are, indeed, "protuberances of the sun" (torches, eruptions from the body of the sun). And the sun itself, is not it subject to "passions"? Verily, "there are spots even on the sun." Christ alone is spotless. But our lovely sun is a bit of a "sinner": it burns and warms, it burns and heats; it burns—and in springtime when it "grows bigger," when it not only warms, but begins to excite the blood, all animals start conceiving. The strength of the sun, the "sin" of the sun, passes into animals. Every-
thing grows stout, all bellies grow big. The earth itself wants seed. . . . There is Demeter, there is Gea, there again is the "stirring field heaving its breasts in prayer." Now, shall we say with Christianity that all this is "a lie"? And that theology can be found only in seminaries? But surely there is much more theology in a bull jumping on a cow. . . . And generally:

Spring is coming, spring is coming
And the green noise is rising, rising . . .

this is paganism which is true; this is Apis and Serapis.

Kapterev mused for a while and said: Observations show that in a caterpillar wrapped up in a cocoon and appearing as though dead, there actually begins after this a reconstruction of the tissues of the body. So that it does not only appear dead, but actually dies. . . . Only instead of the dead caterpillar there begins to emerge a something else, but just out of this definite caterpillar, as it were out of the caterpillar-personality, with as it were a Christian and family name. Since out of any caterpillar placed there will come that butterfly there. And if you were to pierce the caterpillar, say, with a pin, then no butterfly will come out of it, nothing will come out of it, and the grave will remain a grave, and the body will not "come to life again." At that moment, just then, it became clear to me why the fellahin (the descendants of the ancient Egyptians who have evidently preserved their whole faith) cried and fired their guns on the Europeans, when the latter carried away the mummies, removed from the pyramids and from the royal graves. They, those European nihilists, dead whilst alive and tainted, understanding neither life nor death, had violated the whole-
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ness of their (fellaḥin’s) ancestors, and thereby had deprived them of “resurrection.” As Kapterev said, they as it were “broke the mummies in two,” or “pierced the chrysalis with a pin,” after which it passes into the grave without being. And, then, the idea that “the butterfly is the soul of the caterpillar,” “the entelechy of the caterpillar” (according to Florensky) became still more confirmed in me; and above all it became clear and proved to me that the Egyptians in their thinking and in their discoveries of “life beyond the grave” had proceeded in the same way as I did; that is, through the “butterfly” and its “phases.” That to them, too, it was a way of discoveries and revelations, and that it was altogether true. Then I clearly understood the sarcophagi-mummies. Who that has seen them on the ground floor of the Hermitage in Petersburg could help being struck first of all by their size? Why such a large, huge sarcophagus for a mummy of a dead person, which itself is not at all large? But surely this is the “cocoon” of the chrysalis-man; and the sarcophagus was invariably constructed on the model of a cocoon. Just as oblong and smooth as any cocoon which a caterpillar invariably builds, was the sarcophagus which the Egyptians made for the body “becoming a cocoon.” And the body was put in winding-sheets, was wrapped, as the caterpillar of a silk-worm, just letting out silk threads and, as it were, making a “silk shirt” for itself.

And a rough brown shell over it. That is the sarcophagus—always of a uniform brown tone. I think that even in its material it is identical with the shell of a chrysalis. Altogether the burial ritual of the Egyptians sprang from imitating the phases of the caterpillar. And hence chiefly comes the scarabeus, the insect as a symbol of transition into
future life, into life after death. This is the most famous of Egyptian deities—one might say their greatest deity. Why an insect then? But there was there just the same way of reasoning, as in my case. The supreme, the highest that the Egyptians discovered, was "the insect-like future life." And they immortalized their discovery through the insect, the scarabaeus. It is the noblest memory; i.e., the recollection and grateful memory of their own history and of the significance for which their history chiefly stood. Hence a multitude of explanations; as, for instance, why at "feasts" and particularly at "domestic feasts" they loved to carry mummies about. This is not sorrow, nor fear, nor a menace. Not the "Christian menace of death" which can cut short any joy. On the contrary: it is joy of the promise of eternal life, and the joy of this life, of its limpidity and of its glory. "We are now enjoying ourselves, but not yet perfectly," "we are at a feast, but not yet at a perfect one." Only when everything is over shall we participate in perfect love, in a perfect feast, with perfect food and drink. And our wine will be inexhaustible, and our drinks sweeter than all which we have here, for it will be pure love, and although material and concrete, yet already formed as it were out of the very rays of the sun, out of the light and scent and essence of flowers supernal. For if there are flowers, indeed they must be supernal.

Heavenly roses! Heavenly roses!! And the Egyptians carried about a mummy.