

## METROPOLITAN PLATON ON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

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Metropolitan Platon (1737-1812) was one of the most important ecclesiastical figures in Russia of the second half of the eighteenth century. He was very close to the imperial throne. He was a teacher of religion of the prince Paul, a son of the empress Catherine II, then a tutor and confessor of his wife Wilhelmina/Natalia and then of his new wife Sophia/Maria. He assisted in the ceremony of coronation of Paul I and then he conducted the coronation ceremony of Alexander I. He was also a member of the Synod, the highest ecclesiastical body in the Russian church.

#### Fashionable tolerance

It has been a century since certain reforms had been introduced in the church by the patriarch Nikon. The reforms resulted in a very strong reaction of Old Believers or schismatics who could not accept these reforms and separated themselves from the official church, not infrequently forming separate communities with their own – presumably originally Christian – rules. Sometimes the reaction of the schismatics was violent against the official church as expressed in the destruction of certain ecclesiastical items and possessions, or was directed against themselves leading to suicides. Many attempts were made to bring the schismatics to the Orthodox fold, sometimes by force, sometimes by persuasion. On Catherine II's request (PS 6.8),<sup>1</sup> Platon

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<sup>1</sup> References are made to the following works of Platon: KI – *Краткая Церковная российская история*, М., Синодальная типография, 1805, vols. 1-2; P – *Путешествие Высокопреосвященнейшего Платона, Митрополита Московского, в Киев и по другим Российским городам в 1804 году*, 1813, in И. М. Снегирев, *Жизнь Московского митрополита Платона*, М., Типография Ведомостей Московской Городской Полиции 1856; PS – *Поучительные слова*, М. 1778-1806, vols. 1-20; references are made to sermons and to *Увещание раскольников*, vol. 6, pp. 3-118; *Сокращенный катихизис, для священно и церковнослужителей*, vol. 6, pp. 219-288; PU – *Православное учение, или сокращенное христианское Богословие*, in *Поучительные слова*, vol. 7. The book was translated three times into English: *The Present State of the Greek Church in Russia*, Edinburgh, Oliphant, Waugh &

wrote a book, *An exhortation to the schismatics* (1766), intended as a conversion tool motivated by a recent outburst of violence of the schismatics.

Among the ecclesiastical elements that the schismatics found unacceptable, there were 1. modifications of the books used in church service; 2. the position of fingers during crossing oneself; 3. the 4-pointed cross; 4. the seven breads used during church service; and 5. not marching like the sun during baptismal and marriage ceremonies. There were other issues as well, but these were the ones discussed at some length by Platon.

Platon argued that “fortunes of the church are united with fortunes of the state”, so, when Russia was under the Tatar occupation, many errors crept into church books since books were copied by hand; there were no schools and thus no scholarly insight was exercised to copy the books properly (PS 6.16). However, Platon argued that when modifying the books using the Greek original, some changes were made in wording, but the power of the books remained the same (34). No change affected the power of faith (41). The Orthodox faith was not affected by these modifications; on the contrary, it was even strengthened. There was thus no cause for alarm and certainly no cause for the separation from the church on account of these changes.

As to the way of crossing oneself, people crossed themselves in the apostolic church, but it is not known how they put their fingers together. Following church tradition, today, believers put together three fingers: the thumb, the pointing and middle fingers; the remaining two fingers are pressed to the palm of the hand; schismatics put together the thumb with the last two fingers; the pointing and middle fingers are straight. Positions of fingers, said Platon, have to be according to faith and faith is in the mind and heart, not in the fingers (PS 6.44). Schismatics say that putting together three fingers is an image of the Trinity and the two straight fingers depict two natures of Christ. The Orthodox believers will say exactly the same about the positions of their fingers. No doctrinal difference, then, exists between them (45). Belief in the Trinity is important, not which fingers are put together to signify this (46). The Orthodox use their way since it is the way of crossing oneself in all countries (48).

The 4-pointed cross is just a cross, with no additions; the 8-pointed cross includes also the title put above the head (the *titulus*) and a support for the feet. The Orthodox recognize the 8-pointed cross and the 4-pointed cross,

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Innes, 1814; *The Orthodox Doctrine of the Apostolic Eastern Church*, London, Whittaker, 1857; and in an abbreviated version, *The Great Catechism of the Holy Catholic, Apostolic and Orthodox Church*, London, Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1867.

stated Platon. Although schismatics call the latter the Latin cross using the Polish word for “cross” (PS 6.49), or even the Antichrist seal (52), it is a cross and although the Latin schismatics, i.e., Catholics, recognize it, it does not mean that it should be rejected (49). When Christ carried the cross, it did not have the title and was not 8-pointed (50). When schismatics cross themselves, they make the sign of the 4-pointed cross, after all (51). All believers recognize the cross because Christ died on it, regardless of the number of its endpoints (53). Therefore, the shape of the cross should not be a reason for splitting the church.

One rite specific to Orthodoxy is a benediction of bread, and a contentious issue was how many breads should be used in the ceremony. Orthodoxy uses one bread (*prosfora*) for the eucharist since Jesus established the Last Supper over one bread, not five or seven. Church service takes place over one bread called the lamb (PS 6.55). As Platon explained, early Christians brought bread and wine with them to the service and handed them to the priest calling them *prosfora*, bringing. They were put next to the altar and the priest chose one bread for the Last Supper (57). The custom ceased with time (58), but the church maintained it by preparing more bread and putting it at the altar as offering (59). The church uses four such additional breads, but the church does not prohibit bringing more breads. In some villages, 100-200 of them are brought on some holidays (60).

At baptism and marriage, people go from right to left, not from left to right as the sun goes. This hardly needs to be discussed, said Platon. It is important that baptism is in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, not the direction of walking during the ceremony (PS 6.64).

In Platon’s view, what schismatics consider to be errors, they do it by ignorance or obstinacy, but even if these were genuine errors, believers should endure them and stay in the church (PS 6.93), since these errors do not pertain to faith and sacraments, but to church rites (94). Church customs change: there are now no deaconesses; bishops are no longer married; communion was handed to the hand, a change introduced by Chrysostom (95). The most important custom is to preserve love and unity in the church (96). In sum, there are no doctrinal differences between schismatics and the Orthodox church; the contentious issues are related to rites, to the form of worship. Therefore, there is hardly any serious obstacle for the schismatics to return to the church.

Platon stressed the fact that no one can be forced to accept the truth and that conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit (PS 6.75), which is in stark contrast to the way of approaching the problem earlier in the century by involving civil authorities in bringing back schismatics with harsh measures that even included capital punishment, as exemplified by an approach propo-

sed by Stefan Iavorskii. Platon was very gentle in his *Exhortation*, truly concerned about the unity of the church. He did not use name-calling with which former rebuttals of the schismatic doctrines were replete.<sup>2</sup> He even proposed to call those willing to submit themselves to the official church those of one faith (единоверцы) and to reserve the name “schismatics” to those who want to remain separated from the official church.<sup>3</sup>

Incidentally, a question arises: if rites are of secondary importance, why discuss them at such length? Why even change them? Could not the official church accept what schismatics promoted?

True, rites are of secondary importance, but this does not deprive them of all significance. Platon admitted that there are so many rites in the church and so many sacraments. However, none of them would be needed if only one man was on earth; this man simply could open his heart directly to God. However, rites and sacrament are needed to create a union of believers; they tie people one to another with “the holy union of love” and proclaim people’s faithfulness to the church and that they are all brothers, members of one society (PS 11.78, the same on the eucharist, 11.192). That is, rites maintain the cohesion of the society and they should be the same for all members for this cohesion to be lasting. Because society changes, rites can be changed as well to adjust to a new social environment. Yet, only the church rooted in the apostolic tradition can make such changes. And so, liturgy was first performed according to specifications of James, then of Basil, then of Chrysostom. The same happened with virtually all hymns and canons. The Creed was at first different from the Nicene creed (6.40). In fact, there were five creeds: apostolic, Nicene (apostolic + divinity of the Holy Spirit), Athanasian, Ephesian (12 anathemas), and Chalcedonian (8.125-126). Schismatics defied the decision of the official church and thus they did it, as it were, at their whim, not under the divine guidance. Therefore, their rites can be tolerated but cannot be accepted as part of the official liturgy.

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<sup>2</sup> Before Platon, very strong language was used. Polemicists called schismatics pigs, hogs, and the like, Н. В. Лысогорский, *Московский митрополит Платон Левшин как противораскольный деятель*, Ростов-на-Дону, Тер-Абрамиан, 1905, p. 108. However, “harsh tone of polemics can never be justified, since it is contrary to the evangelical spirit” (p. 109). Such language only invokes enmity. Such language is absent in Platon, p. 110. However, it is difficult not to detect harshness in Platon’s statement that schismatics break the sacred union between us and our ancestors; thus, they are neither true children of the church nor the sons of the fatherland (PS 11.302).

<sup>3</sup> Н. В. Лысогорский, *Московский митрополит Платон Левшин как противораскольный деятель*, cit., pp. 373, 536.

When it came to the application of the tolerant approach he advocated, Platon somewhat vacillated. When some schismatics asked for “the lawful priesthood by old rites”, then, in 1796, Platon denied granting their “insane and lawless” request considering it to be potentially harmful for the church. Also, he would not allow the Orthodox priests to conduct a service among schismatics according to their old rites and books, since that would put in disadvantage “our holy rites and books and the church authority”.<sup>4</sup> Later, in 1799, Platon allowed for schismatic priests, but only under strict supervision of an Orthodox archpriest. However, priests that escaped should not be restored to their ecclesiastic posts.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, the Orthodox believers should receive sacraments from schismatic priests only in the case of “extreme necessity”. Should it be done routinely, regular Orthodox would effectively become schismatics. Platon wanted that all believers are freed from a fine for not going to confession and not taking communion. However, this is up to the civic authorities and the Synod should make a requisite appeal. Also, a bishop could consecrate a newly united/schismatic priest with two fingers.<sup>6</sup> In 1800, the Synod accepted Platon’s statement.<sup>7</sup> In sum, Platon did not have any problem with schismatics clinging to their rites under the watchful eye of the Orthodox authority to exercise their way to worship God if they renounced their separatist urges (cf. the proposed rite of accepting schismatics to the church, PS 6.107-118) and recognized the authority of the Orthodox church.

However, Platon’s tolerance had its limits. His intolerant sentiments were very strongly expressed in his slim work, *A voyage to Kiev and other Russian cities in 1804*. Platon had nothing but the deepest disdain for the Jews. In the city of Dubrovna, west of Smolensk, with predominantly Jewish population, the Jews occupied themselves with commerce so common among Jews, reported Platon. Christians were poor. “By some prejudice or by truth itself, we could not look at the Jews without disgust, since it seemed to us that on their faces there was written evil and guile and they appeared to us to be guilty of the situation of local Christians” who confirmed this sentiment (P 16). With great joy Platon heard a rumor on his way that the Jews were expelled from one place near Homel (23). In his opinion, “the Jews, wherever they are, are the first cause of the exhaustion of the poor Christians. We were astonished beyond measure, why would Christian landowners trust

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<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, p. 315.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, pp. 381-382.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem, pp. 384-386.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, p. 389.

them more than their own Christian brothers, [trust] this race known in the entire world for its greed of profit and evil against Christians [that is] natural to them” (54). Non-Orthodox Christian denominations fared only slightly better, as expressed in Platon’s statement of faith concerning tolerance. In Little Russia, there were Catholic and Orthodox churches and monasteries in the same locations. For instance, in the village of Chechersk near Mokhylev, an Orthodox and a Jesuit church were erected side by side. “We could not explain this contradiction other than it was the result of the fashionable way of thinking called *tolerance* which wants to mix into one all faiths and rejoice that they appear in different, but united scenes, like in the theater. The spirit of the Gospel does not allow to persecute anyone, particularly because of faith; however, by the same holy spirit, it should be visible the distinction of true Orthodox faith from other, erroneous [faiths]” (21-22). In a private conversation with a foreign visitor, general Francisco de Miranda, Platon did mention the need for absolute tolerance, “since how can the criticism of all dogmas be allowed, but at the same time, it is prohibited to criticize ukases and threaten those who dare do that?”<sup>8</sup> This by no means indicates that Platon wanted to extend tolerance to other faiths; he only wanted the expression of his own opinions to be tolerated. He simply did not want to meet a fortune of someone who would openly dare to discuss the conduct of the monarch since, as Platon phrased it in 1800 in a conversation with an English traveler, “we would send him to enjoy the full liberty of preaching in the free air of Siberia”.<sup>9</sup>

Whenever non-Orthodox faiths are mentioned, they are always vilified, and Platon did not shy of using harsh and abusive language every time when referring to them. “In our times, to the great offence of Christianity, we see three principal sects or offshoots: Papist, Lutheran, and Calvinist. They are all opposite to one another. Popery, besides being full of harmful superstitions, blindly obeys Popish decrees in contradiction to the word of God, reinterpreting the dogma about the Holy Spirit in opposition to the testimony of the Holy Scripture, took away from common people the communion cup and the reading of the Holy Scripture, invented some purgatory fire, and appropriated a power, unknown to the Gospel, to convert with fire and sword those who oppose it”. The Lutherans and Calvinist rejected prejudices of the Roman church, but with it also the apostolic traditions of the first churches. They keep the same doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit like the Ro-

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<sup>8</sup> Ф. де Миранда, *Путешествие по Российской империи*, М., Наука 2001, p. 192.

<sup>9</sup> E. D. Clarke, *Travels in various Countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa*, vol. 1, *Russia, Tartary and Turkey*, London, Cadell & Davies, 1813, p. 152.

manists, but they have teachings about the communion and other sacraments that are contrary to the Scripture. Lutherans teach about Christ's omnipresence which is only the Father's attribute; the Calvinists teach predestination (PU 2.§28a). Platon expressed his particular dislike toward Jesuits. When they were allowed to teach in St. Petersburg and elsewhere, he considered this to be "genuinely the greatest evil" since "who does not know what a plague for the Church of Christ is papism and to what extent wily and malicious is its tool, the Jesuits?"<sup>10</sup> For a good measure, he described the Jesuits to be "the nastiest and most insidious among all bipeds"<sup>11</sup> and they will not go to sleep without doing something evil. I am surprised that it is allowed to live such a kind of monks openly in our empire, even in Petersburg, while our monks are not endured".<sup>12</sup> Most of the time invectives begin and end the polemic with other faiths, particularly with Catholicism. No arguments are given against religious tenets Platon found unacceptable. The longest argument is made in respect to the belief that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone. "The Papists or those clinging to the Roman church, without any foundation and in contradiction to all tradition, added *and from the Son*. We do not want to investigate it too much, since this mystery is unsearchable: we should not again quarrel much [about it]", but the Scriptures say that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone, not from the Son (J. 15:26) (2.§26a). However, this rare example of theological discussion with Catholicism can hardly be convincing since apostle John said that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, not from the Father *alone*. The Catholics could just argue that their addition in the Nicene creed is not in violation of the Scriptures as Platon asserted.

Catholicism and Protestantism are all evil and thus is all the West; therefore, Platon spared no venom when referring to it; in one sermon he stated: "evil and wily West, always hostile, although blind to the good, toward the evil it is always sharp-eyed and clear-sighted, incited by boundless and anti-Christian love of power, it directed toward our holy Church all fiery arrows

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<sup>10</sup> Letter to Amvrosii, 13 March 1804, in Митр. Платон, "Из глубины воззвах к тебе, Господи...", М., Паломник, 1996, p. 99.

<sup>11</sup> Platon apparently found the insult quite appealing since he called the schismatic Dmitrii Fedorov who was at the head of the movement "a nastiest biped with no conscience and no religion": Н В. Лысогорский, *Московский митрополит Платон Левшин как противораскольный деятель*, cit., p. 339.

<sup>12</sup> Letter to Amvrosii, 11 April 1804, in Митр. Платон, "Из глубины воззвах к тебе, Господи...", cit., p. 100. Platon forgot here lamentably low level of education of the Russian clergy, which otherwise concerned him deeply.

of the evil one”.<sup>13</sup> If power is so evil, it is worth looking at how Platon saw the relation between the state and the church.

#### The state and the church

Russia was an autocratic monarchy and the ultimate political power was in the hands of the tsar (or tsarina). This was always justified by the tsar being God’s anointed emperor/empress and Platon was of the same opinion. The favorite Biblical justification is Romans 13, to which Platon also referred: “there is no authority except from God” (e.g., PS 2.125; 13.266), and the commandment to honor parents which supposedly includes honoring a sovereign, the first ruler after God who should be loved (PU 3.§9.2). Hence Platon’s frequent addressing the tsarina as the mother of the fatherland<sup>14</sup> and the tsars as its fathers.

If the monarchs’ authority comes from God, then it should be revered and there is no shortage of reverence to the tsarist power in Platon’s sermons, particularly to Catherine II. The servile language he frequently used is difficult to endure by today’s sensibility. Very often in a sermon Platon referred to her as an example of all virtues, a model of Christian life, as the light of the nation, the monarch about whom all subjects should always think and pray, and be elevated by her example. Catherine II “has clearly demonstrated before the whole world Her devotion to God and commitment to the true faith by her glorious accession to the Russian throne. Not thirst for glory and riches of gold and silver motivated Her spirit to this wondrous undertaking, but only the desire to save the church from the evils threatening her and to bring peace and prosperity to the beloved fatherland” (PS 1.22). She was “the Russian Atlas who carries on her sacred shoulders the burden of the largest Empire on earth”, “the ever-flowing source of general happiness” (PS 2.72). “In Her sacred face shines the brightest devotion for God; devotion

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<sup>13</sup> Quoted in И. М. Снегирев, *Жизнь Московского митрополита Платона*, cit., vol. 2, p. 101.

<sup>14</sup> To bolster his case for Catherine II’s motherhood of Russia, it was not beneath Platon to use a genealogical fib when he addressed the empress: “You are venerable and of most noble blood which you received from your Great Ancestors, Russian Sovereigns” (PS 2.133). However, Catherine II (Sophie Fredericke Auguste von Anhalt-Zerbst) had no Russian blood in her veins. Her mother, Johanna Elisabeth of Holstein-Gottorp, was a sister of Peter III’s father, Karl Frederick; Peter III’s mother, Anna, was Peter I’s daughter. Incidentally, early in her reign, the Synod asked Catherine II to agree to be officially called a mother of the fatherland, but she rejected the project, С. М. Соловьев, *История России с древнейших времен*, М., Университетская типография, 1825, vol. 25, p. 160.

that is wise, devotion of the love of man". "Her imperial face is the sweetest light that shines upon Her subjects with joy" (2.200). God gave Russia an Empress (11.36) "gifted with exceptional wisdom and born for excellent enterprises". All her statutes were motivated by love of man. "It seems as though not an Empress from her awesome Throne gave them to her subjects and slaves, but a Mother surrounded by her family put in our mouths cordial and consoling words," since her laws are written with motherly milk (37-38). "Not only us, but also the entire world is assured about great attributes and virtues of our Great Empress and the parents of high birth [Paul and Mary]. Their enlightenment is amazing for the world; their love of man is like inborn; their honesty/nobleness is the basis of all their works; their piety the joy and adornment of the church. What else can flow from such a purest source than the purest water?" (11.270). Catherine II was capable of supernatural feats: her "prayers brought winds and directed them against enemies" (2.286). Also, when "old age weakened your strength: She will revive it with [her] care. Sickness made your life burdensome: She heals it with [her] care" (11.57). The adulation goes as far as putting the tsar/tsarina on the same level as God and Christ: "By preserving all-diligently the divine elements of the image and likeness of God stamped on her heart, She thereby becomes for us the visible image of the all-holy Divinity" (2. 403-404). When Catherine II and her son Paul I participated in experimental vaccination against smallpox, Platon depicted it as Catherine's sacrifice of her son just like God sacrificed His Son (2.214). She was the Mother of the fatherland who said to her subjects, "Come to me, all laboring and burdened, and I will give you rest", which is, of course, how Christ called people to come to Him (Mt. 11:28). Peter I's name cannot be forgotten. "If we are silent, these stones will cry it out" (2.276), which are words that Christ used in reference to Himself (Lk. 19:40). Catherine II and Paul I protect Russia "with the eye which never slumbers nor sleeps" (2.231), which is a phrase that refers to God Himself (Ps. 121[120]:4).

The church is not exempted from this semi-divine imperial power and Peter I made sure of it by issuing the *Spiritual regulation* (1721) written mainly by Prokopovich. The *Regulation* abolished the position of the patriarch and established the Synod as the highest ecclesiastical authority; however, the Synod was under the imperial authority; thus, effectively, the church was subjugated to the state. The *Regulation* required that the members to the Synod and all the clergy swear the allegiance to the tsar. In his *Short history of the Russian church* Platon simply accepted this state of affairs without offering any discussion. He simply stated that reasons for the liquidation of patriarchate are explained in the *Regulation* and "its examination should not be entered" (KI 2.274).

Platon not only did not oppose the church's *status quo*, but explicitly endorsed it. He said that "the church itself admits that it owes [its position] to his [Peter I's] instruction, since it received from him a new star/light" (PS 2. 276). In the *Abridged catechism for the clergy* (1775), Platon included an oath of a priest to be made to the tsarina Catherine II and her son Paul "to serve faithfully and sincerely and be obedient in all without sparing my life to the last drop of blood" and to obey her laws (6.281), and do all "that can in all situations be of faithful service and useful to the Empress. To inform as soon as I learn about a damage to what is in Her Highness' interest, about harm and loss, not only to inform in timely manner, but also to stop in at any cost" as it is fitting "to the slave (paб) and subject of Her Imperial Majesty" (cf. 12.277). Only afterwards the priest swore to perform properly his priestly duties and to live an exemplary life (6.282). Deacons were expected to make the same oath (285-288). The clergy were slaves of the tsarina, which is a repetition of the same requirement from the *Regulation*: "to be faithful, good, and obedient slave (paб) and subject to the natural and true Tsar and Sovereign".

It is interesting to see that, privately, Platon expressed some reservations concerning this arrangement. "You write about the sorry situation of the clergy; it is no different here: the same pomposity. And I am not surprised knowing that secular principles are introduced from which stems all evil, namely, all power is entrusted them; they take us for nothing and not only they want to submit us to themselves but also they consider us their subordinates".<sup>15</sup> He complained about an impossibility to use church's money to renovate monasteries without having permission from secular authorities. "What business do we have with them and they with us? And whence they took it that we should subordinate ourselves even in this matter?"<sup>16</sup> After seeing in one book a permission of the Synod and the censor to print it, he was irritated that the permission of the Synod was not sufficient, "and so, we, poor bishops and old men, should in our works expect a permission from children and from the laity".<sup>17</sup>

However, officially, the existing hierarchy was sacred and should not have been violated, at least, not lightly. Platon allowed for the possibility that the obedience to God's law sometimes requires disobedience to higher authorities (PU 3.§4), but he was hardly an example of the reality of such a

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<sup>15</sup> Letter to Amvrosii, 30 Aug. 1788, in Митр. Платон, "Из глубины воззвах к тебе, Господи...", cit., p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> Letter to Amvrosii, 20 Sept. 1788, Ibidem, p. 83.

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Amvrosii, 5 Dec. 1801, Ibidem, p. 92.

principle. Rather, he advocated unquestioning obedience. Servants should respect their masters like parents and even patiently endure their misbehavior; on all occasions servants should defend their masters' honor (3.§9.5). Platon urged his listeners, "Be obedient and respectful to your masters and to the authorities put above you and work for them sincerely and faithfully like before the eyes of God Himself" (2.339). Platon never spoke against the shameful institution of serfdom. Instead, by terminological slight of hands, he considered freedom to be not doing whatever one wants, but doing according to the law, whereby, a slave can be free (2.219). Awareness of such freedom should suffice enslaved Russian peasants. If they tried to gain their freedom by running away, they violated the law, and that could not be tolerated. It is a secret dishonesty, stated Platon, and thus sinful, when a runaway slave is hidden (PU 3.§12.2). To his credit, Platon saw the plight of peasants. He said that in the Ukraine, peasant were generally poor, which was a pity since they were "most useful and needed" in society. The government should pay more attention to them and remove "all the pernicious causes which bring them to poverty and would improve their situation" (P 54). However, he noticed this only in the Ukraine, where he blamed the Jews for this situation and where his solution would be to expel the Jews rather than to liberate peasants.

If all power comes from God, then a similar church-state arrangement could be claimed in any country. However, Russia is special. It is special because the only true faith, the Orthodoxy, that guarantees entering heaven after death is in Russia. In Russia, it is the same church as from the foundation of the world (PU 2.§28a, cf. 2.§5). Russia carries the torch of truth, which signifies the special status of Russia, its elevated position over all other countries, its special place in the eyes of God, the Russians becoming a chosen nation. It is thus not surprising to read that Paul I was a tsar on earth who was "a visible image of the invisible Tsar", "a tsar in Israel, [i.e.,] in Orthodox and famous Russia (234), in our beloved fatherland" (PS 18.235). Catherine II and Paul I were "protecting your Israel" (2.231). Zion is where there is "true protection of Orthodoxy", Russia, "where shines true piety" (1785, 12.282) and Catherine II was a new David and a new Solomon (12.284).

Russia is a new Israel, new chosen nation, and thus it should appropriate to itself the prerogatives of a chosen nation. God promised Israel a land and helped in conquering it. The same thus may be expected for Russia. Platon justifiably stated that the Russian nation suffered first from Tatars (PS 6.11), and then he added that they also suffered from Lakhy (12), which is a somewhat derogatory term for Poles. He mentioned the early seventeenth century as "the time of rebellions and impostors when Poles under evil pretext

caused in Russia greatest/significant ruin causing in almost all of Russia destructive raids and devastation” (P 4). However, he never condemned any of the three partitions of Poland which eventually led to wiping it out from the map of Europe for 123 years. One of the three participants of each partition was indeed Russia. He did mention this fact as something positive, when referring to the rebuilding of “Little Russia [after it] came under the blessed rule of Russia” (38). Also, only a small number of churches in the Ukraine were not Unite, “but everything acquired there a new aspect when, by God’s blessing, a large part of Poland was joined to Russia” (KI 2.270; P 55). When Poles were militarily involved in Russia – that was a curse. When Russia incorporated large Polish territories – that was a blessing. A chosen nation is under special divine protection; thus, it can conquer whatever it can and this should only be beneficial for the subjugated territories, since they become a part of the blessed rule of Russia. Therefore, there is a reason to rejoice: “borders are extended, enemies tremble, friends rejoice: the name of Russia is respected in the entire world” (PS 13.268, 277).

This nationalistic, not to say, jingoistic, attitude toward Russia may explain Platon’s tolerance toward schismatics and his intolerance toward Western Christianity and his rabid anti-Semitism. Schismatics were Russians; they were defying the official church, but they were our dissenters; thus, in the interest of the national unity, they should be treated in the best way possible to preserve this unity. By definition, true faith is in Russia; thus, this faith in its pure form must also reside in the schismatics, if only in a dormant or twisted form. The divine spark of belief in God cannot be completely extinguished from conscience (PS 2.369) and some believed that there are no atheists without their conscience condemning them (PU 3.§5). Similar claim could be made of Russians: in no Russian conscience could the spark of true Orthodox belief be really extinguished, regardless of how far gone schismatics were. They simply needed proper convincing to be brought back to the true faith. Apparently, there was very little hope in that respect for non-Russians; therefore, they should have been kept away from Russia to avoid their harmful influence. And the Jews were even worse since, Platon could argue, they still may have dared to claim to be a chosen nation, which is an honor they lost at least at the time when it was divinely transferred to the Russian nation.

Platon’s nationalism also explains his vilification of the papal power and in his extolling the imperial power of the tsar. The pope is a secular head of the state and an ecclesiastical head of the church with, ideally, emphasis placed on the ecclesiastical leadership. The tsar was also the head of the state and the head of the church with clear emphasis on the political leadership. The tsar was not a theological authority, but he decided who was by elevat-

ing some church figures and deposing others. After all, “Orthodox Monarchs are main guardians and protectors of the church”. They had to “watch that the government of the church be orderly and encourage faithful workers; to spread education and to generously support schools; to bring to the faith nations of other faiths” (PU 2.§29, 3.§9.2). Clearly, the pope could claim the divine appointment if only because “there is no authority except from God”. Politically and ecclesiastically, the pope and the tsar were on the same level, authorities on equal footing. Why disdainfully reject one and lovingly embrace another? Again, nationalism seems to be the answer. The Catholic church is a universal church, not tied to a particular nation. From the perspective of the church, there is no particular chosen nation now: chosen are those who embrace the Christian faith, regardless of their nationality, be it Russian, Italian, or German. And this is what Platon seems to have found unpalatable. It was the Russians who were the first nation in the world, the richest country on earth (PS 19.56), the largest empire that was not seen not only on earth, but in the entire universe,<sup>18</sup> and thus nothing was equal to the tsarist power. Nationalism is a primary motivation in deciding the ecclesiastical priority, and thus Platon did not have to repeat a feat of his great Greek namesake by conjuring up the utopia of Callipolis (in the *Republic*) or of Magnesia (in the *Laws*). Platon was convinced that he already had found a real thing in his own backyard. For this reason, he urged the listeners of one of his sermons: we should love our faith not only because it is true and Orthodox, but also because it is the faith of our fathers; we should love our fatherland not only because we were born here, but also because it is fatherland of our fathers. Nothing is better for faith than the fact that it is a sacred union (11.299) that united centuries. Nothing is better for the fatherland than the fact that there is one spirit for ancestors and the progeny (300).

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<sup>18</sup> Митр. Платон, “Из глубины воззвах к тебе, Господи...”, cit., p. 291.