

ADAM DROZDEK

POLEMICS OF ARSENI MATSEEVICH

Abstract. Arsenii Matseevich, an important ecclesiastical figure, defended the doctrine of Orthodox Church from schismatics, in particular, from attacks of Ioasif, who, among others, wanted to abolish the Orthodox priesthood. Matseevich was also involved in polemics with Lutherans who criticized Iavorskii's monumental *The Rock of faith*. The article discusses arguments Matseevich used against schismatics and Lutherans.

Matseevich was an isolated vocal voice that opposed the idea of secularization of the Church. The article describes arguments he used to retain the dignity of the Church and even to restore it to the former glory. For all his efforts Catherine II put him in prison where he died.

Summarised by Adam Drozdek

Key words: Arsenii Matseevich, schismatics, Lutherans, Catherine II.

Arsenii Matseevich is one of the most important ecclesiastic figures in eighteenth century Russia. Known for his unembellished language and firmness of convictions, he stood up for the purity of the doctrine of Orthodoxy, which led him to polemics with Lutherans and schismatics. He also championed the rights of the Church for its property, which led him to a head-on collision with Catherine II and his tragic downfall.

1. POLEMICS WITH SCHISMATICS

There are two works in which Matseevich criticized schismatics. In 1733, Matseevich was in the Solovetsk monastery trying unsuccessfully to convert a fallen abbot Ioasaf back to Orthodoxy, on which occasion he wrote *An admonition of Ioasaf, a former abbot of the Moshenskoe monastery*.

Dr. ADAM DROZDEK is an Associate Professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, USA; address for correspondence: Pittsburgh, PA 15282, USA — e-mail: drozdek@duq.edu

Dr ADAM DROZDEK jest wykładowcą na Uniwersytecie Duquesne w Pittsburghu, USA; adres do korespondencji – e-mail: drozdek@duq.edu.

The main issue raised by Ioasaf was that there is no Christian Church on earth. The only Church worthy of its status is the Church in heaven. Matseevich agreed that there is a Church in heaven (the triumphant Church), but this does not rule out the presence of the Church on earth (the militant Church). Christ promised to be with His disciples to the end of the world (Matt. 28:20) (U 186)¹ and when Paul spoke about the Church as the pillar of truth, he meant the Church on earth, not in heaven (U 188); Christ also spoke in the gospels about the Church on earth and so does the creed when speaking about being baptized in the Church—such baptism does not take place in heaven; it is the same with other sacraments (U 189), in particular with the Eucharist. As Matseevich justified with numerous quotations, the Eucharist is necessary for salvation and the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ, cannot be replaced by holy water as schismatics claimed (U 201).

A person becomes a Christian through the Church on earth (U 189); thus, by saying that the apostolic Church is only in heaven, Ioasaf made himself a non-Christian (U 190). Without clergy, there are no sacraments, no Christianity (U 192, 308); therefore, the strongest argument in favor of the existence of the Church is the existence of the priesthood. Christ gave the right to baptize, to bind and unbind only to the apostles, and this power is passed forward by laying on hands (U 309; D 211). Today's priests are direct descendants of the apostles by acquiring their priestly status through

¹ References are made to the following works:

- D Диомид (Дзюбан), *Митрополит Арсений (Мацеевич): Историко-религиозный очерк* (Москва: Зеркало, 2001); appendices include various memoranda and letters of Matseevich.
- D1 Арсений [МАЦЕЕВИЧ], *Дополненное обличение неправых и лжесловесных ответов раскольнических. Описание документов и дел хранящихся в архиве Святейшего правительствующего синода*, vol. 1 (Санкт-Петербург: Синодальная типография, 1868–1914), cols. ccccxviii–ccccxxvi.
- D2 Иван Михайлович ДОБРОТВОРСКИЙ, “Об Арсении Мацеевиче как обличителе раскола,” *Православный собеседник* 3 (1861): 349–393.
- P Михаил Степанович ПОПОВ, *Арсений Мацеевич, митрополит Ростовский и Ярославский* (Санкт-Петербург, 1905); republished as *Изгнанный правды ради: жизнь святителя Арсения (Мацеевича)* (Москва: Московское Подворье Свято-Троицкой Сергиевой Лавры, 2001).
- PSZ *Полное собрание законов Российской Империи* (Санкт-Петербург: Типография II Отделения Собственной Его Императорского Величества Канцелярии, 1830), vols. 1–45.
- U “«Увещание к раскольнику» Арсения Мацеевича, бывшего митрополита Ростовского: Увещание бывшему Мошемского монастыря игумену Иоасафу [1734],” *Православный собеседник* 3 (1861): 182–205, 295–334, 413–450.
- V [Арсений МАЦЕЕВИЧ]. *Возражение на папский лютеранский называемый молоток на книгу Камень веры*, manuscript, Москва: Русская Государственная Библиотека, фонд 173.I.

laying of hands. Ioasaf had a quarrel with the existence of the priesthood, the genuine priesthood, at least, since he was deeply troubled by the human imperfections of priests, which frequently reached an alarming level. Matseevich did not dispute the fact of imperfections, but he disagreed with its impact on the position of the priesthood. The fact that Judas betrayed his Master does not mean that he also betrayed his position as an apostle, the apostolate; the mission of apostleship was not thereby destroyed. As Chrysostom said, the position of apostle should not be blamed for Judas' betrayal, but Judas himself (U 329, 416). Thus, when Ioasaf stated that all shepherds of the Church are bad (U 327) and that the priestly life has to be seraphic, not human, in order to be holy, and that sacraments cannot be performed by bad priests, he forgot that sacraments are not the work of man, but of God: it is not priestly virtue that performs sacraments and thus, human faults cannot thwart them. God's blessing can be done by any means, including imperfect, sinful priests. After all, God acts even through pagans to consider Balaam who prophesied in favor of the Israelites (U 312) or archpriest Caiaphas who prophesied about the death of Christ (U 422). More generally, God's blessing often flows through bad people (U 316) and, as Iosif of Volotsk said, although God is not benevolent toward all people, He does act in all people (U 326, 332).

Interestingly, in his polemic, Matseevich focused on one aspect of the Church: the existence of the priesthood without which there are no sacraments and thus no Christianity. He was so focused on this aspect of the Church that when he spoke about the Church being the body of Christ without which Christ would be incomplete and imperfect (U 194), he created an impression that this body is limited to the priesthood alone. In Matseevich's discussion, the believers are secondary and are hardly mentioned.² This focus on the priesthood may have been caused not only by Matseevich's theological concern concerning the meaning of the Church, but also by his own position as a priest: Ioasaf's views threatened him personally by making him irrelevant as an ecclesiastic and, since for Ioasaf no earthly priest is worthy of that name, this may have poked Matseevich's ecclesiastical pride.

² Elsewhere he did say that the Church is the society of believers (D 208), but the emphasis is still placed on the priestly aspect of the Church, e.g.: "if we should believe in Christ, then we should necessarily agree that the archpriestly power is most important to be united with Christ, since after Apostles Christ makes the Church His Body not through anyone else but through archpriests" (209). Also, "the entire power of the Incarnation of Christ" is in the rank of archpriest (D 275).

Matseevich also rejected Ioasaf's claim of knowing when the second coming of Christ would take place. Matseevich indicated that Christ was not ashamed to say that He did not know when this day would come; only the Father knows it (U 430), which raises a very interesting theological problem: how Christ, God Himself and as such omniscient, may not know something. Matseevich addressed this problem with one short sentence: this actually means that He knows it on account of Himself, but not on our account; however, this remark explains very little.

Arsenii's started his *Admonition* by saying that he would provide proofs "not from my own mind, nor from distorted or befuddled sources, but from God's Scriptures and from the true Orthodox faith" (U 184), apparently rejecting rational arguments and relying on revelation alone. And yet, he used reasoning all along (e.g., if there is no priesthood, there is no Church, therefore, no salvation) and ended with an appeal to Ioasaf's reason: at the conclusion of his *Admonition* Arsenii challenged a supernatural appearance of heavenly fire in Ioasaf's monastery or at least its significance as "contrary not only to the Scriptures, but also to reason" (U 448). He also hoped that Ioasaf's reason would eventually be cleared (U 450), whereby Matseevich acknowledged a significant role of reasoning in religious matters.

The disquieting feature of Matseevich's *Admonition* is its uncharitable harshness. At every turn Matseevich was inventing new and more and more offensive invectives.³ Of course, he considered Ioasaf to be a schismatic, a heretic, the devil's progeny whose mouth is worse than that of the devil (U 205). After quoting Anastasius of Sinai, he said to Ioasaf: "you, mindless mole and cattle, should recognize from this [Anastasius' quotation] your crudity and extreme lack of skill and ignorance about the Scripture" (U 314). Or: "But you, Gadarene swine, where do you have this knowledge [concerning the end times] from, the knowledge that neither apostles nor angels possessed and Christ hid it in Himself?" (U 430)—in the same breath mentioning Christ, angels, and very offensive swine. To Ioasaf's claim that he invented nothing and his beliefs are traditional, Matseevich agreed, to a degree: "your faith is old, invented by Satan himself, the father of lie" (U 444). The *Admonition* would be significantly strengthened if instead of exercising his flourish in incessant name calling Matseevich would have put his mind to elaborating some theological issues rather than simply resorting

³ Stating that "the language of the *Admonition* breathes with significant power and liveliness that overpowers the opponent" (D 74) gives a rather skewed idea about this language.

to biblical or patristic quotations. It is particularly striking in the polemic with Ioasaf who was an ecclesiastic and thus who knew very well his Bible. Therefore, throwing at him scriptural verses which he already had known, punctuated with calling him a Gadarene swine and the like, could hardly have been expected to endear Matseevich to Ioasaf and be effective. In fact, Matseevich's attitude may have confirmed Ioasaf's conviction on the sinfulness of the clergy and strengthened his anti-Orthodox resolve. Rather predictably, the evangelization method Matseevich used failed; he was unable to bring Ioasaf back to the Orthodox fold. Had he shed new light on some Biblical passages, deliberated with him on a theological level and restrained himself from using vilifications at the same time expressing Christian charity—Matseevich may have accomplished his conversion goal.

In 1723, archpriest Neofit presented to the Synod *The Pomor'e answers*, which were answers given by a faction of Old Believers to 106 questions posed by Neofit. The Synod commissioned Feofilakt Lopatinskii to write a rebuttal. In 1734, he presented to the Synod his book, *An exposure of the schismatic untruth*. In 1742, Matseevich received an assignment from the Synod to review Lopatinskii's work. Matseevich found the book not to be comprehensive enough and wrote a 200-page supplement to it. The book came out in 1745 without Matseevich's supplement.

It has been stated that except for Rostovskii, all polemics, including Lopatinskii's, with schismatics concentrated on small ritual details, only in passing discussing the essence of schisms. This includes Lopatinskii's work, and so Matseevich tried to write in his supplement on more general issues separating schismatics from Orthodoxy (D2 375). However, Matseevich devoted more attention to ritual details than to general theological issues. Moreover, he listed these issues along with accompanying scriptural references and quotations from Church fathers, primarily Chrysostom, rather than discussing them in any depth.

Matseevich stated that schismatics should show that their religion is the same as Orthodoxy before Nikon's reform. However, by rejecting the clergy and the sacraments, they reject the entire Orthodoxy (D1 cccxxi). Schismatics devote particular attention to certain ritual modifications introduced by Nikon's reform and opt for the old ways to the extent that ritual differences are enough for them to reject the official Orthodox Church as heretical, even antichristian. Schismatics want to keep the old ritual details such as crossing oneself with two fingers, singing alleluia twice, and the 8-pointed cross. However, argued Matseevich, the Apostles and Councils did not speak about

the way of crossing oneself, the number of requisite alleluias, and about the shape of the cross (D1 ccccxii). Schismatics overemphasize the importance of these ritual elements. Why quarrel about two alleluias etc. as though they were the main dogmas necessary for salvation? Such quarrels indicate that, for them, faith is secondary for salvation (D2 363). Nikon introduced three alleluias, the 4-pointed cross, and crossing oneself with three fingers and schismatics “by extreme foolishness, ignorance, and stubbornness dare to call heresy what is appropriate to glorify the name of the only God in Trinity”; they leave aside more important dogmas on the Church, sacraments, and the afterlife (D2 372) and thereby reject the Orthodox Church (D2 373).

Matseevich’s criticism goes sometimes too far. He stated, for example, that schismatics’ salvation is not based on Christ and His cross, but on crossing oneself with two fingers, which is the least important element of faith that has no basis in the gospels nor in old books. Salvation comes not from reading books but from “pious life that is based on the Orthodox faith and submitted to the Church of God” (D2 361). Schismatics put too much weight on rites, but they would agree with Matseevich that submission to Christ and good works are the main means of salvation. Matseevich claimed that schismatics are with the Jews enemies of the Trinity since they want to sing alleluia twice, not three times as the new way requires (D2 ccccxiii). For schismatics, crossing oneself with two fingers and singing two alleluias is an image of the two-fold nature of Christ, human and divine, and has nothing to do with the rejection of the Trinity, which they did not do. In a flight of fancy, Matseevich also said that they kill children to partake in their blood calling it following Church tradition (386). In his view, they also allure rich people to get their money (D2 387) and then lead them to burning themselves and keep their money (D2 388).

Schismatics were not very subtle in their use of language. They considered the official Orthodox Church to be antichristian (D2 389), and the use of three fingers in crossing oneself to be a stamp of the antichrist (D2 391). Matseevich reciprocated in kind to the extent that his hostile tone became very hard to endure.⁴ It is set right at the beginning by the rebuke that in the preface of *The Pomor’e answers* there are “so many words, so much lying and cunning and hypocritical schismatic humility, as though [coming from] a gentle and good lamb that is inside a wolf and a beast and

⁴ The excuse being that, as politely stated by Dobrotvorskii, he wrote in times when polemics did not have “peace loving character” (D2 380).

the proud and stuck up devil himself from hell” (D1 ccccxix). They are “servants of Satan and antichrists” (D1 ccccxix). Their faith is old, said Matseevich, but this is the faith of Satan and of heretics criticized by Chrysostom (D1 ccccxixv). The offensive language reaches the level of Schadenfreude: schismatics, although they were executed, are not martyrs; they deserved not only suffering on earth but also eternal suffering in gehenna (D1 ccccxviii). Matseevich wrote that gentleness should be applied to schismatics with moderation and also “strong measures” should be applied (D2 369). How strong? They burn themselves, thus the civil and Church courts should sentence them to the same fate (D2 382–3).⁵

The laws against schismatics “did not distinguish themselves by particular love of man,” as phrased by Dobrotvorskii (D2 382), but, paradoxically, there was a tad more of this love in Catherine II’s ukases than in Matseevich’s wishes. On February 14, 1765, Catherine ordered that when a gathering of schismatics intending burn themselves were detected, then to avoid such “soul-destructive enterprise” and to assure that “they may not eternally perish,” the gathering should be disbanded, people should be sent home and only the stubborn should be arrested (PSZ 17.12326).

2. POLEMIC WITH LUTHERANS

Around 1731,⁶ probably between 1732 and 1734,⁷ an anonymous manuscript was circulated, *An essay on the Rock of faith* or *The hammer on the Rock of faith*, a short treatise criticizing from the Lutheran perspective the preface and an introductory chapter of Stefan Iavorskii’s magnum opus, *The Rock of faith* (1728). Many years later, in the mid 1750s,⁸ Matseevich wrote a rebuttal, *Objections to the Hammer on the Rock of faith* which also circulated in manuscript and is still unpublished.

⁵ Diomid also makes notice of some Matseevich’s overstatements: “In the heat of his irritation, metropolitan Arsenii exaggerates in his assessment of the schismatic error: he calls them heretics and identifies religious disobedience of the Church with political untrustworthiness” (D 77).

⁶ Иларион Алексеевич ЧИСТОВИЧ, *Феофан Прокопович и его время* (Санкт-Петербург: Императорская Академия Наук, 1868), 386.

⁷ Антон Борисович ГРИГОРЬЕВ, “Загадки сочинения ‘Молоток на книгу «Камень веры»’,” *Филаретовский альманах* 8 (2012): 107.

⁸ ГРИГОРЬЕВ, “Загадки сочинения,” 107; during the reign of the empress Elizabeth, ЧИСТОВИЧ, *Феофан Прокопович*, 386.

The hammer provides many details from Iavorskii's life and uses them to present Iavorskii as so saturated with Catholicism that many a time it affected his judgment in his discussion of the Orthodox dogmas. Iavorskii was educated in Polish seminaries: he had to convert to the Uniate faith to be allowed to go to such a school. Then, he converted back to Orthodoxy upon his return from Poland; thus, concludes *The hammer*, he was really a Catholic. Not quite so, said Matseevich, although Iavorskii was a Uniate when he was in Jesuit schools in Poland, he wholeheartedly returned to the Orthodox Church. Also, Luther was a Catholic but *The hammer* did not blame him for it (V 3v, 53v). From Matseevich's responses it is clear that he knew Iavorskii's life much less than *The hammer*, sometimes simply rejecting facts with which he disagreed. For example, the statement that Iavorskii was prohibited to preach Matseevich considered to be a malicious insult (V 9), although this did happen and even Iavorskii wrote about it in a letter.⁹

Interestingly, Matseevich even undertook the defense of Peter I who denigrated the status of the Church by abolishing the patriarchate and placed the Synod in its place, a governmental institution that answered to Peter I. Considering Peter I to be "our most pious monarch" (V 12, 147v), Matseevich said that he "created according to his goodwill and his monarchical opinion the Synod in place of the patriarch, he did not entirely reject and did not destroy the patriarchate, since he sent [envoys] to four patriarchal capitals for an approval of this [decision]. And there is a trace and reliable proof that he intended to create [the office of] the patriarch in place of the Synod, since when Theodosii [Iavorskii], the archpriest of Novgorod, who was then the principal synodal member, said to his imperial majesty in the Uspenskii Sobor [the Dormition Cathedral] that the place of the patriarch should be removed from the sobor, the most pious monarch rejected such plan with great indignation and severely reprimanded Theodosii so that he was forced to flee the sobor and by the monarchical decision the patriarchal place remained intact as before and still awaits its superior" (V 12). This is a very feeble proof that Peter I contemplated the restoration of the office of the patriarch.

Theological responses Matseevich provided are very weak, if at all provided. He considered Iavorskii as the most Orthodox author and simply referred the reader to his work. For instance, he just stated that schismatics consider the antichrist to be in Moscow, Lutherans—in Rome, but it is

⁹ Чистович, *Феофан Прокопович*, 391, 406–407.

Iavorskii's book on the antichrist that adequately represents the Orthodox teaching (V 6). When *The hammer* states that Lutherans do not seek nor do they need miracles (V 50), Matseevich simply said that "the Lutheran false teaching" on miracles is contrary to the apostolic teaching (V 52v) and "if you want to understand miracles, read the apology of Feofan [Prokopovich]" (V 53). However, he added an argument that the effectiveness of miracles can be seen even today. For example, one monk, Mikhail, was a Lutheran who converted to Orthodoxy having seen the miraculous preservation of remnants in the Kiev caves and miraculous healings through their mediation (V 53).

The most effective part of Matseevich's responses is using Protestant authors to prove his point. For example, when *The hammer* makes disparaging statements about monasticism, Matseevich said that "your teacher Caspar" said that Lutherans often spend their time in dances, games and (V 92v) feasting thereby rejecting monasticism and the virtue of chastity that submits the body to the soul and the spirit to the fear of God. Monasticism, according to the apostle, wants to discern spiritually and crucify with Christ carnal passions and even "your author" Johannes Funger says in his *Etymologicum Latinum* (1605) (in the entry *monachus*) that a monk turns away from the world and its passions; he also quoted Jerome who had said that a monk weeps (or rather mourns) over himself and the world and awaits the coming of Christ (V 93). Funger also showed (in the entry *monasterum*) that early authors spoke of monks with praise, e.g., Philo, a Jewish author (V 16v). Their author, said Matseevich, stated in a Church history that ascetics existed since the days of apostles and monasticism, their spiritual progeny, appeared after 240 AD. This history also showed that since the times of the apostles archbishops were chosen from among ascetics. Thus, concluded Matseevich, Christianity and monasticism are the work of the incarnation of Christ. Christ is the first monk, and the Mother of God, consecrated to God, is an image of monasticism (V 17). Moreover, the archpriesthood comes from monasticism (V 17v). When *The hammer* questions the role of good works in salvation, which include following rituals (V 53v), Matseevich said that Chrysostom required that praising and honoring God should not be done only invisibly, i.e., inwardly, but also visibly, i.e., praising should manifest itself through works, as also "your" Samuel Pufendorf said. Matseevich also urged the reader to check a Protestant Church history that describes old rituals in which candles were used during baptism (V 56v), and its description of the ritual of Christian burial that was accompanied by the Eucharist (V 57). When *The hammer* said that Iavorskii had spoken about the Western

and Eastern Church, whereas there is only once Church (V 149); Matseevich responded that even Pufendorf spoke about the Roman Church and he did not even speak about the Lutheran Church, but spoke about Protestants and a Protestant or reformation country (V 149v). Therefore, the author of *The hammer* should first correct his own authors before he calls Iavorskii a papist (V 150).

An off-putting aspect of Matseevich's work is its outright offensive language. True, *The hammer* does not shun from name calling, but it does not mean that Matseevich should answer in kind. And thus, the Lutherans, "venomous progeny from hell" (V 93), simply hate monasticism (V 93v). Their verbosity is like "dog's barking" (V 101v), or, more subtly, "dog's barking at the sun" (V 23v). Also, "your damned Lutheran tongue" rejects sacred relics of the saints and thus to the Lutherans should be applied Jesus' warning that pearls should not be thrown before swine (V 58v). Luther was a false teacher, whose venom is born of venom of the pope whom *The hammer* considers to be an antichrist (V 103), and again, *The hammer* sees the harlot of the Apocalypse to be the pope and the Orthodox see Luther to stem from her (V 149). In concluding pages, Matseevich exclaimed to the author of *The hammer*: "you, hellish dog, bark in vain" (V 151v), you speak only rubbish and empty lies against Iavorskii; "shut up and just die; devil be with you" (V 152). It is rather doubtful whether the author of *The hammer* would be won over to Orthodoxy upon reading such strong pronouncements about himself.¹⁰

In sum, if the author of *The hammer* had not been convinced by Iavorskii's arguments, he hardly would have been convinced by Matseevich's work. This work is more important as an endorsement of *The Rock of faith* by a high-ranking ecclesiastic rather than as offering ground-breaking theological arguments to buttress the validity of Iavorskii's work. Besides, there was not much room for theology there, to begin with. *The Rock of faith* does not discuss issues like the essence of trinitarianism, the problem of the incarnation, the idea of the transubstantiation, but rather problems pertaining to rites such as the veneration of icons, the veneration of the relics of the saints, the form of the Eucharist, the form of the Church liturgy, fasting, and the like. Whereas Iavorskii referred only to the Bible and to the fathers of the Church, Ma-

¹⁰ "The persuading power vanishes because of outward presentation and an irritated tone with which the entire *Objections* are filled," said Popov (P 48). Interestingly, an ecclesiastic author stated, quite obviously alluding to Popov, that "the persuasive power does not vanish, but increases a bit by irritated tone that fills the entire *Objections*" (D 78).

tseevich used primarily historical data to support such Orthodox tenets and, whenever he could, he used data and views provided by Protestant authors to, in a way, use them against Protestantism. In this he showed his erudition of not only Orthodox, but also Protestant and Catholic literature.

It is interesting to observe that the official attitude toward Lutheranism was different than Matseevich's. Sophie, later Catherine II, had to convert to Orthodoxy from Lutheranism to become the grand duchess. Simon Todor-skii, bishop of Pskov, convinced Sophie that differences between Orthodoxy and Lutheranism are not significant and thus she would not betray her faith by the act of conversion.¹¹ The insignificance of difference between these two faiths was also emphasized to convince Sophia Dorothea, later Maria Fiodorovna, to convert to Orthodoxy to be able to become a wife of grand duke Paul.¹²

3. POLEMICS WITH AUTHORITIES

At least since Peter I monarchs had their eye on Church property since it could constitute a source of additional income for the government which was particularly needed in the time of war which was rather frequently waged particularly by the two imperial aggressors, Peter I and Catherine II.

In 1726, the Synod—that can be considered the Church ministry established by Peter I's *Spiritual regulation* in 1721—is divided into two parts, one responsible for spiritual matters, and another, the College of Economics, responsible for economic and financial matters of the Church (P 80). In 1738, the College was given under the control of the Senate (PSZ 10.7558). In 1741, estates were returned to the control of the Church, but revenue had to be given to the College and the Church needed to support soldiers (P 82). In 1762, Peter III issued a decree that all Church estate should be supervised by the College (PSZ 15.11481). The decree was abolished right after Catherine's ascendance to the throne (16.11643), but within four months she ordered a survey of Church properties (PSZ 16.11716, cf. 16.11745, 11747, 11789) and in May 1763 she reestablished the College of Economics (PSZ 16.11814, 11844, 11864, 11865) to prepare

¹¹ Robert K. MASSIE, *Catherine the Great: portrait of a woman* (New York: Random House, 2011), 52.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 475.

the ground for the takeover, which took place in 1764 when Church property became administered by secular authorities of the College of Economics (PSZ 16.12060); the Church lost its economic support and priests became paid public servants.

Matseevich was an isolated vocal voice that opposed the idea of secularization of the Church. Already in 1742, at the beginning of the reign of the empress Elizabeth, Matseevich defended not only Church property, but was also appalled by the state making any material demands on the Church. He wrote to Elizabeth that recently, on top of taxes on Church property, the Church was supposed to have horse farms; “the shepherd of the Christian Church—may he be a hostler and other ecclesiastical positions also hostlers and instead of tending to the sheep of Christ, tend to mares!” The old income should not be taken away from the Church (D 238). Church and monastic property should be freed from all taxes and should be administered by the Church (D 239). The strongest case he tried to make was in two letters to the Synod, both written in March 1763, at the beginning of reign of Catherine II. The strongest argument Matseevich used was of a historical nature: “since the Apostolic times Church property was not supervised by anyone except only for the Apostles and after apostles—the archpriests and left to the sole will and consideration of archpriests as given and consecrated to God” (D 281). Matseevich justified it by a series of testimonies. First Christians sold their possessions and put money at the feet of the Apostles (Acts 4:37). Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he had sown spiritual things and he should reap their carnal things (1 Cor. 9:11). Matseevich used this verse following Iavorskii’s *The Rock of faith* – in the chapter on icons, 2.9.9 (p. 136) – but it hardly substantiates the case he was trying to make. Iavorskii also showed how much income Israelite priests had had, and, in his words quoted by Matseevich, “those who serve the shadow have true income and those who serve the truth have a shadow income.” All income of those “shadow priests” was free for them to use; for instance, it says that the tenth of all herd and flock “that passes under the rod will be holy unto the Lord” (Lev. 27:32), and Matseevich took “under the rod” to mean the archpriestly authority and thus that this tithe should be under the sole control of priests. In this, Matseevich assumed that property rules that worked for the Israelite priesthood should also be working for the Christian Church. It is not at all clear why and Matseevich provided no justification for this assumption, satisfying himself by quotation from Leviticus. Matseevich’s letters were addressed to the Synod which was composed of fellow ecclesiastics; thus,

they surely knew the verses he quoted. To be more convincing, he should have provided a persuasive comment on why this verse and why in the situation at hand. Also, the Synod also included a nonecclesiastic procurator who hardly would be impressed by a Biblical quotation.

Then Matseevich quoted the *Canons of the Apostles* which “let the bishop have the care of ecclesiastical revenues” without the right of passing them to his relatives for ownership (canon 39), and give the bishop the power over Church property, “for the law of God appointed that those who waited at the altar should be maintained by the altar” (canon 41), which is really a rendering of 1 Cor. 9:13 and some Old Testament verses, such as Lev. 6:16, 26, Num. 18:8–19, Deut. 18:1. A counterargument could be made that being maintained by the altar does not mean ownership of what the altar provided. Someone else could be in charge of the administration of what the altar provided using it to maintain the priesthood. A more subtle argument is in order for Matseevich to make his case, just quoting a verse is insufficient.

Matseevich also quoted canon 13 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council that said that some of the sacred houses, for example, bishops’ palaces and monasteries, were converted by some people into public establishments such as inns. These houses should be returned to the bishops and abbots, which indicated to Matseevich that not only bishops but also abbots were the sole administrators of these sacred houses—under the supervision of archpriests, added Matseevich, suggesting that this canon stated it, which it did not.

And here—continued Matseevich (G 281)—they now not only do not want to return anything but take some more as it was attempted by Peter III, by which, as stated in Catherine II’s manifest of June 28, 1762, “our law of the Orthodox Church first of all underwent a shakeup and destruction of Church tradition so that Our Greek Church was subjected to its ultimate danger by the change of the old Orthodoxy in Russia and acceptance of a heretical law” (PSZ 16.582). Matseevich cleverly suggested that these words from the opening of Catherine’s enthronement manifest refer to Church property, which they don’t. To legitimize her coup, Catherine opened her manifest with what would well resonate with Russians, namely a reference to Orthodoxy and Peter III’s, her deposed husband’s, cavalier and disdainful attitude toward religion cherished dearly by the populace. Thus, she began her manifest with the words, “To all true sons of the Russian Fatherland it became clear what danger to the entire Russian Government, in fact, began to unfold, namely,” and here follows the statement quoted by Matseevich. Catherine could not care less about the rights of the Church. She was

concerned about the permanent overthrow of Peter III's rule and used his denigration of the status of the Church as a convenient argument in her plotting. It worked for her, but not for Matseevich.

Then Matseevich referred to history, stating that in Russia, from Vladimir to Peter I Church property had been under the Church's control (D 282). To cover the costs of the war with Sweden, Peter I took income from Church estates so that no harm was done to bishoprics and monasteries. However, Musin-Pushkin, a senator and privy counselor in the court of Peter I, took as much as he could, thereby impoverishing the Church (D 282–283). Also, just as Matseevich did not blame Peter I directly, but his representative, so he did not blame Catherine but her representatives for their misuse of authority that effectively led to robbing the Church (D 284); for instance, Matseevich considered it to be unjust to make the Church support schools that teach philosophy, astronomy, and mathematics when the means are taken away from it. The mission of the Church is to proclaim the Gospel and the message of salvation, not a support of science education. Education is important, but, as in the ancient Greece and now in the West, this should be supported by the state (D 284). Church schools that prepare for priesthood should teach how to write, read, and how to understand what is read. There is no need for Latin in Russian Churches. They should use Peter Mogila's *Orthodox confession of faith* which *The spiritual regulation* discourages and recommends using small booklets instead. In Matseevich's view, *The Orthodox confession* is "far more needed than philosophy and other academic subjects" (D 285).

Not only is support of education used as an excuse to impoverish the Church, but also under the pretext of superfluity, everything is taken away forgetting Chrysostom's precept to feed the teacher, deacon, and priest (D 286). The authorities take away what others donated to the Church (D 287). Archpriests were under suspicion and were blamed for allegedly being without conscience, particularly by "those who will watch over archpriests,"—which is a direct jab at the College of Economics and its committee to do survey of Church properties—among whom "some hardly believe in God," or go to confession, and yet the archpriest who prays for himself and for others is considered to be worse than everyone else (D 288). The survey allowed officers executing it to enter the altar area and also to survey vessels used in Church services which the Church regulations prohibit outsiders to do (D 291). In 2 Samuel 6, Uzzah, who was not a priest, was punished for touching the ark (D 292). These officers could hardly be

expected to be respectful of sacred objects. They were like people about whom Solomon said that they cannot rest until they do something evil (Prov. 4:16–17) (D 292). If these officers were given power, they are ready “to rob the Savior and the Mother of God” as witnessed by order of the college of economics under general Volkov to survey Spaso-Iaroslav (Spaso-Preobrazhenskii in Iaroslav) monastery in times of the empress Elizabeth (D 293).

Appropriation of Church property may have grievous consequences, argued Matseevich. He quoted a decision of the bishops after the devastating siege of Paris by Vikings in 845, that the siege had been caused by taking away from the Church property which had been previously defended by Pepin and Charlemagne (D 288). This was a not-so-subtle reminder to the authorities that maybe the Swedes or the Turks may do something similar to Russia. A historical argument was also used in the *Objections* in which Matseevich referred to St. Cyprian, a 3rd century Church leader, who, when led to his execution, promised to give the executioner “his personal archpriestly 25 solidi” (V 21) which indicated for Matseevich that already in the early Church personal property existed, which allowed him to say that “it’s impossible for an archpriest to be/live without archpriestly incomes” (V 20v) and that Iavorskii needed to have his personal income (V 15v). However, this historical example is about personal income to support a priest, not about Church property on which the state wants to make a claim, although Matseevich blurred the line by his punch against Lutherans that more was spent on one pastor than on an entire Orthodox monastery (V 16). Never mind how he would know it.

Matseevich’s plea about leaving Church property alone did not bring the desired result. In fact, it led to Matseevich’s demise by first stripping him of his archpriestly rank and sending him to a monastery in the Archangel eparchy, and then by defrocking him altogether and sending him to a monastery in Revel/Tallinn under a much stricter regime, where he died in a solitary cell under the name of Andrei Vral’ (Liar). He was condemned by his Synod colleagues and by Catherine. Catherine’s goal was clear: to put her hand on Church property to be used to pursue her political goals. She said, “I often read that in the past in Catholic countries many secular people controlled Church incomes. I wonder why the rulers were such stupid politicians that they allowed that this custom was destroyed by councils” (P 133). To his letters, the Synod answered that “all that there is [in them] is designed to insult the imperial majesty” (P 141), thus focusing on the real or imaginary *lèse-majesté* aspect of his letters. However, Catherine asked the Synod to

judge him not only as a political criminal but also as false interpreter of the Scriptures; she found in his letter “wrong and shocking renderings of many words of the holy Scripture and of holy books” (P 142), thereby voicing her indignation not only as an empress, but also as the head of the Orthodox Church. However, what was so theologically shocking, she did not explain. Matseevich’s arguments are, at worst, theologically weak, unsatisfactory, not sufficiently elaborated, but surely not shocking in the sense of being offensive. It really did not matter, since the fate of Matseevich was sealed at the moment he sent his letters. The Synod obediently agreed with Catherine that Matseevich offered “false interpretations of the Holy Scripture; he should not be forgiven even if he wrote it out of the zeal for the law of God, since it is prohibited to make venomous statements and objections not only against the ukases but also against instructions of his department” (P 157); some time later, the Synod decided that there was nothing wrong with Matseevich interpretations after all (P 166), but this did not matter). The vitriolic language used by Matseevich’s colleagues is rather surprising: why were they so hostile to one of their own who defended the rights of the Church to keep its property? The thing is that this defense was not the only quarrel Matseevich’s had with the authorities. Another one concerned the existence of the Synod.

Peter I replaced the patriarchate with the Synod thereby creating a collective patriarchate of sorts. In any event, the membership in the Synod was the pinnacle of ecclesiastical authority. Predictably, members of the Synod would not be well-disposed toward someone who would like to abolish this institution. And this is exactly what Matseevich wanted to do even though he himself became in 1741 a member of the Synod.

In 1744 he wrote to the empress Elizabeth that it was difficult to dispute with schismatics, since about the Synod it could not be shown from the apostles, the gospel, nor from the early Church and Councils that it was an old institution. It was, in fact, modeled on Protestants (D 265, cf. D 91–92). The institution was weak, and thus the Church was weakened: priests were not controlled whether they properly executed rites (D 266); there was drunkenness and melees among priests since they had no proper shepherd, i.e., the patriarch. An order had to be restored in the Church before schismatics could be brought back to it (D 267). Two years earlier, he also wrote that the Synod replaced the patriarchate presumably for a better order in the Church, but the Synod did not compare in respect with the solidity of its foundation with the patriarchate in Moscow (D 219). All four (non-Russian)

patriarchs agreed on the existence patriarchate in Moscow; only one patriarch agreed on the existence of the Synod. The establishment of the Synod resulted from the ill will of the monarch caused by evil people who swayed the most pious Peter (D 220). Matseevich listed six reasons that *The spiritual regulation* gave for the creation of the Synod. In fact, *The spiritual regulation* gave nine reasons and Matseevich quoted only some of them and summarized others. He apparently was struck the most by the argument that institutions similar to the Synod existed already before, one being the Israelite Sanhedrin, one the Athenian Areopagus, which the *Regulation* mentions before listing the nine reasons. What Matseevich found unacceptable was the comparison between the secular Areopagus and the ecclesiastical Synod. In his opinion, this proved that the author of this argument had been influenced by Protestantism that makes no distinction between secular and Church organizations (D 221). The strongest argument the *Regulation* used was, in Matseevich's mind—the prevention of the overthrow of the monarch (the *Regulation's* argument 7). This was unjustified, said Matseevich, and it only showed that the author of this argument was not a priest. Such a danger could also come from a field-marshal (D 222). The pope by his pride made himself the archpriest of archpriests and tsar over tsars, but, to the Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. As Chrysostom explained, the patriarch is no danger to the monarch and the author of the *Regulation* should have been ashamed of himself for saying that “the episcopal work is great with, but honor is none” (part ii, section on bishops, § 14). If the work was great, why it did it not deserve any honor? The Synod was not created “by the image of the holy apostolic Eastern Church” as coming from Christ and the ecumenical councils, but “it is shame to say, from, as shown in the *Regulation*, an image of the Jewish synagogue, from ancient idolaters and from today's foreign governments” which are Protestants (D 223). The author of the *Regulation* claimed that the Synod was so much better than the patriarchate, but what was the situation after so many years? Many churches and monasteries were empty, many in lamentable condition, and instead of being headed by patriarch and archpriests, they were ruled by “an unknown/alien power,” the College of Economics that just robs the Church (D 224); “it sinfully and lawlessly” takes away Church collections, but “who serves the altar should live by the altar.” The patriarchate in Moscow, or at least the metropolitan, should be restored (D 225). In fact, the Synod was a straight way to uniting the Orthodox Church with Lutherans, Calvinists, and papists (D 226).

From these remarks it is clear that Matseevich was not aware that the *Regulation* was authored by Prokopovich, a highly positioned ecclesiastic leaning toward Protestantism. This is quite likely, considering the fact that while writing his *Objections*, Matseevich did not know much about the *curriculum vitae* of Iavorskii, incidentally, a theological adversary of Prokopovich. Matseevich would have been in quite a quandary having known that Prokopovich wrote *The spiritual regulation* considering the praise that Matseevich heaped upon him (V 53, 126); however, the praise was about attempts to eradicate superstition, which would not necessarily contradict Matseevich's disapproval of Prokopovich's participation in the creation of the Synod.

While not readily accepting decisions of authorities, Matseevich was rather careful when speaking about decisions of the emperor/empress. This became almost disingenuous. As already mentioned, he blamed Catherine's advisors for her decisions he could not accept and blamed *The spiritual regulation* and thus the creation of the Synod on the author or this document; did Matseevich think that Peter did not read it or, if he read it, he did not quite understand its impact? The whole purpose of the *Regulation* was to decrease the importance of the Church and Peter I himself added a few sections that even radicalized what Prokopovich wrote. However, the position of the emperor had for Matseevich a theological dimension: the emperor was put on the throne by God Himself and woe to someone who would dare to undermine the position of the emperor. In a rather rare daring pronouncement, Matseevich at least tried to restrain the authority of the emperor believing in Christ's precept that to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's: in a memorandum to empress Elizabeth he approvingly quoted, without a comment, Theodore the Studite's address to the king Leo V, the Armenian, that he should not intervene in Church affairs and interpret matters of Church doctrine; this should be done by priests and kings should follow their decisions in these matters (D 215). Also, having been appointed by Elizabeth to the Synod, he refused to take an oath since the oath was "to the Highest Judge, the all-Russian empress herself," which he considered to be similar to the Catholic oath to the pope as the highest judge (D 44, 186); the highest judge is Christ (D 258). Generally, however, Matseevich was a monarchist through and through and spoke about Russian emperors with greatest respect. He discounted schismatics as candidates for martyrs since true martyrs suffered on account of Christ, but they were not rebels who fought against their monarchs even if these monarchs were idolaters (D1

ccccxxviii). For Matseevich, Peter almost always was not just a tsar, but most pious and wisest. Incidentally, it is curious that being the wisest he let himself be fooled by the author of the *Regulation*. He also spoke with greatest reverence about Catherine. In New Year of 1763, he sent to her his greetings: may God “who rules over tsars and over your person wonderfully chosen by Him and put on the tsarist throne protect [you] and pour [His] blessing ... by elevating His faithful slave, the protectress of faith and piety” (P 116). It was easy to blame plotters surrounding her for his misfortunes. Little did he know that she personally saw to it that he suffered the most for just writing letters that questioned ultimately her decision concerning the ownership of Church property. He also dared before her coronation to suggest that she should be crowned by the Moscow metropolitan (Timofei), not by the metropolitan of Novgorod (Sechenov), since the former metropolitan was the highest in the Church hierarchy and Matseevich showed that this was the way it had been done historically (D 113). Unsurprisingly, she did not invite him to the coronation and did not follow his advice (D 114). But vengeful as she was, she remembered this rather humble advice that she took for meddling in imperial affairs. Moreover, who was the head of the Church, he or she?

Considering his reverence for the imperial office, it is very unlikely that during his preliminary hearing attended by Catherine Matseevich maligned her and that she covered her ears and exclaimed to gag him, as was quite frequently assumed.¹³ However, during the public and humiliating spectacle when he was ceremonially disgraced by taking away all symbols of his rank as an archpriest and thus degraded to the rank of a simple monk, he did loudly castigate the members of the court accusing them of neglecting the Church, having two minds, and selling out. It is said that he prophesied the death of some officials including Catherine, which prophecies came to pass in an uncanny manner (P 159).

¹³ Иван Михайлович СНЕГИРЕВ, *Арсений Мацеевич, митрополит ростовский и ярославский* (Москва: типография Бахметева, 1862), 22; Владимир Степанович ИКОННИКОВ, “Арсений Мацеевич, историко-биографический очерк,” *Русская Старина* 26 (1879), 18; Alexander BRÜCKNER, *Katharina die Zweite* (Berlin: Grote’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1883), 138; Антон Владимирович КАРТАШЕВ, *Очерки по истории Русской Церкви*, vol. 2 (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1959), 464; Henri TROYAT, *Catherine the Great* (Nuffield: Aidan Ellis, 1978), 153; Isabel DE MADARIAGA, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 116; Иван Феодосійович КОРСАК, *Тамниця святого Арсенія: Роман-есеї* (Луцьк: ПВД Твердиня, 2008), 18; MASSIE, *Catherine the Great*, 300–301. Попов considers this report to be apocryphal (P 148 note 2).

The empress Elizabeth, who was very pious, respected Matseevich and valued his opinion. The memorandum on how to solve the problem of schismatics—in which he proposed to restore the patriarchate—was written upon her request (D 91–92). It may very well be that Matseevich expected a similar response from Catherine. However, the minor German princess who usurped the throne of Russia would not have any of it. She stifled Matseevich’s dissent which was completely disproportionate to his alleged crime, which was writing letters to the Synod. And sadly, although he stood up for the rights of the Church, the Church turned against him siding with Catherine. This was not the Church at its best. Matseevich endured humiliation and the indignation of imprisonment with dignity and died without renouncing his ecclesiastic convictions. He was not entirely effective in his evangelization efforts. His arguments are very dogmatic lacking theological elaboration and subtlety and resemble more theological pounding with the fist on the table. He was no Chrysostom as he recognized himself when someone tried to flatter him with this comparison (D 305). His language was frequently abusive aiming more at condemnation than salvation. However, his firmness in standing for the rights of the Church—while the Church was against him— was unmatched. The Orthodox Church finally recognized it and proclaimed him as a saint in August 2000.

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POLEMIKI ARSENIUSZA MACIEJEWICZA

Streszczenie

Arseniusz Maciejewicz, ważna postać w historii Kościoła, bronił doktryny prawosławnej przed schizmatykami, w szczególności przed atakami Joasifa, który, między innymi, pragnął znieść kapłaństwo prawosławne. Maciejewicz był również zaangażowany w polemiki z luteranami, którzy krytykowali monumentalne dzieło Stefana Jaworskiego *Kamień wiary*. Niniejszy artykuł prezentuje argumenty Maciejewicza przeciw schizmatykom i luteranom.

Maciejewicz był odosobnionym głosem przeciwko sekularyzacji dóbr kościelnych przeprowadzanej przez Katarzynę II. Artykuł przedstawia argumenty Maciejewicza użyte celem zachowania godności Kościoła, a nawet przywrócenia jego dawnej świetności. Z powodu swych starań Maciejewicz został osadzony w więzieniu, gdzie też zmarł.

Streścił Adam Drozdek

Słowa kluczowe: Arseniusz Maciejewicz, schizmatycy, luteranie, Katarzyna II.