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Cyril Hovorun

Politicisation of Religion: Eastern Christian Cases

In this chapter I shall address the issue of religion being politicised. This issue has been well-studied in the West, but is almost ignored by scholarship in the East. At the same time, the Eastern patterns of politicised religion are prototypes of many Western patterns. In looking at the Eastern cases of politicised religion, I am going to utilise both a microscope and a telescope, first drawing your attention to smaller cases, which will then reveal larger panoramic vistas.

1 Political Theology

Let me start with the discussion of the term *political theology*, which took place in interwar Germany between two conservative Catholic¹ soulmates, Carl Schmitt and Erik Peterson. Schmitt re-coined the term political theology, which he, as a scholar of ancient Roman law, may have borrowed from Marcus Terentius Varro, who used it in a different context.² Thanks to this re-coinage, Schmitt is sometimes called the godfather of political theology.³ Of course, he was not. There were many political theologies before him, even though they were not called political theologies. Schmitt used this catchphrase to explain his own theory of state. His concern was to identify the sources of legitimacy for laws. He believed that the state itself cannot be a source of its legal order.⁴ This order emerges *ex nihilo*, as it were. The initial legal order, according to Schmitt, is the result of a ‘miracle’, which happens in the ‘situation of emergency’. The source of this order cannot be truth or nature, but the authority personified. This train of thought proved useful for Adolf Hitler, who was looking for the legal means of overcoming the crisis of the Weimar constitutional order. Schmitt identified this crisis as a situation of emergency, which can be solved with the law personified. Thus he established that a given political leader who per-

1 Peterson converted from Lutheranism under the influence of Schmitt.

2 According to Augustine, Varro spoke of the Stoic theology, which consisted of a political theology as juxtaposed to the mythical and cosmological theologies (*De civitate Dei* 4.27, 31).

3 See M. Kirwan, *Political Theology: An Introduction* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2009), 26.

4 He claimed that “the state is neither the creator, nor the source of the legal order”; see C. Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 19.

sonifies law is one who may override the existing constitutional norms. The führer had his eureka moment.

Schmitt provided a theoretical framework for Hitler's rise to power. As the President of the National Socialist Association of German Legal Professionals, he came to be the 'Crown Jurist' of National Socialism. From justifying the extraordinary authority of the führer, Schmitt evolved to defending extra-judicial killings of Hitler's political opponents and excluding Jews from German jurisprudence. After the war he was tried at Nuremberg and was prohibited to teach in German universities (most professors who collaborated with Nazis were allowed to teach, regardless of denazification). He continued to be an influential public intellectual, with strong conservative views, until his death in 1985.

The concept of political theology was crucial for Schmitt, because it helped him explain and reshape the established legal institutions by the instruments transcendent to law. He chose theology to be such an instrument, and famously claimed that "all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularised theological concepts".⁵ In other words, as György Geréby has put it, "the conceptual framework of a world, even if deprived of the divine, still shows a 'theological' structure".⁶ Many modern scholars would concur with this point of Schmitt's.⁷

However, Erik Peterson, once a friend of Carl Schmitt, disagreed. He noted how Schmitt had utilised his concept of political theology to justify the Nazi regime, and sounded the alarm. However, Peterson objected not only to one particular ramification of political theology, but to the concept *per se*. In his argumentation, he used a particular case, which, he believed, would demonstrate that the entire method of analogy between the theological and political does not work. This was the case of theological monotheism being projected onto political monarchy in the period of Christian Antiquity.

5 *Ibid.*, 36.

6 G. Geréby, "Political Theology Versus Theological Politics: Erik Peterson and Carl Schmitt", *New German Critique* 35/3 (2008), 7–33, on p. 11.

7 A good example could be a conversation between José Casanova, Michael J. Kessler, John Milbank and Mark Lilla, which took place in October 2008 at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University and was then published in the collection *Political Theology for a Plural Age*. All the participants, despite their own disagreements, agreed that Schmitt was wrong in pursuing a political theology that justified Nazism, but he was right in pointing out the theological backdrop of political ideas. Lilla summarised this agreement in the following statement: "Most societies in most times and places have legitimated public authority by some sort of appeal to revelation loosely conceived"; cited in M.J. Kessler (ed.), *Political Theology for a Plural Age* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 17.

2 Theological Models for Political Ideologies

Peterson focused on this case in his monograph *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem* where he argued that the Triune God cannot be a model for political monarchy. The divine Trinity presupposes sharing power, and not its usurpation by one person. Therefore, monarchs, whether they are emperors, kings, presidents or the führer, cannot refer to the Christian God in claiming legitimacy for their power. As Peterson wrote, “with the development of the orthodox dogma [here he means the homoousian interpretation of the Trinity], the idea of divine monarchy loses its political-theological character”.⁸

Peterson was not the first theologian to draw parallels between Christian monotheism and political ideologies. Liberal Anglicans tried to justify their ‘Christian Socialism’ as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. The founder of the British Socialist Party and simultaneously a vicar of the Church of England, also known as the Red Vicar, Conrad Noel, believed that in the Arian controversies,

The principle at stake, politically, was Democracy *versus* Imperialism; for the Arians held that God was a solitary being remote from the interests of men, a somber emperor in the Heavens, who had not been able to bridge the gulf between the heavens and the earth. Now, if this was so, they argued that such a solitary being was best represented upon earth by a solitary tyrant.⁹

The response of the Nicæan theologians to this belief was that “the highest form of unity which could be conceived by us was the collective unity of the many and the one”.¹⁰

Peterson may have had in mind these discussions about Christian Socialism earlier in the century. He was certainly mindful of patristic insights. A key patristic text for him was an excerpt from the *Third Theological Oration* by Gregory of Nazianzus. According to Gregory, there are three basic ideas about God: anarchy, polyarchy, and monarchy. The former two are pagan and unacceptable for Christians. From the Christian perspective, only monarchy can be accepted. However, this kind of monarchy is not singular and personal, but natural and shared. It is a result of the complete coherence of the divine persons, who share one will and activity:

⁸ E. Peterson, *Der Monotheismus als politisches Problem: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der politischen Theologie im Imperium Romanum* (Leipzig: Hegner, 1935), 102, cited in Geréby, “Political Theology”, 16.

⁹ C. Noel, *Socialism and Church Tradition* (London: Clarion Press, 1900), 7–8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

We most respect monarchy. However, this is not a monarchy, which is defined by one person, [...] but the [monarchy], which is set together (συνίστησι) by the single honour of the nature, coherence of knowledge, identical movement, and the convergence towards one of those who are from [this one].¹¹

Gregory uses the verb συνίστησι, which, because of the prefix συν-, implies that the divine monarchy is composed, not singular. This is a way to say that it is shared. This kind of shared monarchy is possible only for God, but not for any human institution (“created nature”, as Gregory puts it).¹² This is because the degree of the divine integrity is unachievable by humans. A political monarchy, which is based on personality, i.e. the absolutist personal power, would fail to demonstrate coherence and integrity. Gregory remarks that such personal power necessarily incurs opposition from many.¹³ Only shared power, exercised in coherence, can produce harmony and unity. On the basis of this statement, Peterson concluded that the monarchy of the Christian God cannot be projected onto the monarchy of political rulers, including the führer.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that Peterson utilised the text from Gregory of Nazianzus to polemicise against Nazism in general, and the Schmittean political theology in particular. His study was a metaphor or coded message to communicate to Schmitt his concerns. In a footnote to his study he hinted how “blind and unforeseeing” Cicero was, in helping Augustus against Antony, because eventually this contributed to the dictatorship of the former. Jacob Taubes explained this metaphor in his letter to Schmitt: “That *caecus atque improvidus futurorum* was a coded warning directed at you – but you didn’t get it”.¹⁴

Peterson was wrong to condemn political theology as such, but he was right to condemn political speculations based on Christian theology,¹⁵ – or what we can more accurately render as the politicisation of religion. What Peterson had in mind was better articulated by his younger contemporary Raymond Aron, who coined the term *religion séculière*. The primary focus of Aron’s critique was Marxism and its incarnation in the system of global Communism¹⁶ but he also expanded the category of secular religion to Nazism. In his article “L’avenir des religions séculières”,

11 *De filio*, Or. 29.2:6–10, cited in J. Barbel, *Gregor von Nazianz: Die fünf theologischen Reden* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1963). My translation.

12 *De filio*, Or. 29.2:10, cited in Barbel, *Gregor von Nazianz*.

13 *De filio*, Or. 29.2:7–8, cited in Barbel, *Gregor von Nazianz*.

14 J. Taubes, *Ad Carl Schmitt: Gegenstrebiges Fügung* (Berlin: Merve, 1987), 40.

15 See G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 287.

16 See R. Aron, *The Opium of the Intellectuals* (New York: Norton, 1962).

first published in 1944, he argued that both Communism and Nazism “reproduce certain distinctive characteristics of ancient dogmas. They too offer a global interpretation of the world”.¹⁷ This interpretation is divisive. It ontologises evil by incarnating it in large social groups, who are to be contained or exterminated. “Eager to federate hatreds, convinced that humans are drawn together more by hostile emotions than by common affections, they [Communism and Nazism] never rest from displaying to their followers new Bastilles to storm”.¹⁸

Quite unexpectedly, Aron’s choice of words was criticised by Hannah Arendt. In her article “Religion and Politics”, published in 1953,¹⁹ she addressed her critique mostly to Jules Monnerot, but implicitly also to Raymond Aron. Arendt found any parallel between totalitarian ideologies and religion inappropriate, even blasphemous.²⁰ She argued that the very nature of Christianity is to be a-political: “The freedom which Christianity brought into the world was a freedom *from* politics”.²¹ However, the kind of religion that Aron described, just as the kind of theology that Peterson criticised, was not religion or theology in the proper sense.

3 Legitimacy for Christian Emperors

Carl Schmitt was right that the main goal of political theology is to enhance the legitimacy of political regimes. Long before him, in the early fourth century, Eusebius of Caesarea dealt with the legitimacy of the Roman imperial power after this power had legalised Christianity. Before Constantine (sole ruler 324–337), the Roman Empire and the Christian Church treated each other as irreconcilable enemies. The empire attempted to contain, even to extinguish, the church, while the church impatiently waited for the Kingdom of God to replace the kingdom of Caesar.

After Constantine procured a truce with Christianity, legalised its status, and lifted all restrictions that had been imposed upon the church by his predecessors, the empire in return awaited from the church new arguments in support of its own

¹⁷ R. Aron, “L’avenir des religions séculières”, *Commentaire* 8/28–29 (1985), special issue *Raymond Aron, 1905–1983. Histoire et politique: textes et témoignages*, 369–383, on p. 370.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 374.

¹⁹ The article was originally delivered as a paper at a conference in Harvard and then published in 1953 in the Harvard-based journal *Confluence*, edited by Henry Kissinger. It is included in the collection of Arendt’s articles, see Hannah Arendt, “Religion and Politics”, in Hannah Arendt, *Essays in Understanding, 1930–1954: Formation, Exile, and Totalitarianism*, ed. J. Kohn (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co, 1993), 368–390.

²⁰ Arendt, “Religion and Politics”, 379.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 373. Italics original.

legitimacy. Previously, maintaining this legitimacy was a sacred duty of the Greco-Roman public religion. Now a similar service was expected from the Christian Church. Eusebius was among those who sensed the new expectations, and with them new opportunities for the church. In his bulky corpus of writings, he effectively designed a new legitimacy for the old empire. Eusebius, thus, and not Carl Schmitt, should be celebrated as the father of Christian political theology.

Eusebius borrowed two beliefs most valuable for Christians in the pre-Constantinian era and transformed them into two pillars of his political theology. The first was respect to martyrs. Martyrs died, because they were persecuted by the murderous empire. They were literally ‘witnesses’ of faith and of the injustices that the Roman state imposed upon the Christian Church. Eusebius forged from high respect to martyrs a story in which the presumably ‘new’ empire substituted the ‘old’ one, when Constantine ceased persecutions of the church. Martyrdom was merely the rising action in the structure of Eusebius’s narrative. Its true climax was the reign of Constantine – the liberator of the church, who opened doors to a new era.

This new era constituted the second pillar of Eusebius’s political theology. Albeit with somehow declining vigour, Christians by the time of Eusebius still believed that the Kingdom of God was imminent and that it was a matter of years, not centuries, until the time when Christ would return. Eusebius transformed these eschatological expectations to a new legitimacy for the Roman Empire. After it stopped killing Christians, this empire turned into the millennial kingdom that the Christians had been awaiting since apostolic times. The urge of Eusebius was simple: open your eyes – the Kingdom of God is not coming but has already come. Eusebius’s political theology was millennialist: the archenemy of Christianity, the Roman Empire, had become the Kingdom of God. True, it was not yet a full embodiment of this kingdom, but certainly its resemblance. The model suggested by Eusebius was familiar to anyone with an elementary training in Platonism: this world is an imperfect image of the ideal world. It seems that many Christians, particularly those who had recently converted from the educated classes of the Greco-Roman society, began to accept Eusebius’s model. At the same time, one cannot imagine a more convincing idea to substantiate the legitimacy of the Roman emperors in the eyes of all their Christian subjects.

We know from modern scholarship that the early church did not focus on persecutions and martyrdom as much as Eusebius imagined, and Constantine did not want to rule the Kingdom of God on earth. He probably did not even intend to change the socio-political structures of the empire he ruled. He simply wanted an extra layer of legitimacy for his rule, in addition to the extant ones, such as, for instance, his pagan role as *Pontifex Maximus*. Nevertheless, the millennialist utopia designed by Eusebius gradually came to be received by the generations of

theologians and politicians that followed. Eusebius's political theology became the mainstream political theory in what we now call Byzantium.

At the core of this theory was the concept of symphony, – an ostensibly harmonious relationship between church and state. This concept of symphony was millennialist and utopian. Although it presupposed that the Roman Empire embodied the Kingdom of God as fully as possible, the reality was different, sometimes quite anti-utopian. Iconoclasm, a case to which I shall later return, was such an anti-utopia. At the same time, it should be said that, even if imperfect, symphony did provide a certain extent of peace and harmony to many phases of the relationship between the church and state in Byzantium. Needless to say, even those periods can hardly be acknowledged as anything close to the Kingdom of God on earth.

The first major and sobering crisis in the relations between the Christian Church and the Roman state occurred during their honeymoon. It is sometimes called Arianism – quite misleadingly. It would better be called a controversy about oneness and plurality in God, with the Council of Nicaea in 325 as its milestone. During this crisis, the Roman state suddenly faced not one, but several partners in the place that was supposed to be occupied by one church. On the one hand, there were supporters of the Alexandrian presbyter Arius, including influential Eastern hierarchs, Eusebius of Nicomedia and Eusebius of Caesarea. On the other hand, there were no-less influential hierarchs, led by two popes: one of Alexandria, Athanasius (several tenures between 328 and 373), and another of Rome, Julius (from 337 to 352).

The state, which initially helped the church to condemn the teaching of Arius at the council in Nicaea, soon changed its mind and favoured those whom the council had condemned or marginalised. After that, for most of the fourth century, most Roman emperors supported the cause of those who doubted or rejected Nicaea. Erik Peterson ingeniously realised that the reasons why the state supported the monarchical theology articulated by Arius and his confederates were not only theological but also political. This theology promoted the personal monarchy of the Father and the hierarchical structure of the Trinity. Both ideas could easily be referred to the absolute power of Christian monarchs. But the idea of the equality of the Father and the Son, which the Nicaean Creed promoted, was hardly compatible with the model of monarchy and hierarchy-based power in the utopian Kingdom of God, which had allegedly been incarnated in the Christianised Roman Empire. At the same time, the monarchical/hierarchical model of the Trinity perfectly suited the political model designed by Eusebius. The same Eusebius, by the way, supported monarchy and hierarchy in God.

During the fourth century, when Trinitarian monarchism/hierarchism dominated the Roman Empire and its church, Christian emperors managed to consolidate political power in their own hands to a greater extent than did even their

pagan predecessors on the throne. Paradoxically, the Christianised Roman Empire, which was expected to become less autocratic as a result of the Christian message of humility and service, in reality demonstrated the opposite results. Trinitarian monarchism/hierarchy, I believe, was among the main contributors to its transformation towards autocracy.

For a fairly long time, Trinitarian monarchism/hierarchy was the major supplier of legitimacy for the imperial court. At some point, however, it started to lose its charm. This happened when convincing theological arguments against the monarchical and hierarchical model of the Trinity were elaborated upon, especially by the Cappadocians. As a result of this theological development, the monarchical/hierarchical model turned from legitimising to de-legitimising, and was eventually abandoned. Cappadocian theology, however, could not substitute the monarchical/hierarchical Trinity as the source of legitimacy for the Christian emperors.

A new source for political legitimacy was found in its stead, where no one expected to find it – in neo-Platonism. The original attitude of neo-Platonism towards politics was mainly neutral or negative. It has been characterised as upholding “Plato without politics”.²² Despite its a-political or even anti-political standpoint, neo-Platonism, in its Christianised version, came to be employed heavily as a new supplier of political legitimacy for the court, to the extent that it turned into a durable framework for most later versions of Christian political theology. It began again with Eusebius. In his *Praeparatio Evangelica*, he supported the idea of a Christian polity, which was not dissimilar from the utopian Platonopolis designed two decades earlier by the neo-Platonic Porphyry of Tyre.²³ Unlike the neo-Platonic utopian *polis*, which was never built, Eusebius envisaged the entire empire turning into a Christian Platonopolis. To some extent, this vision was realised.

Ancient neo-Platonism provided a clearer and more convincing link between God and the political ruler than even Carl Schmitt could imagine in the 1920s. Schmitt’s link was an iconoclastic and transcendental analogy, while for the Christian political theologians trained in neo-Platonism, the divine and political spheres had a more intrinsic relationship of image and participation. Christian emperors were proclaimed the images of the one God. On the one hand, this seemed like a significant downgrade in comparison to the pagan emperors, who had been venerated as deities. On the other hand, a pagan emperor was a deity among many other gods, while the Christian emperor was the sole image of the one God. Although his

22 D.J. O’Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4.

23 See J.M. Schott, “Founding Platonopolis: The Platonic Politeia in Eusebius, Porphyry, and Iamblichus”, *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 11/4 (2003): 501–531, on p. 502.

authority was assumed to be reduced in Christianity, in effect it only increased. Another neo-Platonic idea of participation established a more intimate connection between one God and the ruler than in Schmitt's analogy. The analogy presupposes a transcendence of the divine power over any political power, while participation makes the divine power immanent in politics.

Neo-Platonism supplied Christianity with an even more politically charged concept: that of hierarchy. The neo-Platonic universe, in both its upper and lower chambers, was structured strictly hierarchically. Deities were distinguished in it according to their ranks in specially-designated places – *henads*. The lower hierarchical structures mirrored the upper structures. Hierarchy, for the neo-Platonists, became a superstructure that engulfed any other structure and being. So it became for the Christian theologians. One of them, who hid under the pseudonym of Dionysius Areopagite, also structured the Christian heavens and *ekklesia* hierarchically. He only substituted pagan deities with angels and linked ecclesiastical hierarchies to the divine ones.

Pseudo-Dionysius was probably one of the most a-political theologians in Christianity. Yet, unwillingly, he became one of the greatest, if not the greatest, Christian political theologian, whose thought has influenced Christian political philosophy immensely. His concept of hierarchy even now continues to be dominant in both ecclesial and political structures. It reached its heyday in the Middle Ages, when political, social and ecclesial structures became rigidly hierarchical. This hierarchy was interpreted in ontological categories, which then came to be recognised as having been established by *ius divinum*.

4 Western Copies of the Eastern Political Theologies

In the context of medieval political theology, let us return to interwar Germany, and focus on the medievalist Ernst Kantorowicz. He can be listed together with Schmitt and Peterson as a scholar who succeeded in deciphering classical theology, and extracting from it some fascinating political theories. Kantorowicz was similar to Schmitt and Peterson in many regards. He wrote in the same period and in the same place, that is to say, in interwar Germany. All three scholars had similar conservative political preferences. Kantorowicz was a German nationalist, who won an Iron Cross at Verdun, dreamed of destroying France and participated in the anti-Polish riots in his native Poznań. When the Nazis came to power, Kantorowicz expressed sympathy with some of their causes. Norman Cantor even believes that “except for the misfortune of being a Jew”, Kantorowicz “was the ideal Nazi scholar

and intellectual”.²⁴ Indeed, Kantorowicz was a Jew and did not want to “deny his blood”.²⁵ Eventually, despite his unrepented German nationalism and concurrence with many Nazi ideas, he had to leave his country and emigrated to the United States.

There, he published his masterpiece, *The King’s Two Bodies*, which became an instant classic. Although it was published as early as 1957, Princeton University Press continues to reprint it to this day.²⁶ Kantorowicz did with the Middle Ages what Peterson did with Late Antiquity: he discovered a technology of extracting political ideas from theological formulas. In other words, both scholars discovered political theologies, which were expressed in theological terms and contributed to the legitimacy of political rulers. Both realised that at the core of those political theologies there was a Christology. For Peterson, the ‘Arian’ standpoint, that the Son is inferior to the Father, implied a model for the absolutist monarchy of the Christian Roman emperors. Kantorowicz dealt with the dynasties that claimed to be successors of the Roman emperors. He argued that their legitimacy rested on the Christological constructs developed by their contemporary court theologians.

Kantorowicz chose to analyse a collection of texts composed around AD 1100 by an unknown Norman theologian, who developed argumentation in favour of the exclusive prerogatives of Christian kings during the Investiture controversy. The Norman Anonymous – as he has become known in scholarship – argued that the royal office reflects the power of God: “Potestas enim regis potestas Dei est”.²⁷ A king, as an individual person and a holder of the office, is similar to Christ in both his humanity and divinity. This was a bolder comparison than the Byzantine political theologians would permit themselves, with all their love for their rulers.

The Byzantine political theologians had developed highly sophisticated and dizzyingly nuanced theories about the imperial authority and its relationship to

24 N.F. Cantor, *Inventing the Middle Ages: The Lives, Works, and Ideas of the Great Medievalists of the Twentieth Century* (New York: W. Morrow, 1991), 95.

25 So he wrote in the letter to his mentor poet Stefan George, cited in R.E. Lerner, *Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018), 163.

26 The latest reprint was made in 2016: E.H. Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016).

27 The full quote reads: “Verum si sacerdos per regem instituitur, non per potestatem hominis instituitur, sed per potestatem Dei. Potestas enim regis potestas Dei est, Dei quidem est per naturam, regis per gratiam. Unde et rex Deus et Christus est, sed per gratiam, et quicquid facit non homo simpliciter, sed Deus factus et Christus per gratiam facit. Immo ipse, qui natura Deus est et Christus, per vicarium suum hoc facit, per quem vices suas exsequitur”; *Libelli de lite imperatorum et pontificum saeculis XI. et XII. conscripti* (vol. 3 of *Monumenta Germaniae historica inde ab anno Christi quingentesimo usque ad annum millesimum et quingentesimum: Scriptorum*, Hannover: Impensis Bibliopolii Hahniani, 1897), 667.35–40.

the divine. Gilbert Dagron published an encyclopedic study on this matter.²⁸ If we compare the theological hermeneutics of the Byzantine and Norman kingships, we see how great a theological and cultural gap there was between them. The latter seems to be a vulgar copy of the former. Even Kantorowicz, who was not a theologian and did not know the nuances of high Byzantine Christology, recognised that the theology of Norman Anonymous was deficient, with “a Nestorian and Adoptionist flavour”.²⁹

The Christology that the medieval Norman theologian promoted was rather poor. In particular, it was articulated in a language with theological vulgarisms, such as *persona mixta* (mixed), and forbidden words, such as *gemina* (twinned). This language was applied to the medieval kings as reflecting two natures of Christ. The word *mixture*, σύγκρασις, was taken with a large grain of suspicion in Eastern Christology – especially after it became a keyword in the Monophysite Christology of Eutyches. As for the word *twinned*, it was unheard of and indeed unthinkable in the Eastern Christological discourses. The idea of mixed or twinned person was not even Nestorian, as Kantorowicz suggested, because Nestorianism affirmed a single person (*persona*, πρόσωπον) in Christ. The Christology of the Norman Anonymous went further than Nestorianism would have gone, in dividing the *persona* of the king. Paradoxically, this political Christology appears to be quite Eutychean, which is the opposite of Nestorianism. The Byzantine monastic Eutyches taught that the humanity of Christ changed and appropriated many natural properties of divinity. This teaching is usually called Monophysitism and should be differentiated from the Miaphysite teaching of Dioscorus of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch. Although they also claimed that Christ had one nature, in their interpretation, Christ’s humanity remained unchangeable and consubstantial with our humanity.

Eutycheanism insinuated an ontological alienation of Christ’s humanity: the ontological status of his humanity became significantly higher than the ontological status of humankind. The anonymous Norman author in a similar manner implied that the king’s power is not functional, but ontological. It has its own substance. The royal power was ontologised even more in the political theology of the Tudors in England, as Ernst Kantorowicz demonstrated in the same book, *The King’s Two Bodies*. The title of this seminal study highlights its main idea, that kings were believed to have two bodies: physical and corporate. The former, the physical, was

²⁸ G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre: étude sur le «césaropapisme» byzantin* (Paris: Gallimard, 1995); English translation: *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

²⁹ Kantorowicz, *The King’s Two Bodies*, 52.

mortal, while the latter, the corporate, never died. All the subjects of the English Crown were included in it. As a Tudor lawyer explained,

The King has two Capacities, for he has two Bodies, the one whereof is a Body natural, consisting of natural Members as every other Man has, and in this he is subject to Passions and Death as other Men are; the other is a Body politic, and the Members thereof are his Subjects, and he and his Subjects together compose the Corporation.³⁰

The ontologisation of power, either in the form of the “twinned person” of the king, or his “corporate body”, was an extreme form of political theology. Indeed, I believe, it was a heretical political theology. Once one starts making political power a thing, and not a function, it opens doors to dictatorships, wars, and other abuses. Byzantium – a prototype for many patterns of Western political theologies, which usually were copied with inaccuracies and without preserving subtleties, – did not go as far as that. True, there were other, more sophisticated and less heretical forms of ontologisation of power in the Christian East. One of them was the already-mentioned concept of hierarchy. However, in the hierarchical structures, the power of its holder is defined not by the holder’s ontological status, but by his/her place in the hierarchy. In other words, not the king *per se*, but his place had ontological gravity. That is why the dethronement of the Byzantine basileuses was a rather well-known routine,³¹ and not an existential tragedy, which was so well described by Shakespeare in his *Richard II*.

5 Eastern Symphonies

Ernst Kantorowicz described Christological ideas, which underpinned the patterns of political power during the Middle Ages and early Modernity. The Christian East applied Christological models to its political patterns much earlier, in Christian Antiquity. While the West focused more on the personal power of kings, the East applied Christology to the entire complex of church-state relations. I would identify

³⁰ Justice Southcote in the case *Willion v. Berkley*, in *ibid.*, 13.

³¹ A Chinese traveller to Byzantium in the seventh century made an interesting observation about how easily the Byzantines eliminated their rulers: “Their kings are not men who last. They choose the most capable and they put him on the throne; but if a misfortune or something out of the ordinary happens in the Empire, or if the wind or the rain arrive at the wrong season, then they at once depose the emperor and put another in his place”; *Xin Tang shu* [New book of Tang] (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1975), ch. 198, 5313–5314, cited in F. Hirth, *China and the Roman Orient: Researches Into Their Ancient and Medieval Relations as Represented in Old Chinese Records* (Chicago: Ares, 1975), 52.

three such Christological models, which had political underpinnings: Chalcedonian or Dyophysite, Miaphysite, Monothelite, and finally Nestorian. Let me give a brief characterisation of each of these Christologies.

Both Dyophysite and Miaphysite Christologies believe that humanity and divinity in Christ do not constitute distinct subjects, but have been united intrinsically into one being. On the one hand, humanity and divinity are whole, and were never alienated from what they originally had been. On the other hand, they remain distinct from one another, and have never been separated. The difference between the two approaches is that the Dyophysite Christology calls humanity and divinity “natures”, and therefore speaks of two natures in Christ, while the Miaphysite Christology speaks of one nature in Christ, in order to stress the unity of Christ even more than the Dyophysite Christology does. The Monothelite Christology tried to reconcile the two above-mentioned Christologies by combining the theological language of two natures with the idea of single activity and will in Christ. Finally, the Nestorian Christology envisaged a significantly wider gap between humanity and divinity, to the extent of admitting two subjects in Christ: God and a man.

As mentioned earlier, the Byzantine ideal of church-state relations was symphonic. The classical definition of this ideal can be found in the preamble to the sixth novella promulgated by the Emperor Justinian:

The greatest gifts that God, in his celestial benevolence, has bestowed on mankind are priesthood and sovereignty, the one serving on matters divine, and the other ruling over human affairs, and caring for them. Each proceeds from one and the same authority, and regulates human life. Thus nothing could have as great a claim on the attention of sovereigns as the honour of priests, seeing that they are the very ones who constantly offer prayer to God on the sovereigns' behalf. Hence, should the one be above reproach in every respect, and enjoy access to God, while the other keeps in correct and proper order the realm that has been entrusted to it, there will be a satisfactory harmony, conferring every conceivable benefit on the human race.³²

“Harmony” here translates the Greek *συμφωνία* and Latin *consonantia*. In this model, “priesthood” and “sovereignty” are presented as two distinct political entities, which, nevertheless, come from the same source (“each proceeds from one and the same authority”) and focus on the same subject: “human life”. In other words, the structure of the formula of symphony is the following: unity → duality → unity.

³² *Corpus iuris civilis*, ed. T. Mommsen/P. Krüger/R. Schöll/W. Kroll (3 vol.; Berlin: Weidmann, 1889–1895), cited in P. Sarris (ed.), *The Novels of Justinian: A Complete Annotated English Translation*, trans. D.J.D. Miller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 97–98.

Exactly the same is the structure of the Christological formula as adopted by the Council of Chalcedon in 451: unity of Christ → duality of his natures → unity of Christ.

In other words, there is an apparent coherence between how the Byzantines saw the relationship between the two natures of Christ and how they saw relations between their church and state. Justinian's symphony can hence be characterised as Chalcedonian, which is no surprise, given the support that Justinian extended to the Chalcedonian faction in the Byzantine Church.

Justinian's ideal of symphony remained an ideal. In practice, the Miaphysite formula of power was implemented. In this formula, the church and state could hardly distinguish their respective spheres of existence; even their perceptions of themselves conflated into a single theopolitical self-awareness. This can be observed, for example, in the fact that during the Byzantine period, theologians virtually never reflected on the church as an entity different from the state. Those who did reflect on it, such as John Chrysostom, usually had a non-conformist tilt in their views on church-state relations. Thus the Byzantine church and state effectively conflated into a single theopolitical nature. In this nature, they could be distinguished "only theoretically" (τῆ θεωρίᾳ μόνῃ), to use the wording of Cyril of Alexandria.³³ Paradoxically, the imperial ideologists, who were mostly Dyophysites, preferred the Miaphysite modality of church-state relations.

There was a period in Byzantine history, during the seventh century, when Christological theory and political practices converged. The emperor of the time, Heraclius (reigned 610–641), a gifted politician with an ambition of becoming a second Justinian, embarked on a project of reconciliation between the pro- and anti-Chalcedonian churches. With the assistance of his court theologians, he designed a theological formula that he believed would satisfy both quarrelling sides. On the one hand, this formula stated that Christ had one hypostasis and two natures, and this was to please the Chalcedonian side. On the other hand, the single Christ had one activity (ἐνέργεια), and this was to accommodate the anti-Chalcedonians. Later, the single activity in this formula was replaced by a single will (θέλημα). The formula was called Monoenergist/Monothelite.

This eclectic Christological formula was designed to bridge the theological and political gap between two large groups: those who supported and those who opposed the Council of Chalcedon. It can also be interpreted as having the following political implication. On the one hand, it respected the distinctiveness of the church *vis-à-vis* the state. On the other hand, their unity, according to this formula, had the same source of activity and one will, and that was the emperor. The Monothelite

³³ *Quod unus sit Christus* (CPG 5228), 736.27.

formula, which was adopted mainly for political reasons, perfectly described the church-state relations in the Eastern Roman Empire in the period, when it was passing from Antiquity to the Middle Ages. It is true that Monoënergism and Monothelism were condemned at the ecumenical council in Constantinople in 680–681. Nevertheless, as a political formula, Monothelism continued to define church-state relations in Byzantium until its demise.

The Monothelite political model culminated during iconoclasm. Scholars still argue about both the theological and political causes that triggered the controversy about sacred images. They agree, however, that its single promoter was the state, which forced the church to comply with its policies regarding icons. One of the main reasons that might have motivated the imperial authority was to enhance the legitimacy of this authority. Iconoclasm was an ideal case of the Monothelite symphony, when the emperor unilaterally imposed his will upon both the state and the church. It was also a case of political theology in the Schmittean sense, when theology smoothly translates into politics.

While in the Eastern Roman Empire, also known as Byzantium, there was no separation between the church and state whatsoever, with the degree of distinction between them varying from insignificant to zero, outside this empire, in the majority of cases, the church was forced into separation from the state. This produced a new model of church-state relations, which can be called Nestorian. Nestorianism, as mentioned earlier, presupposed a significant distance between divinity and humanity in Christ. This distance was caused by the interpretation of divinity and humanity as self-standing subjects: as God and a man. This interpretation was promoted by the Archbishop of Constantinople Nestorius, for which reason this Christological doctrine received his name. It was condemned at the ecumenical council in Ephesus in 431.

In a way similar to that in which the Nestorians perceived the gap between divinity and humanity in Christ, the churches outside the Roman Empire were forced to keep a distance from the state. The states that enforced such a distance were not Christian. One of the earliest examples of this, after Constantine, occurred in the Persian Empire, the eternal rival of the Greco-Roman world. The Persians, with several exceptions, tolerated Christianity, but did not offer Christian bishops any symphonic favour – even though the latter tried hard to attain it. The Christian community in Persia had to live in a fairly pluralistic society with no preferences awarded from the state. Occasionally it was persecuted. The majority in this minority consisted of the Nestorians, mainly Christians from Eastern Syria, who refused to comply with the council of Ephesus and thus were expelled from Roman soil.

This experience of living in a pluralistic society, with no benefits from the state, was painful at first for the church but soon proved to be to its advantage. The Nestorian Christians, also known as Assyrians, made good use of their experiences of survival in the Persian environment, namely, in their mission to Asia. These experi-

ences allowed them to establish themselves successfully in the countries and societies as impenetrable to foreign influence as that of the Chinese. I believe the success of this mission is connected to the Nestorian model of relationship with the states where this church sent its missionaries.

At the time when the Chalcedonian churches in Byzantium lived through Miaphysite sorts of symphony, the Miaphysite churches, which after the Arab conquest of Syria and Egypt found themselves under the control of the Caliphate, had to embark on the Nestorian model of relations with the Muslim state, – even though they despised everything Nestorian. In effect, most of those churches, which we know as Oriental, continue to live according to the same Nestorian pattern. Most Byzantine churches had to adopt the same pattern, when the Ottomans established their own state on the ruins of Byzantium. The Nestorian model of church-state relations, which the Eastern churches have experienced since at least the fifth century, was not dissimilar to the Jeffersonian “wall” and other modern models of separation between the church and state. Thus the Eastern churches pioneered the models of both unity and separation from the state, and the Western churches followed them.

I mentioned above that the churches in the East were forced into the Nestorian model of relations with the state. This model was never their choice. They always preferred the one nature model whenever it was possible, or even when it was impossible. Modernity, with its ‘disestablishmentness’, caused a lot of pain to both Western and Eastern churches, – probably more than with its secularisation and ‘modernism’. The Catholic Church suffered ‘phantom pains’ after being stripped of much of its own political power, while the ‘phantom pains’ for many Eastern churches came from losing privileged relationships with the state. Following their symphonic instinct and suffering from the deprivation of political influence, the churches usually did not miss the slightest opportunity to collaborate with political regimes, even when these regimes were hostile.

Perhaps the most bizarre kind of symphony that ever occurred in the history of Christianity was the one with the regime whose established religion was militant atheism. I would characterise the *modus vivendi* of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Soviet Union as symphonic. The formula of this symphony was articulated by Metropolitan Sergiy Stragorodsky, later the Patriarch of Moscow, and published by the central Communist newspaper *Izvestia* in 1927: “We want to be Orthodox and at the same time do recognise the Soviet Union as our civic homeland, the joys and successes of which are our joys and successes, and whose failures are our failures”.³⁴ Needless to say that among the greatest joys of the Soviet homeland would be to eliminate any religion altogether.

³⁴ First published in the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*, 18 August 1927.

Many historians argue, and this is also an official line of the Moscow Patriarchate, that the church had two bad choices: to be exterminated or to collaborate with the regime, with a hope of survival. Therefore, the best option that the church had, even though it was not a good option, was to collaborate with the Communist regime. Others counter-argue that the church by all means had to avoid collaboration with the atheistic regime. As an alternative, the Christians could go underground and, if needed, had to die as martyrs. In effect, many underground groups, all of which of dubious canonical status, mushroomed during the waves of the Soviet persecutions. Collaboration with the state at any price did not save the official church from persecutions. Most of its bishops, priests and monastics were killed or exiled to the Gulags, and most churches were shut down or destroyed.

Those Russian hierarchs who survived Stalin's purges in the 1930s, were recruited by the Soviet government after the Second World War to propagate in the world the advantages of the Communist ideology. A new kind of symphony was established. Its scope, however, was very narrow: this symphony served only the purposes of Soviet propaganda abroad, and it benefited only a minuscule group of hierarchs. The majority of ordinary faithful continued to suffer and were restricted in their basic rights. Again, some people would argue today that the church did not have any other choice but to cooperate with the state. However, I believe there was something more to this cooperation than simply choosing between two bad options. It was a desperate, and sometimes subconscious, need to have a political partner, even if this partner wanted to kill you. Some would call it the Stockholm syndrome. I would call it symphonic syndrome.

6 Orthodoxy and Totalitarian Ideologies

The same symphonic syndrome moved the Orthodox churches to support radical nationalist regimes and ideologies, which mushroomed in the traditionally Orthodox countries in the interwar period. In addition to the custom of treating *any* political regime as a partner, the churches were motivated by what we now call traditional values, which were usually promoted by fascist and nationalist regimes and ideologies. Most Orthodox countries in different periods of the twentieth century lived through conservative dictatorships or ideologies close to fascism. They were in most cases modelled on Italian Fascism,³⁵ and sometimes came close to Nazism.

³⁵ See D.G. Williamson, *The Age of the Dictators: A Study of the European Dictatorships, 1918–53* (Harlow, UK: Routledge, 2007), 132.

The Italian word *clericofascista*, coined by Fr Luigi Sturzo in the 1920s,³⁶ is also applicable to many clergy, hierarchs, primates and even saints in the Orthodox churches during the last century.

One of the most obvious examples is the Romanian National Legionary State, which existed in 1940–1941. It featured a one-party regime with a strong agenda of Orthodox conservatism. This state was controlled by the right-wing nationalist Legion of Archangel Michael (*Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail*). This was a clerical movement and then a party, with about 30% of its members in the parliament after the elections in 1937 being priests. A priest from this movement wrote in its heyday: “A true priest will therefore be a Legionnaire by the nature of things, just as a Legionnaire will be in his turn, and again by the nature of things, a Legionnaire, the best son of the Church”.³⁷ Most scholars agree that the Legion was a movement with a strong fascist tilt.

There were less numerous movements in other Orthodox countries, which had a similar bent. One of them, Assembly (*Zbor*), was organised in Serbia by Dimitrije Ljotić. While not as popular as the Romanian Legion, the Serbian *Zbor* had many similarities with the former: both combined a conservative and nationalistic political agenda with a strong religious motivation. *Zbor* was also supported by influential hierarchs, one of them being bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. Scholars still argue which kind of fascism Ljotić’s ideology was close to.³⁸ One can easily recognise in it some classical fascist features, such as the idea of a corporatist state, – similar to Benito Mussolini’s “*lo stato corporativo*”.³⁹ Unlike Mussolini, however, Ljotić regarded religion as the core of national identity.

Most Orthodox thinkers and hierarchs outspoken in promoting ultra-conservative and ultra-nationalist agendas in the interwar period felt closer to Italian Fascism than to German Nazism. Nevertheless, from time to time they uttered some words of approval of Hitler, too. The above-mentioned Nikolaj Velimirović, for instance, in his article “The Nationalism of St Sava”, published in 1935, urged his readers to “render homage to the present German leader, who [...] realised that

36 Sturzo coined the word in the interview with *La Stampa* (10 February 1924) and then used it in later publications, such as L. Sturzo, *Popolarismo e fascismo* (Torino: Gobetti, 1924), and L. Sturzo, “La politica dei clerico-fascisti”, in L. Sturzo, *Pensiero antifascista* (Torino: Gobetti, 1925), 7–16.

37 I. Imbrescu, *Biserica și mișcarea legionară* (Bucharest: Cartea Romaneasca, 1940), 201, cited in R. Griffin/M. Feldman, *The “Fascist Epoch”* (vol. 4 of *Fascism: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, London: Routledge, 2004), 132.

38 See M. Falina, “Between ‘Clerical Fascism’ and Political Orthodoxy: Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Interwar Serbia”, in M. Feldman/M. Turda/T. Georgescu (ed.), *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe* (London: Routledge, 2014), 35–46, on p. 33.

39 See B. Mussolini, *Lo stato corporativo* (Firenze: Vallecchi, 1938).

nationalism without religion is an anomaly, a cold and insecure mechanism”.⁴⁰ Another prominent conservative hierarch of that time, the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, Metropolitan Anastasiy Gribanovskiy, praised Hitler in 1938 with the following words:

Not only the German nation commemorates you with fervent love and devotion to the Throne of the Highest: the best people of all nations, who wish you peace and justice, see you as a leader in the world struggle for peace and truth. [...] Your feat for the German people and the greatness of the German Empire made you an exemplary model worthy of imitation, and a model of how one should love one's people and one's country, how one should stand for national treasures and eternal values. [...] May God strengthen you and the German people in the fight against hostile forces, who wish death of our people. May He give you, your country, your Government and the army good health, prosperity and all the good haste for many years.⁴¹

Both Fascism and Nazism were quite popular in the conservative circles of the Russian White immigration to the West. Some immigrants collaborated with these regimes, and some even provided inspiration for them. This inspiration came from a particular direction of what we can call Russian political theology, as it developed at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Political theology was not a part of the official theological curriculum in the Romanovs' Russia. It emerged outside this curriculum, and immediately took two opposite directions. One direction was liberal and accommodating for the developments in the progressive part of Russian society. That part wanted emancipation from monarchy, constitution, equal rights for all strata of society, and so on. A political theology that reflected these desiderata was articulated by such prominent figures in Russian religious philosophy as Vladimir Solovyov, Sergei Bulgakov and Nikolai Berdyaev. It influenced the programme of *aggiornamento* adopted by the council of the Russian Church in 1917–1918. I believe this council was a forerunner of the Second Vatican Council.

The other direction of the Russian political theology at that time was reactionary and populist. It tried theologically to substantiate monarchy, was anti-modernist and anti-democratic. Among the protagonists in this direction of political theology were some prominent hierarchs, including Metropolitan Antony Khrapovitskiy,

⁴⁰ N. Velimirović, *Nacionalizam Svetog Save: Predavanje održano na proslavi nedelje pravoslavlja u Beogradu 1935* [The Nationalism of Saint Sava: Lecture Held at the Celebration of the Sunday of Orthodoxy in Belgrade in 1935], (Belgrade: Udruženje srpskog pravoslavnog sveštenstva Arhiepiskopije beogradsko-karlovačke, 1935), 21; English translation in M. Falina, “Between ‘Clerical Fascism’ and Political Orthodoxy: Orthodox Christianity and Nationalism in Interwar Serbia,” *Totalitarian Movements & Political Religions* 8/2 (2007): 247–258, on p. 253.

⁴¹ Gribanovskiy's message published in *Tserkovnaya Zhizn* 5/6 (1938), 96.

who later founded the conservative Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, mentioned above in connection to greetings to Hitler, and Archbishop Serafim Sobolev. The latter, for instance, believed that democracy is a diabolic political system. He wrote a book entitled *Russian Ideology*, which can be considered a manifesto of Russian conservative political theology. Recently, the Moscow Patriarchate proclaimed him a saint.⁴²

7 Anti-Semitism

I should now like to focus my microscope on a figure who contributed to this same conservative political theology in a special way. His name is Sergei Nilus, and he composed pietistic pamphlets and books for the people. His approach to political theology was *völkisch*. He picked up stories and prophecies from the past and extracted from them lessons about the divine character of monarchy, and how gravely those who challenge this institution sin. He became famous for popularising the figure of Seraphim of Sarov, a Russian monk who flourished in the first three decades of the nineteenth century. Nilus published spiritual conversations of this monk with one Nikolay Motovilov, and concluded from these conversations how important it is for his contemporaries to support the Romanov dynasty wholeheartedly.

Recent studies have established that those conversations were to a great extent fictional.⁴³ Even more fictional was an appendix attached to their publication. This appendix is known as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*,⁴⁴ and they were published for the first time by Nilus. Scholars still argue by whom and where this forgery was produced. Very likely, the imperial Russian intelligence agencies were behind the *Protocols*. The purpose of this appendix was to compromise the Jewish participants in the anti-tsarist movement, and this purpose cohered with the general goal of the book: to bring convincing arguments in favour of the monarchy and to defy its enemies.

The *Protocols* became wildly popular reading in pre-revolutionary Russia. Even Tsar Nicholas II Romanov read them with a pencil in his hand. After the Bolshevik revolution, they were transmitted to the West. It is believed that the person

⁴² S. Sobolev, *Russkaya ideologiya* [Russian ideology], (Sofia, s.n., 1939).

⁴³ See V. Stepashkin, *Seraphim Sarovskij* [Seraphim of Sarov], (Moscow: Molodaya gvardiya, 2018).

⁴⁴ S. Nilus, *Velikoe v malom i antikhrisť kak blizkaya politicheskaya vozmozhnost, Zapiski pravoslavnogo* [The big within the small and the Antichrist as a imminent political possibility, notes of an Orthodox], (Tsarkoe Selo: Tipografiya Tsarskoeselskogo komiteta Krasnogo kresta, 1905).

who brought the *Protocols* to Germany was Pyotr Shabelsky-Bork, a devoted royalist and participant in the anti-Bolshevik military campaign. After this campaign failed, he was rescued by the Germans during the winter of 1918–1919.⁴⁵ When in Berlin, Shabelsky-Bork met a German nationalist, Ludwig Müller von Hausen. Von Hausen helped publish the first German translation of the *Protocols* in 1920 in the newspaper *Völkischer Beobachter*. The *Protocols* became a best-seller in Germany and, no doubt, contributed to the rapid spread of Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda.

The *Protocols* also inspired many Orthodox in other countries. For instance, in 1926 a Serbian devotional group, Bohomoljci, led by the above-mentioned bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, disseminated the *Protocols* in Serbia.⁴⁶ Anti-Semitism, inspired by the *Protocols*, continues to be a part of the modern Schmittean versions of Orthodox political theology, even today. Soon after liberation from Soviet atheism, the largest Russian monastery, the Lavra of St Sergiy, along with urgently needed spiritual literature, published a collection, *Russia Before the Second Coming*.⁴⁷ It was a compilation of quotes and ‘prophecies’, often falsified, about the ‘powers of evil’ working against Russia. The West and Jews were named among those powers, and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* were included in the edition.

8 Nationalism

Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, and with him many other conservative Orthodox political theologians, counterposed Orthodox nationalism to the secular West. He accused the West of anthropocentrism,⁴⁸ which has substituted God with man. The irony, however, is that nationalism is a Western secular construct. In the capacity of an ideology, it emerged as an organic part of the Enlightenment project. Adaman-

45 Michael Kellogg found this information in a gestapo report from April 1935. See M. Kellogg, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism, 1917–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 63.

46 See A.V. Prusin, *Serbia Under the Swastika: A World War II Occupation* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 127.

47 S. Fomin, *Rossija pered vtornym prishestviem* [Russia before the second coming], (Moscow: Svyato-Troitskaya Sergieva Lavra, 1993). In the period 1993–2005, around two hundred thousand copies of the book were sold; see V. Shnirelman, “Eskhatologiya, prorochestva o konze sveta i anti-semitizm v post-sovetskoj Rossii” [Eschatology, prophecies about the end of the world and anti-Semitism in post-soviet Russia], *Forum novejshej vostochnoevropskoj istorii i kulturny 1* (2015), 306.

48 See R. Bigović, *Od svečoveka do Bogočoveka: hrišćanska filosofija vladike Nikolaja Velimirovića* [From the Holy man to the God-man: the Christian philosophy of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović] (Belgrade: Raška Škola, 1998), 363.

tios Korais, who was among the main proponents of nationalism on Orthodox soil, discussed it first in the Parisian Société des observateurs de l'homme – a quintessentially anthropocentric society.

After having been imported to the Orthodox countries, nationalism combined with the religious identity of the peoples there. Its secularist pedigree was thoroughly camouflaged. An ancient and specifically Eastern structure of the Orthodox Church, autocephaly, facilitated the appropriation of nationalist ideologies in the Orthodox world. In the West, nationalism clashed with the universalist structure of the Catholic Church, which responded by condemning it in the forms of Gallicanism or Febronianism. In the East, nationalism cohered with the autocephalous (meaning self-headed, independent) structure of the local Orthodox Churches. Because of the compatibility between the autocephalous structure of Orthodoxy and ethnic states, nationalism – originally a secular ideology – was readily adopted in the Orthodox Church. It became a quasi-religious phenomenon, without clashing very much with religion proper and sometimes even substituting the latter. As a result, there are more people who identify themselves as Orthodox than those who believe in God.⁴⁹

Raymond Aron's term *religion séculière* describes Orthodox nationalism best. A particular instance of this *religion séculière* is an ideologeme that emerged recently, that of the Russian world. It is not exactly the same as the nationalistic ideologies in most Southern or Eastern European countries, which are usually identified with one nation. The nationalism of the Russian world is supra-ethnic and indeed neo-imperial. It exploits culture, language, and faith to rebuild the Russian world within the framework of the Romanovs' Russia and, if possible, Stalin's Soviet Union. This ideology has inspired the two wars that were waged on the European continent during the twenty-first century: the one on the territory of Georgia in 2008, and the other on the territory of Ukraine. The ideology of the Russian world sometimes presents itself as political Orthodoxy. In effect, both are similar to that particular case of political theology which was promoted by Carl Schmitt and opposed by Erik Peterson.

⁴⁹ See Pew Research Center, "Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe" (10 May 2017), <https://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/11/2017/05/15120244/CEUP-FULL-REPORT.pdf> (accessed 12 January 2021).

9 Conclusions

Politicised religion, in conclusion, is still very active in our days and causes a great deal of evil. However, it is probably as ancient as religion itself. In the period of Antiquity, politicised religion was a norm – the only form of religion that people publicly practised. Christ brought a change, when he said, disappointingly for many of his followers: “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). Early Christianity followed this non-conformist principle, which was quite a departure from the common practices of Antiquity. The hostility of the Roman Empire to the Christian communities corroborated the Christian non-conformist attitude. When the hostile tide started changing to a more favourable one, Christianity faced the challenge of getting back on the track of the old Greco-Roman religions: to become public, serve *salus populi romani*, provide legitimacy for the political authorities, and so on. A significant part of the church followed that track, but not all of it. A number of non-conformist movements emerged that endeavoured to preserve the early Christian ethos. The most significant among them became known as monasticism.

The Christian East has authored most models of politicised religion. The West often followed the East, with a little original input. The Western copies of politicised religion usually were not as refined as the Eastern originals. These original models were embodied in the Eastern Roman Empire, known to us now as Byzantium, in Late Antiquity, and in the Western Christendom of the Middle Ages.

Modernity, with its Hobbesean and Jeffersonian separation between church and state, challenged the old symphony-based models of politicised religion. This religion, nevertheless, has survived even the unfavourable conditions of modernity. It was reinvented and recast in many new forms. This time, the West led, and the East followed. They often took their inspiration from the Romanticised Middle Ages and Romanticised Byzantium. Some countries in the West, and later in the East, being tired of modernisation of their societies, tried to resurrect the glories of *Germania* or of τὸ Βυζάντιον. Some even now try to recreate the Romanticised and ideal version of the medieval Holy Rus. The results are always the same: on the basis of Romantic blueprints they usually end up with totalitarian regimes.

These regimes utilise what Erik Peterson criticised as political theology. We should probably not follow Peterson in condemning political theology wholesale. After all, this term was rehabilitated after the Second World War within the framework of the so-called theology after Auschwitz. Its founding father, Jürgen Moltmann was, by the way, influenced by Erik Peterson.⁵⁰ Since then, it has become one of the most studied theological disciplines in the world. Modern political theol-

⁵⁰ See R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London: SCM Press, 2001), 14.

ogy studies all forms of interaction between the church and public square, a very respectable and legitimate field. What Peterson criticised could be called not political theology, but by more appropriate names: secular or political religion. It can also be called, and sometimes it calls itself, political Orthodoxy, political Catholicism, political Protestantism, and so on.

This phenomenon may have many names, but its quintessence is the same. It was articulated by Hannah Arendt, a secular Jewish philosopher who understood some things about Christianity better than many Christian theologians did in her time: “If we try to inspire public-political life once more with ‘religious passion’ or to use religion as a means of political distinctions, the result may very well be the transformation and perversion of religion into an ideology”.⁵¹

She apparently meant the totalitarian ideologies of Communism, Fascism, and Nazism. This list, however, can be expanded and should include the ideologies that seem to have been appropriated by Christianity, to the point of merging the latter with the former. Such is, for instance, nationalism, which is particularly strong in the world of Eastern Christianity. The most recent ideology of the Russian world can also be added to the list. These ideologies demonstrate that politicised religion leads to substituting theology with ideology as its simulacrum, the transcendent *beyond* with the visible *here*, religion with politics. It causes the alienation of religion as such and opens doors for conflicts, tragedies, and wars.

51 Arendt, “Religion and Politics”, 384.

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