The Concept of Trinity as a Paradigm for Relationship between Church and State

Introduction

“The optimum variant of existence of modern society is the secular state, which is opened to religion and recognizes its positive social values and understands limitations of own political spheres”—Iv Aman.¹

A “new paradigm shift” from “christocentric universalism” towards a “trinitarian” understanding of the divine reality and “Oikumene” as the one household of life² raises a question: can we use this “trinitarian” understanding also a paradigm for the relationship between state and church?

The purpose of this paper is to answer this question while affirming that neither Arianical model of Eusebius of Caesarea, nor Chalcedonic Justinian nor Dyophysical model of Luther but only the concept of Trinity (State-Church-Civil Society of Conscious Citizens) is the appropriate model to serve as a relationship paradigm between church and state in the contemporary world.

The Historical Models of Church-State Relationship

The Eastern Type (Byzantium)

Starting from the fourth century up to the end of its existence the Byzantine Empire was faithful to the idea of theocracy of the Basilia. This idea had been shaped by Eusebius of Caesarea in the IV century.³ The bewitched by the great idea, the inhabitants of Byzantium didn't observe the chasm between the theory and reality. For the Byzantine people the failures of the empire were just fair but temporary ordeals. They believed that their God just suppressed the re-establishment of theocracy with her complete secular - oicumenical size.⁴ Here is hidden the tragedy of Byzantium: they decided that the state can become internally Christian.⁵ The Church was ready to accept the imperial protection with enthusiasm, which was never corrected with precise and detailed study of nature and the role of the state and secular society.
in the life of fallen humanity. The affirmation of Justinian of symphony with the doctrine of Chalcedony, includes the fundamental error, since it is not distinguished between the created nature, that is fallen (this concerns in each land power), and the equally created but not fallen nature (it only concerns the Christ). Furthermore, in the end of his life Justinian became a supporter of Afibartodocetism and consequently the imperial authority and the empire became something imperishable, that is to say divine.

The same kind of theological problem we can find earlier than this ambiguous theory of Justinian. Videlicet, in the discourse of Eusebius of Caesarea we find: “hence there is one God, not two, or three, or more, for to assert a plurality of gods is plainly to deny the being of God at all. There is one Sovereign and His sovereign Word and Law is one”. We know that Eusebius’s theory of trinity introduced subordination in Trinity and he broadened this subordination in such a way that the emperor was included within as some kind of emanation of Trinity on the earth. God is one without equal personal relationship inside God’s life and consequently the power of imperator, which was the image of God, could not be shared. Also the strict social hierarchy and inequality was recognized as order as a natural consequence of divine subordination. Thus, the empire according to this theory became the divine entity.

In the twelve centuries, the relationship between church and state that was based on this (above mentioned) theory took various forms and features. This theory was not accepted with its pure meanings but was not surmounted it either. The Eastern (Orthodox) churches always leaned towards the imperial model. The very complex and explicit dogma of Trinity and of two natures of Christ were not put into practice for the relationship between the church and state in the Byzantium reality. But one important moment was displayed in the thoughts of Byzantines: the major role of good citizens in the life of society. Christians must be good citizens and transform society. This thought was also reflected in the 14th centuries in the works of the Byzantine thinker Theodori Metochitae. He considered that everything involved in improving the social life depended on the most excellent citizens. Thus we can consider that Byzantine thought emphasized the important role of each church member (believer) in the life of the society and consequently the state.

The Western Model

In Western Christianity, an explicit tension between religion and society, church and state, has become characteristic. Within Western Christianity, one needs to distinguish the Roman Catholic model (synthesis and continu-
The Concept of Trinity as a Paradigm for Relationship between Church and State

This chapter does not intend to give an overview of these theories or versions. Instead it wants to mention some of the more salient reflections of most important western church thinkers, which help us to clarify the intention of our topic.

Augustine of Hippo. It is well-known that Augustine of Hippo’s theory of state had an enormous influence on the development of Western models of church-state relationship. The separation between church and state is the positive consequence of Augustine’s theory. He sharply divided the two opposite worlds: the state and church, the city of earth and the city of heaven. The state is just a necessary evil that forced the citizens to overcome violence and violent actions. The law of the state offers Christians (citizens of heaven) a frame in which they can pave the way towards the true house. But the Christians as human beings are social by nature. The Christians introduce the values of God such as peace and love in the body of society so “the members are harmoniously included in the complete structure of the body.” Harmony (έμμελλης και μουσικής πολιτεία) of social body is found also in the thinking of Byzantines. Both Byzantines and Augustine introduce this harmony in society (κοινωνική συμφονία) and propose it as the responsibility of Christians. So, the divine harmony ties up social body as co-existence of church and state. Does this social body-church-state serve as a paradigmatic theology of Trinity?

Martin Luther. For Martin Luther, both, state and church are instituted by God. Neither of them is enough for the world without the other. The state as a secular power is not a necessary evil. Consequently when human personality serves the state, he/she is serving God. In this case, Luther uses Christological terms: one Christian person has two identities. He lives due to the Gospel by loving and suffering and acts as member of society by obeying the law and using the sword when he operates on behalf of his fellows. The life on earth is a continuous tension between these two identities. This perception of Christological dogma is more sensible than the Justinian’s theory, because state in this case doesn’t become divine. And more than this, in the perspective of this theory, state has energetic or dynamic character. It can be transfigured and appears to be quite a positive phenomenon on condition if the citizens carry out divine values in life of society.

Huldrych Zwingli. Huldrych Zwingli was more than Luther in emphasizing the positive role of government. The two powers (state and church) cooperate very closely and even overlap in the external life of community. But
man’s inner life is more to defend the church\textsuperscript{20} and when the rulers do not respect the Christian values, the believers must react. Thus all the life in the state depends on the Christian virtues of personalities who were transformed step by step and gradually by participating in church’s inner (liturgical or social) life. Zwingli served a very good example in his life as he lived out Christian virtues. He placed the bible as the centre of church’s life and point of reference for society.\textsuperscript{21} We can say that personal role of each citizen was promoted in the life of society. Thus, this was the step towards reality where the body of society links the bodies of church and state as one whole organism.

Jean Calvin. Calvin promoted the idea of the two governments in relationship. Civil authority for Calvin was far the most sacred and honorable of all human vocations. Calvin supported the idea of a theocratic government and promoted the belief of power to be divided between equal administrators.

The law according to Calvin is instituted by the Divinity. It is not a simple human invention but a processing and an adaptation of the divine message to the human social needs. Magistrates were not able to operate without the law because it is impregnated with Christian values and the soul of society. Therefore, it is invited here for the government and society to listen to the teaching of Christian values underscored by the church. It was exactly what Calvin (and Zwingli) did and influenced the public life through his personal example in preaching and counseling the government. Calvin also reorganized ecclesiastical offices in such a way that the church may be involved in social life.\textsuperscript{22} Thus state and church became closely connected and Christian citizens played a very important role in the life of the state and society.

\textit{Some Aspects of Church-Social-State Relationship}

Some of the aspects of church-social-state relationship will be delineated in detail with a hope to give clear and dynamic process of the relation between church and state.

Personal role in society

We have spoken and underlined the important and sometimes crucial role of some specific individuals. Peter Burke in his book \textit{History and Social Theory} shows that while it is important the personal talent of leaders (charisma) –at extension of all personalities–, is important, movements from below are also equally important, that is to say readiness of whole society or whole surrounded clime.\textsuperscript{23} The leaders and the whole society together are able to create one radical progressive change in society.
The Concept of Trinity as a Paradigm for Relationship between Church and State

**Concept of secularization**

a) Secularization in the first place is usually conceived as a negative phenomenon. On the contrary, Greek theologian Prof. Nikos Matsoukas criticizes such approach and considers that: “(The church) necessarily and physiologically is secularized. Differently her path cannot be historical.” The Church is in the world and lives the Fact or Event of Salvation. At the same time fights also in the space of morals and ethics, in order to be less errors and less scandals and sanctifies also insufficiency of nutshell (for example the solid hierarchal structure) that the body of church is dressed.

b) Second, even when we admit the negative aspects of secularization, nevertheless, we can’t affirm that it necessarily had taken place in the Reformation. The Reformation stimulated tighter relationships between church and state and increased the authority of religious institutions in all areas of social and political life. So, the early modern Europe was less secular than the Middle Ages.

**Symbols in Life of Society and Church**

In uniting the previous two points of personal role and secularization, we need to introduce the concept of symbol. Religious life undergoes change when its primary symbols change. Religious symbols interact creatively with social situations as one influences the other. When religious life changes, it is viewed in light of both its symbols and social situations. The symbols may be eradicated and created without the occurrence of secularization (in its negative sense) for changing of symbols actually reinforces the religious faith of a community. Secularization may occur even if the formal expression of symbols is not changed formally with reference to non-religious events (for example, the national identity of believers) and expressions. The new symbols of relationship between church and state may promote the values of old or true faith into body of society.

The changing of symbols of relationship between church and state is not necessarily due to the negative aspects of secularization. The charismatic individuals and the new social environment inspired “realistic mysticism” which created a new paradigm of positive secularization where the church effectively carries out its historical and eternal functions.

**Role of Ritual**

What has been told is not enough. It is necessary to show positive role of church symbols in the social-state life. But how do the church’s symbols work in and for a society? They work through the life of symbols which are implanted in church rituals (and may be the liturgical life in general) and are
necessary components of social life. One of the functions of ritual is to be a means of upbuilding the religious community as a communion and a way of living. This communal understanding of ritual discourages all distinctions between the various segments within the religious communities, but also by extension within the wider social life. Thus it overcomes the corrupted hierarchical order both in society and in the priestly ministries of the church. It dissolves barriers between members of different religious system and promotes religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence in a multicultural society.

And if we understand church which is identified not by what it is given to her in the past, nor by what she is as an institutional reality, but by what she is supposed to become at the end of time, at the Eschaton then the church is an organ which impels the body of society and state towards the tolerant, just and environmentally sustainable society.

Role of Citizen

We have spoken about a ritual life and of symbols and their importance in life of state. But can they automatically promote progress? Or if all is automatic then where is a free personal act which is the main aim of the Christian doctrine? We have spoken that one charismatic leader can only manage to bring change in society when this society is ready for transformation and actively participates in this change. And we know that a civil society just consists of and is a field of concrete personal conscious acts. And symbols and rituals as concrete forms just create conditions of such acts.

One thing is the “humble’ or “blind” collaboration of actors in sphere of social or church rites and symbols and quite different is the presence of the conscious carriers of acts of understanding—this last means the assimilation and incorporation of true values in symbol and through symbol in community (in church or society). A body of society must be impregnated with these values to be able to carry out an equal rights role in relationship between state and church, which relationship is energetically varying and creates progress.

Social Coexistence as Ontology of Personhood

The archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) in his article promotes the concept of the “seminal word” and advances the idea, which is very similar to notion “anonymous Christian”. He makes this by using the quotation from Maximus Confessor: “The divine Logos of God the father is mystically present in each of His commandments... In this way, he who receives a commandment and carries it out receives mystically the Holy Trinity.”
The Concept of Trinity as a Paradigm for Relationship between Church and State

Taking a one step further from this point Archbishop concludes: “…if we apply these views to the sphere of social life, perhaps new horizons might open up in our theological understanding of the mystery regarding the lives of people with other religions faith”.35 Thus the social life is common field where everything has its place and is determined, where “the Church… [as] the instrument of the mystery of the salvation of the nations … [and] sign of God’s love for all man”36 by its symbols, rites and concrete moral actions are present and mutual learning and mutual transformation take place.37

So, the social sphere is the field where life can be and mostly is multicultural. Every member of society has or has to realize his moral role in life of society. Here, in this sphere, the fact of coexistence of individuals or some groups is not that it mere takes place but, what is more important, dynamically accompanied by the continuous and inevitable event of mutual transformation. The Georgian philosopher Merab Mamardashvili says:

Marx had an idea. He decided to put sociality not after persons, who had before agreed among them and thus was created a condition, but before [or under] them [these persons]. He believed that how people communicate among themselves is exactly the essence of each of them independently of what agreement they had made. To put it briefly, Marx considered that the members of society are formed by social communications. I repeat, there does not exist prepared already counter-agents (contrahens, contractor) who then entered in communication, but there is certain social unity and it precedes person-members and these persons are formed inside of this unity… According to young Marx the essence of the person is relationship itself. Or to say vice versa, relationship is essence of person… the image of the human basically is plural, communicational plurality [or plurality, which is intrinsically in relationships]. Consequently the essence of the person is not a firm fact, which would exist by itself, but it is, exists in that measure in what the human person supports, reproduces and keeps relationship. If this constant maintenance and reproduction of relationship is not present, there is no person, there is a mere animal.38

In this case we deal not with mere coexistence of individuals in society but with ontology of person. This means that in social field occurs the ontological mutual influence-transformation of individuals. So in relationships inside the sphere of social life is formed “one nation, under God”, as it is in case of America. “But to be true American, one can hold another religion or no religion at all… America holds together because of the American ideal, that anyone, of any race, creed, color, language, religion… can become a good American under this nation’s Constitution and Bill of Rights”.39 Thus exact-
ly this condition can be satisfying for every Christian, which is to transform and to be ready to be transformed by his own active and conscious ethical existence and coexistence with other. We repeat that we are speaking about personal transformation ontologically. This is, in our opinion, the best and the only effective means of true coexistence—not trying to convert others with the help of state propaganda or other means of violent state (direct or not) influence but to give them chance to discover the treasure of those hearts and for this the more appropriate locus is the social sphere of responsible coexistence.

For this reason the peaceful coexistence and collaboration on a social level is evidently a more effective method of peaceful social and consequently state’s (and even church’s itself) progress towards Eschaton, because, we believe that, the social coexistence affects on ontological level. The orthodox Christians confess a dynamic and energetic identity of personhood. And exactly in this dynamic process it is possible to include or embrace an atheist. In this way, first, the society, which includes Christians and atheists, would be generated as multi-personal dynamic essence of life, which primarily God has bestowed to us; second, the same life would be our Eucharistic gift to God. Furthermore, if this gift were liked by God who knows in what He could transform the humankind through His grace? In this point we see hope, that the postmodernism, breaking up of essence in separated individuals, does not necessarily portend the approach of catastrophe or apocalyptic horror. Yes, our epoch is unique but also unique can be the image of humankind transformed by God’s grace. And our task is to be, to work and to live with dignity and to have, keep and improve our respect towards others and otherness.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, church-state relationship is understood in the light of Trinity which proposes a paradigm for such relationship. This role in old (Easter or Western) paradigms at least was not clear but latent. We promoted this idea because the permanent energetic or dynamic changeable world is image (likeness) of essential being of Trinity. Every personal energetic relationship in created world bears seal or stamp of this essential relationship between Divine Persons. Neither state or society nor church is composed with impersonal objects. Each of them is a live body of living people. Everything depends on the Conscious Citizens who form up each of these three bodies (state, society and church). The function of Conscious Citizens can best be understood as similar to the veins which links the heart (church) with the
The Concept of Trinity as a Paradigm for Relationship between Church and State

whole body (state) conveying the life-force, which goes out from worship into the people’s ordinary social -state life and flows back from that into worship. While symbols, law and rules constantly change energetically, the important role of Conscious Citizens is unchangeable.

In this way, “we Christians (have to) become God’s grace for this age”.41 We are representations of the Grace of God as Christian citizens in the concrete place and time. If the “Christian values are being openly rejected”42 in our places (states), we have to be open ourselves for Grace in the place of God’s Gift, the Church, to became a concrete place and time (moment) of Christian values and carry out a societal form of transformation into society.

Notes

9. С. Р. Christos, Στοιχεία Πολιτικής Φιλοσοφίας στους «Υπομνηματισμούς» του Θεοδώρου Μετοχίτου, in “Scientific An- nals of the Faculty of Theology” Volume 7 edited by School of Pastoral and Social Theology, Thessalonica 2001. P.73-74.
10. C. P. Christos, Στοιχεία Πολιτικής Φιλοσοφίας... p.71: “In Novella 105, Justinian declares that he was not only committed by the laws, but he was himself their lord as living law (έμψυχος νόμος).”

11. C. P. Christos, Στοιχεία Πολιτικής Φιλοσοφίας... p. 68. Compare to B.I. Popescu, Models of Relationship between Church and State... p.18: “Following the Byzantine thought John Chrysostom considers the equalitarianism as a potential source of anarchy. The principle of subordination is also present in nature in order to organize the life... For this reason he asks the Christians not to be ashamed of subordination, because God instituted it.”


13. Compare B.I. Popescu, Models of Relationship Between Church and State... p.23: “He (John Chrysostom) does not separate Christians from the world, but tries to make them a ferment and a matrix of a new state... The followers of Christ must not run out of society but have to transform and improve it peacefully.” See also B.I. Popescu, Models of Relationship between Church and State... p. 24, 25, 27.

14. C. P. Christos, Στοιχεία Πολιτικής Φιλοσοφίας... p. 82.


16. This attempt is based on the work Popescu B.I., Models of Relationship between Church and State and their Significance for Today, Bossey s.n. 2002.

17. B.I. Popescu, Models of Relationship Between Church and... p.29-35, 38, 40.

18. Theodori Metochitae, Υπομνηματισμοί 634: «Τον αυτόν άρα ως αληθώς τρόπιον ουδέν ανθρώποις έσται συμβιώσεως αρμονία και συμφωνία κοινωνική, και εμμελώς και μονοσικός ἐχονσα πολιτεία... Αρμονία γαρ τις εστί τω όντι και το πολιτικόν σύνθημα τε και σύστημα και σύνταγμα» - see in C. P. Christos, Στοιχεία Πολιτικής Φιλοσοφίας στους «Υπομνηματισμούς» του Θεοδώρου Μετοχίτου... p. 76.

19. B.I. Popescu, Models of Relationship Between Church and... p. 40, 46.


21. B.I. Popescu, Models of Relationship between Church and State... p. 61, 63-64, 62, 67.

22. B.I. Popescu, Models of Relationship between Church and... p.67, 68-70, 71, 75.
23. Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory*, Tbilisi 2002, p. 102-103. (Georgian Translation). Compare Jon N. Mack in his article illustrates that the reforms of Peter the Great in Russian was caused not so much “from above” that is to say from Peter himself but emerges from below and the impetus for change came from within Russian society rather without (Jon N. Mack, “Peter the Great and the Ecclesiastical Regulation: Secularization or Reformation”, *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, Volume 49, Number 3 (2005), Typeset at. St Vladimir’s Seminary, New York, 2005. p.247).

24. For example see B.I. Popescu, *Models of Relationship between Church and State*... p.81.


27. For example, in establishing in Russian College in place of a Patriarch, Peter the Great both eradicated an existing symbol and created a new symbol to “pull through” the old faith into a new social environment. For the “common good”, for a well ordered society the church had to change some symbols to play in society an incredibly valuable role (Jon N. Mack, “Peter the Great and the Ecclesiastical Regulation…”, p. 259, 260-261, 264 267.).


29. Compare M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger. An Analysis of the Concept of Pollution and Taboo*, London: Routledge and Keegan Paul, 1966, p.62: “It is not too much to say that ritual is more to society than words are to thought… It is impossible to have social relations without symbolic acts.” (Quotation from Petros Vassiliadis, *Beyond Christian Universalism: The Church’s witness in a multicultural society*, in “Scientific Annals of the Faculty of Theology” Volume 7 edited by School of Pastoral and Social Theology, Thessalonica 2001, p.317).


32. Compare Merab Mamardashvili, *Обязательность формы (obligation of the form)*, http://www.philosophy.ru/library/mmk/forma.html, page 4 of 4: “There are things which as though as much as possible determine, narrow edges of a field so that inside of it could be flashed (could be induced) the some free event… Ability of the form [in our case, social form]
is, besides any analytical development, to cause the creative act of understanding in the human being."

33. Compare Merab Mamardashvili, *The Civil society*, in *The Civic Arts Review*, Vol.2 Summer 1989, published by Arneson Institute at Ohio Wesleyan: “A state without citizens is a monstrosity... The civil society corresponds to the historical possibilities of man and history as a drama of good and evil... The problem is if we have few citizens who are capable of living according to values and realizing what is embodied in it... To be mature we have to know why and how we live, what are the sources of our existence. Only such people may be called citizens. Not those who have the right to take part in public affairs, but those who are obligated and are capable of carrying out their duties in public life...” And Сергей Хоружий, *Антивозрождение России*, (Sergei Horugi, *Antirevival of Russia*) http://www.politklass.ru/cgi-bin/issue.pl?id=71, http://intelros.ru/club/texts/horuzhiji_1_club.pdf

34. Harvey Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991, p. 600: “the experience of God forms the ambiance, undertow, or the basal spiritual metabolism, of daily life. Because of God’s universal self-communication, communication that the human person must freely accept or reject, anyone—even the agnostic or atheist—who lives moderately, selflessly, honestly, courageously, and in silent service to others experiences the mysticism of daily life. The courageous, total acceptance of life and on oneself, even when everything tangible seems to be collapsing, is perhaps the primary mystical experience of everyday life. Anyone does so accepts implicitly the holy mystery that fills the emptiness both of oneself and life. And because Christ’s grace supports this hope against hope, the experience is, at least anonymously, Christian, that is, Christian in fact if not in name” (We take this quotation from John Garvey, *Seeds of Word*, Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Chestwood, New York 10707, 2005, p. 6).


40. The paradigm of Chalcedonic doctrine can be acceptable if we take into account that a human person stands in the center of events. This person participates and receives fullness of grace as gift in church and into the intense field, which extends between this gift of eternity and chaotic current of time; personal acts perform this chaotic time as an image of eternity. It means that Conscious Citizen with concrete his acts gives concrete forms to created realities both flowing elapsing of public life and a of state and church life.
