

Differing Political Theologies of Differing Eras

Terms and Problem Specification

Carl Schmitt introduced the term 'political theology' into modern political science. In his opinion, 'all significant concepts of the [modern] science of politics are secularized theological concepts'.¹ Political theology describes a method that makes it possible to detect traces of theology in modern political discourse.

The concept of political theology has become a subject of investigation for many scientists. For example, Armin Adam in his work '*A History of Political Theology*' talks of the broadening usage of this term.²

We are interested in that aspect of political theology that deals with Church-State relations and the theological foundations of the ideological side of these relations.

This subject interests us from many angles:

Firstly, the Church is a societal community and, from a certain perspective, itself comprises a 'polis' that is based on theology.

Secondly, there is the issue of relations between the 'Kingdom of God' and an earthly power, which comprises relations between a spiritual authority and a secular power.

Thirdly, how the Church provides the functioning of certain political systems with a theological discourse.

Fourthly, how the Church paves the way for its policy by elaborating a theological discourse.

Fifthly, the problem of the extent to which one political system or another exerts influence on the Church's theological discourse.

We shall discuss this topic using the example of the Georgian Orthodox Church. We shall see what political theology it elaborated in differing eras and towards differing political systems.

Naturally, it is difficult for us to touch on all aspects of this research topic within the scope of a single article. We shall attempt to seek out the basic principles of theological discourses.

The differing political theology of coreligionist peoples

After the annexation of Georgia in the nineteenth century, Russia not only abolished the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church (in 1811) and changed its socio-cultural structure, it also completely changed a political theology that had been established for centuries.

Three important factors determined the political theology of the Georgian Church and, accordingly, that of Georgia.

The first was that, according to the established perspective of the social sciences, national identity took shape only in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In our opinion, this is quite clearly apparent in the case of Georgia. We have attempted in the article “*Georgian by Faith: Secularization and the Birth of the Georgian Nation*”,³ based on the examination of a single fragment of *Kartlis Tskhovreba* to show that, up to the nineteenth century, ‘Georgian’ was not a national but a religious epithet. Everyone who belonged to the Georgian Church was a Georgian. This condition was determined by the centuries-long relations between the royal dynasty and the Georgian Church, underlying which was a certain political theology. It is true that many things had changed over time, and especially at the turn of the eighteenth/nineteenth centuries, but the basic principles still remained unchanged.

The second is the historical reality that, from its very inception, the Georgian Church was connected with the Kingdom of Kartli, and directly with the Bagrationi dynasty at the time of the United Georgian Kingdom. We read in *Kartlis Tskhovreba* that ‘nowhere do we see great buildings, churches and monasteries or precious icons or crosses on which there are other kings’ names, apart from “We, King of Georgia, or of Kartli, or of Apkhazeti” which are written on stones, icons and crosses”.

Even when the Georgian Church was divided into the Kartli and Apkhazeti Churches, and was governed by the Patriarchs of Georgia and Apkhazeti (western Georgia) respectively, it remained within the space of the Bagrationi dynasty.

Georgian sources link the genealogy of the Bagrationi dynasty with the biblical David. Grigol Khandzteli addresses Ashot Kuropalates with the following words: ‘O King called son of the one anointed by the Prophet David and by God’. This situation represented the cornerstone of the political theology of both the kingdom and Church. The Georgian tradition did not differ from that established in all Christendom, according to which the biblical David represented the archetype of Christian kings. He was God’s chosen one. As Uspensky notes, the words ‘You are holy, You are holy, You are holy’ uttered during the anointing of a king indicate to us an Old Testament text (Isaiah

4, 3), specifically, the Old Testament tradition of the anointing of a king. In a unified *ecclesia* the Catholicos as well as the King were differing servants (Grigol Khandzteli, for example, addresses Demetrius, King of Apkhazeti, thus: 'O King, Servant of God and Your Majesty'), they were living in a unified political unit. For this very reason, as Uspensky notes, in the West they compared kings who were not God-fearing to the wicked kings of the Bible.

In connection with the King's charisma in Georgia we must also take into account those important circumstances that were characteristic of other Christian kings. In Giorgi Merchule, when Ashot Kuropalates asks Grigol Khandzteli for his blessing, the latter addressed him with the following words: 'Let all the Christian people bless you and all the saints, since this utterance is truly right: **'Where there is respect for princely rule, there is the likeness of the Divinity.'** It is interesting that to emphasise this likeness Grigol turned to biblical figures: 'And God says about Abraham: "Abraham wished to see my light, he beheld it and rejoiced". Like Abraham I, a poor man, wished to see it and worship you and now I am filled with joy and I offer a prayer as a gift.'⁴ The concept of a similarity between royal power and God is an important element of Christian theology but, as the rite of anointing a king shows us, this did not mean equivalence between King and God. As Grigol Khandzteli himself explains it: "God made for us rulers to govern the Earth, since through their rule we understand the good that God does for us."⁵

The importance of the Church is quite clear from an analysis of the figure of the King. It was precisely in the Church that the political theology of the King and of the kingdom as a whole was formed. By way of example, we know from history that Vakhtang Gorgasali fought for the independence of the Kartlian Church, but at the same time this implied an increase in the legitimization of his own power. The King is God's chosen one and has been anointed by Him, but the Church is the institution that is entitled to affirm this and talk about this fact. It is a mediator between God and the King and between the King and the people. The King receives legitimization from the Church. The King is not only the ruler of a particular people. Like the biblical David, he is the King of God's chosen people. Here we should note that before Christianity only the Jews were God's chosen people, while after Christ all who accepted Christianity became the chosen people, irrespective of their ethnic origins. Accordingly, the independent Georgian Church, in a similar way to Israel and by the theology established by Paul created a new unit of the chosen people. Thus the Georgian Church did not simply play an important role in Georgia's socio-political and cultural life, it also created the main principles of this living space.

From a sociological viewpoint the ecclesiastical class, as a rule, represented the local aristocracy. In the same *Kartlis Tskhovreba* we read that from the sixth century ‘they no longer used to bring a Catholicos from Greece, but instead would appoint the sons of distinguished noblemen.’ Patriarchs were often younger princes and this accurately portrayed the hierarchical ordering between the King and the ecclesiastic spheres. In the same way, at the next level in the social structure the bishop was subordinate to the prince, and so on. To put it in other words, the clergy formed an integral and basic layer in the feudal social structure of a unified Georgia.

It says much about the aristocraticism of the ecclesiastic layer and about its importance in social life that churchmen took the same part in wars as the secular aristocracy and this was to a certain extent natural since they, like the feudal lords, were obliged to raise their own army. We read in *Kartlis Tskhovreba*: ‘And bishops participating in wars, hunts and internal struggles became the custom after this: When they told King David later of the unremitting struggle and oppression, and they saw the frailty and weakness of the country’s bishops, then the bishops would say to them: “Do not be disillusioned and do not become weak in the fight with them, and do not abandon the Faith and your traditions, and we shall be in your front line”, and that is what they did indeed do’.

The existence in the kingdom of the King and the Patriarch implied an orientation of the political system towards Constantinople and a similarity to it. However, the feudal system in Georgia, as elsewhere, was based on individual, dependent relations. In feudalism after all, as Sharashidze notes, the connection between the State and the individual ‘breaks down’. It follows from this that in the case of Georgia specific circumstances are to be taken into account.

The figure of the Patriarch in the Georgian Church is approximately the same as in other Orthodox Churches, in other words, he is one of many bishops and his special place in the Church is defined by the bishopric he occupies (for example, Mtskheta, in the same way as Jerusalem, or Constantinople, as the holiest of places), but in the Church his power is not unlimited, for example, the special significance of the synod is indicated by the fact that Anton I who, besides being patriarch was Vakhtang’s son and Erekle’s cousin, was not forgiven for becoming a Catholic and was expelled.

Besides this, in Georgia—even at the time of the unified kingdom, or as historians say, in the era of the single monarchy—there were two Catholicos, one of Apkhazeti (western Georgia) and the other of Kartli. In spite of the fact that the Catholicos of Kartli were also Catholicos-Patriarchs of a unified Georgia and, accordingly, had more rights (the right to anoint the King

of a unified Georgia) than the western Catholicos, at court the Catholicos of Apkhazeti, to a certain extent, enjoyed the same honour as the Catholicos of Kartli. In addition, he was a participant in the anointing of the King. (However, as Berdzenishvili demonstrates, the Catholicos of Kartli could anoint the King in the absence of the Catholicos of Apkhazeti.

After the break-up of the unified Georgia, the Catholicos of Apkhazeti became the equal of the Catholicos of Kartli. As Berdzenishvili writes: 'From now on he is the apostle Andrew's heir and the companion in arms of Paul, 'God's Second' in the struggle against those unwilling to submit to Christ. In his hand are the binding and loosing of the "kingdoms and churches" of eastern Georgia... He anoints the religious and secular great and small, that is, bishops and metropolitans, kings and princes.'⁶

In the Georgian royal and Church tradition, the Abbot-Preceptor and First Vizier (*Chqondideli*-Royal Chancellor) were also important figures. Here we must pay attention to how feudalism's precise system of dependent relationships functioned. Ekvtime Taqaishvili assumes that the Abbot-Preceptor must have been the rector of Gelati Academy. His functions are apparently not known precisely nor have they been studied in depth. However, from the point of view of political theology, it is interesting that the Abbot-Preceptor enjoyed particular honour at the King's court: it was he who stood to the right of the King, that is to say, in this respect he enjoyed greater superiority than the Catholicos of Kartli and Apkhazeti and the First Vizier (*Chqondideli*-Royal Chancellor).

David the Builder created the post of First Vizier (*Chqondideli*-royal chancellor) and, until the break-up of the unified Georgia, this was one of the most influential figures both at the royal court and in the Church. In historians' view, by creating this post David the Builder in actual fact subordinated the Church to himself. The Royal Chancellor was the King's First Vizier and he managed the administration of affairs at the royal court. The Bishop of Chqondidi was one of the most influential bishops in western Georgia. (The importance of his influence was especially great before the formation of the Catholicosate of Apkhazeti, variously dated to the seventh, tenth or twelfth centuries.)

In spite of the fact that the posts of Abbot-Preceptor and First Vizier (*Chqondideli*-Royal Chancellor) had been abolished quite some time before the unification of Georgia with Russia, taking these figures into account in the tradition of the political theology of the Georgian Kingdom is quite important in considering the charisma of the Catholicos-Patriarch: His place had been special throughout the whole of the Middle Ages, but by his side, in the Church itself, there were always ecclesiastic authorities with equiva-

lent 'honour', and this 'honour' was correspondingly represented by their influence on politics.

The third most important determinant of Georgian Church and royal political theology was the Georgian language. According to the mythology of the origin of the kings of Kartli, the Georgian kings are the descendants of Noah's son Japhet. This indicates that the Georgian language brought by the kings was like the language existing before the 'confusion of languages'. The Georgian language is the language of all regions of Georgia, of the royal dynasty and of the Church, that is, of culture or—in other words—of the book.

Besides this, it is to be noted that language was accorded differing theological importance in eastern and western Christendom. In the eastern tradition 'Christ speaks to all in his own language', while in the western tradition Christ speaks through the Church to all peoples in a single language, Latin.

The feudal Georgian kingdom was formed within the area of the socio-political system of Byzantium and directly under its cultural influence. It is important to note that Georgia's relations with the Hellenistic Mediterranean world before the adoption of Christianity were quite close. In spite of the fact that Georgia was on the periphery of this living space, it was a part of it.

As far as Russia is concerned, Pipes notes that the whole ideology of autocracy was formed by churchmen. As several authors describe it, and Uspensky more clearly than most, from the sixteenth century 'there occurs in Russia a peculiar restoration of the Byzantine Empire'.⁷ The Kingdom of Moscow was formed by this very desire. The essence of its political theology was in its being the new Constantinople, the third Rome. 'This idea was formulated by Philip, a monk from Pskov, after which it became an inseparable part of Muscovy's political theory.'⁸

It is interesting that in its form "new Constantinople's" concept of power is apparently entirely based on the philosophy of the Byzantine theocratic administration, but by that time, as Uspensky notes, 'Byzantium no longer existed. What is more, relations between Moscow and Constantinople (by now Istanbul) endured for a long time after the fall of Byzantium. Thus Russians were orientated not towards a tradition existing in reality, but towards their own conception of a theocratic state: Here, ideology was considerably more significant than facts.'⁹

The second important feature of Russian political theology was that, according to this theology, the Tsars of Moscow were descendants of an imperial branch originating from the Emperor Augustus. This genealogy was elaborated by Russian churchmen under the leadership of Metropolitan Macarius.

From this followed the theory's third feature, something that even Byzantium itself did not have in mind: Not only is royal power of divine provenance, but the Tsar himself when 'he is clothed in power he is God's equal. The Church is subservient to him in all matters other than dogma. He is the Church's secular king and all churchmen have to subordinate themselves to him. This theory was first promulgated in Russia by Iosif Volotsky and has been confirmed by many Church councils, including that of 1666.'¹⁰

Although there was nothing new in the divine origin of the Tsar's power, Uspensky however attaches particular significance to this issue. The essence of the problem is that in the Eastern Church and, incidentally, in the Western tradition as we have noted above, kings were considered as 'descendants' of biblical David (this explains the origin mythology of the Georgian kings, the Bagrationis). But in David's time anointment meant only God's choice, while in Russia at the time of anointing 'You are holy, You are holy, You are holy' was not uttered, but rather 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power' (Acts 10, 38), thus likening the Tsar to Christ himself.

Following on from this, in Russia such a charisma of the Tsar was formed, the like of which we do not meet in any other Christian country. An autocratic Tsar was not chosen by God but was himself similar to God. It is interesting that elsewhere they compared non-God-fearing kings to wicked biblical kings, while in Russia they called them Antichrists.¹¹

Another difference of Russian autocratic theology was that, as Pipes writes, 'All Russian Tsars were emperors of all Orthodox believers, that is to say, they had power to govern, defend and also subjugate them to their power. This was confirmed by a Church council in 1561. Besides this—Pipes notes—in certain sources it is written that Russian Tsars were not only rulers of the Orthodox believers, but of all Christians.'

We can say that the Russian Tsar (it is important to note that, etymologically, tsar derives from Caesar), that is to say emperor, represented a completely different charisma, a completely different tradition of political theology from the Georgian royal tradition.

The traditions of Church organization and of the figure of the patriarch were also different. In spite of the fact that at the time of the unification of Georgia with Russia, patriarchs no longer governed the Russian Church itself, a phenomenon that is worthy of our attention, since from 1917 in Russia and later in Soviet Georgia, it is precisely a medieval patriarch's charisma that arose.

In his work 'Tsar and Patriarch' Uspensky explains that in eastern Christendom they did not elect patriarchs from the ranks of the bishops.

His charisma was determined not, in a manner of speaking, by the post of patriarch, but by the bishopric that he held, for example, that of Jerusalem, Constantinople or Moscow. A patriarch was one of many bishops. It was in Russia that bishops were first consecrated as patriarchs and this ritual defined that consecration as patriarch was linked to rising to a new level in the hierarchy, in other words, a new rite of consecration as patriarch was added to that of bishop.¹²

Thus we can say that in Russia up to the rule of Peter the Great, unlike in Georgia, Byzantium itself, and especially western Christendom, there was a completely different tradition, which assumed figures of the Tsar and the Patriarch non-existent before that time. It is important to take this tradition into account, since, in my opinion, in Stalin's Soviet Union to a certain extent just such a construction arose.

But the aim of Peter the Great's reforms was to introduce into Orthodoxy a Protestant system of rule. He abolished the post of patriarch and made the Church entirely subservient to the state. Russian churchmen were, in actual fact, bureaucrats, who were governed by the Head of the Holy Synod. Their social level changed entirely. Pipes notes that the Russian aristocracy were forbidden from becoming churchmen.¹³

The changes implemented by Russia in the Georgian Church in accordance with the same principles brought about major changes in Georgia's social life: Natural and important actors in the form of the clergy disappeared from the social structures in the villages and towns of Georgia and appointed bureaucrats appeared, who did not represent the existing society, but were the representatives of the government in that society.

In this respect a 1905 address by the clergy of the Imereti Eparchy of the Georgian Exarchate to a Russian Ministerial Committee is interesting. This address analyses the relations between the Georgian people and the Church in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: 'The clergy, instead of taking care of and helping us, in the opinion of the whole population of Georgia, have changed into veritable wolves and beasts, they have struck deals with our enemies and bar our way in our yearning for legal earthly success and well-being. They regard the clergy as political bureaucrats, gendarmes in disguise...'¹⁴ A question is raised and answered in the same letter: 'Surely Orthodox Georgians have not lost their faith to such an extent that they have deserted Christ and His Church? No! Georgians have not turned their backs on Christ and His Church, but they are indignant and they do not wish to adapt to the modern organization of ecclesiastical life and to those who implement this way of life among the people.'¹⁵

A further important element of Russian political theology—not only in secular space but also in the Church—was the policy of replacing Georgian by the Russian language. This broke the most important paradigm of Georgian political theology and, accordingly, of the vital cultural space: Christ speaks to everyone in his own language.

Into the reality of nineteenth-century Georgia came the Middle Ages such as had never been seen by the Georgians. Their Church, like the Catholic, spoke to them (as to all other peoples) not in their own tongue, but in another language, Russian. Just as Latin was for the Catholic world, so Russian became for Georgians the language of culture.

Up to the nineteenth century Georgians had their faith taken from them. After unification with Russia the Georgian people simply lost their faith. What in Soviet Georgia turned total atheism into an inevitable Georgian reality was precisely the outcome of a century of union with co-religionist Russia.

The reason for loss of faith is alienation from oneself. When you feel and see that your faith is no longer yours, it is something other and alien. Formally the Russians abolished the Georgian Church, but in reality a considerably deeper and significant process of substitution occurred: as if nothing had changed, but in actual fact another faith was introduced in the name of a shared religion.

As we have said above, up to the nineteenth century ‘Georgian’ was not a nationality, it was a faith. Vakhushti wrote: ‘If you were to ask a Kartlian or an Imeretian or a Her-Kakhetian what his faith is, in an instant he will respond “Georgian”.’ In the nineteenth century they did not conquer ‘Georgian by faith’: this identity disappeared into Russia imperceptibly, painlessly, without a trace. Russian Orthodoxy was for Georgians a magic mirror into which they looked and asked: Mirror, who is the most beautiful, strong and rich in the world? In the mirror only the golden domes of the empire of the third Rome could be seen. After the nineteenth century Kakhetians, Kartlians, Imeretians, Mingrelians and others were no longer ‘Georgians by faith’, they had accepted Russian Orthodoxy.

In the nineteenth century Georgian ecclesiastic and secular space were not demarcated. For Georgians ecclesiastic space simply disappeared. A Georgian forced out of the ecclesiastic sphere relocated to secular space.

A National Church

The movement begun by the clergy at the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth centuries for the independence of the Georgian Church was, as they themselves were aware, more of a secular and national movement based on the spirit of the 1860s.

The autocephaly movement was ostensibly oriented solely towards the restoration of the freedom of the Georgian Apostolic Church, but already underlying this phenomenon was a differing political theology.

Up to the nineteenth century 'Georgian' was a faith that for its part encompassed all spheres of social life, but in the nineteenth and early twentieth century independent secular spaces formed in Georgia: in art, science and political life. These spaces were secular for the reasons we have given. But secularity in itself does not imply a confrontation with the ecclesiastic, rather it demands on the one hand demarcation and emancipation, and on the other the modern always defines its own classics, and for this very reason a secular nationalist movement became a constituent basis of ecclesiastic space.

Before the nineteenth century not a single Georgian Church figure said that the Church should be nationalist, even if for the simple reason that the modern concept of the state did not exist. In Georgia, as elsewhere, the Church was not the people's, on the contrary, the people belonged to the Church: 'Nowhere do we see... other kings' names, apart from "We, King of Georgia, or of Kartli, or of Apkhazeti" which are written on stones, icons and crosses'.¹⁶ Naturally, neither could someone see the Georgian people named here.

After the end of the political theology of the old Church, together with the formation of a nationalist world, the concept of a new national Church came into being based on modernist liberal values. This is quite clearly seen in the demands formulated by the Georgian autocephaly group. In a document that they compiled we read:

1. 'Declaration of the full independence of the Georgian Church. It will be headed by a Catholicos, who will be elected by a council of local bishops together with representatives of **the entire Georgian nation and of the clergy**.
2. Election of clergy. Priests, deacons and psalm-chanters will be elected by the parish from among relevant persons, and bishops will be elected by the clergy and the population of the eparchy.
3. Thoroughgoing reform of the school system: the institution of general theology courses in primary and secondary national schools; for the clergy, the completion of a two-year third-level special the-

ology course after finishing secondary school; and the foundation of theology faculties in higher education institutes.

4. Freedom of speech, printing, assembly and meeting for the clergy.
5. According Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime*. New York: Scribner, p. 129. the clergy all civil rights that are not in opposition to the idea of the Church.
6. Freeing the Church from service with political aims, and also from bureaucratic and official business.¹⁷

It is not hard to see that that this source of political theology is a conception of liberal values which, for their part, were being formed through the secularization of Christian values.

Several values are given in the demands of the autocephaly group:

The first is the principle of democracy and elections. For the pre-modern world and, accordingly, for the old Church, the highest virtue was the monk who dedicated himself, a person as the highest value, to God. Luther's Reformation, as Hegel notes, brought the predominance of another virtue, that of the family and the family-loving person. The family is the place where love is manifested most clearly. And love is God. This change in accent indicated that God does not confide to an individual, or dictate to society, but God's will is realized in the existence of society and of mutual support. The principle of civil agreement and elections is a secularized Gospel idea, according to which wherever two (several) persons gather together in the name of Christ (to seek the truth), God (that is to say, the truth) is there.

The second value is manifested in the demand that all civil rights be accorded to the clergy. This is the idea of the freedom of the individual. According to Hegel, for a traditional Church (here we may have in mind either Catholic or Orthodox), the greatest virtue is obedience, while for the Reformation it is the freedom of the individual. Society does not exist without freedom of the individual.¹⁸ The Georgian autocephalists turn this modernist value into an integral part of their political theology.

The third is their attitude towards education. The main principle of modernity is rationality. This became especially important in the Age of Enlightenment. The founding of national schools began after the French revolution. Demarcation between Church and schools is one of the fundamental principles of the modern world. It is interesting that in Georgia it was the clergy in particular who were demanding the creation of national secular schools (which should provide a corresponding education). What is more, they were entrusting the universities with the education of the clergy.

At an initial glance such an attitude towards the education system on the part of the clergy is strange, but firstly, as we have already said, the ideo-

logical basis was Ilia's national project, the most important element of which was precisely issues of education, and the interest in the clergy that is apparent in the nineteenth-century printed media was linked to educational issues. Secondly, the principle of rationality is in the same way a secularized Gospel idea, according to which God is *logos*, that is, He is the word or idea or thought. Thus, it is through rational conception and cognition of the world that communion with Him is possible. It follows from this that, for the clergy for whom the modern world was in principle acceptable, conceptualizing either the importance of science or a sharp demarcation between the topics of scientific and religious truth would not be unfamiliar. In the final analysis, the holy fathers were still talking of the principle of dual truth, of the importance of Athens and Jerusalem.

We can say that the Georgian Church remained faithful to all the principles formulated in 1905, not only until the annexation in 1921 but, notwithstanding the inhuman physical and moral terror wreaked by the Soviet authorities against all levels of the clergy, until 1927, in other words, until the death of the Georgian Patriarch, Ambrose Khelasia.

On 12 March 1917 the Georgian clergy took the decision at Svetitskhoveli patriarchal cathedral to restore autocephaly. In this decree we read:

1. "The autocephaly of the Georgian Church continues from this day, that is, from 12 (25) March.
2. Bishop Leonid of Guria-Odishi is appointed temporary head of the Church pending the election of a Catholicos.
3. The administration of the Georgian Church is being entrusted to an Executive Committee comprising both clergy and laity.¹⁹

In spite of the fact that the Georgian ecclesiastic movement was stimulated ideologically by the national movement, it was in terms of its political activity quite ahead of the latter. Secondly, not only did national figures actively participate in this movement, they were directly involved in its administrative organs.

The second important occurrence was the election of the Georgian Patriarch on 17 September 1917. Some 430 delegates attended the Church Assembly. To grasp the atmosphere of the democratic election it is important to recall that the elected Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch beat his rival, Bishop Leonid (later also Georgian Patriarch) by only eleven votes. Here we should take into account the circumstance that at that time Bishop Leonid was acting head of the Church.

On the basis of the autocephalists' desire for a political theology oriented towards modern values, and of the involvement of the laity in administration (in actual fact, the whole nation participated in the election of church-

men at all levels), we can say that in 1917 a national Church was founded in Georgia. Here it is essential that we note that it was not oriented towards, nor did it perceive itself as an ethnic Georgians' church. Incidentally, the Russian civil and ecclesiastic authorities attempted to do exactly this: They did not want Orthodox believers of all ethnic affiliations living in Georgia to come under the jurisdiction of the Georgian Church, but only Georgians, while others would be subject to the Russian Church.²⁰

The Church was never dependant on a single ethnic group. In the past it had been interested in the subordination of differing ethnic groups in the same way as its allied secular dynasty. As if a movement based on the ideas of the national movement could make such an error, but it did not happen like this, and neither did the Church in modern times confine itself to a single ethnic group. Thus after the restoration of autocephaly the Georgian Church in its actions relied for support not on a concept of an ethnic, but of a nation state.

In the period 1917-21, for the first time in Georgian history, the Georgian Church became independent of the State. The Church welcomed as acceptable the law adopted by the authorities of the Georgian Democratic Republic and if in those years there still existed disputed issues between Church and State, these were entirely within the bounds of healthy relations between two estimable modern institutions.

The Church in the Soviet Union or a Soviet Church?

The existence of the Georgian Democratic Republic was cut short on 25 February 1921. From the very first days of the occupation the terror of the Communist regime, like everywhere its power spread, touched all levels of society in Georgia. The repression of former public officials (policemen, gendarmes, army officers, financiers, lawyers, diplomats, officials in the education system, teachers in secondary schools and third-level institutions, and others), of the clergy, land owners, entrepreneurs and peasants stood out for its particular ruthlessness. A regime was established in Georgia, the like of which has been forgotten to history. Mankind has not known a similar scale of persecution and destruction of people for ethnic, social, political and religious attributes (the only analogue is the destruction of the Jews by the Nazis). According to various data, in the period 1923-53 alone the number of victims of political repression by the Soviet Communist regime and Stalin exceeded 20 million people. This fluctuates between 20 and 60 million according to different data.

Naturally, a Church, and specifically the Georgian Church, had to develop a relevant policy in connection with such a regime and thus a political theology. At the time of the establishment of Soviet power, its policy towards religion was particularly aggressive. To explain this Stalin's words uttered in 1930, for example, are sufficient: 'Mention of God should be forgotten in the Soviet Union'. This stage in Soviet historiography is known by the name of the 'Godless five-year period'. These words were accompanied by a new wave of closures of churches and chapels, their demolition and a new wave of terror directed against the clergy. At a glance, the Church was not left with much choice other than martyrdom in its fight against atheism in the country, but politics has its own rules and these often push actors towards such actions as are not essentially foreseen in their plans.

It is known that following the occupation, the Georgian Church confronted the Communist regime at the initiative of Patriarch Ambrose Khelaia. The history of the Church in the period 1921-27 was exemplary in the recent history of Georgia. It is an example of how it is possible to preserve one's own principles and values so consistently and honourably in extremely difficult conditions.

Patriarch Leonid died soon after the occupation (on 11 June).²¹ Under such circumstances the policy of the Georgian Church is clearly to be seen not only in its election of a Patriarch, but in all the decisions of the Catholicosate Council and of the Church Assembly.²² It is important to note that in the election of the Patriarch both participating candidates, Ambrose (Khelaia), Metropolitan of Chqondidi, and Nazar (Lezhava), Metropolitan of Kutais-Gaenati, were outstanding in their faithfulness to their own principles as later developments showed.

Ambrose Khelaia and the whole Catholicosate Council launched a protest over the well-known Revolutionary Committee Decree No. 21 which deprived the Church of its right to the status of a legal entity. With the support of the Catholicosate Council, Ambrose Khelaia sent a well-known memorandum in its name to the Genoa International Conference declaring that his homeland had been annexed, that terror was being inflicted by the occupiers, and asking the member countries of the Conference for assistance. As we can see, the Georgian Church in actual fact functioned as a national movement in these years. The following circumstances express exactly the spirit and the ideology of the Georgian clergy: When Ambrose Khelaia was being interrogated by the Cheka they reminded him that the Menshevik government was opposed to religion. He answered that the government of the democratic country had been elected by the people and was fighting to defend what in Communist times the Church had undertaken to defend. And being re-

minded that Ambrose Khelaia had been exiled in Tsarist times, the Patriarch answered that he had been persecuted not for his faith, but for defending the national interests of the Georgian people.

Notwithstanding several summons by the Cheka, insulting interrogations and other moral pressures, they could not break Ambrose Khelaia.

In 1923 the majority of the Georgian Catholicosate Council were arrested and accused of betraying their homeland. Neither did this measure directed against the Georgian Church turn out in the end to be effective. Court actions only increased the authority of the Patriarch and of the other detainees, and increased popular support for them. And it is at this time that the Soviet authorities first deployed a policy that was at a glance paradoxical, but which was one quite tried and tested by the Bolsheviks.

It was acknowledged that, according to traditional Marxist ideology, the proletariat was considered the sole progressive power that could bring about a revolution. Accordingly, cooperation with other social classes on issues of the revolution was considered as an inconsistent policy. At Lenin's initiative the Bolsheviks rejected this principle. They established links first and foremost with the peasants and later with other working classes. It is widely known that in agrarian Russia it was precisely the factor of winning over the peasants that decided the fate of the revolution.²³ The Marxist principle was defended here by the fact that the proletariat was the engine of the revolution, and thus its leader. In spite of the contribution of this alliance to the revolution (taking into account that the Soviet authorities were workers and peasants as depicted in their symbolism by the hammer and sickle), following the Bolshevik revolution, at the very time the dictatorship of the proletariat was being established, unprecedented repressions were launched against all working classes, especially the peasantry.

Thus a temporary link with their ideological opponents was from then on part of the Bolsheviks' political arsenal. This policy served several purposes: Firstly, provocation of confrontation in the ranks of their opponents; secondly, the subordination of the relatively loyal part of their opponents; and, thirdly, garnering support from a wide circle of their enemies. To put it in other words, what was happening was that the Bolsheviks were not supporting anyone, they were simply talking about the differing degrees of progressiveness of various social classes who could participate in building Communism under a dictatorship of the proletariat. And, against the background of the repressions, even their opponents acknowledged the predominance of Bolshevik ideology.

At a glance, as a result of their strongly negative ideological positions towards each other, prospects for cooperation between the Bolshevik authori-

ties and the Church were almost nonexistent. However, as a result of the circumstances cited below, the authorities were forced to change their policy.

Firstly, it became impossible for the Bolsheviks to quickly destroy the Church. Secondly, on the judicial level and taking into account the international factor, the Soviet authorities acknowledged freedom of conscience and open aggression against the Church was politically unfavourable. The Bolsheviks pursued the clergy, ostensibly for anti-state actions, and they closed churches, apparently at the demand of the people. According to Communist propaganda, the greater the educational level of the people, the more pointless and, as they themselves called it, the more outdated religion became. The third factor was that the Church really was confronting the Soviet authorities from a national interest perspective and it therefore enjoyed widespread authority and support in certain classes.

For this reason the Soviet authorities began to look for allies in the Church. The policy was straightforward: If only two out of a hundred could be won over the others would be destroyed and these two would become the official voice of the Church. This is clearly seen in the historical material and from the information in the recently-opened archives. For example, we read in an analysis of the Georgian Church written by Beria that of the thirteen members of the Catholicosate Council only two—Christopher Tsitskishvili, Metropolitan of Tskhum-Apkhazeti and David, Bishop of Kutais-Gaenati—were members of the so-called progressive group, which basically meant loyalty to the Soviet authorities. Beria mentioned the other clergymen as reactionaries.

Metropolitan Christopher Tsitskishvili was interim head following the arrest of the majority of the Catholicosate Council, and this was the very first time that not only was a positive position stated towards the Soviet authorities on the part of an official Church figure, but Ambrose Khelaia and his supporters were condemned. Right from this time a new political theology was formed not only in Georgia, but throughout the whole of the Soviet Union and, in particular, in the Russian Orthodox Church. This political theology returned both Churches to the Middle Ages of Genghis Khan, when the idea was widespread that the Mongols had been sent to deservedly punish the Christian world. But this time of punishment, as Pipes notes, for some reason became a golden age for the Russian Orthodox Church, since the Russian Church, at a time of universal taxation in the country, was freed from taxation, and its influence and wealth only increased. In exchange, it was foreseen by the political theology that the Churches would offer up prayers in the name of the Great Khan. The Georgian Church greeted the Mongols with roughly the same political theology.

The same political theology was also created in the time of the Communist regime. For example, a statement by Bishop David Kachakhidze went as follows: 'The memorandum sent to the Genoa Conference in the name of the Georgian clergy, a counter-revolutionary action, put the Georgian Church in an awkward position. The Soviet authorities regarded it as its enemy and for this reason it ravaged churches, scattered the clergy; the government has to be convinced that the Church has nothing in common with politics. If we confirm this under normal conditions, then the authorities will cease the campaign against the Church. We therefore demand that the fight in our eparchy against churches and clergy be stopped. Let churches be restored. If still someone is observed in anti-government actions, let him be punished severely.' And punished they were: the majority of the members of the Catholicosate Council were arrested at this time.

It is interesting that work on the sources shows that a new political theology was taking shape in conditions of close cooperation between quite a number of the clergy and the Bolshevik authorities. We read in Beria's letters that, following the arrest of Ambrose Khelaia and the Catholicosate Council, 'it should be noted that from this stage under the leadership of Catholicos Christopher Tsitskishvili the Catholicosate Council has set out on the path of reforms. First and foremost, the Church has gone over to the new calendar, secondly the clergy are permitted to wear civilian clothes during their free time, times of services and fasting have been reduced, they are permitted to conduct weddings during times of fasting, there is talk of granting priests permission to re-marry. It is significant that we perceive all these initiatives as Christopher's, a man who sympathizes with the Soviet authorities, wishing to take the Georgian Church away from a regime of confrontation with the Soviet Authorities and lead it towards renewal.'

After 1923 it became clear that the Soviet authorities were not alone in the terror unleashed against clergy in the Georgian Church having a nationalist disposition. A new movement was created in the heart of the Georgian Orthodox Church known by the name of 'Renewal and Reformers' whose leaders were the Bishop (later, Metropolitan) of Kutais-Gaenati, David Kachakhidze, and the Bishop of Urbnisi, acting Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch 1922-25, and Patriarch of Georgia 1927-32, Christopher III Tsitskishvili. The spirit of this movement was largely characterized by collaboration with the Communist regime and, accordingly, the pursuit of irreconcilable clergy.

In 1923 Metropolitan David Kachakhidze wrote to the Chief Priest of Kutaisi: 'It is time for renewal to be brought into our ecclesiastical life. In accordance with the state system of modern culture, it is incumbent on us to

request permission of the government to set up a reform commission and to hold the necessary meeting to elaborate the reform project.’

The basic story-line of the reforms policy was formulated as follows:

*Decision of the 5 September 1923 meeting of the Kutaisi Church Reform Initiative Group: The existing Soviet authorities in Georgia today are the only legal authorities and defenders of the interests of the Georgian people. We call on all believers to support them. We declare that the action of Ambrose, Catholicos-Patriarch of all Georgia, was mistaken and illegal, we deem it necessary that he be removed from the post of Catholicos-Patriarch.*²⁴

As we see, from the very first years of the Soviet authorities an entirely paradoxical policy was in place, according to which—as far as the Bolsheviks’ were concerned—the Church, an institution doomed to destruction, had henceforth to become ‘Soviet’ before its demise. The Bolshevik leaders toiled selflessly for the Sovietisation of the Church no less than that of other spheres.

Here we must define what ‘Soviet’ means. Naturally, this is not really rule by the working class or even by the Communist Party. It is, as Voslenski notes, the dictatorship of the nomenklatura. The Soviet poet Yevtushenko had earlier accurately formulated the main characteristic of the Soviet ruling elite: ‘They’re not interested that the power is Soviet, the main thing is that it is power.’²⁵

Who had real power in the Soviet Union? Who were the ruling class? Sovietologists put it tersely: the nomenklatura. The nomenklatura was defined as the most important posts for which candidates were investigated in advance, for whom recommendations were made and who were confirmed by the appropriate Party committees. Senior officials who entered the ranks of the nomenklatura of a Party committee were also dismissed by the latter. The nomenklatura comprised the most important senior officials.

The nomenklatura included all responsible skilled workers in Party bodies, skilled administrative workers in state bodies, also important senior administrative officials in collective farms, cooperatives, scientific organisations and creative unions.²⁶

As we see, the main characteristic of the nomenklatura was that a senior official, it is true, was formally appointed by an institution, but his selection and putting forward was a matter for a higher level. For example, a research institute director represented the nomenklatura of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia elected by the synod of the Russian Orthodox Church represented the nomenklatura of the Politburo of the Central

Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. This was the constitution of powers in the Soviet Union. A senior official represented not that institution that he headed, but the level to which the latter was subservient.

It is precisely in this manner that the Sovietization of the Church took place, in other words, the main thing was that the authorities got their hands on it and only after that was an appropriate policy defined and provided with theological arguments. By 1926 Beria was already writing: 'In the case of the possible early death of Ambrose Khelaia, Metropolitan Christopher Tsitskishvili must be put forward for the post of Catholicos-Patriarch.' By appointing him by their own nomenklatura the authorities attained their set aim. The Georgian Church, about which Beria himself was writing that 'the Church has influence over certain strata in society in which it awakens an anti-Soviet spirit and, resulting from its organization, in recent years its influence has been increasing such that it is essential that from our side corresponding tactics be worked out',²⁷ became a supporter and a eulogist of the Soviet authorities.

The history of the Georgian national Church came to an end with the death in 1927 of Ambrose Khelaia and the era of the Soviet Georgian Church began. One of the first declarations by the newly-elected Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch, Christopher III, on 28 February 1927 reads: 'We welcome the Soviet authorities of all Georgia and we wish them fruitful action in the country's cultural and economic success to the extent that the existing great Union of Soviet republics may be more consolidated and by its creative work and by establishing justness between nations, they will be even more attractive for peoples outside the Union.'

Incidentally, short of martyrdom, this was the only path that the Soviet authorities left not only the Georgian or the Russian Orthodox Churches, but also members of other confessions existing in the Soviet Union. What is more, the cynicism of the situation was in the fact that, in spite of many thousands of martyrs, the authorities turned implacability itself into a private matter, since in 1927 the Church's official position was as follows: 'We wish to be Orthodox believers and at the same time to perceive the Soviet Union as our civil homeland, whose joy and successes are our joy and successes, and whose failures are our failures. Every blow directed against the Soviet Union, be this war, boycott, social unrest, murder as happened in Warsaw, will be perceived on our part as a blow directed against us' (Patriarch Sergei's well-known declaration of 29 July 1927).

The success of the Soviet government is our success: It is interesting whether or not mankind can recall a more successful pursuit of Christians than in the Soviet Union in the twenties.

It is important to note here that 'Sovietization' could not bring the Church the result that the clergy who had collaborated with the authorities had supposed. The destruction of the Georgian as well as of other Churches was almost completed by 1944. Statistics demonstrate this:

In 1921, before Sovietization, there were fifteen eparchies in Georgia and 2,357 churches and monasteries.

In 1928 there were thirteen bishops and 1,110 priests.

By 1939 there were three bishops and a Catholicos-Patriarch, 83 priests, three deacons and ten psalm-chanters.

By 1944 there were two bishops and a Catholicos-Patriarch. There were 21 functioning churches, three of which were Russian, a total of 83 priests, three deacons and ten psalm-chanters.²⁸

It was as if the Soviet authorities had achieved their stated goal: they had practically destroyed the Church. It may be said that in the Soviet Union the unity of the Church was entirely informal, since its right as a unified legal entity had been removed. The law formally provided for the freedom of workers in the sphere of culture. Accordingly, a specific church would be opened on the decision of the Soviet in a particular district on the basis of a request from believers. Correspondingly all believers were registered ('put onto the register').

But right then, when nothing apparently hindered Stalin, when in keeping with his stated aim he had finally resolved the problem of the Church, he not only halted the repressions, but began the reconstruction of the Church, in a manner of speaking.

On 4 September 1943 Stalin first sent for Karpov, a colonel in the security services and appointed him to a newly-created post called the 'Council for the Affairs of the Russian Church attached to the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union', then he asked to see Metropolitans Sergei, Alexis and Nicholas in the Kremlin and proposed to them that an organ of Church administration be created that would elect the Russian Patriarch (it is important to note that at this time the Russian Church had been without a Patriarch for eighteen years). To the question of the General Secretary as to when they could convene a synod, the churchmen said that this could be done in a month. Stalin smiled and asked them if they could work at a Bolshevik pace. It was decided that the date for the election of the Patriarch would be 8 September.²⁹

At this meeting Stalin offered the metropolitans every kind of support on the part of the Soviet government in the dismissal of the patriarchate: The Russian Church was handed the former residence of the German ambassador and several cars; he promised to allocate a government subsidy; he promised

that a candle factory would be built and made subordinate to the Church so that the latter would have its own financial resources; he offered that seminaries and academies be opened so that new personnel be trained; they agreed that a printed organ be founded.

The historical facts cited are of interest to us, so that we can share not only the political motive that forced the authorities—the cornerstone of whose policy was to root out religion from society’s consciousness—to change their decision, but also what factors conditioned the creation of a political theology in that era.

According to a widely-held view, Stalin halted the repression directed against religious associations because the Church had declared its support for the Soviet authorities in the war years and religion had facilitated an increase in patriotic spirit, in return for which, at the end of the war, the Church was rewarded, in a manner of speaking, for its support.

We should probably begin from the position that the passage of time had shown Stalin (and we may suppose that the war years had significantly strengthened this view) that, while it was possible to destroy the Church entirely as an institution and also to subjugate it, however, in spite of unprecedented terror, the ‘complete eradication of belief’ from society was impossible. To put it in other words, declaratively Soviet secularism implied the banishment of religion from the public sphere, but at the same time, taking the principle of freedom of belief into account, it formally acknowledged the possibility of its existence in private space. However, the matter was that totalitarianism could not tolerate a loss of control over this private space itself and, in the case of the complete destruction of the Church, it would lose all levers for governing the religious part of society.

Before the complete destruction of believers (the illusion of which Stalin probably held to the end), only the Church could have been an ally in their subjugation: Control of believers was possible through control by the Church. Churches were obliged to regularly provide the state with both quantitative and personal information on its parishioners.

Let us glance at the external political circumstances: According to information from historians, repressions against the Church stopped in 1939. At that time the Soviet Union was not a victim of aggression, but together with Nazi Germany it had launched an expansionist war to conquer the countries of Eastern Europe. Incidentally, the second phase of the policy of ‘constructive relations with the Church’ began in 1943 when the Soviet armies launched massive offences and the front line ran through Europe, and when Stalin was planning to conquer European countries, and not earlier, when he was conducting a war for the defence of the Soviet Union. We

may surmise that Stalin needed the institutional revival and strengthening of the Church precisely while conducting his expansionist policy. In 1943 the Soviet Union went onto the offensive and, in order to create an instrument to control and govern the Churches existing on occupied territories, this first had to be established in the Soviet Union.

The second motive was relations between the Soviet Union and its allies. Stalin, as is evident from Karpov's minutes, was clearly hurrying to not only regulate relations with the Church but, using the media, to also show these relations to society at large. At the end of a conversation with the Russian metropolitans Molotov says that a visit was being planned to Moscow by an English Church delegation and they agreed on a time to meet with it.

Thirdly, the Nazis were opening churches in their occupied territories and, clearly, it was politically inappropriate to close them after the establishment of Soviet control.

After 1943 the Soviet Union appeared to Western countries as a liberator from Nazi German occupation. However, the end of the Nazi occupation of a particular country by its allies and liberation is one thing, but the Soviet armies did not intend to leave the countries they had 'liberated'. Furthermore, socialist regimes were established in these countries. These campaigns of conquest by the Soviet Union needed a corresponding ideological and political provision. The formulation of this ideology was expressed in the idea that the Soviet Union had not only freed the countries of Eastern Europe from Nazism, but was protecting them from an imperialist war of conquest. After the nightmare of the Second World War, peace was clearly a topical subject. But the Soviet peace policy would require support not only in the Soviet Union, but also among the various social strata of the West. For this reason it clearly became necessary that the ideology be firmed up not only by the arguments that the capitalist world could not exist without imperialist wars and that peace was in the interest of the working class alone. Ideology had to be strengthened by various arguments, including theological, and the Soviet Church could provide these. Of course, they were found: its cornerstone became the Gospel concept of peace, in particular 'Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will'.

The Soviet clergy were the vanguard in the war against the capitalist world. These were churchmen who were fighting for peace. On the one hand they were propagandizing the Soviet state with anti-Western rhetoric and, on the other, they were attempting to weaken Western defence capabilities. Before Soviet tanks would appear in the West, they would be preceded by the preaching of the priests of peace.

For example, one of the Georgian Patriarch's speeches (which, of course, had been agreed with the Party's Central Committee) to a conference of peace supporters went as follows:

I want to tell you that the Georgian Orthodox Church, which has always been inseparable from the Georgian people, in good times and in bad, shares all their innermost thoughts and is fighting together with them for peace in the whole world.

...The Georgian Orthodox Church, together with all the peoples of the Soviet Union, expresses its firm will to defend to the end the matter of peace in the world.

...At a time when the war-mongers are attempting in every way to drag the peoples of the world into the horrors of war, the forces of the supporters of peace, under the leadership of the great Soviet Union, are daily increasing and strengthening.

...Everyone knows that while American millionaires and billionaires are urgently preparing for a new war, the Soviet Union is getting on with the construction of gigantic electric power stations, draining marshes and irrigating deserts.

...The Georgian Orthodox Church supports the mighty movement of the whole of progressive mankind for peace throughout the world and we are convinced that we will achieve this, since God is with us, the highest truth is with us.

...The matter of peace will win, since the movement for peace is led by that great warrior and standard bearer, Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin.³⁰

The political theology of peace initiated by the Soviet Union and, correspondingly, by the Soviet Church, was quite successful in the West, especially in leftist circles. This was a discussion space where the Soviet Union spoke, as it were, taking not only its own interests and values into account. The Soviet Union recruited political allies and sympathizers on the basis of this policy. In this respect after Stalin's death, Pope John XXIII's encyclical, also called *Pacem in Terris* ('Peace on Earth') and issued on 11 April 1963, is interesting. It should be noted that the Soviet media received this encyclical quite positively on its publication.

As we see, the political theology of the Soviet Church was based on a number of concepts.

The first was the demarcation between Church and State, in other words, the demarcation between the Kingdom of God and the earthly, secular authorities.

The second was the justification of Soviet socialist ideology by the biblical idea of equality.

Lastly, there was the justification of Soviet militarism by the Gospel concept of peace.

Conclusion

Using the example of the Georgian Church we have attempted in this article to analyze a Church's discourses on political theology under the political systems prevailing at differing times.

It should be noted that we have touched on only a single layer of this topic and that several aspects have remained unexamined. For example, when we discussed the Church in Soviet times, we did not touch on the issue of what place it occupied and how Soviet society perceived this institution.

The analysis presented here shows us that the political theology of a Church, and of the Orthodox Church in particular, is formed under, and is dependent on, the secular authorities' policy in a given historic era.

Following on from this, we may say that in many cases the political discourse on the one hand employs theological language and, on the other, that political theology can speak to us not specifically from positions of the Church's eternal values, but from the position of a particular secular policy from the past or the present.

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