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GLOBAL ORTHODOXY: DESPERATE NEED FOR SELF-CRITIQUE

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Abstract. New concerns about Orthodoxy grow within and without it. Many no longer have a romantic outlook on Orthodoxy of the sort that flourished in the second half of the 20th century but see it as intrinsically susceptible to weaponisation. To correct this outlook, the Orthodox need to start a thorough self-evaluation through ecclesiology and political theology. The paper explores the ecclesiological and theopolitical preconditions that have led to the support of dictatorships in the past, as well as the modern wars waged between the Orthodox peoples. It also suggests ways out of the ongoing crises of the Orthodox identity and theology based on the Church's emancipation from imperial and authoritarian phantoms, as well as on observing the demarcation lines between the church and the state. Shifting from the "ecclesiology from above" to the "ecclesiology from below" could help the Orthodox church overcome the crises.
Keywords: Symphonia; Ideology; Fascism; Dictatorship; War

Crises in the Orthodox Identity and Theology

History demonstrates that crises help the churches develop. We are in the middle of a major crisis. A previous crisis of such magnitude occurred about a hundred years ago, with the collapse of the empires where Orthodoxy was present predominantly, namely the Ottoman, Russian, and Austro-Hungarian. This caused not only an exodus of Orthodox masses from the fallen empires to the West but also a transformation of their identities and theological ideas. The latter included the famous neo-Patristic synthesis, which was more about identities and ideological standpoints than Patristics; synodality and eucharist, which we now believe to be deeply embedded within Orthodoxy as its ostensibly unalienable identity; and

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personalism, which became perceived as a distinct feature of Eastern Christianity that differentiates it, so many of us believe, from the Western Christianity.

More recent events put all these ideas and identities to test. The Holy and Great Council, which was envisioned as early as the 1920s as a celebration of synodality, when eventually happened, disillusioned many and urged them to ask the question: does synodality really exist in Orthodoxy beyond declarations? The local Orthodox churches that decided not to come to Crete in 2016, unwillingly undermined the tenet held for a century that the quintessence of Orthodoxy is conciliar. They demonstrated that conciliarity cannot translate from theological textbooks to the Church's *praxis*, at least now. The pandemic of COVID-19, which sparked in early 2020 and lasted about two years, forced many to rethink the Eucharistic essence of the Church.[2] Indeed, the Eucharistic ecclesiology states that the Eucharist makes the Church.[3] However, what happens to the Church when the Eucharist cannot be celebrated and shared? Does she cease to exist? If she does not, what holds her together? The Russian war against Ukraine provoked the question of whether there is such a thing as the togetherness of Global Orthodoxy. One Orthodox nation wages a genocidal elimination of another Orthodox nation, and the local Orthodox churches pretend this does not happen. The protagonists and supporters of the war, especially in the Russian Orthodox Church, did not read the fascist theologians of the interwar period. Their favourite books are Fr Georges Florovsky's, Vladimir Lossky's and other personalists'. They started their intellectual journey by fervently affirming the prevalence of human hypostasis over essence. They are ending it by searching in cold blood for theological justifications for the brutal destruction of both human hypostases and essence in Bucha and Mariupol.

The Russian war against Ukraine is like the coronavirus: we may ignore it, but it does not ignore us. It can leave some ecclesial bodies suffocating and eventually breathless, as this has happened to the Russian Orthodox Church. Some other ecclesial bodies can survive it but would experience the so-called "long COVID"—discomfort and the loss of some capacities for years, if not decades. Like with the virus, ignoring the war does not help us to deal with it. On the contrary, the more we ignore it, the more damaging it is to us. To minimise the damage, we need to start by asking two basic questions: what is the Church, and how do we relate to her?

2 See Cyril Hovorun, „Covid Theology,' or the 'Significant Storm' of the Coronavirus Pandemic", *State, Religion and Church* 8. 2 (2021), 20–33.

3 See Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, London: T&T Clark, 1996.

A hundred years ago, the answer that Orthodox theology gave to similar questions was that the Church is different from both an empire and, by extension, from any kind of coercive state power. She is something ontologically else. Among the most enlightened Orthodox Church members, there grew an understanding that the ecclesiastical body is closer to the social body of responsible citizens than to the state bureaucracy. Consequently, twentieth-century post-imperial ecclesiology radically shifted from top-down to bottom-up. That is, from so-called "ecclesiology from above" to "ecclesiology from below."[4]

Ecclesiology of freedom against the ecclesiology of fear

Freedom is the main element that differentiates the latter from the former. In radical contrast to the ancient world, where religion was not an individual choice but imposed by authorities from above, Christ gave everyone the responsibility to choose how to relate to God: "To sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father" (Mt 20:23, English Standard Version (ESV)). From then on, one's relationship with God has value as long as it remains his or her free choice. Which means that belonging to the Church requires both the potentiality and actuality of choice. People need to be allowed to choose and to actually have will to make it. I would venture to say that belonging to the Church is not a momentary status but must be chosen and continuously asserted. Only through perpetual choice and assertion does the congregation remain genuine and effective for salvation. Then a church with a small "c" becomes the Church with a capital "C". Otherwise, the Church gets reduced to a a sect. I believe that the key criterion that differentiates the Church from a sect is respect for the freedom and choices of each of its members. Such respect implies a great deal of risk, but it is a precondition sine qua non for the Church to remain both orthodox and catholic.

The riskiest aspect of the Church is synodality. Those who try to contain the risk of freedom in the Church, paralyse its conciliar functions. They confess synodality with their lips only, without using or practising it. The local churches that did not show up in Crete in 2016, were either consciously or unconsciously afraid to take the risk of the synodality. Although they declared that they wanted to protect the

4 See Gerard Mannion, *Comparative Ecclesiology: Critical Investigations*, London: T&T Clark, 2008.

Church from misguidance, in effect they were motivated by misguided perceptions about the Church, i.e., by fear and not by faith in the Church.

Ecclesiology that fears, avoids, or marginalises freedom causes local churches to succumb to fear, distrust, and even paranoia. In its extreme version, such ecclesiology provides an indirect justification for various abuses, including the most painful of them: war. Churches that fight against their members' freedom inspire their people's leaders to wage wars against other people. Fear-based ecclesiology looks for arguments to justify authoritarianism and totalitarianism of all kinds.

This ecclesiology imposes within the churches an ethos that is not much different from the ethos that cements empires. It prefers coercion to consent. However, the church's use of coercion—always for the best of the Church's interests—often ends up with the churches supporting wars. That is how we have come to the tragic situation in which the majority of Orthodox Christians today (I include here those in Russia who identify themselves with the Orthodox Church and those Orthodox outside Russia who sympathise with what the leadership of that country is trying to achieve) either actively or passively support the complete annihilation of an Orthodox people—that of Ukraine.

I cannot explain this paradox except by a distorted ecclesiology. The main element of such ecclesiology is that it looks not to Christ as the head and sole reference point for the phenomenon of the Church but to his substitutes. These may include secular authorities, so-called traditional values, the glorious pasts of the churches and empires, etc. All these are nothing else but idols that substitute for God.

The idol of Byzantium

Byzantium is among the idols worshipped in our days most. Populist politicians across Orthodox countries cynically exploit romantic enthusiasm for Byzantium shared by their populations. It is no coincidence that this enthusiasm refers to a state that never existed — as we know, Byzantium is a Western fantasy about the state with its capital in Constantinople that called itself Roman.[5] Our fantasies about Byzantium lead us to fantastic ideas about the Church. Being moved by these ideas, we want our church to be state-owned, politically powerful, and exercising

5 See Anthony Kaldellis, *Romanland: Ethnicity and Empire in Byzantium*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019.

a monopoly on all tenets within the society. In reality, however, at least in modern reality, such a church cannot last for long. All attempts at political Byzantinism in the twentieth century prove this. I deliberately use the word "Byzantinism" with -ism at the end as a sign of the ideological character of this conception.

The person who laid the theoretical foundations of modern Byzantinism was Nicolae Iorga. He is best known for his work *Byzantium after Byzantium*.[6] It was first published in 1935, three years before the Romanian King Carol II established royal dictatorship (in 1938). Under Carol, Iorga served as prime minister and as president of the Senate, the Parliament, and a nationalist party. As almost every dictatorship in the Orthodox countries during the twentieth century, that of Romania, with Iorga's contribution, pretended to function as a Byzantium after Byzantium. That is, trying to incorporate some elements of Byzantium under the new historical conditions, and almost always failing.

In most cases, Byzantinism ended up in unchecked and unrestrained personal power of a dictator who had imagined himself a reincarnation of the Byzantine basileuses. Sometimes, the dictatorial appetites of the modern "basileuses" surpass what the old ones allowed for themselves. Like the latter, the former seek to legitimise themselves through the Church. In contrast to the past, however, which embraced contemporaneity, the modern adepts of Byzantinism reject modernity. Their Byzantinism is a caricature of Byzantium. The protagonists of phantasmagoric Byzantinism usually fail to comprehend that the real Byzantium was not a dictatorship of typology that flourished in the twentieth century. It was a complex political entity featuring quite strong democratic structures that only recently scholars have begun acknowledging.[7]

Russian President Vladimir Putin is one of those ignoramuses who enacts Byzantium without understanding it. He has been misinformed about Byzantium by some high-ranked prelates, who think they know Byzantium, even though they do not, such as Metropolitan Tikhon Shevkunov. He has inspired Putin to imagine himself a new Constantine or Justinian, or at least a second Vladimir the Great, the Grand Prince of Kyiv. That is why, for example, Putin endorsed building an enormous "archaeological park" in the occupied Crimea on the

6 Nicolae Iorga, *Byzance après Byzance: continuation de l'histoire de la vie byzantine*, Bucarest: L'Institut d'études Byzantines, 1935.

7 See Anthony Kaldellis, *The Byzantine Republic: People and Power in New Rome*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015.

spot where Prince Vladimir allegedly received his baptism from Byzantium. I put "archaeological park" in quotation marks because, first, its constructors destroyed some archaeological monuments and artefacts, and second, it is not about archaeology but about propaganda. Shevkunov made sure that archaeology was subsumed to the needs of the state propaganda.

Putin's fantasies about himself constitute a big problem. But an even bigger problem is that many Orthodox today still fantasise about their Church as an extension of an empire that no longer exists. They admire the TV images of Putin being pompously received on Mount Athos, where he was welcomed to stand in the stasidia that serve as a symbol of imperial might.[8] The Orthodox, infected with the virus of Byzantinism, are willing to forgive Putin for any crime, even the genocide of another Orthodox people, as long as he promises them a second coming of the ghost of an empire and an imperial church.

Self-denial of Orthodox political theologies

Such a false eschatology stems not only from the false ecclesiology but also from a false political theology. There is an intrinsic connection between ecclesiology and political theology, particularly in the Orthodox world. Since the Church determines how we live and act as Christians, ecclesiology determines how we understand our Christian selves. We live, act, and perceive in a space which is both social and political. It is impossible to extract ourselves from it. When we turn our backs or avert our sight from it, we do not make it disappear. We simply stop influencing this space while it continues to influence us. We, thus, make ourselves unprepared to face it and vulnerable to its many impacts, both positive and negative. We are more prepared to face it when we look in its face. Then we better understand not only the world but also ourselves as members of the Church and the Church per se.

It is no coincidence that ecclesiology as a theological discipline emerged in modern times with the advance of secularisation. As a result of the latter, the Church, from engulfing the entire world, suddenly found herself smaller than the world and surrounded by it. This world no longer recognised itself as an intrinsic part of the Church. Several times it rejected the Church altogether, such as in the

8 "Putin on Athos: the Protaton throne", in *Athos – Agion Oros Weblog*, June 1, 2016, https://athosweblog.com/2016/06/01/1823-putin-and-the-protaton-throne/ [accessed on September 7, 2024].

cases of the French Revolution or Soviet Communism. Sometimes the Church responded by rejecting the world altogether. It was as if she stood in front of a mirror and made the same gestures that the secularised world made toward her, with the only difference that her right hand in the mirror was left. That is how the churches that fight secularism and wrong (according to them) political doctrines, end up self-secularised and siding with wrong political regimes.

When the Church acknowledges the world (without necessarily accepting it), even if the latter seems to be hostile, this helps her to see and understand herself significantly better. Thus, ecclesiology as a theological discipline was born when the Church turned to the secular world instead of averting from it. Of course, this does not mean that ecclesiologies did not exist before the "secular age." As long as she existed, the Church reflected on herself theologically. Yet she did not produce a systematic theology about herself that would be similar to a systematic theology about the Triune God or the Incarnation. Perhaps this can be explained by the lack of a mirror in front of her which was not her.

Something similar happened with Orthodox political theology. It has always existed unsystematised, without being recognised as a theology. Even today, many Orthodox theologians refuse to acknowledge that it exists. Yet some of them are involved in political theology nolens volens, and indeed are political theologians par excellence. A towering figure among such crypto-political-theologians was Christos Yannaras, who believed that political theology is a Western discipline that does not deserve to be included in the nomenclature of the Orthodox theological disciplines.[9] Ecclesiology as an Orthodox theology was recognised late. The recognition of Orthodox political theology has been delayed even more.

One reason for such a stagnation is that in the East, it is often seen as a Western theology. Indeed, one of the first references to this kind of theology is made by Augustine when he quoted the Roman intellectual Marcus Terentius Varro (116-27 BC). Augustine preserved in his *City of God* the following passage from the lost treatise of Varro: "tria genera theologiae dicit esse: <…> unum mythicon appellari, alterum physicon, tertium civile."[10] That is, he distinguished three kinds

9 Χρήστου Γανναρά, *Κεφάλαια Πολιτικῆς Θεολογίας*, Ἀθήνα: Γρηγόρη, 1983, 14.

10 In Burkhart Cardauns, *M. Terentius Varro. Antiquitates rerum divinarum* [Abhandlungen der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse 1], Mainz: Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1976, liber 1, fr. 7, p. 18. In Augustine, *The City of God against the Pagans*, trans. by William M. Green [Loeb Classical Library 412], Cambridge, MA: Harvard

of theology: mythic, physical, and civil. The last one had to do with citizens. Varro used two terms for the citizens engaged in political theology: *populi* and *in urbibus cives*.[11] The last phrase literally means citizens.

Although Augustine was highly critical of Varro's political theology, he adopted from him the most important idea—the idea of political theology per se—to the point that he is considered the father of Western political theology. His *The City of God* is the founding *opus* of this theology.

Here we should make a footnote that a later follower of Augustine, a Bernardine monk Peter of Poznan in Poland (c. 1575 - 1658) paraphrased Varro's definition of theology as "rationis quae de diis explicatur"[12] to "ratio quae de Deo haberi potest."[13] The same Peter of Poznan wrote another work, bearing the title *Splendores hierarchiae politicae et ecclesiasticae*.[14] In this work he explored ecclesiology and political theology as intrinsically connected — something I also insist upon.

I also insist that, although the West indeed has a tradition of political theology that goes back to Varro and, through Augustine, to our own day, this theology is not original but a copy. The same Augustine, while describing Varro's theology, referred to its Greek originals, which he found in Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Epicurus, and others.[15] Augustine himself had predecessors among the Greek Christian theologians. Eusebius of Caesarea can be considered the father of Eastern political theology par excellence. He elaborated on it it in his cycle of writings on Emperor Constantine. *Life of Constantine* has a prominent place in this circle.[16]

University Press, 1963, liber VI 5, pp. 306-309. (["He said] there are three kinds of theology, that is, of a logic seeking to explicate the gods. Of these one is called 'mythic', the second, 'natural', and the third, 'civic' […] the one they call 'mythic' is that most especially used by poets; the 'natural', by the philosophers; and the 'civic', by the people.")

11 In Augustine, *The City of God*, liber VI 5, pp. 312-313.

12 Augustine, *The City of God*, liber VI 5, p. 306.

13 Petrus Posnaniensis, *Commentaria in primum librum Sententiarum fratris Joannis Duns Scoti*, Mainz: Schönwetter, 1612, 71.

14 Petrus Posnaniensis, *Splendores hierarchiae politicae et ecclesiasticae*, Kraków: Łukasz Kupisz, 1652.

15 Augustine, *The City of God*, liber VI 5, pp. 310-311.

16 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, translated by Averil Cameron and Stuart George Hall, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999.

Even before Eusebius we find original samples of political theology in the East. The letter from a second century's unknown author to a certain Diognetus is one of these.[17] Even in the time of Constantine, Eusebius was not the only political theologian in the East. Athanasius can be seen as a robust alternative to Eusebius. The archbishop of Alexandria stood not only for a different theology of the Triune God, but also for a different political theology. Which can be seen in the *Life of Anthony*.[18] Athanasius disagreed with Eusebius, who had Constantine as the model of Christian ethos. He instead promoted Antony the monk as such a model. In this way, Athanasius disagreed also with the Eusebian paradigm of church-state relations. Since then and up to the present day, the dilemma that Eusebius and Athanasius had set forth has continued. It is the dilemma between an absolute and a more careful support of the state by the Church.

The Athanasian theopolitical line can be discerned in some other great Patristic figures of the past. For example, the surviving documents from the trial of Maximus the Confessor[19] present him as a notable political theologian. He, like Athanasius before him, drew a clear red line between the Church and the state, which the latter must not transcend. So did the patriarch of Constantinople Photius, although he was more cautious than Maximus. The *Introduction to the Law*, written during the reign of Basil I (r. 867-886), probably on the initiative and with the contribution of Photius himself, clearly expounds some principles of his political theology. Without much exposure, Photius tried to maintain the same line between the church and the state that Athanasius and Maximus had held.

Most other patriarchs of Constantinople cared less about maintaining this line. One of the last patriarchs of the empire, Anthony IV, wrote to the Grand Prince of Moscow Basil I (r. 1389-1425) that it was impossible for Christians to have the Church without an emperor.[20] Soon, however, the Orthodox Christians would have lost their emperor, without losing the Church.

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17 Edited by Henri Irénée Marrou, *A Diognète* [Sources chrétiennes 33 bis], Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 196, 52-84. Translated by Bart D. Ehrman [Loeb Classical Library 25], Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

18 See Raymond Van Dam, *The Roman Revolution of Constantine*, Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 318.

19 See Pauline Allen and Bronswen Neil, *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents From Exile*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 2002.

20 See Robert L. Wolff, "The Three Romes: The Migration of an Ideology and the Making of an Autocrat", *Daedalus*, 88.2 (1959), 291–311 (299).

Itching for dictatorship

The counterposition of the two lines originating from Eusebius and Athanasius continues in our time. The collapse of the old empires in the 20th century caused many crises in the life of the local Orthodox churches, in their relations with the state, and in their political theologies. After the First World War, most states with a significant Orthodox population demonstrated inclinations towards democratisation, although most remained monarchies. Serbia (later Yugoslavia), Bulgaria, Albania, and Romania retained their kings, while Greece was torn between monarchy and republic. Russia, too, after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II and the February Revolution of 1917, adopted republican rule, which immediately affected the church, providing it with more freedom. As a result, the Russian Orthodox Church managed to convene its council in Moscow. This council became a milestone in the process of the Orthodox *aggiornamento*.

Russia's democratisation was reversed with the Bolshevik revolution in October 1917. The same setback would soon affect other Orthodox countries, with the Orthodox churches in them playing leading roles in the anti-democratic reversals. Thus, the Synod of the Church of Greece supported King Constantine I (r. 1913-17; 1920-22) against Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, to the point of anathematising the latter. Those political theologians who in the 1920s sympathised with democratic changes in their contemporary societies, during the 1930s, U-turned towards supporting autocracy. One of them was Nikolaj Velimirović.[21]

In some cases, the Orthodox-majority countries ended up with military dictatorship; in others, with royal dictatorship; and in some, with both. In Serbia, King Alexander I Karađorđević (r. 1921-34) declared a royal dictatorship on 6 January 1929. He annulled the democratic Vivodan constitution, dissolved the parliament and political parties, and made General Petar Živković, the head of his guard, Prime Minister. He thus set an attractive example for other Orthodox countries that followed suit over the next decade.

Romania followed this example closely enough. It resembled Serbia in many respects. Both countries were created in the 19th century by the unification of

21 See Vladimir Cvetković, "'Nationalism', 'Fascism' and 'Anti-Semitism' of Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović", in *Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović: Old Controversies in Historical and Theological Context*, edited by Vladimir Cvetković and Dragan Bakić, Alhambra, CA: Sebastian Press, 2022: 211-254.

pieces extracted from two empires: Ottoman and Habsburg. After World War I, both countries grew in size. Serbia was transformed to a significantly more sizable Yugoslavia, while Romania, to *România Mare*, "Great Romania." Both countries, as a result of adding territories, became more difficult to govern. Consequently, soon after the liberal reforms of the 1920s, they slipped to dictatorships.

The evolution of the Romanian dictatorship was a bit more complicated than in the case of Yugoslavia. It was established quite late, in 1938, i.e., almost ten years after the Serbian dictatorship, and followed a similar line. Its protagonist was the king, Carol II (r. 1930-40). He annulled the democratic Constitution of 1923 and dissolved the Parliament and political parties, which he replaced with his own "Front of National Renaissance" (*Frontul Renașterii Naționale*, FRN). This party exercised a political monopoly in the country until it was replaced by another monopoly, that of the "Iron Guard" (*Garda de Fier*). This party, which began as a movement similar to the fascist movement in Italy, in contrast to the latter, had a strong clerical character. We can say that it was effectively a political wing of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Similarly to the Serbian King Alexander who appointed a general as his prime minister, Carol in Romania, when he declared a dictatorship, also appointed a general as prime minister. His name was Ion Antonescu. But this general was not as obedient to the king as Petar Živković was in Yugoslavia. He soon managed to get rid of his mentor. Carol was forced to resign on 6 September 1940, and on the same day Antonescu was declared the Leader (*Conducător*) of the state. He, thus, joined the family of other "conductors" of European nations. Each of them was called by the same word in their own languages: *Duce* in Italian, *Igetis* (Ηγέτης) in Greek (the title adopted by the Greek dictator Ioannis Metaxas), *Führer* in German, and *Vozhd'* (Вождь) in Russian.

Antonescu first relied on the Iron Guard for which he secured a political monopoly. From 14 September 1940 to 14 February 1941, Romania was officially the National Legionary State (Statul Național Legionar). That means that it effectively adopted some theocratic elements. The German "Conductor" of the time, despite his hesitations about the role that religion could play in politics, paradoxically supported both the Iron Guard and the Legionary State. One of the reasons for this support was the fanatical anti-Semitism of the guards, who even sought to reorganize themselves with the Nazi *Schutzstaffel* (SS) as their model.[22]

22 Rebecca Haynes, "Germany and the Establishment of the Romanian National Legionary State, September 1940", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 77.4 (1999) 700-725 (723).

Theocracies are usually unstable and do not last long. So the National Legionary State soon began to descend into chaos, and Antonescu decided to dissolve it. But doing so was no easy task, given the German support of the Iron Guard. Only personal approval from Hitler allowed the Romanian leader to get rid of the Guard.[23]

But this meant that he had to take more personal responsibility for the so-called resolution of the Jewish question, for which Antonescu usually used the euphemism "cleansing."[24] It actually meant almost 300,000 lost lives. According to research,[25] between 12 and 20 thousand Jews were shot by the Romanian and German armies in Bessarabia and Bukovina in July and August 1941. Romanian forces killed about 15 to 20 thousand Jews in Odessa during October 1941. Of the 14 thousand Jews in Bukovina, Bessarabia, and Transnistria, at least 90 thousand died between 1941 and 1943, the majority of them from typhus and starvation. In the same period, between 130 and 170 thousand Ukrainian Jews disappeared. This policy was favoured and sometimes supported by the kind of Orthodox political theology that developed in interwar Romania. Among the protagonists of this political theology was Nichifor Crainic, who was a notorious anti-Semite.[26]

In the so-called First Balkan War (1912-1913), in which the Orthodox nations fought together against the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria gained a lot of territory. This territory was lost in the Second Balkan War and the First World War, which is also considered to have started as the Third Balkan War. Unlike Serbia and Romania, where territorial acquisitions eventually led to dictatorship, Bulgaria was driven to

23 See Dennis Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally: Ion Antonescu and His Regime, Romania 1940-44*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, 62-64.

24 Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, 128.

25 See Deletant, *Hitler's Forgotten Ally*, 127. According to the report from a commission established by Romanian President Ion Iliescu in 2003, "Of all Nazi Germany's allies, Romania bears the responsibility for the greatest contribution to the extermination of the Jews, apart from Germany itself. The murders carried out at Iaşi, Odessa, Bogdanovka, Domanevka and Pecioara are among the most heinous crimes committed against the Jews during the Holocaust. Romania carried out genocide against the Jews. The survival of some Jews in certain parts of the country does not change this reality." In Gabriel Andreescu, "Raportul Comisiei Internationale pentru Studierea Holocaustului in Romania", *Ziua* (18 November 2004).

26 See Iuliu-Marius Morariu, "Aspects of the Anti-Semitic Views of Nichifor Crainic Reflected in 'Gândirea' Journal", *Research and Science Today* 17.1 (2019) 110–18.

the same destination by territorial loss and the obligation to pay war reparations as Germany's ally in the Great War. They felt something similar to the Germans of the Weimar Republic: people became frustrated with democracy.

On 19 May 1934, two colonels, Damian Velchev and Kimon Georgiev, successfully staged a coup. They had the support of a group called the "Zveno" (which means "chain"). This group resembled the Romanian Iron Guard in several respects and was not far from the other fascist movements of the time. Once it seized power it established a regime similar to the National Legionary State of Romania a few years later. It deactivated, but did not annul, the Tarnovo Constitution (1879), and dissolved the political parties. Unlike the Romanian Guard, it promoted secularist policies, although it still supported the Church. Like the Guard, it did not last long. Its downfall, however, came not from within, as in the case of General Antonescu in Romania, but from without, from King Boris III (r. 1918-43). In April 1935, he replaced the "Zveno" regime with his own royal dictatorship. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church widely accepted both dictatorships.[27] The then Metropolitan of Sofia, Stefan Shokov, even took an active part in the coup of 1934.[28]

In similar ways, each dictatorship was widely accepted and supported by the Church in Greece. They include the coup of General Georgios Kondylis in 1935 and, after 4 August 1936, the so-called "Third Greek Civilization" of General Ioannis Metaxas. The Church of Greece also actively collaborated with the "dictatorship of the Colonels" Georgios Papadopoulos and Dimitrios Ioannidis (1967-74). The Archbishop of Athens Ieronymos Kotsonis was of particular help to this dictatorship, which had promoted him to this position. A political theology backed dictatorship, such as represented, for example, by Fr Ioannis Romanidis.

Proposals how to update Orthodox ecclesiology and political theology

In sum, we can see how in the shadow of the grand fascist systems of Germany and Italy, smaller fascisms and semi-fascisms mushroomed across the Orthodox countries. They all were celebrated by most theologians and hierarchs. After World War II, the Western churches mostly recognised their crimes and tried to correct

27 See James L. Hopkins, *The Bulgarian Orthodox Church: A Socio-Historical Analysis of the Evolving Relationship between Church, Nation and State in Bulgaria*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.

28 See. Дилян Николчев, *Екзарх Стефан под «грижите» на Държавна сигурност,* София: Военно издателство, 2015, 58-75.

the errors of their political theology. The Protestants did so more quickly and openly, while the Catholics did so belatedly and indirectly. The Second Vatican Council promoted the *aggiornamento* agenda as an indirect acknowledgement for the Catholic Church's collaboration with the dictatorships. More directly, this council elaborated on a political theology that made such cooperation difficult in the future.

In the Christian East, only a few theological voices have condemned the toxic collaborations of the past: with the right-wing and left-wing dictatorships of the twentieth century. Church authorities prefer not to refer to their collaboration as if it never happened. This is, in my opinion, one of the main reasons why toxic collaborations with dictatorships still occur in the twenty-first century: unrepentant sins tend to be made again.

Hence my proposals for the future Orthodox political theology:

1. This should continue the line of Athanasius and Maximus, and not Eusebius. That is, we must critically assess the Byzantine *symphonia* between the Church and the State, as well as the attempts to re-enact it in modern times.

2. Cooperation with the fascist and semi-fascist regimes of the interwar period, as such re-enactment, as well as with the communist regimes of the post-war period, must be evaluated openly and critically. Such recognition and re-evaluation need to be done in a conciliar manner.

3. This will help us to recognise and critically assess the recent wars in Yugoslavia, Georgia, and Ukraine. It is a great injustice to Orthodoxy that all the wars of the last thirty years in the territories of Europe have been fought among or involving Orthodox peoples, and we pretend that they did not or do not happen. We, as the Orthodox Church, will not move forward, or rather we will regress if we continue to ignore these wars, especially the one in Ukraine.

4. Many Orthodox justify this war on the pretext of the assumed East-West dichotomy. Now it is time to overcome this dichotomy, which is a pseudomorphosis of the Orthodox theology and *praxis*.

5. Finally, it is vital to keep a safe distance from the culture wars of our time. This does not mean that we should avoid a critical evaluation of all the ideologies that contribute to these wars from both the left and right margins of the political spectrum. It means that we must not allow our theology to be politicised.

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