

CHURCH AND STATE WORKING TOGETHER IN FAVOR OF PEOPLE

Tudor Cosmin CIOCAN¹

ABSTRACT:

THIS STUDY ENCOMPASSES THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ASPECTS OF THE INSEPARABILITY OF RELIGION AND POLITICS OVER THE AGES, REVEALING THAT, UNLIKE IN THE WESTERN CHURCH, THE EASTERN ONE HAS ALWAYS SEEN ITSELF PRIMARILY AS A SACRAMENTAL ORGANISM IN CHARGE OF "DIVINE THINGS" NOT OF WORLDLY. STARTING FROM THE IDEA THAT RELIGION WAS ALWAYS THE STRONGEST POLITICAL FORCE IN THE WORLD AND SEEING RELIGION AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL CONTROL, WE`LL SEE THE REASONS OF THE INSEPARABILITY BETWEEN THEM, WHILE, ON THE OTHER HAND, UNDERSTANDING THE STATE AS A THEOCRATIC INSTITUTION THAT MUST REFLECT THE CONCERN FOR THE PEOPLE AND BY HAVING THE BEST EXAMPLE IN THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, WE`LL UNDERSTAND THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN THESE TWO SOCIAL REALMS. IN THE EYES OF ORTHODOXY THE REASON FOR POLITICS TO WORK IS ONLY IN FAVOR OF PEOPLE, SEEN AS A CREATION OF GOD THAT RELIGIOUS LEADERS HAD TO DEFEND AND PROTECT FROM ANY MISTAKES AND INJUSTICE. WHILE INSEPARABILITY WAS A FEATURE ASSIGNED TO CHRISTIANITY ESPECIALLY SINCE CONSTANTINE THE GREAT`S REIGN, THE DICHOTOMY HAS SEEMED EVIDENT MUCH EARLIER, FROM THE CHRIST`S WORDS, MY KINGDOM AND SERVANTS ARE NOT OF THIS WORLD. IN THE PRESENT STUDY ARE EXPOSED THE MAIN REASONS AND PRINCIPLES UNDERLYING BOTH PARADIGMS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THESE TWO REALITIES FOR, IN THE END, ANYONE WHO READS THIS STUDY TO BE ALONE ABLE TO DECIDE WHICH OPTION HE`S FAVORING. IS THEREFORE RELIGION INTERFERING OR HELPING POLITICS IN A BETTER GOVERNMENT? OR, BETTER, IS THERE RELIGION (OR, AT LEAST ITS MORALITY) THE REASON AND THE MOTIVATION THAT POLITICIANS MUST HAVE WHEN THEY PROMULGATE THE LAWS AND NOT AN IMMEDIATE "GOOD" OF PEOPLE?

KEY WORDS: CONSTANTINE, INSEPARABILITY, DICHOTOMY, CHURCH, SOCIAL THEATER, DEIST, PAGANISM, COMMUNITY.

INTRODUCTION

What is the role of religion in relation to human society? Can a religion be altogether abstract and other-wordily? Can there be a clear demarcation between the boundaries of the spiritual and the empirical? Are the two realms entirely separate and incompatible? Or can there be harmony between the two? And, in this harmony, which one should lead the other?

These questions were answered differently from one age to another. We all are aware of the inseparability of these two realms before the age of Christianity, inseparability that was found in the institution of power; those that had reigned had at the same time the prerogative

¹ Priest, PhD, Senior lecturer at Faculty of Orthodox Theology "St. Ap. Andrei" – Department of biblical and systematic theology; "Ovidius" University : Constanța/Romania. Email: cosmin@wallpaintings.ro .

of power and the religious one too. But, most of all, it should be recognized that these two realms are notoriously the most influential for all anthropologists and that these two provoked any essential changes in the human existence. Any anthropologist could not leave aside any of these two areas, religion or politics, when he wants to define, understand or express the essence of the human. This is the aim of my paper, to point out the role of this binomial coexistence in the structure of anthropology and how Christianity contributes to it.

Religion is and always has been among the most potent political forces in the “contemporary” world². As Sherry Ortner says about religion, that is “a metasystem that solves problems of meaning generated in large part (though not entirely) by the social order, by grounding that order within a theoretically ultimate reality within which those problems will ‘make sense’”³, it always has to do with any other sector of social life, especially with politics. Following anthropologists in their research about religion will make us understand that this meaningful realm of mankind’s existence involves politics in primitive, then antics humanity’s minds because humans “see themselves, in a religious context, as occupying a certain kind of relationship with being(s) and/or force(s) which we can rightly and only call a social relationship. It is a relationship of communication, intention, reciprocity, respect, avoidance, control, etc. The being(s) and/or force(s) are like us in some ways, despite the fact that They are greatly unlike us in others. They may have a language (usually ours), personality or intentionality desires and interests and likes and dislikes; They may “live” in their own social arrangements; and They can be approached and influenced. This takes us to the real significance of religion as a cultural factor and its real distinction from the other domains of culture. Economics, kinship, politics – these are all about people. They interact with us. They are social, because they are part of society”⁴. Because of that reason all social order that religious leaders have ever seen in heavens (e.g. Moses - “Only be careful, and watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them fade from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them” Deuteronomy 4:9) they applied it to the society they were leading.

This was the beginning of theocracy and of the inseparability of religion and politics in all kind of states, no matter if they were monotheistic or polytheistic ones. That is consider to be so as a manifestation of natural (primordial) revelation seed in everyone’s mind, atheist or believer all the same. “In Christianity, God is the father – a kinship term. Australian Aboriginals speak of the kangaroo-grandfather or the moon-mother, in terms very similar to most societies. In fact, for them and many others, their religious beings are ancestors, sometimes even literally part-human and part-animal or part-plant”⁵. It is undoubtedly something unique about humans that makes it possible and necessary for us to have religious notions, which let us set aside questions of “truth” and concentrate on social, political and cultural nature and functions of religion. As for Judaism “strikingly, Maimonides elaborates a rabbinic political ideal, with the Torah as its constitution, a strong central ruler «to fight the battles of the Lord», but who governs under the authority of the Law and the wisdom of its interpreters”⁶. The problems of how to govern a material world after the laws of a spiritual one, as Maimonides understood them, were those of cosmology and metaphysics, centered on the accommodation of the infinitely transcendent God to the finitude of creation. For Ezekiel

² Paul J. WEITHMAN, *Religion, Law, and Politics* in Charles Taliaferro, Paul Draper and Philip L. Quinn, “A companion to philosophy of religion”, (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 577.

³ Sherry B. ORTNER, *Sherps through their Rituals*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 152.

⁴ Jack David ELLER, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion: Culture to the Ultimate*, (London: Routledge, 2007), 9.

⁵ ELLER, *Introducing*, 10.

⁶ Philip L. QUINN, *A companion to philosophy of religion*, (Chichester, West Sussex: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2010), 50.

seems to suggest (18:20), with much periphrasis, that he saw God in human form, and Genesis clearly proposes a causal relation between God's timeless perfection and our changeable world. "Hence the Scriptures are the great source from which every age must draw its religion as from a perennial source"⁷.

For a better understanding of this inseparability in a proper perspective, however, it is necessary to put aside our modern conceptions of what is meant by "political" when we have to explain it for ancient's perspective. This is because the modern political theory, aware of politics as a dimension of the state rather than co-terminus with the community ("the city") and, because of its often dominant positivism – all too conscious of its debased realities – stands at a great distance from its Platonic and Aristotelian counterparts. No doubt, the political realities of the ancient world were anything but uplifting. However, Plato and Aristotle thought of them as perversions of the "true" polity rather than its unavoidable face. Due to its universal principles of knowledge and its particular problems of praxis, calls for religion to use them for practical reason; religion is concerned with the application of these universal principles to necessarily unique instances. Consequently, all ancient's views of religion are an integrant aspect of its political understanding – taking care of people as an application of ontological commandment, i.e. Genesis 1:28. In return, for politics to work in this dimension one is often told that it is a very wrong thing to attack religion, because religion makes men virtuous and, without this virtuosity, politics frequently falls out of its purpose and became nothing else but a mean of oppression.

1. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS

Religion is, among other things, a mean of social control. Even in the Judeo-Christian tradition, a large part of the religion is about what we should do, how we should live. Politics and even kinship provide a measure of this control. However, the limitation of political social control is its scope: Human agents of social control cannot be everywhere and cannot see everything and the rewards and punishments they can mete out are finite. For instance, they cannot continue to reward or punish you after you die. But religious "sanctions" can be much more extensive, exquisite, and enduring. In other words, religious being(s) and/or force(s) not only make the rules but enforce them too.

Philosophical discussions of God in early modern world evolved in close relation with natural and political philosophy. Just as longstanding scientific and political models were preempted by the new philosophies of Galileo, Descartes, Machiavelli and Hobbes, the Reformation ended a long period of relative theological consensus in Christian Europe. And in the two centuries of theological innovation and conflict that followed, many of the same issues that preoccupied philosophers, such as human nature, freedom, and the foundations of knowledge, were also at the heart of major debates in science and politics. The result of deep and widespread theological controversy in Great Britain was not so much the transformation of the concept of God – which remained remarkably familiar at the end of the eighteenth century – as the transformation of theology itself. No longer a self – evident creator and sovereign, God had become the ultimate scientific hypothesis: perhaps unavoidable to explain and unify the known phenomena, but still tentative and subject to criticism and refinement⁸. Although faith and revelation continue to play an important role in religious knowledge, because of the science-religion conflict these fundamentals were preempted from any political debates and, soon, from any Constitution in the World. This enactment is made today

⁷ Rev. Jack C. TODD, *Politics and Religion in ancient Israel: An introduction to the study of the Old Testament*, (London: MacMillan and CO., 1904), 309.

⁸ Geoffrey GORHAM, *Early Modern Philosophical Theology in Great Britain*, in QUINN, *A companion...*, 124.

forgetting the fact that all colonized countries were also baptized in the Christian faith from the beginning and therefore they are all entitled to begin their thinking and legislation with the ancient Latin saying, *Nihil sine Deo*, like Americans did through the sintagm “In God we trust” that was adopted as the official motto of the United States in 1956. Usually this truth is forgotten and left aside when crucial humanity’s issues are political answered.

1.1. ARE THERE ISSUES REGARDING THESE TWO REALMS THAT REVEAL THE PROBLEMS IN THIS RELATIONSHIP?

We are all aware of the difficulties that modern politics supply the breach between religion and politics by any means. From Thomas Jefferson’s 1802 letter that explained the necessity of “building a wall of separation between Church and State” to the overplus of recent Supreme Court cases citing the First Amendment as a reason to prohibit everything from prayer in school to the public display of the Ten Commandments, Americans have been cautious of the integration of these two influential institutions. These measures, taken by the political class especially for the broadening of knowledge of a particular religious belief in school, were copied by other countries among which we can find ourselves, the Romanians, in latest decades. For the communist leadership, atheistic, it is understandable why it took this measure, as a protection against an institution of powerful, influent over popular masses, but for the period of "freedom" after the modern revolutions (i.e. 1989) that motivation can no longer be valid.

However it is imperative to mention that, although these measures have had at the time practical motivations – e.g. it is wrong to implement a particular religion confessional (sectary) teaching in a population so religious heterogenous as it is Americans –, that's not a ground to be applied in the case of homogeneous religious States, mostly Europeans, where Orthodox, Catholic or Protestants are a major part in any country here. Therefore that is not a valid reason for us to exclude teaching religion in school or taking off the pray out of our doings. I don’t want to sound like in conspiracy theory but I believe that excluding the prayers from the school or the Decalogue’s teachings we mark the revival of paganism and hedonism, that has already been brought by globalism. We can see what it is coming after such a primary stage of separation between religion and politics. Take prostitution, euthanasia or same-sex marriage for example, three social issues at the forefront of political debate in every country, or even a less conflicting issue like abortion or fertilization and you’ll find yourself wandering the same as I do: could not the rejection of mere pray be only the beginning of rejecting any and more important religious answers for all bioethical problems nowadays?

Because, often, none of the Church’s representatives are asked when promulgated such laws (i.e. legalization of prostitution, euthanasia, homosexuality etc.) or even when they are proposed for political debate, it often comes down to street riots, popular movements in which the representatives of both categories meet to discuss their "rights", those favored by atheist laws and those entitled by religious morality. Even for these popular movements and their implications and political class mustn’t ignore and remove religion from political debates. In other words, it is a mistake to slate religion as strictly polarizing and something to be ushered away from the realm of politics — at least completely. Though not all shape their beliefs through a respective faith, for many religion does provide the foundation for morality. And while political decisions based entirely on religious convictions can be dangerous, so are decisions void of a moral compass.

2. IS THERE INSEPARABILITY OR DICHOTOMY BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS?

2.1. CHRISTIANITY UNDER CONSTANTINE THE GREAT'S REIGN

The inseparability of religion and politics has been one of the main characteristics of Christianity since the beginnings. The need of a clear perception of Christianity has led to many controversies and misconceptions regarding this doctrine. Jesus did not usher in a political kingdom. But Christianity has been the single largest influence on European and then western society. This was considered to be in the benefit of society for thousands of years of history when establishing their government. There had been times when the State had absolute authority and persecuted the Church. At other times the church had effective control of the state. The founders saw that neither of these extremes was ideal, but beginning with Constantine the Great the age of religion and politics inseparability begins in the benefit of both. As long as Christianity was persecuted, the Biblical assertion – man, by nature, is God-centered in all aspects of his life, and he is responsible for the fate of the entire creation – could be nothing more than an article of faith, to be realized at the end of history and anticipated in the sacraments. With the "conversion" of Constantine however it suddenly appeared as a concrete and reachable goal⁹. The original enthusiasm with which the Christian Church accepted imperial protection was never corrected by any systematic reflection on the nature and role of the state or of secular societies in the life of fatten humanity. There lies the tragedy of the Byzantine system: it assumed that the state, as such, could become intrinsically Christian.

Christianity, a revelatory religion, originated in the 1st century as a new revolutionary force that aimed for a spiritual rejuvenation, a moral upliftment and a social emancipation of people; “there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). It confronted the dogmatism of religious and moral experience with the leading class’s oppression. This emerging religion challenged the political and of the contemporary rulers to change its point of view not only over the humanity, but of the liberty, democracy and Law itself. It introduced new modes of thinking, gave new content and orientation to the existing categories and formulated new concepts of man's relations with God, his role in society and the goal of human life. In due course of time, the inner values of the Christianity faith got more and more crystallized and became no less real than the more visible outward forms.

For a correct evaluation of the ideological of Christianity and its practical implications it is crucial to understand the Christian way of life and some of its fundamental concepts of the World, God, apocalypse and society, which became the moving impulse of a people. We know that, regarding to the view over the apocalypse, all Christians were greeted each other with “Maranatha”, an Aramaic salute meaning “the Lord is coming” or “come, O Lord” (1 Corinthians 16:22). This emerging religion’s point of view over the end of the world influence almost all approached issues, even of life itself, one that was no longer regarded as an absolute good, but as a mean of achieving immortality through Christ. Therefore the Christian community has had a long tradition of inseparability of religion and politics. This inseparability is implicit in the basic postulates of Christianity and must be viewed in its true perspective of defending its believers and protected them in this pagan world. Constantine the Great's reign was extremely important to the Christian church. Through his declaration over the legality of Christianity in the Edict of Milan he completely abandoned paganism and put his full force of favor towards advancing the cause of the Church of Christ. He provided

⁹ John MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, (original version used for English quote Fordham University Press, 1999, used version for pagination: the one translated in Romanian by Al. Stan, Bucuresti: Nemira, 2010), 313.

Christianity with important legislation on such matters as the observance of Sunday, the confiscation of the temple buildings and turned them into churches and the exemption of some clergy from taxes. He funded Christian leaders and the construction of churches, some of which he dedicated to his mother, Helen, a dedicated Christian to who is due the popularization the tradition of pilgrimages in Christianity. Most Christian leaders greatly admired Constantine for the works he did for the church and Christian cause. It was nonetheless possible to maintain that human beings had common spiritual ends which were to be promoted by diverse political authorities after Constantine as well.

While Constantine's idea of an integrated Church and State, at present called Constantinism, began having equilibrium in the empire upon his conversion, it became significantly stronger through several events over the years. Many state's matters that have been solved with christian implication or vice versa have demonstrated the crucial role that Constantine thought Christianity must have into society. With his view regarding this mixture of religion and politics starts the Christian theocracy. We now know for sure that this intricate mixture of politics and religion was not seen well by both sides; on the one hand his involvement in Church's business – i.e. his presidency of the Council of Nicaea where 300 bishops were hosted on the imperial expense, which again dealt with the Arian controversy about the nature of the divinity of Jesus – was then and over the years seen as an attitude of bias for Orthodox cult. On the other hand, after 324, when Constantine defeated his co-emperor in the west, Licinius, he uproot paganism – the imperial's official religion – this time involving his christian faith in imperial business and legislation.

As part of the controversial reign Constantine was tolerant of paganism from 312-320, keeping pagan gods on coins and retaining his pagan high priest title "Pontifex Maximus" in order to maintain popularity with his subjects, that is why some researchers think that is a possibility of indicating that he never understood the theology of Christianity. But, in the light of this inseparability we are talking about, we must accept this fact as a diplomatic solution to keep away the political opponents not to gain too much power against him using any strong measures that he might take against paganism, still the majority and in high spirits at the time.

Christianity, as a religious and cultural group that have been in a minority in the first place, yet they have played a significant role in the Roman imperial's affairs, out of proportion to their small, but increasingly numbers. It is so because of their unique historico-political position and their spiritual and social vitality bestowed upon them by Constantine. The Christians have had to pass through great ordeals to preserve their strength and faith over first eight centuries due to all doctrinal controversies. Before the Age of Enlightenment, Christianity was the only religion which welded the spiritual and the temporal into a harmonious whole. He appeared at first to have very little grasp of the basic beliefs governing Christian faith. But, unlike Constantine the Great, the Christians believed in a dichotomy between the Church and the State. That belief was stated in Jesus Christ's words, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place" (John 18:36; cf. Luke 20:25). But this was officially decided only in the beginnings of Christianity, when the influence of Christ's teachings were very strong in spirit; after Constantine's reign it has begun the age of coexistence of christian religion and politics. With Constantine thus has begun what we call here the inseparability of religion and politics.

2.2. THE DICHOTOMY BETWEEN RELIGION AND POLITICS

Ones have even transferred dogmatic religious believes into the political space. Such people think it is a sin to criticize your government, because it is God who gives power to those in Government (Romans 13: 1-5). Even though they see these people wangle their way to power, they will want to quote those sections of the Bible that orders subservience to the powers that be. In order to do that they must serve the Christian people`s best interests, otherwise it is meaningless to invoke such an argument without getting it to its purpose, “Do good and you will receive its commendation, for it is God’s servant for your good” (Romans 13: 3-4). This surrender “in the will” of legislative`s authority does not goes on forever, as a surrender to the will of God, infused with confidence in Its indelible providence, but must be passed through the filter of moral consciousness “by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Corinthians 4:2). This political authority may even be rejected if they come in the counter with the interests of the Christian community, its dogmas or the work of salvation of Christ. *Than what is the limit for entrusting political leaders with our lives?* The limit for religion-politics inseparability is determined by Christ’s words, “Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10: 37). And how could we think that if we cannot love or entrust our lives to our family more than in the hands of Christ, we can entrust our fate into immoral, atheist politicians? In that case we have our bests answer if we go back to Constantine`s reign and see what this inseparability was built upon: serving someone`s interests or looking to help and serve Christian community`s best interests? This must be the selection criterion of the political class in this limitation to any genuine Christian that wants to make at the same time politics without getting his hands dirty of politics shortcomings.

2.3. WHERE CAN BE FOUND THE ROOTS FOR THIS DICHOTOMY?

In the eyes of Western Christians, the Eastern Church often appears as quite other-worldly, and, indeed, the West has traditionally been much more concerned than the East with organizing human society, with defining the Christian truth in terms which could be readily understood, with giving man concrete normative formulae of behavior and conduct. To attempt a critical description of this problem in Byzantine theology is to raise one of the basic theological and anthropological issues of Christian life: the relation between the absolute divine truth and the relative faculties of perception and action possessed by created and fallen man.¹⁰ Indeed, the great dream of Byzantine civilization was a universal Christian society administered by the emperor and spiritually guided by the Church. But this wasn’t a Christian dream shared by the Fathers of the Eastern Church, that is a more spiritual one or, as Vladimir Lossky said, “in a certain sense all its theology is mystical”¹¹. The Eastern Church and its representatives abstained from active, aggressive involvement in politics – as we find throughout the history of the Catholic Church – and it confined just to a beneficial influence over political leaders to not make regrettable mistakes. In doing so we often meet priests and bishops who stayed near the leaders as political counselors, who are demanding an opinion whenever crucial decisions were to take or when they got themselves involved in in case the population`s welfare was threatened. For Constantine the idea of the Christian and universal empire presupposed that the emperor had obligations, both as guardian of the faith and as witness of God’s mercy for man. According to the ninth-century Epanagogē, “The

¹⁰ Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 312.

¹¹ Vladimir LOSSKY, *The mystical theology of the Eastern Church*, (London: James Clarke & Co., 1973; reprinted by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 7.

purpose of the emperor is to do well, and therefore he is called benefactor, and when he fails in this obligation to do good, he forsakes his imperial dignity”¹².

The contrast between the Eastern and Western Churches, built by the Medieval papacy and the eschatological, experiential, and “other-worldly” concepts we’ve talked about earlier – which prevailed in the ecclesiological thinking of the Byzantine East – helps us understand the historical fate of East and West. In the West, the Church developed as a powerful institution; in the East, it was seen primarily as a sacramental (or “mystical”) organism in charge of “divine things” and endowed with only limited institutional structures. These structures (patriarchates, metropolitanates, and other officialdom) were themselves shaped by the empire (except for the fundamental tripartite hierarchy — bishop, priest, deacon — in each local church) and were not considered to be of divine origin. Taking into account all these considerations mentioned here we can say, then, that in its later history the Eastern Church experienced the fact that the State did not always deserve its confidence, and often assumed a clearly demonic face.

3. WOULD BE POSSIBLE FOR RELIGION TO HELP THE POLITICS IN BETTER GOVERNANCE OF THE POPULATION?

I am not aware that the pure, genuine principles of Christianity can be said ever to have been adopted by any state as the practical rule and standard of political government and legislation. They have occasionally been the subject of eulogium in the harangues of orators; they have been abundantly appealed to in state papers; the mysterious doctrine from which they flow has formed for ages the preface to all treaties between sovereigns bearing the style and title of most Christian, Catholic, Apostolic and so forth. But where is the statesman or diplomatist that would not be sneered at by the disputers of the world, who should attempt to draw from the “foolishness” of the Cross arguments of political wisdom, and insist on the obligation imposed equally on governments, as on individuals, to be guided in their affairs by the spirit of Christian morals and by Christian motives? And yet, if the Divine origin of Christianity be admitted, (and here it is assumed) the absurdity which belongs to a defective logic evidently lies at the door of those who deny the obligation to be the same in the one case as in the other. For can there be a greater contradiction than to affirm that God has enjoined a rule which is acknowledged binding on all men individually in their more restricted personal capacities, but from which they are to be released when acting collectively, in the more extended relations of political intercourse?—as if the obligation of a rule diminished in proportion to the increased responsibility of those who acknowledge it, and to the wider diffusion of the evil tendencies of its violation.

But the reason of this thing and the common sense of mankind concur in rendering it needless to expend arguments to disprove the monstrous proposition that there is one code of morality for those who govern, and another for those who are governed. It may be enough to observe in passing, that when, on the one hand, a merely worldly philosophy lays claim to liberality for conceding that “religion is an useful ingredient in the business of government, as a check on the multitude” and when, on the other, the arbitrariness of absolute power appeals to the “raison d’état”, in order to palliate the violation of the moral and religious rule, they both issue in the same practical result, of pouring contempt on the first duty of all governments, and on the first right of all subjects. For certainly governments can have no duty paramount to that of setting in their own conduct the example of a most scrupulous respect for those fundamental principles of morality on which human society is based, and in virtue of which they require obedience to “the ordinances of man”; nor can the ruled insist on

¹² Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology* 315.

a right more sacred than that of being governed by a moral law as binding on their rulers as themselves.

Now, no law or rule can be thus universally binding but one sanctioned by the authority of a power superior to those on whom it is imposed. Even more so, in societies with blended traditions – especially one in which a “world religion” like Christianity or Islam has mingled with and superimposed itself on an indigenous tradition – we may find priests coexisting with politicians or other specialists in a kind of spiritual “division of labor” for the good of people. To a community professing Christianity, whose authority can be no other than God – as revealed in the Christian doctrine – and, as an inevitable consequence, the will of God, revealed in the same doctrine, this must be the law of the community, to the exclusion of all other laws at variance with it. In this view, which all governments calling themselves Christian are bound, as such to take, on pain of the guilt and consequences of holding a lie in their right hand, it must be admitted that the law of nations and all positive laws of human institution, are only so far capable of promoting the object for which Government exists – namely, the common good – as they accord with the spirit and tendency of the Christian law. To the above admission no objection can consistently be offered, in theory, by those who profess to believe in the truth of Christianity. They who aim at the regeneration of mankind by other schemes of their own may fairly be challenged, before they can be justified in rejecting the means proposed by the Christian politician for that end, first to prove that it can be attained more effectually if at all, according to their plan. But how a religious community, as the Christian one, can demonstrate itself to act as a human institution, a political government?

Rituals as social dramas are many things, including socially appropriate interaction with the supernatural, communication, effective action, social and political power, and entertainment. All of these features combine into the notion of social theater, in which people and groups put on performances for each other, even if they are not intentionally “putting on” their performances at all. One scholar to take the notion of social theater quite seriously is Erving Goffman, whose highly influential *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) developed a theatrical account of social life, in which all human beings at least on occasion are actors taking on roles and in which all social encounters are potentially stages upon which these actors play their roles. If Goffman describes human social action as performative and theatrical at the smallest scale, Clifford Geertz describes it as such at perhaps the greatest possible scale. In his discussion of traditional Balinese culture, he refers to Bali as a “theater state” where ritual was politics and politics was ritual. In the theater state, “the kings and princes were the impresarios, the priests the directors, and the peasants the supporting cast, stage crew, and audience. The stupendous cremations, tooth filings, temple dedications, pilgrimages, and blood sacrifices, mobilizing hundreds and even thousands of people and great quantities of wealth, were not means to particular ends: they were the ends themselves; they were what the state was for. Court ceremonialism was the driving force of court politics; and mass ritual was not a device to shore up the state, but rather the state, even in its final gasp, was a device for the enactment of mass ritual. Power served pomp, not pomp power.”¹³

The ceremonialism of society is never merely superficial decoration; rituals, on the other hand, are “great collective gestures”¹⁴, realizations in the sense that they “make real” cultural ideas and ideals. So, rituals are a key component of religion. However, the tendency to see ritual as uniquely religious and uniquely symbolic distorts both religion and ritual. Religion is not so much a thing to believe or to “mean” as a thing to do. Humans have goals –

¹³ Clifford GEERTZ, *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 13.

¹⁴ Geertz, *Negara*, 116.

practical and social – to accomplish. If language is effective, though, then action is doubly so. As Jack David Eller says¹⁵ social action – religious or otherwise – is interaction, and it makes sense that humans who ascribe supernatural agency to the world would interact with those agents in the only ways they know how. Religious rituals, whether or not they have practical effects, have social effects, but it is hard to imagine that people would perform healing rituals solely for the social effects. They must think, rightly or wrongly, that the ritual has some healing effects as well. In other words, rituals are not merely informative (and often not informative at all) but transformative—establishing certain states of being (like wellness), certain kinds of persons or social statuses, a certain kind of society, and ultimately a certain kind of world.

Another issue-key in understanding how religion could help improving politics is the Christianity's assertions about the immanent aspect of God are to stress the spiritual and meaningful character of life and universe and its capacity for relationship with God. The term transcendent describes Him as 'wholly other'. The immanent aspect indicates that He permeates this world and reveals Himself through His creation. This is the paradox of Christian teaching: God is at the same time transcendent and immanent, known and unknown, hidden and revealed, and all that are possible because He chose to. Through Christ's incarnation all boundaries was lifted, all God's attributes became understandable for humanity and reachable to its rationality. In this scene we are able to deny the nihilistic assertion that religion should not mingle with politics or science because they are as different as it could be. While politics or science deals with the real stuff, material, religion have solely a surreal object, a fantastic, spiritual world, and these cannot be mixed or put together. But coming in the flesh, Christ gives us the opportunity to understand these two realms together, as parts of the same world, created by God.

This gives relevance, authenticity, sanction and direction to the entire spiritual and moral life of man and his institutions and goals. It also emphasizes God's nearness to man and His deep and abiding interest in the world. In the words of the emperor Justinian, "there are two greatest gifts which God, in his love for man, has granted from on high: the priesthood and the imperial dignity. The first serves divine things, the second directs and administers human affairs; both however proceed from the same origin and adorn the life of mankind. Hence, nothing should be such a source of care to the emperors as the dignity of the priests, since it is for the (imperial) welfare that they constantly implore God. For if the priesthood is in every way free from blame and possesses access to God, and if the emperors administer equitably and judiciously the state entrusted to their care, general harmony will result, and whatever is beneficial will be bestowed upon the human race"¹⁶.

In the thought of Justinian, the "symphony" between "divine things" and "human affairs" was based upon the Incarnation, which united the divine and human natures, so that the person of Christ is the unique source of the two — the civil and ecclesiastical hierarchies. The fundamental mistake of this approach was to assume that the ideal humanity which was manifested, through the Incarnation, in the person of Jesus Christ could also find an adequate manifestation in the Roman Empire and, therefore, in all kind of political leadership.

4. IS STILL A NEED FOR OUR MODERN WORLD TO MIX POLITICS WITH RELIGION?

Thus the deist project is motivated by three powerful, interlocking Enlightenment motifs: an epistemic concern for the autonomy of a universal human reason, a political

¹⁵ Jack Eller, *Introducing*, 132-133.

¹⁶ Novella VI, *Corpus juris civilis*, ed. Rudolfus Schoell (Berlin, 1928), HI, 35-36 in Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology*, 312.

concern for religious tolerance, and an anti-clericalism designed to deny to the Church both epistemic and political authority, this project clearly antedates the prevalence of the assumption, bemoaned by Hegel, that we do not know God and mustn't therefore talk about religion. It is confident that, in one way or another, unaided human reason can know all we need to know about God. Still, in seeking to distinguish good religion (morally and politically speaking) from bad religion it begins the shift to philosophizing about religion. It is unembarrassed by talk about God, but it spends more of its energy talking about religion as a human, all - too - human social reality that is, for better and often for worse, a player on the stage we call history. The problem is less to prove God's existence than to make religion the ally rather than the enemy of morality.

Having underlined on postmodern critique's frontispiece the release from Scriptural and ecclesial dogmas' authority and the triumph of reason and science, postmodern man falls to his own deceptions as the man in Escher's drawings. By scientism and positivism, political activity began to be guided of what you might call an *idolatry of the facts*¹⁷, context where the experience has a decisive role for the study of political phenomena. The primacy of *the Act* outlines the primacy of material things over any spiritual reality and experience, *materialist and atheistic ideology becoming overlapped with the political attitude*. In the 19th century, man of politics adopted a reductionist stance, refuting any reality side that comes out in his viewfinder and cannot be controlled by other meanings except its own, believing that his empirical research alone can explain the mysteries of the humanity and assures a better government over it. Religiosity means an always renewed contact with the Absolute; religion is just obedience to the law, a passive one. Religion maintains "what exists", religiosity refreshes it and that's why it always be a renewal for politics. "True religiosity is act", writes Martin Buber (1878-1965) in *Der Jude und sein Judentum*.

To exclude religion and its leaders out of politics area, politicians have borrowed from nihilists their reasons of criticism. There are at least three related ways in which God's sovereignty doctrine has been criticized by modern philosophers as violating the integrity of the human subject. (1) Firstly, religious doctrine stops the authentic relationship so much that this has no longer but a one active participant, who is God. Human subject needs divine Subject, acting in his favor, but God does not benefit from the actions of men who passively accept gifts from Him. Feminists' theologians are among those concerned that such an understanding of divine authority would be used to justify the unbalanced powers between the two sides and to discourage mutual relationships, as the Christian community is characterized. (2) Secondly, the doctrine of divine authority was intended by religious leaders to minimize the causal link between the method of human action and the condition of the world. Because God's authority by definition cannot be responsible for the evil (the bad actions), human beings are responsible in regards to how they behave; through their obedience to God's command, people can choose to be involved in the work of transformation, but whether they do or not, only the authority of God's will is ultimately working for the things to turn for the better. The theologians of Process¹⁸, among others, have tried to develop models of the relationship between God and the world – that is not the Kingdom of God inevitably moving towards us – stressing instead the human actions (or its lack of action) have now a decisive impact for the future.

¹⁷ Pr. Lect. Tudor Cosmin CIOCAN, PhD, *Iisus Hristos –plinirea revelației dumnezeiești: Aspecte moderne dogmatice și misionare*, (Constanța: Astra Museum, 2012), 211.

¹⁸ *Process theology* is the philosophical and theological position that God is changing, as is the universe. Therefore, our knowledge of God must be progressing as we learn more about him and it can never rest in any absolutes, which is why process theologians deny the absolutes of God's immutability and truth. (cf. Matt Slick).

(3) The third way of criticism to remove religious implication from politics nowadays: the doctrine of divine authority, seen so as that it minimize the importance of human agents, is also associated with the feeling of lack of power, loneliness and fear – fatal for politics and its agents. These feelings are born because we are ashamed of our humanity (we didn't assume it on the stark), which is inappropriate and pathetic comparing with Divine omnipotence. Why should we celebrate our own accomplishments when God orchestrated things? Why should we express our pain, believing that God sits closely in our lives' ambiguities, and everything that happens is God's will? Liberal theologians on the other hand, concerned that the idea of an authoritative God is used to serve the passivity and shame rather than a joyously resistance in front of life's injustice, did no longer point out that human beings are weak and untrustworthy. Recognizing God's solidarity with them in sufferings, they claim their exclusive participation as human beings in daily events of life and in spiritual-religious ones, trying to create a climate that would allow them to live life to the fullest. The man is no longer created by God and redeemed from sin and death through the Sacrifice of Christ; the man is no longer obedient to sin. The notion of sin becomes a "pure moralistic one, and human nature is essentially good. The man is self-sufficient, just his thinking and only his deeds are normative, without any reference to God and His work. Furthermore, God as an objective and real existence is simply denied by the various approaches of understanding and interpretation of the world: political, philosophical, psychological, sociological, scientific ones. The theoreticians of modernist vision and their followers, Kant, Marx, Durkheim and Freud see in religion a prehistoric residue"¹⁹.

In this picture of a postmodern, nihilistic and globalized world can we assume that is a need any longer to mix politics with religion? If not, this mustn't be for almost all politicians are always trying to use religion to differentiate the people and for their personal benefits. But religion and politics are two different faces of the same coin, namely the government of people, and the implication of religion in politics will improve or develop us. The evidence and proof that political leaders seek to help people not enslave it with religion comes when it comes to living by biblical values, particularly as espoused by Jesus Christ, otherwise hypocrisy and bearing false witness can cause a politician to fail "the test of fire".

If yes, we must understand very good the principles that can drive us to do this, meaning that our Lord Jesus Christ is the true Lawgiver, and the Message of all the prophets; He is the suffering Servant Israel, and He is Israel's Messianic King. "In a word, the New Testament is the Book of God made man; and that God is the God already revealed in the whole political and social nexus of the time. Jesus Christ is personally every institution and relationship which binds man to man – the two revelations of God that are identical"²⁰. That's a specification that Church is the oldest institution that has never lost its authority, credibility and obedience to its members because, led by the One who instituted it, it has always brought to its people the prosperity and comfort they needed.

CONCLUSION

In fine, the impact of modernism on the mindsets and consciousness has been huge, and – at least from religious perspective – what is called the "disenchantment of the world" (see Max Weber), i.e. the man's dispossession of consciousness of the ontological dependence on divine, along with all false religiosity return and the re-enchantment of the world does not mean a return to Christ and His Church in the Western area, but to a new religiosity, enclosed within the immanency, artificially created by man according to his wishes, pleasures and

¹⁹ David J. BOSCH: *Dynamique de la mission chrétienne. Histoire et avenir des modèles missionnaires*, (Lomé, Paris, Genève: Haho, Karthala, Labor & Fides, 1995), 359.

²⁰ Todd, *Politics and Religion*, 310.

interests (cf. 2 Timothy 3:4). According to this, the association of postmodernism with entertainment, hedonism, ego latria and the spectacle is a real one, and the man's type promoted by all means, especially by media advertising, no longer matches with the spiritual, cultural, civilizational, or even political Christian ideal; the man today no longer found itself in the genuine anthropological projects, and he presents a new human ideal, exclusively physical, sensuous and appealing, directed to a life of consumption²¹.

The complexities and apparent contradictoriness of the political situation nowadays with which we find ourselves confronted wide world – in looking at modernity from these points of view at the beginning of the 21st century – are impressively increasing. On the one hand, we cannot deny the undoubted realities and effectiveness of rationalization, or its extensive scope that aim to a better “tomorrow” for all mankind. On the other, however, rationalization seems to have more holes in it than a sieve (Richard Jenkins) and that better frequently becomes the worsts for most people. This reality, even it is predicted and “assume” by political leaders, cannot be deal with but only by putting together again politics with religion, and by this I mean that they should look back, at the ages when empires were ruled by great political leaders exclusively with religion help or, at least, with themselves` religiousness. Today, this religiousness is being left behind, left in desuetude and it is ours to bring it forward, showing to the politicians that the best policy is that made by God to his people (Deuteronomy 11:12, “It is a land the Lord your God cares for; the eyes of the Lord your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end”).

In the end, can we separate religion from politics? It seems a complex but natural relationship in which there can be mutual benefit. But like most successful relationships it is hard work in accomplishing it. There must be healthy debate, balance, and the ability to compromise. As already stated, I agree in deprecating the union of Church and State; in condemning all intermeddling by the Church in mere politics; in denouncing every attempt to interfere with the rights of conscience, and all sayings or doings which may tend to engender and foster sectarian bigotry and strife.

In the process by which I arrive at these conclusions I agree most cordially that it would be a ruinous and wicked thing to unite Church and State, and also that placing the Bible, prayers and teaching religion in the schools of the State will effect that union, or in any possible way tend towards it; of course, I hold that it is the very means and the only means by which not only that, but every other evil is to be averted from the State. As Revered W. C. Anderson once said, that “both the Church and the State are ordained of God and are of co-ordinate jurisdiction the one for the spiritual interests of men, and the other for their civil and temporal well-being”²². If God has ordained an institution called government, for the all-important purpose of regulating the social and temporal affairs of His intelligent, immortal, account able creatures, from which He lead mankind in the end, He also entitled His rightful government into this world, His Church, to assure its people of a leadership to the afterlife.

²¹ Ciocan, *Iisus Hristos*, 213.

²² Rev. W. C. ANDERSON, *Notes on Dr. Scott's Bible and Politics*, (San Francisco: Towne & Bacon, Printers, Excelsior Book And Job Office, 1859), 18.

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