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CHURCH-STATE SYMPHONIA: ITS HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND ITS APPLICATIONS BY THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the origins of the concept of symphonia, its historical development, and its utilization by the Russian Orthodox Church as a normative ideal for church-state relations. In various historical contexts, this concept has referred to different normative requirements; it relied on different paradigms in Byzantium and in medieval Russia and it acquired new meanings in Imperial Russia. The reinterpretations of this concept by the Russian Orthodox Church in order to legitimize its position in the political life of contemporary Russia take this concept far from its original meaning. Using methods from the history of concepts of, among others, Reinhart Koselleck and Quentin Skinner, the author considers how the semantic transformations of symphonia in modern contexts by the Russian Orthodox Church lead to a hollowing of this concept. This conception is hardly reconcilable with the normative logic of the actual Russian political and legal systems.

KEYWORDS: church-state relations, Byzantium, Russian Orthodox Church, symphonia, religiosity, rationality

INTRODUCTION

The recent tensions between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Ecumenical Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople about the autocephalous status of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church reveal the old rivalry between the New Rome (Constantinople) and the Third Rome (Moscow) about appropriation of the symbolic capital of Orthodoxy and the mutual contestation of their aspirations to be leaders of the Orthodox world.[1] These tensions reveal the deeper problems of the conceptualization of church-state relations in Russia.[2] I examine these problems against the

1 Surely this is not a new problem. See Serge Keleher, "Orthodox Rivalry in the Twentieth Century: Moscow versus Constantinople," *Religion, State and Society* 25, no. 2 (1997): 125–37; Alicja Curanović, "The Attitude of the Moscow Patriarchate towards Other Orthodox Churches," *Religion, State and Society* 35, no. 4 (2007): 301–18.

2 Joachim Willems, "The Religio-political Strategies of the Russian Orthodox Church as a 'Politics of Discourse,'" *Religion, State and Society* 34, no. 3 (2006): 287–98; Boris Knorre, "Rossiyskoe pravoslavie. Postsekulyarnaya institutsionalizatsiya v prostranstve vlasti, politiki i prava," [Russian Orthodoxy: Post-secular institutionalization in the space of power, politics and law], in *Montazh i demontazh sekulyarnogo mira* [Construction and deconstruction of the secular world], ed. Aleksei Malashenko and Sergei Filatov (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2014), 42–10; Kristina Stoeckl, "Postsecular Conflicts and the Global Struggle for Traditional Values," *State, Religion, Church* 3, no. 2 (2016): 102–16.

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background of the concept of symphonia, which is being employed in debates about the place of the Russian Orthodox Church in Russia's political and legal systems.

The utilization of this concept in *The Bases of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church* of the Russian Orthodox Church, issued in 2000,[3] indicates a number of inconsistencies in the political theology of the church. On the one hand, the use of this concept in the *Social Doctrine* and other official documents of the Russian Orthodox Church is mostly metaphorical. Practically, it could not be otherwise, given the large difference between the historical background of symphonia and the actual situation in Russia. On the other hand, once launched into the public debate in 2000, this notion acquired new symbolic and ideological meanings, which do not rely on historical contexts and form a new ideological framework. In this sense, symphonia is employed as a normative tool to justify the moral authority of the Russian Orthodox Church in its relations with the Russian state. Symphonia—as with any other concept—does not have any eternal substance that remains unaffected by its applied uses. My intention in this article is not to criticize the Russian Orthodox Church for semantic transformations of symphonia in modern contexts. Rather, using methods from the history of concepts developed by Reinhart Koselleck,[4] Quentin Skinner,[5] and others, I respond to the question of whether these transformations have led to an eventual hollowing of this concept in its contemporary use by the Russian Orthodox Church.

Historically, symphonia concerned the relations between political and religious powers and did not embrace human rights, the right to dissent, political rights, or other individual freedoms. But this has not impeded the Russian Orthodox Church from using symphonia to assert its moral authority or to fight against these freedoms.[6] A comparative analysis of the similarities and dissimilarities in the use of this concept in Byzantine history, in the Russian Middle Ages, in Imperial Russia and under the current political regime sheds light on the inner rationality of political discourse on church-state relations in the Orthodox world and, specifically, in Russia.

Adding to this complexity, inside the Russian Orthodox Church there is a large variety of groups—from liberals to fundamentalists—who pursue different political agendas relying on the same frames of reference: the *Social Doctrine* and its intellectual background formed by Byzantine and Russian religious philosophies.[7] Among these groups, the term *symphonia* has varying ideological connotations based on their different readings of the intellectual history of Orthodoxy.[8]

Pursuant to the constitutional norms, the Russian Orthodox Church and other denominations are separated from the state and its legal system.[9] At the same time, the use of such concepts as symphonia implicitly denies this separation and suggests that the state and the Russian Orthodox Church shall work as one whole in the moral education of citizens, in protecting

3 Russian Orthodox Church, *Osnovy Sotsial'noi Kontseptsii Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkv / The Bases of the Social Conception of the Russian Orthodox Church* (2000), https://mospat.ru/en/documents/social-concepts/ (hereafter the *Social Doctrine*.) The document was adopted at the Sacred Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church on August 14, 2000. I translate the Russian *kontseptsiia* as *social doctrine*, not c*oncept*. See *Social Doctrine*, "Church and State," at III.4. Subsequent citations to the *Social Doctrine* are parenthetical.

4 Reinhart Koselleck, *Sediments of Time: On Possible Histories* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018).

5 Quentin Skinner, *From Humanism to Hobbes: Studies in Rhetoric and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

6 Kristina Stoeckl, "The Russian Orthodox Church as Moral Norm Entrepreneur," *Religion, State and Society* 44, no. 2 (2016): 132–51; Alexander Agadjanian, "Exploring Russian Religiosity as a Source of Morality Today," in *Multiple Moralities and Religions in Post-Soviet Russia*, ed. Jarrett Zigon (Oxford: Berghahn, 2011), 16–24.

7 Irina Papkova, *The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

8 See, for example, Kristina Stoeckl, "Political Hesychasm? Vladimir Petrunin's Neo-Byzantine Interpretation of the Social Doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church," *Studies in East European Thought* 62, no. 1 (2010): 125–33.

9 Konstitutsiia Rossiiskoi Federatsi [Konst. RF] [Constitution] art. 14 (Russ.).

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traditional values and in other respects. Supporting this concept as one of the traditions of Russian political culture, the church legitimizes its particular understanding of church-state relations.[10] This framework does not fit Russian constitutional and statutory law and ignores the realities of the political system under which Russian authorities are not disposed to share their political power with the Russian Orthodox Church.

Basing its narratives on Byzantine political theology and, particularly on symphonia, the Russian Orthodox Church risks getting lost between the premodern and modern rationalities that framed the respective philosophical ideas in Byzantium and in nineteenth-century Russia. This reinterpretation results in divesting symphonia of its historical meaning and in bringing a good deal of ambiguity to the church's own ideology, which suggests a comprehensive cultural program of modernity, recognizes the secular environment, employs secular language, and appeals to public reason.[11] The historical concept of symphonia does not frame these ideas and cannot serve as a tool for promoting the church's ideology of church-state relations. This conception is hardly reconcilable with the normative logic of the actual Russian political and legal systems.[12]

In this article, I trace the historical origins of symphonia, first in Byzantine and then in Russian political philosophy, up to the interpretation of this concept in the 2000 *Social Doctrine* of the Russian Orthodox Church. Such a comparison provides grounds for conclusions about the ideological value of this concept for modelling church-state relations in contemporary Russia. I argue that the church utilizes this concept to reinterpret the constitutional provisions on the separation of church and state. It is not an overt ideological program but a camouflaged message about the priorities of the church in a wide range of matters dealing with morality, including human rights, civil freedoms, and other legal instruments. In fact, symphonia works as a floating signifier to assert the church's moral authority in relations with the state. The church rejects the normative value of the historical meanings of symphonia and provides its own interpretations, which are far from these meanings. Symphonia becomes a signifier without a referent; it points to no actual object and has no agreed upon meaning. Such a signifier can serve as a convenient ideological tool for the Russian Orthodox Church in its political activities.

THE BYZANTINE ORIGINS OF SYMPHONIA

In 2014, the Russian Orthodox Church's Metropolitan Hilarion argued,

> [N]o matter what researchers say about church-state relations in Byzantium and Rus, at her very heart the Church has remained free, irrespective of the external political circumstance.... Today the Church and state

10 On the attempts of the Russian Orthodox Church to intertwine symphonia and other theological concepts of the *Social Doctrine* into the prevailing political culture, see Katja Richters, *The Post-Soviet Russian Orthodox Church: Politics, Culture and Greater Russia* (Abington: Routledge, 2013), 18–35; Alexander Agadjanian, "Liberal Individual and Christian Culture: Russian Orthodox Teaching on Human Rights in Social Theory Perspective," *Religion, State and Society* 38, no. 2 (2010): 97–113.

11 Alexander Ponomariov, *The Visible Religion: The Russian Orthodox Church and her Relations with State and Society in Post-Soviet Canon Law (1992–2015)* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2017).

12 Possible philosophical perspectives for such a reconciliation and for intertwining the Eastern-Orthodox intellectual tradition into modernism would rather require introduction of new types of political modernity. See Kristina Stoeckl, *Community after Totalitarianism: The Russian Orthodox Intellectual Tradition and the Philosophical Discourse of Political Modernity* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2008); Alexander Agadjanian, "Breakthrough to Modernity, Apologia for Traditionalism: The Russian Orthodox View of Society and Culture in Comparative Perspective," *Religion, State and Society* 31, no. 4 (2003): 327–46.

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> in Russia, as well as in some countries in the post-Soviet expanse, are able to speak with a single voice and express a united position. . . . The principle of mutual non-interference of Church and state in the internal affairs of each other must be preserved and is being preserved.[13]

The *Social Doctrine* underscores the continuity of the church's understanding of symphonia with the original Byzantine conception: "In Byzantium . . . the principles of church-state relations were expressed in the canons and the laws of the empire and were reflected in patristic writings. In their totality these principles were described as symphony between church and state" (III.4, ¶ 3). In the same spirit, in a 2015 polemic letter, three Orthodox writers insist that symphonia means an "organic instead of adversarial understanding of the *sacerdotium* and the *imperium* united, harmoniously albeit with some tension, in a single Christian commonwealth."[14] However, such a utilization of symphonia raises a number of difficult philosophical issues.[15]

This conceptualization of symphonia in the *Social Doctrine* is based on the definition taken from the Byzantine constitutional draft of the ninth century, dubbed *Epanagoge* (Ἐπαναγωγή): "The temporal power and the priesthood relate to each other as body and soul; they are necessary for state order just as body and soul are necessary in a living man. It is in their linkage and harmony that the well-being of a state lies."[16]

This language suggests that the church and the state are taken not as separate entities but as organic parts of one Christian polity. Practically, this definition means the indirect authority of the state over internal affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church and provides the possibility of the church's having a say in political matters.

This formulation stems from an earlier and broader formula in Justinian's *Sixth Novel*:

> There are two great gifts which God, in his love for man, has granted from on high: the priesthood . . . and the imperial dignity. . . . The first serves divine things, while the latter 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 their (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.[17]

This reading of symphonia is linked to the Christian dogma that formed when Christianity became the new official religion under Constantine the Great.[18] One of Constantine's biographers,

13 Hilarion, "The Theology of Freedom: Christianity and Secular Power from the Edict of Milan to the Present," *Russian Orthodox Church* (October 18, 2014), https://mospat.ru/en/2014/10/18/news109757/.

14 Alexander F. C. Webster, James George Jatras, and Victor Potapov, "Patriarch Kirill and Russian Orthodoxy Deserve Respect Not Insults: An Open Letter to George Weigel," Pravoslavie.ru, September 3, 2015, http://www.pravoslavie.ru/82093.html.

15 See, for example, Cyril Hovorun, "Is the Byzantine 'Symphony' Possible in Our Days?" *Journal of Church and State* 59, no. 2 (2016): 280–96.

16 As translated and quoted in the *Social Doctrine*, III.4, ¶ 5.

17 As translated and quoted in John Meyendorff, *Imperial Unity and Christian Divisions: The Church 450–680 A.D.* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1989), 209. Meyendorff interprets this conceptualization of symphonia in terms of "an authentic attempt to view human life in Christ as a whole" where "both Church and state cooperated in preserving the faith and in building a society based on charity and humaneness." John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, 2nd ed. (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983), 214–15.

18 Alexander Schmemann, *Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997); John Julius Norwich, *Byzantium: The Early Centuries* (New York: Knopf, 1988).

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Eusebius of Caesarea, outlined in the fourth century an ideal model of church-state relations, where the emperor had the obligation to protect the church, its order, and its dogma, while the church had to sanctify the emperor's political power and to pray for him.[19] Eusebius argued that like body and soul are one in man, as divine and human natures are one in Christ, so the Christian state shall be one with the church. This consubstantiality of the ecclesiastical and political authorities in one Christian polity agrees with the Christological dogma (shaped by the 451 Council of Chalcedon, after Eusebius died), according to which in Christ's person divine and human natures are harmoniously and inseparably united.[20]

This theory of symphonia hinges on the antique perception of religion as the public cult underlying the common life in a polity, with the emperor as a symbol of unity. One finds no intellectual attempts to differentiate between the state and the church or to reconcile *hierosyne* and *basileia* in medieval Byzantine political philosophy, both being understood as one political body.

Epanagoge restated the emperor's supreme power as similar to that of God in the Heaven: the emperor appeared as "sovereign in issuing laws," while "ecclesiastical traditions and conciliar decisions are *made laws* by imperial decree, but they have no legal and binding existence by themselves."[21] The contestation of supreme authority between the church and the state, so important for the medieval debates in the West after the Papal Revolution, was not problematized in Eastern Christianity to any significant extent: the state and the church were understood as one orchestra conducted by the emperor who normatively stood above and directed both of them,[22] although the modalities of this were more sophisticated than a command-subordination relationship.

The church-state balance in the Eastern Empire was apparently different from the balance in the West in the era of the Crusades and afterward. The emperor's powers were neither enumerated in any constitutional document of the Eastern Empire nor limited de facto. Normatively, the patriarch had certain accepted powers to protect the church and its dogma.[23] This empowerment also had procedural gateways: Justinian gave to the church canons the force of law and therefore their violation could give a way to legal action initiated by the patriarch. Factually, patriarchs lacked powers similar to those possessed by popes in the Catholic Church. This notwithstanding, on some occasions the Russian Orthodox Church (in a broad sense, as the totality of believers, not limited to the

19 Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, trans. Averill Cameron and Stuart G. Hall (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

20 "Consubstantial with the Father as to his Divinity, and the Same consubstantial with us as to his humanity . . . known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation" (my translation). *The Oecumenical Documents of the Faith: The Creed of Nicaea, Three Epistles of Cyril, The Tome of Leo, The Chalcedonian Definition*, ed. T. Herbert Bindley and F. W. Green (London: Greenwood Press, 1950), 193 [Greek]. This formula of consubstantiality seems to be revealed also in the church-state symphonia, in which the church participates at the same time through its divine (Corpus Christi) and social natures. It might be questioned whether the attempts of rationalization of this consubstantiality by the Catholic Church in the Filioque controversy formed one of the intellectual pillars of the Papal Revolution, which gave birth to the modern state. Harold J. Berman, *Law and Revolution: The Formation of the Western Legal Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), 115.

21 John Meyendorff, "Justinian, the Empire and the Church," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 22 (1968): 45–60, at 49.

22 George Ostrogorsky, "The Byzantine Emperor and the Hierarchical World Order," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 35, no. 84 (1956): 1–14.

23 In Steven Runciman's description, the patriarch "could refuse to crown an Emperor-designate of whom he disapproved. He could refuse to co-operate with a policy distasteful to him. The Emperor might pack a synod which would depose and replace him, but only if public opinion supported him. If public opinion was on the Patriarch's side the Emperor had to yield. Steven Runciman, "Byzantium, Russia and Caesaropapism," *Canadian Slavonic Papers / Revue Canadienne Des Slavistes*, no. 2 (1957): 1–10, at 4.

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church's hierarchs) objected to iconoclastic and other policies that gravely violated Orthodox dogma, without largely meddling in properly political battles.[24]

Probably under the influence of Neoplatonic philosophy, from around the eleventh century Byzantine political theory started to consider the emperor as the supreme principle of unity, mirroring the role of Mind, *Logos*, *Nous* in the world order, implying that the church was a subordinated unit.[25] This Neoplatonic transposition of celestial order onto earthly affairs meant that just as God is the autocrat in heaven and on earth, so the emperor, acting in God's image, reflects this power of God. Symphonia signified a well-organized choir of the body (polity) and the soul (church), conducted by the emperor.[26]

Such an earthly copy of the Kingdom of Heaven implied that symphonia is due to the wise management of the state and of the church by the emperor who is an indispensable part of the world order. Characteristically, in 1393, the Constantinople Patriarch Antonius admonished the Great Prince Vasily of Moscow, who ordered the name of the Byzantine emperor to be dropped from the liturgy: "It is not possible for Christians to have a church and not to have an empire. Church and empire have a great unity and community, nor is it possible for them to be separated from one another."[27]

Theoretically, this reading could imply a parity between the empire and the church, but practically it led to the symbiosis, called *caesaropapism*, with the political preeminence of the emperor. Orthodox political philosophy did not distinguish clearly between the state and the church nor divide their respective competences. In this normative vacuum, the emperor symbolized their unity and guaranteed cohesion of the social whole.[28]

Thinking of the church and the state as two separate phenomena is undoubtedly a modern intellectual construction absent from antique social philosophies.[29] To separate the political from the religious would be as illogical from the antique and medieval perspectives as to separate body and soul, either delimiting their respective capacities or physically separating them from each other, which would result in death of the social organism. Symphonia perfectly translated this idea of wholeness. The separation in the Enlightenment era supported the modern conception of state, while in the Middle Ages there was only a blurred distinction between state and church, but no separation.[30] The metaphor of body and soul, and their desired harmony justified political

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24 Alexander Schmemann, "Byzantine Theocracy and the Orthodox Church," *CrossCurrents* 4, no. 2 (1954): 109–23.

25 Dominic J. O'Meara, *Platonopolis: Platonic Political Philosophy in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 145–97.

26 There can be another standpoint, according to which church's views prevailed in Byzantium despite emperors' attempts to meddle with church's affairs, while picturing symphonia as a sign of caesaropapism is erroneous and due to Western orientalization of Orthodox Christianity.

27 John Meyendorff, "The Christian Gospel and Social Responsibility: The Eastern Orthodox Tradition in History," in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History: Essays Presented to George Huntston Williams on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. F. Forrester Church and Timothy George (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 118–30, at 125. See the brilliant analysis of the intellectual context of this phrase: James C. Skedros, "You Cannot Have a Church without an Empire: Political Orthodoxy in Byzantium," in *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine*, ed. George E. Demacopoulos and Aristotle Papanikolaou (New York: Fordham University, 2017), 219–31.

28 Vasilios N. Makrides, "Orthodox Christianity and State/Politics Today," in *Orthodox Religion and Politics in Contemporary Eastern Europe*, ed. Tobias Köllner (New York: Routledge, 2019), 235–54.

29 John Witte Jr., "Facts and Fictions about the History of Separation of Church and State," *Journal of Church and State* 48, no. 1 (2006): 15–45.

30 David Knowles, "Church and State in Christian History," *Journal of Contemporary History* 2, no. 4 (1967): 3–15.

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unity based on the common religious cult and on the ideology common both for state and church united in one Corpus Christi.[31]

SYMPHONIA IN KIEVAN RUSSIA

The *Church Statute* said to have been drafted at the end of the tenth century[32] by Grand Prince Vladimir implicitly reaffirmed the symphonic balance in relations between the state and the church. His son, Grand Prince Jaroslav, in the middle of the eleventh century composed another *Church Statute*, which opened with the characteristic preamble: "following my father's gift, hav[ing] consulted with Ilarion, Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus', we have compared Greek *Nomocanon*; since a prince, or his boyars, or his judges ought not have jurisdiction over these suits."[33] The same striving to harmonize the church-state relationship is seen in the *Eulogy of Prince Vladimir and Prince Jaroslav* written by Metropolitan Ilarion during the same period of time.[34]

This normative ideal reflected the new conception of social order that started to form in medieval Russia after the 988 baptism. The church provided an example of the right order, opposed to the feudal fragmentation of Kievan Rus', so that rows between the ecclesiastical and the mundane authorities, if they were frequent, could eventually delegitimize this order and stir up centripetal tendencies. Medieval Russians firmly believed that good and bad princes were sent by God as a reward or punishment for the people, so that any revolt against the state would be suspicious (albeit not excluded as an act of God's will, punishing bad princes) as encroaching on God and His order.[35] Gregory Fedotov aptly describes this style of thinking: "if a bad prince is sent by God and his tyranny has a penitential significance this seems to exclude revolt against the tyrant as a legitimate political action."[36]

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31 Addressing all possible interpretations of symphonia in the Byzantine history is beyond the scope of this article, as is a detailed analysis of the literature that sheds a different light on this problem. However, see, for example, Steven Runciman, *Byzantine Civilisation* (London: Arnold, 1933); Percy N. Ure, *Justinian and His Age* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1951); Alexander A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire, 324–1453* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1952), vol. 1; Jaroslav Pelikan Jr., *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine*, 5 vols. (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1973–1974), vols. 1 and 2; Joan M. Hussey, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Petros Vassiliadis, "Orthodox Christianity," in *God's Rule: The Politics of World Religions*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 85–105; John A. McGuckin, *The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Its History, Doctrine, and Spiritual Culture* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008); Lucian N. Leuştean, "The Concept of *Symphonia* in Contemporary European Orthodoxy," *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church* 11, no. 2–3 (2011): 188–202. I am grateful to the anonymous referee for this bibliographic indication.

32 George Vernadsky, "The Status of the Russian Church during the First Half-Century Following Vladimir's Conversion," *Slavonic Year-Book*, no. 1 (1941): 294–314, at 305. The text of the Statute: "Synod Copy of Church Statute of Prince Volodimir [Vladimir, ca. 1019–54]" in *The Laws of Rus': Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries*, ed. and trans. Daniel H. Kaiser (Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks, 1992): 42–44. In Ferdinand Feldbrugge's opinion, this statute laid the "foundations of the relationship between Church and state in Russia as it was to survive for many centuries." Ferdinand J. M. Feldbrugge, *A History of Russian Law: From Ancient Times to the Council Code (Ulozhenie) of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich of 1649* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 149.

33 "Statute of Prince Jaroslav [1019–54]" in Kaiser, *The Laws of Rus'*, 45.

34 Ilarion, "Eulogy on St. Vladimir," *Anthology of Russian Literature from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, Pt.1, trans. Leo Wiener (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), 48.

35 Georgy P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. I (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 399; see also Nikolay Zernov, "Vladimir and the Origin of the Russian Church," *Slavonic and East European Review* 70, no. 28 (1949): 123–38.

36 Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, 399.

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In medieval Russian political philosophy, this symphonic conception was opposed to the cosmological social order characteristic for paganism. This order was reflected in the factual political structure of the Kievan Rus', which was governed by one large but parceled family, mirroring the polytheist worldview in which gods, conceived as members of one divine family, shared sovereignty over the world and contested the mutual powers of each other.[37] Practically, the cosmological idea of diversity rejected the principle of hierarchy and implied a complicated, multilevel, polytheistic world order, with clans as the main intellectual pattern of power relations.

Oppositely, the ecclesiastical order of the church displayed the ideal of accord and hierarchical unity. The Orthodox symbol of symphonia clearly referred to the monotheistic unity of the hierarchically organized world according to the Christian teaching. This perspective can partly explain why bishops and other hierarchs usually acted as mediators in political rows between princes, popular assemblies, and other political institutions in medieval Russia. In this sense, one can agree with Janet Martin who argued, "[t]he Church became a second institution, along with the Riurikid dynasty, that gave shape and definition to the emerging state."[38] Furthermore, the alliance between the church and the Kievan grand princes contributed to their mutual legitimacy by promoting and strengthening the other, so that "in Kievan Rus' the prince did not exercise ultimate authority, but shared this responsibility with the head of the church, in *symphonia*, in harmony."[39]

There is no early medieval Russian literature that specifically deals with the conception of symphonia or even mentions it explicitly. Neither is there evidence of any serious impact of *Epanagoge* on Russian law: as argued by Feldbrugge, it had minimal importance and never had the force of law in Russia.[40] Nonetheless, given the discussions around *Epanagoge* in Byzantine political thought from the ninth century, it is likely that the theory of symphonia could have come to Russia from the Eastern Roman Empire. The absence of debates about symphonia in Russia suggests that this theological construction did not meet any intellectual opposition in Kievan Rus'. The problem of church-state relations did not seem to preoccupy Russians in the early Middle Ages: *Sermon on Law and Grace* by Metropolitan Ilarion (1038) can serve as an example of this optimism.[41]

The effect of symphonia was already observable in Russia in the process of baptism when the church and the state authorities closely worked together to convert Russians to Christianity, and to eradicate paganism. Grand Prince Vladimir was lauded by Metropolitan Ilarion in *Sermon on Law and Grace* for having, similar to Constantine the Great, "with our new fathers—the bishops—in frequent assembly and utmost humility took counsel on how to establish the law for these people new in their knowledge of God."[42] In the consequent political history of Kievan Rus', there are other examples of the reconciliatory role of the Orthodox clergy in feuds between Russian princes: the Kievan Abbot Grigoriy to prevent the war between Prince Vsevolod Olgovich and Prince Mstislav in the mid-eleventh century; Metropolitan Nikolai to reconcile Prince Vladimir Monomakh and Prince Sviatopolk Iziaslavovich in the late eleventh century; Metropolitan Mikhail and Metropolitan Feodor in the mid-twelfth century, and Metropolitan Kirill in 1220s to repeatedly calm the warfare between the clans of the Monomakhovichs and the Olgovichs.[43]

37 Elizabeth Warner, *Heroes, Monsters and Other Worlds from Russian Mythology* (London: Peter Lowe, 1985).

38 Janet Martin, *Medieval Russia: 980–1584* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 9.

39 Wallace L. Daniel, *The Orthodox Church and Civil Society in Russia* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2006), 12 (emphasis in original).

40 Feldbrugge, *A History of Russian Law*, 57–58.

41 Ilarion, "Sermon on Law and Grace," in *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'*, trans. Simon Franklin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), 3–30

42 Ilarion, "Sermon on Law and Grace," 23.

43 John L. Fennell, *A History of the Russian Church to 1488* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 113–16.

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Similar trends in the church-state relationship could also be observed in other provinces of Russia, such as the Novgorod archbishops, who were elected by the Novgorod popular assembly (Veche) and then the metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia confirmed the appointment. Archbishops' powers went beyond the episcopal pattern and included, along with a judicial function, the role of ceremonial head of the state (the city of Novgorod) with the right to sign treaties and to conduct negotiations at the international and constitutional (to calm civil conflicts inside the state) levels.[44] Each time two antagonistic parties of citizens living on two different banks of the Volkhov river—the merchants and the artisans—were ready to start fighting, they waited on the main bridge for a while expecting the archbishop to come between them and start reconciliation talks. This ritual was repeatedly used and was a part of the political order of that city.[45] The church's role was mostly confined to negotiations. Before the Mongol invasion, the Russian clergy was reluctant to interfere with state politics, unless it touched on religious matters (such as a breach of religious oath or fighting heresies).[46] Although there are mentions of the political interferences of princes in the election of metropolitans, they are relatively few.[47] These medieval realities could be successfully described with the help of the concept of symphonia.

SYMPHONIA IN MUSCOVITE RUSSIA

The church remained relatively unaffected by the Tartar invasion in the mid-thirteenth century: the invaders were generally protective of the religions of the conquered lands and did not try to impose any religion of their own. Of practical importance was the fact that the church was exempt from taxation, unlike the rest of Russian society, and enjoyed full jurisdictional and fiscal rights on its vast territories. The state authorities willingly conceded these rights to the church on colonized territories in the northwest, where monasteries functioned as de facto representatives of the state.[48]

Feeling its relative strength, from the fourteenth century on, the church started actively interfering in political rows, explicitly supporting Moscow grand princes (later, tsars) in their warfare with the rival provinces (Novgorod, Tver, and others), using excommunication, the interdiction of liturgies, and other tools to support Moscow in its sacred function of "the gathering of Russian lands" (*sobiranie zemel' russkikh*).[49] Moscow's exemplary fidelity to the Orthodoxy, opposed to attempted alliances of the rival provinces with the Lithuanian and Polish Catholics, have been one of the gages of this new tacit church-state alliance.[50]

Using its financial resources and sacerdotal power, the church did not hesitate to pursue the national interest that was understood *prima facie* as Moscow's political interest and identify this

44 Feldbrugge, *A History of Russian Law*, 494–95.

45 *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*, trans. Robert Mitchell and Neville Forbes (London: Royal Historical Society, 1914), 187–88.

46 George P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind: Kievan Christianity. The 10th to the 13th Centuries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 268–303.

47 See, for example, Michael C. Paul, "Episcopal Election in Novgorod, Russia 1156-1478," *Church History* 72, no. 2 (2003): 251–75.

48 Feldbrugge, *A History of Russian Law*, 563.

49 James W. Warhola, "Revisiting the Russian 'Constrained Autocracy': 'Absolutism' and Natural Rights Theories in Russia and in the West," in *Civil Society and the Search for Justice in Russia*, eds. Christopher Marsh and Nicholas Gvosdev (Lanham: Lexington, 2002), 19.

50 Michel Bouchard, "The Medieval Nation of Rus': The Religious Underpinnings of the Russian Nation," *Ab Imperio* 3 (2001): 97–122.

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interest with church's corporate interests.[51] Sergiy of Radonezh, one of the most venerable Russian saints, blessing the Moscow Grand Prince Dmitry Donskoi in the Kulikov Battle (1380) is a symbolic example of this identification of church and state interests.

This strategic alliance with Moscow grand princes gave the church much political and economic power, and could probably have secured its independence. The church became opulent and mighty, but, unlike the Catholic Church, it lacked an efficient governance structure. Therefore, it had to rely on the state to fight dissidents and heresies, especially when the church experienced significant internal conflicts. Yosef Sanin (Volotsky) and other church hierarchs were well aware of the institutional frailty of the church, and sought advantageous alliances with the state to amend this. In the controversy between the possessors and the non-possessors at the turn of the sixteenth century, the church got the upper hand over the non-possessors and retained its riches thanks only to the state's support.[52]

Such pragmatic alliances triggered the process of the merger of the church with the state. The culmination point was the creation of the Moscow Patriarchate, which localized the Russian "branch" of Orthodox Christianity.[53] However, the rise of the power of the church was temporary and dependent on political circumstances. Twenty years of the factual co-governance of Tsar Mikhail Romanov and Patriarch Filaret, Mikhail's father, in the first half of the seventeenth century exemplified the attempt to implement symphonia in Russian politics.[54] In this co-governance and the political struggle of the next patriarch Nikon, the first two-thirds of the seventeenth century, according to James Billington, "were consumed by one last great effort of the Russian Orthodox Church to reestablish and extend its authority over all Russian life."[55]

This great effort failed and the harmonious relations between the church and the state broke down. Progressively gaining independence from Constantinople, the Russian Church identified its corporate interests with the national interest: dropping the yoke of the pagans, defending Orthodox Russia from the Latin West, securing national unity and religious homogeneity through suppressing heresies and dissent, reasserting its property rights, and so on. Byzantine political ideas soon found fertile ground in Russian politics and ideology aimed at the centralization of political power around Moscow.[56] Among the characteristic events is the dynastic marriage between the Moscow grand prince Ivan III and the Byzantine princess Sophia Palaiologana in 1472, the acceptation of the new title of "tsar" by Moscow grand princes in 1547, and the establishment of the Moscow patriarchate in 1589.

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51 James W. Warhola, "Revisiting the Russian 'Constrained Autocracy': 'Absolutism' and Natural Rights Theories in Russia and in the West," in *Civil Society and the Search for Justice in Russia*, ed. Christopher Marsh and Nicholas Gvosdev (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2002), 19–39.

52 In this case, the state acted against its own interest to expropriate the monastic lands which coincided with the requirements of the non-possessors. See Donald Ostrowski, "Church Polemics and Monastic Land Acquisition in Sixteenth-Century," *Slavonic and East European Review* 64, no. 3 (1986): 355–79.

53 John Meyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981), 95–99.

54 It is emblematic that Patriarch Philaret's full title was Our Father, the Great Sovereign, the very Holy Patriarch Philaret Nikitich of Moscow and all of Russia. Such a title displayed the authority of the patriarch who was on the same level as the tsar in both secular and ecclesiastical affairs. Lee Trepanier, *Political Symbols in Russian History: Church, State, and the Quest for Order and Justice* (Lexington: Lexington Books), 75–76.

55 James H. Billington, *Face of Russia: Anguish, Aspiration, and Achievement in Russian Culture* (Eugene: Resource Publications, 2008), 58.

56 Ihor Sevcenko, "A Neglected Byzantine Source of Muscovite Political Ideology," *Harvard Slavic Studies*, no. 2 (1954): 141–79.

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The asserted continuity between Byzantium and Russia became one of the main legitimation instruments when the former progressively started to dwindle and finally fell under the Ottoman Turks in 1453. The centralization tendency in nation-building was strengthened also from a soteriological perspective, in the view of Moscow's messianic role in world history. Monk Filofei's (Philotheus) 1511 Epistle summed up this messianic ideal in the famous theory of Moscow as the "Third Rome," which signified "the tsardom, which shines like the sun in its orthodox Christian faith throughout the whole universe."[57] Filofei assured the Moscow grand prince that "all the empires . . . of the orthodox Christian faith have gathered into your single empire . . . you are the only tsar for Christians in the whole world."[58]

The conception of symphonia evolved in Russia from the idea of natural equilibrium to the idea of an orchestrated performance under the direction of the tsar, progressively taking the shape of the Byzantine caesaropapism.[59] The conflict between Tsar Alexei and Patriarch Nikon in the mid-seventeenth century showed that symphonia was no longer a theoretical solution for church-state relations. It was Patriarch Nikon's grave mistake to challenge the new role of the state in his controversy with Tsar Aleksei.[60] In vain, he incorporated passages from *Epanagoge* about symphonia into *Kormchaya kniga* to legitimize the tsar's authority and to persuade the tsar not to intervene in Church affairs.

The decisive point in this appropriation of the church by the state was the suppression of the patriarchate in 1721 by Peter the Great, who transformed the church into one of the state ministries (the Holy Synod).[61] In Peter's 1721 Decree, one reads the following justification of this political decision: "[T]he common people do not understand how the spiritual authority is distinguishable from the autocratic, but marveling at the dignity and glory of the Highest Pastor, they imagine that such an administrator is a second sovereign, a power equal to that of the Autocrat, or even greater."[62] Reasoning that there shall not be two heads for one body, Peter decided to cut one head off and abolished the patriarchate.

The new political language was based on allegories of corporeal constitution and of political mechanics, representative of the political discourse of the late Middle Ages and of modernity in the West.[63] In *Pravda Voli Monarshei*[64] and other statements of the official ideology, one finds abundant references to Hobbes, Pufendorf, Wolf, and other Western philosophers who resolutely distinguished between the church and the state, and between the ruler and the state—a distinction that had not been conceptualized in Russian political thought. The beginning of the eighteenth century can be considered as the moment at which Western ideas about the church-state relationship penetrated into Russian political realities and decisively tipped the balance in favor of the

57 Quoted in Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 38.

58 Michael Cherniavsky, *Tsar and People: Studies in Russian Myths*, 38.

59 Chapter 62 of the Decision of the 1551 Moscow Hundred-Chapters Council (*Stoglav*) of Russian Orthodox Church reproduced the principle of symphonia from Justinian's Sixth Novel, giving to it thereby the force of law.

60 Serge A. Zenkovsky, "The Russian Schism: Its Background and Repercussions," *Russian Review* 16, no. 4 (1957): 37–58.

61 Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (New York: Scribner, 1974), 241–43.

62 Peter the Great, *The Spiritual Regulation* (1721), as cited by Geoffrey Hosking, *Russia and the Russians: A History* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001), 199.

63 C. J. Nederman, "Body Politics: The Diversification of Organic Metaphors in the Later Middle Ages," *Il Pensiero Politico Medievale*, no. 2 (2004): 59–87.

64 Feofan Prokopovich, "Justice of Monarch's Right to Appoint the Heir to His Throne," in *Peter the Great: His Law on the Imperial Succession in Russia, 1722*, trans. Anthony Lentin (Oxford: Headstart History, 1996), 122–281.

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state.[65] This was the end of the era of symphonia and of rethinking the relationship between the political and the spiritual in terms of Modernity. These constructions clashed with the remnants of the medieval political philosophy in the Russian romanticism of the nineteenth century.

SYMPHONIA IN RUSSIAN ROMANTICISM OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Byzantine political ideals were received into Russian political philosophy through the lens of nineteenth-century discussions about Russia's uniqueness and historical mission in the nineteenth century.[66] Today, the glorious past of the Russian Empire—its philosophical and ideological legacy inclusive—is asserted as a part of the spiritual revival not only in the official state ideology, but also in the Russian Orthodox Church's official documents.

Piotr Chaadaev's famous *Philosophical Letters*, about Russia's historical mission, his criticism of Russian religious and cultural development following the particularistic Byzantine culture triggered the Slavophiles-Westernizers controversy.[67] His condemnation of Russia's past and present promised no good prospects for uncovering in Russian history any good, let alone ideal, forms of church-state relations: "From the very first moment of our social existence, nothing has emanated from us for the common good of men; not a single useful thought has sprouted in the sterile soil of our country; not a single great truth has sprung from our midst."[68] Driven by his Catholic sympathies, Chaadaev even ventured to suggest that adapting Orthodoxy from Byzantium was one of the main factors that divided Russia from Western civilization. Later, in his *Apology of a Madman*, Chaadaev reasserted the decisive role of Orthodoxy in Russian nation-building and the spiritual role of Orthodoxy for the accomplishment of the mystical mission of Russia.[69]

In their responses to Chaadaev's *Letters*, the first Slavophiles sought to identify the uniqueness of Russia through the prism of a spiritual connection between the Russian communitarian lifestyle (*mir*), the requirement to follow this style (*narodnost'*), Orthodoxy (*pravoslavie*), and political autocracy (*samoderzhavie*). Ivan Kireevsky formulated the famous distinction between Russian and Western social philosophies: in the West, the tendency toward the rationalistic segmentation of society prevails, while Orthodoxy preserves the inward integrality of spirit.[70] The principle of

65 Nikolas Gvosdev, *An Examination of Church-State Relations in the Byzantine and Russian Empires with an Emphasis on Ideology and Models of Interaction* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001).

66 My analysis is limited to the Slavophiles-Westernizers debate and to the ideas of Vladimir Soloviev. In this respect, conservative ideas of many other Russian authors of that period of time could also have been examined, especially the Byzantism of Konstantin Leontiev, the Panslavism of Nikolay Danilevsky, the Monarchism of Konstantin Pobedonostsev or Lev Tikhomirov, and others. To keep this research at a manageable length, these ideas will not be examined here. See, for example, Pavel Rakitin, "Byzantine Echoes in the Nineteenth Century Press and in the Writings of Russian Intellectuals," *Opuscula Historiae Artium* 62, Supplementum (2013): 98–109; Lora Gerd, *Russian Policy in the Orthodox East: The Patriarchate of Constantinople in 1878–1914* (Warsaw: De Gruyter, 2014), 20–39.

67 Andrzej Walicki, *The Slavophile Controversy: History of a Conservative Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (London: Oxford University Press, 1975), 83–117.

68 Peter Chaadaev, "Philosophical Letters in Teleskop," in *Russian Philosophy*, vol. 1, *The Beginnings of Russian Philosophy, the Slavophiles, the Westernizers*, ed. James Edie, James P. Scanlan, and Mary-Barbara Zeldin (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), 106–154, at 116.

69 Peter Chaadaev, "The Apologia of a Madman," in *Philosophical Works of Peter Chaadaev*, ed. Raymond McNally and Richard Tempest (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991), 102–11.

70 "[I]n the West we find a dichotomy of the spirit, a dichotomy of thought, a dichotomy of learning, a dichotomy of the state, a dichotomy of estates, a dichotomy of society, a dichotomy of familial rights and duties, a dichotomy of

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integrality (*vseedinstvo*) excluded the separation of church and state and made their union a matter of supreme religious intuition and wisdom.[71] In the words of Georges Florovsky, "Slavophiles returned to the Church as to the sole 'organic' force amidst the 'critical' dissolution and disintegration of all binding ties . . . and did not fully discern or admit the incommensurate natures of Church and society."[72] Replacing a rational distinction with a mystical intuition, the Slavophiles endorsed anti-individualism and illiberalism.[73]

Given the rational separation of the respective competences of the church and the state, their pragmatic coordination was not a solution for the first Slavophiles. Konstantin Aksakov was explicit on this point: "In the West . . . they kill souls and replace them by the perfecting of political forms and the establishment of good order and by police action. Conscience is replaced by law; regulations become a substitute for the inward impulse; even charity is turned into a mechanical business in the West; all the anxiety is for political forms. . . . At the foundation of the Russian State there lies spontaneity, freedom and peace."[74]

This vision mandated fusion instead of separation, faith instead of critical reflection, and common good instead of individual interest. According to the dichotomy between Byzantium and the West, as explained by the Slavophiles, in Eastern Christianity the philosophical premises of the fusion of church and state relied on the vision of the polity as a unity of the logos and the social body under the grace of God.[75] In their opinion, the strict differentiation between *Civitas Dei* and *Civitas Terrena* in Western political thought led to the practice of the Holy See of Rome repeatedly trying to fight the state into submission. Taken in this context, the idea of *sobornost'* meant a denial of such theocratic aspirations.[76] In Berdyaev's opinion, this Slavophile style of thinking reflects "the very true and very Russian idea," which is defined as "the fusion of right in the sense of truth, and right in the sense of justice, of integral knowledge by the whole being of man."[77]

These generalizations were exaggerated as both Eastern and Western spiritual traditions were much more diverse and sophisticated than their Slavophile summations. However, the Slavophile conceptual synthesis proved to be a fruitful ideological solution for conservative ideologies for years to come. This synthesis implied a syncretic worldview in which the church and the state were considered as stemming from the same spiritual sources and harmonically fused in a mystical communion, all-unity (*vseedinstvo*). However, this ideal of wholeness "discouraged individuals

morals and emotions . . . . We find in Russia, in contrast, a predominant striving for wholeness of being, both external and inner, social and individual, intellectual and workaday, artificial and moral." Ivan Kireevsky, "On the Nature of European Culture and on Its Relationship to Russian Culture," in *On Spiritual Unity: A Slavophile Reader*, trans. Boris Jakim and Robert Bird (Hudson: Lindisfarne, 1998), 189–232, at 229.

71 Abbott Gleason, *European and Muscovite*: *Ivan Kireevsky and the Origins of Slavophilism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

72 Georges Florovsky, *Ways of Russian Theology*, trans. Robert L. Nichols, 2 vols. (Belmont: Nordland, 1979), 2:17.

73 Laura Engelstein, *Slavophile Empire: Imperial Russia's Illiberal Path* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

74 Nicolas Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 42.

75 Aleksi Osipov, "The Theological Conceptions of the Slavophiles," in *The Holy Russian Church and Western Christianity*, ed. Giuseppe Alberigo and Oscar Beozzo (London: SCM Press, 1996), 33–48.

76 Thus, Metropolitan Hilarion, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church's Department for External Church Relations, draws a conceptual link between the Slavophile idea of *sobornost'* (which he translates as *synodality*) and the church's ideal of church organization. Hilarion, "Primacy and Synodality from an Orthodox Perspective," Russian Orthodox Church, November 9, 2014, https://mospat.ru/en/2014/11/09/news111091/.

77 Berdyaev, *The Russian Idea*, 112.

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from viewing themselves apart from the community, it also made the Orthodox Church slow to distinguish itself from the state."[78]

This Slavophile discourse followed the famous triad of Sergei Uvarov: "Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationhood," which he formulated in 1834 to summarize the official ideology of the Russian Empire:[79] "Sincerely and deeply attached to the Church of his fathers, the Russians have, from the earliest times, looked upon it as the pledge of social and family happiness . . . . The saving conviction that Russia lives and is preserved by the spirit of a strong, humane, enlightened autocracy must permeate public education."[80]

This ideology was not unanimously accepted by Russian intellectuals, many of whom were abhorred by attempts to justify Russian political absolutism by references to church dogmas. This ideology partly discredited the church itself, so that some intellectuals chose atheism to affirm their protest against the alliance between church and state. Vladimir Soloviev tried to restore the authority of religion and to find other ways to formulate what he saw as the social philosophy of Orthodoxy. In his *Critique of the Abstract Principles* (1880), Soloviev relied on philosophical holism, which prompted him to argue that all distinctions between the political, the legal, the religious, and other principles, between mystical and rational cognition are artificial. It is in their fusion that one can find the concrete universalism that is the real foundation of social life.[81] For Soloviev, social life is determined by two absolute principles: first is a self-subsistent God, the second is mankind in the process of becoming; their alliance being expressed by the term *Godmanhood* (*bogochelovechestvo*)[82]—another concept that is widely utilized by the Russian Orthodox Church in its official discourse. The original meaning of this concept is that "there is no essential difference between God and the world. In other words, the 'essence' of God and world are the same. . . . God himself endows each point of being with the power of self-consciousness—apart from which the whole of manifold reality could not become external to God."[83] His approach to the church-state symphonia stems from this eschatological perspective and is expressed in the formula:

> The normal relation, then, between the state and the Church is this. The state recognizes the supreme spiritual authority of the universal Church, which indicates the general direction of the goodwill of mankind and the final purpose of its historical activity. The Church leaves to the state full power to bring lawful worldly interests into conformity with this supreme will and to harmoni[z]e political relations and actions with the

78 Paul Valliere, "Russian Orthodoxy and Human Rights," in *Religious Diversity and Human Rights*, ed. Irene Bloom, Paul Martin, and Wayne L. Proudfoot (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 278–312, at 282.

79 Cynthia H. Whittaker, "The Ideology of Sergei Uvarov: An Interpretive Essay," *Russian Review* 37, no. 2 (1978): 158–76; Nicholas Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825–1855* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959).

80 Sergei Uvarov, "Memorandum 1834," in *Russia and the West from Peter to Khrushchev*, ed. Lawrence J. Oliva (Boston: Heath, 1965), 90–91, at 90.

81 "The ultimate moral significance of society 'is determined by the religious or mystical principle in man, by virtue of which all members of society are not limits for each other, but rather internally fulfill each other in the free unity of spiritual love, which must be immediately realized in a spiritual society or the church. Thus, the normative society has as its foundation a spiritual union or the church, which defines its absolute ends.'" Vladimir S. Soloviev, *Kritika otvlechennykh nachal* [Critique of abstract principles], as cited by Randall A. Poole, "The Greatness of Vladimir Soloviev: A Review Essay," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 50, no. 1–2 (2008): 201–23, at 217–18.

82 *Vladimir Solovyev's Lectures on Godmanhood*, ed. Peter P. Zouboff (Poughkeepsie: Harmon, 1944).

83 Vladimir Zenkovsky, *A History of Russian Philosophy*, trans. George L. Kline, 2 vols. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953), 2:500; see also Vladimir Wozniuk, "In the Shadow of the Anthill: Religious Faith, Individual Freedom, and the Common Good in the Thought of V. S. Solov'ev," *Russian Review* 67, no. 4 (2008): 622–37; Teresa Obolevitch, "The Metaphysical Foundations of The Ecumenical Project of Vladimir Soloviev," *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 67, no. 1–2 (2015): 31–43.

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> requirements of this supreme purpose. The Church must have no power of compulsion, and the power of compulsion exercised by the state must have nothing to do with the domain of religion.[84]

It is plausible that the authors of the *Social Doctrine* were inspired by Soloviev's conception,[85] but they failed to notice the distance between his ecumenical project and the medieval conception of symphonia, or his final disappointment about the feasibility of this project. Toward the end of his life, Soloviev dropped his earlier theoretical attempts to work out ecumenical projects ("free theocracy") for the reunification of churches and for the implementation of his social ideal. In his final work, *Three Conversations*, Soloviev resolutely abandoned his former belief in progress and its culmination on earth.[86]

SYMPHONIA IN THE *SOCIAL DOCTRINE*

The first commentators lauded the *Social Doctrine* for presenting the ideas about church-state relations so that these ideas find "their best fit to the teaching on relation between state power and spiritual power as set out in the canons and by the Fathers of the Church."[87] The *Social Doctrine* describes symphonia as a theoretically homogeneous conception. Such a description disregards the plurality of meanings that this concept has in Byzantine political thought and how it was historically received and developed in Russia. Playing a symphony (be it political or musical) presupposes that someone selects the performers, assigns musical compositions to musicians, and directs their performance. As shown above, there were at least two versions of symphonia in Byzantium, one based on the mystical union of body and soul in one Corpus Christi, while the other considered this union as possible only with the intermediary role of logos incarnated in the person of emperor who conducted the performance of the *social orchestra*. Neither of these versions fits the conceptualization of symphonia in the *Social Doctrine*.

The authors of the *Social Doctrine* do not treat symphonia as a historical fact and argue that neither in Byzantine nor in Russian history did symphonia exist in a pure form, always being subject to distortions (III.4, ¶¶ 6–8). After their critical appraisal of the separation of church and state in the West, the *Social Doctrine*'s authors close their deliberations on church-state relations (in chapter 3, where symphonia is dealt with) with a reference to the "two-thousand-year-long historical experience" (III.4, ¶ 16). This reference serves as a meaningful link to the consequent deliberations about the correct model of the church-state relationship in the following parts of the *Social*

84 Vladimir Solovyov, *The Justification of the Good: An Essay on Moral Philosophy*, trans. Natalie A. Duddington, ed. Boris Jakim (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 394.

85 Soloviev's formula is reproduced in the *Social Doctrine*: "The Church should not assume the prerogatives of the state, such as resistance to sin by force, use of temporal authoritative powers and assumption of the governmental functions which presuppose coercion or restriction. At the same time, the Church may request or urge the government to exercise power in particular cases, yet the decision rests with the state" (III.3, ¶ 5). His conception of "Godmanhood" also appears in the directive "the tasks and work of the Church and the state may coincide not only in seeking purely earthly welfare, but also in the fulfilment of the salvific mission of the Church" (III.3, ¶ 3).

86 Vladimir Solovyov, *War, Progress, and the End of History: Three Conversations. Including a Short Story of the Anti-Christ*, trans. Alexander Bakshy (Hudson: Lindisfarne Press, 1990); see also Judith D. Kornblatt, "Soloviev on Salvation: The Story of the 'Short Story of the Antichrist,'" in *Russian Religious Thought*, ed. Judith D. Kornblatt and Richard F. Gustafson (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 68–87.

87 Konstantin N. Kostuyk, "Vozniknovenie sotsialnoi doktriny Russkoi pravoslavnoi tserkvi" [The appearance of the social doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church], *Obshchestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* 6 (2001): 114–131, at 127.

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Doctrine. It implies that the pre-modern concept of symphonia can work as a normative ideal for shaping church-state relations in modern times.

The *Social Doctrine* definitively does not support the idea of the state being a part of Corpus Christi; neither does it accept the lead role of the mundane authorities (emperor, tsar, president) to conduct the *social orchestra*. The difference of the intellectual frameworks between the mystical political thought of the Middle Ages and the rational thinking of modernity is also disregarded. In the political narratives both on the part of the Russian Orthodox Church clergy and of the political leadership, symphonia remains only an allegoric figure of speech. It does not seem that the *Social Doctrine*'s authors believe that the church and the state can be fused into one, as the medieval thinkers believed. The system of checks and balances in the church-state relationship proposed in the *Social Doctrine* is evidently based on rational, pragmatic thinking and conclusively rules out any mystical all-union between the Russian Orthodox Church and the state. In such an all-union, legal or institutional guarantees would become useless, as the state and the church would be mystically fused into wholeness.

Despite the lip service paid by its authors to the medieval theory of symphonia, the *Social Doctrine* is far from this in its philosophical implications and is closer to what Vladimir Soloviev condemned as the "theocratic temptation" of Catholicism in his *Three Conversations*. The *Social Doctrine* clearly delimits the respective goals, competences, and sovereign powers of the Russian Orthodox Church and the state (III.5). With this, the *Social Doctrine* seems to be closer to the "two-swords" theory than to Eusebius or other Byzantine theoreticians of symphonia. The *Social Doctrine* explicitly considers theocracy as the ideal form of social order. Only after "society moved away from obedience to God"—claim the authors of the *Social Doctrine*—"people began to think about the need to have a worldly ruler" (III.1, ¶ 3). The general conclusion is that the golden age remains in the past, while other non-theocratic polities are only distortions of the ideal.

To exclude God's responsibility for this occurrence, the authors refer to the well-known theological argument of Thomas Aquinas that God granted human beings only "an opportunity to order their social life by their own free will, so that this order is a response to the earthly reality distorted by sin" (III.1, ¶ 3). Therefore, God is not responsible for erroneous deviations from theocracy to other, worse forms of social organization. These worse forms result from sinful resolutions and are tacitly equated to the liberal forms of governance that distort the hierarchical world order. What is symbolically important in this constellation of ideas is that the real social life is not expected to reproduce a natural harmony or symphonia that can be available only from an eschatological perspective. Neither is the church ready to assign to the state the role of the conductor of the divine-social orchestra.

On the other hand, even a bad state is better than anarchy: "God blesses the state as an essential element of life in the world distorted by sin" (III.2, ¶ 2). Echoing Soloviev's philosophical ideas, the *Social Doctrine* claims that the state is called to restrict evil and to support good. The obligation to obey the state authorities is not absolute but is conceptually dependent on their moral justification: "Christians should avoid attempts to make [the state] absolute and failure to [recognize] the limits of its purely earthly, temporal and transient value conditioned by the presence of sin in the world and the need to restrain it" (III.2, ¶ 3). However, the church reserves for itself a rich arsenal of means to curb state authorities. In its possible conflict with the state, the church can go as far as applying to "international bodies and the world public opinion and appealing to her faithful for peaceful civil disobedience" (III.5, ¶ 4). However, any interference of the state into the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church is precluded.

This approach is hardly compatible with the Byzantine symphonia. Justinian's *Sixth Novel* explicitly excludes any disagreement with the state rules, and solely "grants permission to everyone,

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no matter what may be his office or to what order he may belong, when he becomes aware of any of these breaches of discipline, to notify the emperor, or the government."[88] The right to disobey the sovereign and his commands, so intensively discussed in medieval Western natural-law philosophy, was not central to Byzantine political thinking. Only in a few exceptional cases could the clergy and laity make use of this right.

From such a moral justification of the authorities and their commands in the Social Doctrine one may infer that citizens have to decide themselves about the limits of their obeisance to the state, based on their moral evaluations. "The Church remains loyal to the state," but only insofar as this does not contradict "the task of salvation" (III.5, ¶ 3). When the state compels people "to commit sinful and spiritually harmful actions, the Church should refuse to obey the state" (III.5, ¶ 4). An individual also has the right to disobedience: "following the will of his conscience, he can refuse to fulfil the commands of state forcing him into a grave sin" (III.5, ¶ 4). Such flexible conceptions as "spiritually harmful actions" or "grave sin" leave the matter of obedience undefined, while the commanding power of the state is dependent on individual discretion of the clergyman or the lay believer. The normative force of such individual judgments cannot be found in the Byzantine or Russian medieval political literature, including those works that are referred to in the *Social Doctrine*.

The original idea of symphonia does not conceptually provide room for freedom of individual choice. Individual freedom would turn symphonia into a discord, as the multiplicity of individual value judgments would inevitably bring dissonance into the orchestrated choir. Characteristically, the Byzantine symphonia does not imply any social contract between free individuals, so their consent to be commanded by the political authorities would have no normative bearing.[89] The *Social Doctrine* clearly adheres to the *Gesellschaft*-framework, based on the premises of the Western legal tradition about individual freedom as the cornerstone of social order and about the right to disobedience justified by individual moral judgment.[90]

The difference in the natures of the church and the state, as explained in the *Social Doctrine* (III.3), implies that the church is a divine-human organism—"Being the body of Christ, [the church] unites in herself the two natures, divine and human, with their inherent actions and wills" (I.2, ¶ 1). While the state is simply a human production—"the emergence of the temporal state should not be understood as a reality originally established by God" (III.1, ¶ 4). Still, this difference was not recognized in Byzantine political thought in this sense, as the state and the emperor's power also explicitly emanated from the God's will and were integral parts of the God-created world order. The divine-human alliance results from the symphonic alliance between the church and the state ("general good will result," in the words of Justinian's *Sixth Novel*[91]), both the church and the state being parts of a divine-human organism. Moreover, the emperor's power had explicit divine sanction in Byzantine political philosophy. That this power was blessed by God meant that the

88 Justinian, *The Enactments of Justinian*, *The Novels*, VI, in *The Civil Law, including the Twelve Tables the Institutes of Gaius, the Rules of Ulpian, the Opinions of Paulus, the Enactments of Justinian, and the Constitutions of Leo*, trans. S. P. Scott, vol. 16 (Cincinnati: Central Trust, 1932), Epilogue, https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N6_Scott.htm.

89 This fact is due rather to the political circumstances of Byzantium than to any particular principles of the Orthodox Christianity. On possible Orthodox interpretations of social-contract theory, see, for example, Nikolas N. Gvosdev, "St. John Chrysostom and John Locke: An Orthodox Basis for the Social Contract?," *Philotheos* 3 (2003): 150–53.

90 Nikolai Danilevskii, *Russia and Europe: The Slavic Worlds Political and Cultural Relations with the Germanic-Roman West*, trans. Stephen M. Woodburn (Bloomington: Slavica Publishers, 2013).

91 Justinian, *The Novels*, VI, Preface.

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church was obliged to subordinate itself and to play its part of the symphonia, following the emperor's baton.

To underplay the state and to check its possible interference with divine matters, the authors of the *Social Doctrine* reason that "the Church has been founded by God Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, while the God-instituted nature of state power is revealed in historical process only indirectly" (III.3, ¶ 1). Once again, this "indirect revelation" was inappropriate for Byzantine political thought, in which the emperor's power was de facto deified. The difference between the natures of the emperor's or the patriarch's powers was not discussed. Quite the contrary, Justinian's *Sixth Novel* underscores that both powers "proceed from the same principle": only the fields of their competence can be theoretically distinguished in divine and human matters, respectively.

In the same vein, the *Social Doctrine* distorts the symphonia theory when it asserts the freedom of the church to pragmatically decide about cooperation with the state—"the Church can cooperate with the state in affairs which benefit the Church herself, as well as the individual and society" (III.8, ¶ 1). This assertion cardinally diverges from the very principle of symphonia, which was either preestablished by God's providence or secured by the emperor's power and did not depend on decisions of the church's clerics.

Apparently, what the *Social Doctrine* allows the church in its relationship with the state goes far beyond the limits of the Byzantine symphonia, which reserved for the church only a limited autonomy in "divine matters." With its *Social Doctrine*, the church pretends to assume the role of the defender of morality in Russia, seeking "the prerogative to arbitrate the meaning of morality in Russian society."[92] The *Social Doctrine* argues that "the Church is called to take part in building human life in all spheres where it is possible and, in doing so, to join efforts with representatives of the secular authority" (III.8, ¶ 1). In particular, the church condemns such convictions or actions that may result in the "total control over a person's life, convictions and relations with other people, as well as erosion in personal, family or public morality, insult of religious feelings, damage to the cultural and spiritual identity of the people and threats to the sacred gift of life" (III.6, ¶ 3).

With its conservative philosophy enshrined in the *Social Doctrine*, the church evidently intends to counteract the liberal rights based on the ideas of Western individualism that are established in the Russian Constitution. Kristina Stoeckl aptly describes this philosophy as "present[ing] human rights as the product of a Western secular legal positivism, which started to influence the Russian legal space after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, but was essentially alien to the national legal culture. The document clearly remained on a confrontational and ideologically closed plane vis-à-vis the concept of human rights. . . . [I]t represents the nationalist and anti-Western viewpoint on human rights."[93]

CONCLUSION

The Russian historical formula of symphonia in church-state relations is summed up by Feldbrugge as "the state handed over some of its powers to the Church, to be exercised independently, although it was implied that the Church would do it in harmony with the general policies if the

92 Papkova, *The Orthodox Church and Russian Politics*, 38.

93 Kristina Stoeckl, "Moral Argument in the Human Rights Debate of the Russian Orthodox Church," in Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine*, 11–30, at 18. On the general framework of the Russian Orthodox Church's human-rights conception, see Kristina Stoeckl, *The Russian Orthodox Church and Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2014).

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state."[94] This symphonic balance in Russian society stirs the church to have its say on a number of political matters (minority protection, family and education, memory politics, and so on). However, the mutual possibilities of the church and the state to influence each other are limited, at least formally, by the constitutional principle of the separation of church and state. The strategy of the church to use the concept of symphonia as a part of its vocabulary is seemingly to gain new channels of influence on state policies. Nonetheless, in its original medieval interpretations, the conception of symphonia is not reconcilable with this agenda of the church.

As John Meyendorff defines it, symphonia "is not a harmony between two powers, or between two distinct societies, the Church and the State, rather, it is meant to represent the internal cohesion of one single human society, for whose orderly welfare on earth the emperor alone is responsible."[95] As he argues further, this conception implies the power of the emperor to legislate on the marital status of the clergy, on church property, on episcopal residence, on clergy selection and education, on obstacles to ordination, and on the legal status of the clergy. Reflecting the antique sacralization of the supreme ruler, the concept of symphonia implies that the emperor is tasked with organizing political life harmoniously, which reflects the divinely ordered harmony of nature.[96] The church does not envisage any subordination to the presidential or any other political power in Russia.

More than once the Russian Orthodox Church has taken the symbolic leadership when the state and its ideologies were too weak—it happened in the decentralized Kievan Rus', during the Mongol yoke, in the Time of Troubles, and immediately after the fall of the Soviet regime. Having no effective governance, no understandable symbols of national unity, and no normative models of social order, each time, people turned to the church, which offered its established narratives about social order and its spiritual foundations. In all these instances, the church built strategic alliances with the state to foster its economic and political power.

This is the kind of comprehensive and pragmatic strategy followed by other religious denominations under similar circumstances. But this strategy does not fall either under the conceptual limits of symphonia or under the institutional realities of the Byzantine Empire relative to which this theory was formulated in the early Middle Ages. This theory is at the opposite end of the spectrum of the church-state separation:[97] the holistic understanding of the church-state relationship embodied in the conception of symphonia is incompatible with the idea of separation, and the institutional dependence of the Russian Orthodox Church on the state. The concept of symphonia can have different, more liberal interpretations, contrary to the illiberal conservatism of the church's leadership.[98]

Introducing the medieval concept of symphonia into its narratives, the Russian Orthodox Church intimates a return to the premodern conceptualization of church-state relations. Although, such a return stands in opposition to the church's strategy to delimit state intervention into divine matters and to establish the firm independence of the church in its relationship with the

94 Feldbrugge, *A History of Russian Law*, 740.

95 Meyendorff, "Justinian, the Empire and the Church," 49.

96 Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Background* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 1966), 255.

97 Zoe Knox, "The Symphonic Ideal: The Moscow Patriarchate's Post-Soviet Leadership," *Europe-Asia Studies* 55, no. 4 (2003): 575–96.

98 Athanasios Giocas, "The Byzantine Legacy of Religious and Legal Pluralism: A Contemporary Reassessment of Byzantine Church–State Relations," *Oxford Journal of Law and Religion* 3, no. 1 (2014): 462–83; Emmanuel Clapsis, "An Orthodox Encounter with Liberal Democracy," in Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou, *Christianity, Democracy, and the Shadow of Constantine*, 111–26.

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state. The church has effectively chosen to subordinate itself to the political power by and large, and to win thereby more benefits for its moral power in Russian society. This strategy is rooted in the rational political thinking that is typical for modernity and is incompatible with the mystical intuitions of the consubstantiality of church and state. In the light of such thinking, the church is no longer thought of as a part of the state's machinery, while the state is not conceived as a part of the mystical body of the church. Their relationship is conceived not as a mystical unity, but as the cooperation or rivalry of these institutions. They are separated, while the idea of their syncretic fusion suggests a return to premodern political configurations and the conceptions of antiquity and the Middle Ages. Paradoxically, such a return is not on the agenda either of the Russian Orthodox Church or of the Russian state, albeit both readily employ symphonia in their ideological narratives without making necessary reservations.[99]

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99 Deliberating on Orthodox Social Doctrine (Ethos) in 2020, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America evokes the concept of symphonia, but prudently adds that symphonia "cannot, however, be invoked as a justification for the imposition of religious orthodoxy on society at large, or for promotion of the Church as a political power. Rather, it should serve to remind Christians that this commitment to the common good—as opposed to the mere formal protection of individual liberties, partisan interests, and the power of corporations—is the true essence of a democratic political order." Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, "For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church," accessed June 23, 2020, https://www.goarch.org/social-ethos?p_p_id=56_INSTANCE_<kmoXa4sy69OV&p_p_lifecycle=0&p_p_state=normal&p_p_mode=view&p_p_col_id=column-1&p_p_col_count=1&_56_INSTANCE_kmoXa4sy69OV_languageId=en_US.

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