



RELIGION AND STATE: A MODEL OF SUCCESSFUL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND STATE ON THE EXAMPLE OF GEORGIA

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Abstract. This article refers to the relationship between the State and Church in Georgia, both in the past and in present time since the Constitutional Agreement was signed between the State and the Church. The article emphasises the tremendous role of the Church in the life of the Georgian nation, which implies, on the one hand, the significant fact that since the day of the conversion of Kartli to Christianity, the Church has always protected the genuine Orthodox faith and, on the other hand, that the Church has always shown special support for our statehood. The Church has always been a major force in strengthening spirituality and in upholding core values based on Christian consciousness. The deifying and saving service of the Holy Church is of the utmost importance in terms of the spiritual revival and unification of the Georgian nation in our time as well.

Keywords: the Church, Constitutional Agreement, Autocephaly

CHAPTER I

In the modern age, religion and state are two different entities. Even though they do not oppose each other, they regulate the relationship between each other by strictly determined rules and laws. However, in some cases, these two institutions may influence each other in the scopes of their authority.

Modern multicultural society is prone to secularism, but international political challenges are often the result of conflicts which are based on religious fanaticism; the challenges taking place in the Near East serve as proof to this.

In the 21st century, most of the conflicts are the result of a misunderstanding of nationalism and the confusion of religious fundamentalism, that benefit state actors, as well as aggressive non-state and also religious non-state actors in achieving their own subjective goals; Syria and the conflict there serves as an example of the above-said.

Secularism is a concomitant of the modern age. However, when tradition and the goodwill of cooperation between the Church and the State exist, the Church can make an important and special contribution to the protection, spiritual unification, strengthening and development of the country. In this context, mention may be made of the highly significant words of St. Gregory of Khandzta (9th century), addressed to his contemporary authorities of Kartli: „You, immortal Kings, have been granted by the Lord to establish the holy churches through the mortal kingship, and invisibly, He made their support a shield to protect you. And this shield is much stronger than all visible armours and more than innumerable horsemen“¹.

The relationship between the Church and the State has always been of special importance in Georgia, because the Church has always played a tremendous role in the unification of the country and the spiritual revival of the Georgian nation. The entire history of Georgia truly testifies to this fact. Her special eminence and merit before the Georgian nation is properly reflected in the Constitution of Georgia as well².

Cooperation between the State and the Church is successfully accomplished in many European countries and it has a corresponding legal basis as well. The position of the Church and Her legal status in different states have indispensable preconditions and are consistent with the disposition of the vast majority of societies and their system of values. The fact that in France society follows a secular system and the Church is separated from the State is the result of the French Revolution, whereas the close cooperation between religion and state institutions in the United Kingdom and Scandinavian countries is a continuation of the never-ceasing ancient tradition of these countries. These models are drastically different from each other. Some international law experts and human rights defenders of today consider unacceptable the declaration of any faith as a state religion and the granting to the Church of a legal and institutional status that implies a certain unity with the State³. Elizabeth Shakman explains that the academic direction of international relations has resulted in certain kinds of contradictions among the ideological concepts of modernisation, nation-state and secularism within the Westphalian System⁴.

1. ძველი ქართული აგიოგრაფიული ლიტერატურის ძეგლები, წიგნი I. თბილისი. 1963. 276. (Ancient Georgian Hagiographic Literary Works, Book 1. Tbilisi. 1963. 276).

2. Along with freedom of faith and worship, the state recognises the special role of the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in the history of Georgia and Her independence from the State. The relationship between the State of Georgia and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia shall be governed by the Constitutional Agreement, which shall be in full compliance with the universally recognised principles and norms of international law, specifically in terms of human rights and fundamental freedoms. (Article 8, Relations between the State and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia, Constitution of Georgia, The Parliamentary Gazette of Georgia, 31-33, 24.8.1995).

3. თალალ ასადი, რელიგია, ერი-სახელმწიფო, სეკულარიზმი, ღირს თუ არა სეკულარიზმის კონცეფციის შენარჩუნება? თარგმნეს თორნიკე ჭუმბურიძემ და გიორგი ვაჩნაძემ. Tbilisi. 2019 (Talal Asad, Religion, Nation-state, Secularism; Is the Idea of Secularism Worth Saving? Translated by Tornike Chumburidze and Giorgi Vachnadze. Tbilisi. 2019).

4. *Jeffrey Haynes*, An Introduction to International Relations and Religion. London. 2013. 77.

Given this reality, the current model of relations between the Church and the State of Georgia is arguably unique, as long as the Orthodox Church does not have the status of a state religion (which might have put other religions in an unequal legal condition), however, at the same time, the signing of the Constitutional Agreement⁵ clearly defines the historical position and role of the Orthodox Church in the formation and development of the State of Georgia and its culture⁶. The aforementioned model creates a burgeoning milieu for successful cooperation between the State and Church. It should also be noted that both the State and the Church are independent entities⁷. This does not violate the rights of other religions since, under the legislation of Georgia, they have the same legal status as the Orthodox Church and the Constitutional Agreement determines the rights of the Church, which are granted to local Churches in the majority of European countries⁸.

5. The Constitutional Agreement, which shall take precedence over any other normative act of Georgia after the Constitution (Organic Law of Georgia on Normative Acts, Article 7.4), is a domestic normative agreement of Georgia concluded between the State of Georgia and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in 2002. The Constitutional Agreement is signed by the President of Georgia on behalf of the State and approved by the Parliament of Georgia; as for the Church – it is signed by the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia and the Holy Synod. The Constitutional Agreement shall be considered approved if it is supported by at least three fifths of the parliament, and as for changes and additions thereto, they can be made only by mutual agreement of the parties; this gives the document high legitimacy and security. It is noteworthy that the Constitutional Agreement has received positive legal assessment by the experts of the Council of Europe (Legal Expertise of the Draft Constitutional Agreement between the State of Georgia and the Autonomous Apostolic Orthodox Church of Georgia, R. Lawson & R. Balodis, HRCAD (2001)3, 28 May 2001). It is also noteworthy that according to the Constitutional Agreement (Article 1.5), „Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia is inviolable“. Special attention is claimed by Article 4.2 of the Constitutional Agreement „The State in compliance with Church shall provide creation of priest institution at armed forces, prisons, and jails. The State shall adopt proper legal acts“, which implies that the clergy become public officers and perform a highly challenging function in state institutions. An analogue of this is often found in the vast majority of Euro-Atlantic countries. The Legislative Herald of Georgia, LHG 116, 27.11.2002. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/41626?publication=0> (Last accessed on 17.5.2021).
6. *Expert J. Khetsuriani* writes about the validity of the model chosen by Georgia on relations between the State and Church: „Considering all the above, it is safe to say that an absolutely correct legal form of relations between the Georgian state and the Orthodox Church has been found by introducing the concept of Constitutional Agreement. This form of relations ensures independence of the church, protection of its sovereign rights, on the one hand, and grants the church all rights necessary for performance of functions of uniter of the nation and other functions traditionally common for it, on the other hand. At the same time, interference of the state in church affairs (and vice versa) is excluded. Relations of state and church are based on principles of equality and cooperation of the parties“. *ჯონი ხეცურია*, სახელმწიფო და ეკლესია, ურთიერთობის სამართლებრივი ასპექტები. თბილისი. 2013. 43-44 (*Joni Khetsuriani*, State and Church, Legal Aspects of Relations. Tbilisi. 2013. 43-44).
7. The very fact that the Georgian Orthodox Church has an independent educational system operating in accordance with the legislation of Georgia and the diplomas issued by it are recognised by the State is the result of the aforementioned cooperation (Article 5.2, The Legislative Herald of Georgia, LHG 116, 27.11.2002. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/41626?publication=0> (Last accessed on 17.5.2021). The Church has its own mass media (radio and television), social institutions and organisations. The activities of the clergy in the military and penitentiary systems are successful. Of particular note is the fact that, in the interests of the State, the Church often acts as a mediator in tense political controversies within the country, at the request of the parties.
8. „At the same time, it should be mentioned that a differentiated approach to different religions by the state, for example, support of any religious organizations, is not an indicator of violation of „the equality principle and discrimination. when a reasonable basis for such differentiation exists ... In this respect, the definition of Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights regarding prohibition of discrimination by the European Court of Human Rights is noteworthy, according to which, discrimination takes place not only when the state differently treats persons being in equal, similar conditions without reasonable justification, but also when the state, does not differently treat the persons being in different conditions, without objective and reasonable grounds. Objective grounds for a different attitude to this or that religion by the state may be the scale of dissemination of this religion in the country, the role played by this religion in the history of this country“, *ჯონი ხეცურია*, სახელმწიფო და ეკლესია, ურთიერთობის სამართლებრივი ასპექტები. თბილისი. (*Joni Khetsuriani*, State and Church, Legal Aspects of Relations. Tbilisi. 2013. 39-40).

In the light of relations between the State and Church, there is no document in the world of similar status and normative content as the Constitutional Agreement. Although some similarities can be observed with agreements concluded between the Vatican and various states, the difference between them is substantial, since the Vatican is a subject of international law and its agreements (concordats) are agreements between states.

The fact that, along with the determination of the utmost role and status of the Orthodox Church in Georgia, the Constitutional Agreement does not restrict the rights of other religions and does not endanger the freedom of faith and worship, has been considered the ultimate merit of the Constitutional Agreement⁹.

Article 1.3 of the Constitutional Agreement determines the legal status of the Church: „Church is a historically originated public legal person – a full legal public person recognized by the State that exercise its activities according to the Ecclesiastical (Canon) Law, the Constitution of Georgia, the present Agreement, and Georgian legislation“¹⁰.

According to the above-mentioned article, the State of Georgia recognises the Church as „a historically originated public legal person“ not from the moment the Agreement is concluded, but based on historical reality¹¹, which is reflected in the preamble to this Agreement as well: „The Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia is an Apostolic See... It is Autocephalous since 5th century and its spiritual-administrative center and See is the City of Mtskheta; Patriarch’s other Cathedras are also Tbilisi and Bichvinta¹²“;

9. „The Constitutional Agreement of Georgia shall be in full compliance with the universally recognised principles and norms of international law, specifically in the area of human rights and freedoms“ (საქართველოს კონსტიტუცია, საქართველოს პარლამენტის უწყებები, 31-33, 24.08.1995, მუხლი 8 (Constitution of Georgia, The Parliamentary Gazette of Georgia, 31-33, 24.8.1995, Article 8)). The utmost merit of this document is the fact that some issues significant for both the Church and the State are regulated on the legislative level as well. For example, „The State shall acknowledge material and moral damage to Church during loosing state independence in XIX-XX centuries (especially in 1921-1990). Being factual owner of part of bereft property, the State shall take responsibility to partly compensate material damage“ (Article 11). A similar approach is well-known in some Eastern European countries where the law of restitution was adopted to return property confiscated during the communist era to the owner. In accordance with Articles 7 and 8 of the Constitutional Agreement, „The State shall recognize orthodox churches, monasteries (acting and non-acting), their remains and land premises they are built on all over Georgia to be in possession of Church. The State shall recognize ecclesiastic treasure protected by State security (kept at museums and treasury, those except owned privately) to be in possession of Church.“ In accordance with Article 10, „The State shall take responsibility to negotiate with other states on protection, care and ownership of all Georgian orthodox churches, monasteries, remains, other ecclesiastic buildings, and ecclesiastic items being on their territories“. According to this article, the State shall be obliged to negotiate with the relevant states „on protection, care and ownership“ of Georgian churches and monasteries being on their territories. The Legislative Herald of Georgia, LHG 116, 27.11.2002. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/41626?publication=0> (Last accessed on 12.5.2021).

10. The Legislative Herald of Georgia, LHG 116, 27.11.2002. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/41626?publication=0> (Last accessed on 12.5.2021).

11. „The Georgian Orthodox Church is autocephalous. Unlike other religious organizations operating in Georgia, it is not a part of the Church located beyond boundaries of Georgia, but it is represented in the organizationally completed form in Georgia. Other confessions are only structural units of religious organizations located beyond boundaries of Georgia and accordingly, they are subordinated to their centers. Their possibility of independent action is restricted. At the same time, as compared to the Orthodox Church, their role in the history of Georgia is absolutely different. Therefore, there is no legal or historic ground for concluding a Constitutional Agreement with them“, *ჯონი ხეტურიაანი, სახელმწიფო და ეკლესია, ურთიერთობის სამართლებრივი ასპექტები*. თბილისი. 2013. 44-45 (Joni Khetsuriani, State and Church, Legal Aspects of Relations. Tbilisi. 2013. 44-45).

12. The Legislative Herald of Georgia, LHG 116, 27.11.2002. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/41626?publication=0> (last accessed on 12.5.2021).



CHAPTER II

The role of the Georgian Orthodox Church has been crucial in the life of the Georgian nation throughout its history, not only from the standpoint of the enforcement of Her primary services implying the inspiration of the Georgian nation with the saving faith, clothing the nation with divine light, and preserving the moral values which serve as a basis for the spiritual revival of the nation and its true union with the Lord, but also in terms of the protection of the state interests of the country, its territorial integrity and political stability. To clarify the aforementioned, the following significant facts shall be corroborated¹³:

In the 11th century, during the hostilities between Byzantium and Georgia, under the reign of Basil the Caesar and later his brother Constantine Parakimanos, the reason for the defeat of the Georgians was the betrayal committed by some of the nobles. When, during the campaign of the Emperor Constantine, they marched on Trialeti and reached the Kldekari fortress, where the noblemen of King Giorgi I were encamped, some of the Georgian nobility sided with the Byzantine emperor and handed over their castles to him¹⁴. The defeated King of Georgia, Giorgi I, withdrew his troops from the battlefield as long as the Byzantines had numerical superiority.

In those dire circumstances, the responsibility of the protection of the country was assumed by the Georgian Bishops Saba of Tbeti and Ezra of Anchi. They built a large impregnable fortress named Sveti (the Pillar), which the Byzantine army could not conquer¹⁵. The chronicler particularly emphasises the merit of both the Bishops of Tbeti and Anchi, who governed the defence of the country, and encouraged and inspired the defenders of the fortress, showing them a personal example of loyalty to the homeland, and the valour of warriors: „And as true devoted martyrs of God, they were ready to suffer for their earthly born sovereigns and shed their blood as the Apostles have said, and so took courage“¹⁶.

The selfless efforts of the Church ministers halted the advance of the Byzantines and the great efforts of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Melchizedek I (1010-1029), in terms of conducting diplomacy with the Byzantine emperor, produced the desired effect, so a peace treaty was concluded between Byzantium and Georgia (1025).

The best example of the harmonious relationship between the secular and ecclesiastical au-

13 The words of Professor Dodona Kiziria (Indiana University, USA) on the special significance of the role of the Georgian Church are of great interest: „The Georgian Orthodox Church represents much more than a symbol of faith for the Georgian nation. Even for those who do not consider themselves believers, the Church of Georgia is inextricably intertwined with the history and culture of Georgia in all aspects. Georgian toponyms, art, literature and language are imbued with the Orthodox faith, which represent the essence of the historic memory of Georgia. Diminishing and neglecting the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church equals the degrading of Georgian ethnic identity, destroying the historic memory of Georgians.“ საქართველოს ფორუმი, „გლობალიზაცია და ცივილიზაციათა დიალოგი“. თბილისი. 2004. 80 (International Forum, Globalization and Dialogue among Civilizations. Tbilisi. 2004. 80).

14. სუმბატ დავითისძე. იხ. ქართლის ცხოვრება, მთავარი რედაქტორი აკად. როინ მეტრეველი. თბილისი. 2008. 374 (Sumbat Davitisdze. See The Georgian Chronicles, Editor-in-Chief Acad. Roin Metreveli. Tbilisi. 2008. 374).

15. იხ. ქართლის ცხოვრება, მთავარი რედაქტორი აკად. როინ მეტრეველი. თბილისი. 2008. 374 (See The Georgian Chronicles, Editor-in-Chief Acad. Roin Metreveli. Tbilisi. 2008. 374).

16. Ibid, pp. 374-375.

thorities in Georgia is the Ruis-Urbnisi Church Council held in 1105, at which important decisions were made concerning the upholding of the canon laws of the Church, as well as for the elimination of vices which had taken root within the Church. This served as a basis for the revival of the Church, which would determine significantly the spiritual revival of the country, its progress and development. The appointment of the Metropolitan of Chkondidi to the position of the Mtsignobartukhutsesi (Royal Chancellor) speaks of the great authority of the Church.

It is noteworthy that the Ruis-Urbnisi Legal Decree pays special attention to the fact that the Holy Church of Georgia, since the day of Her establishment, has unwaveringly protected the sacred Orthodox faith¹⁷.

The Church of Georgia remained an institution of significant influence throughout the 14th-18th centuries. She often carried out legations of special importance in foreign affairs as well¹⁸.

In the 15th century, when Georgia was split into principalities, and the integrity of the Georgian nation and of the Church was facing a danger of division into parts by the actions of domestic or external forces, the Church of Georgia managed to maintain the unity of the Georgian nation and the integrity of the Church. The rulers of Meskheta fought for the independence of their principality and succeeded in the fight with King Giorgi VIII. They plotted to create a Church in Meskheta which would be independent from the Catholicate of Mtskheta. For this purpose, Qvarqvare the Atabeg (the Prince) of Samtskhe contacted the Patriarchates of Antioch and Jerusalem with a desire to enthrone the Bishop of Matskveri as Catholicos. In response, the Catholicos-Patriarch Davit III (1435-1439, 1443-1459) went to Meskheta, gathered the clergy who were in favour of secession from the Catholicate of Mtskheta and, as a historical source has it, punished them by excommunication and disallowing them to wear the cross; but after they had repented, he demanded from them to swear allegiance to him. All the above-mentioned is reflected in one of the charters of Mtskheta¹⁹. As the outstanding Georgian historian Ivane Javakhishvili underscored, „That oath was at the same time an oath of integrity and unity of the State and Church of Georgia, therefore their conduct should have aroused sincere sympathy and joy among their contemporaries; as for history and descendants of those people, they cannot fail to appreciate their merit before the nation and country in all its depth“²⁰.

In 1472, the Patriarchate of All Georgia opposed the scheme of the kings of the princi-

17. იხ. დიდი სჯულისკანონი, გამოსაცემად მოამზადეს ე. გაბიძაშვილმა, ე. გიუნაშვილმა, მ. დოლაჯიძემ ე. ნინუამ თბილისი. 1976. 549 (See Great Canon Law, prepared for publication by E. Gabidzashvili, E. Giunashvili, M. Dolakidze, G. Ninua. Tbilisi. 1976. 549).

18. A clear example thereof is the fact that a truce between King Giorgi I of Georgia and Basil I, the Byzantine Emperor, was concluded through a major contribution of the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia, Melchizedek I. The personal merits and authority of the Patriarch found favour with the enraged Byzantine emperor and a truce, albeit a difficult one, was concluded with Byzantium. The Catholicos-Patriarch Melchizedek was also able to obtain financial support from Byzantium for the construction of Georgian churches and monasteries.

19. იხ. „ქართული სამართლის ძეგლები“, ტ. III. თბილისი. 1970. 242 (See Monuments of Georgian Law. Vol. III. Tbilisi 1970. 242).

20. ივანე ჯავახიშვილი, თხზულებანი, ტ. III. თბილისი. 1982. 285 (Ivane Javakhishvili, Works Vol. III. Tbilisi 1982. 285).



palties of Western Georgia and the Patriarch of Antioch and Jerusalem Michael to separate the Catholicates of Likht-Imereti and Abkhazeti from the Catholicate of Mtskheta, but they failed to deter this process; Ivane Javakhishvili wrote about it with heartache²¹.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, when Georgia had to face the fragmentation of the entire land into the smallest parts, the Church maintained the idea of unity throughout the independent principalities. These circumstances are manifestly reflected by the fact that, when it would come down to issues of entire national interests (for instance, the banning of the trade in slaves), the authorities of the Church of Georgia (the Church of East Georgia and West Georgia), working in principalities separated from the political standpoint, would take the most important decisions beneficial for the country together and by doing so they secured the unity of the Georgian nation and the integrity of the Church²².

The Church of Georgia, in concert with the State, has always striven to steadfastly safeguard the unity and stability of the country. In the 1560s, a Council was held in Bichvinta in the working process of which the Catholicos of Mtskheta participated as well. The document titled The Law of Catholicoses was adopted at this Council, in which the trade in slaves in West Georgia was strongly condemned. In 1758, with the participation of the Catholicos-Patriarchs of Likhtimereti and All Georgia, another Council was held, which condemned once more the trade in slaves and expressed full support for King Solomon I of Imereti²³.

In June 1790, the principalities of Georgia concluded a treatise, a bilateral agreement, the parties to which were the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti and the Kingdom of Imereti along with the principalities of Odishi and Guria. The Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Anton II and Solomon Lionidze, the Chancellor of King Erekle, played a great role in the preparation of the treatise. In the preamble of the treatise, it was remarked that the basis of the agreement was the national unity of Georgians²⁴. Accordingly, the kings and princes of Georgia vowed the unity and mutual support between Upper and Lower Iberia (i.e. East Georgia and West Georgia). This document was signed by King Erekle II, King Solomon II, King Simon III of Guria and Grigol Dadiani.

On 14 October 2009, during the Svetitskhovloba celebration, with the blessing of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II, the Treatise of the Unity of Iberians was renewed, in which the following was recorded: „As we, the residents of Iberia, the dwellers of Abkhazeti, Adjara, Guria, Tusheti, Imereti, Kakheti, Lazeti, Meskheta, Mtiuleti, Odishi, Racha-Lechkhumi, Svaneti, Pshav-Khevsureti, Kartli, Khevi and Hereti, and those living beyond

21. Ibid. pp. 336-340.

22. „სამართალი კათალიკოსთა“, 1758 წლის გელათის კრება (The Law of Catholicoses, Gelati Council of 1758). იხ. მიხეილ რეხვიაშვილი, იმერეთის სამეფო (1462-1810). თბილისი. 1990. 51 (See Mikheil Rekhviashvili, Kingdom of Imereti (1462-1810). Tbilisi. 1990. 51).

23. სარგის კაკაბაძე, დასავლეთ საქართველოს საეკლესიო რეფორმისათვის სოლომონ I-ის დროს. თბილისი. 1914 (Sargis Kakabadze, On the Reforms in the Church of West Georgia under the Rule of King Solomon I. Tbilisi. 1914). 4; მიხეილ რეხვიაშვილი, იმერეთის სამეფო (1462-1810). თბილისი. 1990. 189 (Michael Rekhviashvili, Kingdom of Imereti (1462-1810). Tbilisi. 1990. 189).

24. იხ. პლატონ იოსელიანი, ცხოვრება გიორგი მეცამეტისა. თბილისი. 1936. 18 (See Platon Ioseliani, The Life of Giorgi the Thirteenth. Tbilisi. 1936. 18).

the boundaries of our State, are all descendants of one ancestor, have one language and culture distinguished by its diversity, all the sons of this land, united by kinship and brotherhood, who care for it and everyone who supports it, declare publicly: We shall continue to strengthen our eternal unity and, in the name of the Almighty God, we vow to be loyal to Georgia and steadfastly support and love each other²⁵.

The initiative of His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II on the creation of the new treatise, similar to the Treatise of 1790, was a response to anti-Georgian propaganda directed against the unity of the Georgian nation and aimed at its misrepresentation as a deliberately created unification of various ethno-religious groups (Svans, Megrelians, Lazi, Ajarians).

200 years later, this new treatise once again reminds society that our unity is necessary. The necessity of unity made our ancestors, the rulers of Kartli-Kakheti, Imereti, Guria, Odishi and Abkhazeti, decide to sign the Treatise of the Unity of Iberians to jointly surmount the challenges which the Georgian nation had to face.

It is quite obvious that the activities of the Georgian Orthodox Church unequivocally reveal Her harmonious relationship with the State. However, it is also noteworthy that throughout our history there have been exceptional cases of rivalry and confrontation between secular and ecclesiastical authorities²⁶; these are only separate precedents, the generalisation of which cannot be condoned.

The harmonious relationship between the State and Church has been important at every stage of our history. Although this relationship was of a difficult and controversial nature in 1920-1970s, when the existence of the Georgian nation and the State of Georgia were in danger, despite the fact that atheistic ideology was completely unacceptable for the Church, along with Her primary mission, the protection of the country was of the utmost importance for the Church as well. This stance was clearly expressed in the beginning of the war, on 22 June 1941, in an official statement issued on behalf of the Georgian Apostolic Church by the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Kalistrate²⁷.

An important example of the protection of the freedom of the State and Church of Georgia is the Memorandum of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ambrosi addressed to the

25. უწმიდესი და უნეტარესი სრულიად საქართველოს კათოლიკოს-პატრიარქი ილია II, ქადაგება სვეტიცხოვლოვანს, სვეტიცხოვლის საპატრიარქო ტაძარი, 14 ოქტომბერი, 2009 წ. (The Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, Homily delivered on the day of the Svetitskhovloba celebration at the Patriarchal Cathedral Svetitskhoveli, 14 October 2009). <https://www.orthodoxy.ge/patriarqi/qadagebebi/2009/14-10-2009.htm> (Last accessed on 27.4.22).

26. In this respect, the 9th-10th centuries are interesting, when some of the ecclesiastical hierarchs believed that the ecclesiastical authority prevailed over the secular, even though the royal authorities, the Bagrationi dynasty, are the anointed. According to Giorgi Merchule, kings are the rulers of only this world, while Christ is the King of the entire visible and invisible world. This attitude is clearly manifested in the words of Saba of Ishkhani addressed to Bagrat Kurapalati (იბ. გიორგი მერჩულე, შრომა და მოღვაწეობა ღირსად ცხორებისაა წმიდისა და ნეტარისა მამისა ჩუენისა გრიგოლისი, ჩუენი საუნჯე, ქართული მწერლობა ოც ტომად, ტომი I. 1960. 164 (see Giorgi Merchule, The Work and Career of the Worthy Life of Our Holy and Blessed Father Grigol, Our Treasure, Georgian Literature in 20 volumes, Volume I. 1960. 164)).

27. განცხადების სრული ტექსტი იბ. კ. კეკელიძის სახ. ხელნაწერთა ეროვნული ცენტრი, კ. ცინცაძის ფ. N 77. 13 (See the full text of the Statement, K. Kekelidze Georgian National Centre of Manuscripts, K. Tsintsadze Branch of the Centre No.77. 13).



participants of the International Conference of Genoa (April of 1922). The Patriarch besought the participants to help Georgia and not to leave this land to face an atheistic regime all alone²⁸.

In the 1990s, when the political situation reached extreme tension in Georgia, and the country was in danger of civil war, the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, addressed the representatives of the political Government with a special letter: „The political tension in Georgia has reached its peak, the Georgians have confronted each other, we are facing the danger of bloodshed between brothers. But, this shameful fact should not take place. We should not commit a terrible sin before God and before our nation. I call for an urgent dialogue, which should be started immediately in order to resolve all disputes in a peaceful manner. If it is your wish, I am ready to take part in it“²⁹.

In 1993, when conflict escalated in the territory of Abkhazeti, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II sent special letters to the Secretary General of the UN, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, the Pope, the President of the Russian Federation, the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, in which he called for an impartial and fair assessment of the circumstances in Abkhazeti and for the taking of immediate measures to stop the bloodshed³⁰.

In the 1990s, the universal recognition of the historical autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church (4 March 1990) was largely the achievement of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Ilia II³¹. The revival of the Church, as well as the development of theological education and science and the spiritual strengthening of the Georgian nation, started on the very day of his enthronement. In general, it is noteworthy that the leaders of the Church of Georgia have always been guided by two main principles: 1. the impeccable protection of the Holy Orthodox faith and indefatigable service to the Georgian nation; 2. to be minister to Georgian statehood. This attitude is manifested throughout the period of the ministry of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II in our time, whose merit before the country and the nation is special in many respects. It can be stated unequivocally that during his incumbency, the Holy Church of Georgia regained Her special authority among the local Orthodox Churches of the world. The role of the Church has remained important up to now in the life of the Georgian nation and, despite the opposition of anti-ecclesiastical forces and their attempt at discrediting the Church, She continues to work tirelessly for the spiritual sanctification, enlightenment, unification, revival and salvation of the Georgian nation, in accordance with Her divine mission. The opposing forces, which contend with the Church, will not be able to hinder the work She performs for her flock.

28. მემორანდუმის ტექსტი იხ. საქართველოს საპატრიარქოს არქივი, ამბროსი ხელაიას საქმე, N 1549 (See the text of the Memorandum, Archives of the Patriarchate of Georgia, Case of Ambrosi Khelaia, No 1549).

29. საქართველოს საპატრიარქოს არქივი, საბ. N 6870 (Archives of the Patriarchate of Georgia, Doc. No 6870).

30. საქართველოს საპატრიარქოს არქივი, საბ. N 7191 (Archives of the Patriarchate of Georgia, Doc. No 7191).

31. „Tomos of Recognition and Official Approbation of the Autocephaly of the Very Holy Church of Georgia“, in accordance to which the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognised the autocephaly and independent structure of the Orthodox Church of Georgia. In the Tomos signed by His All-Holiness Demetrios, the Church of Georgia is recognised as the Church of patriarchal dignity. The title of the Patriarch is: „Archbishop of Mtskheta and Tbilisi and Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia“.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be stated that the model of cooperation of the Church with the State (which implies a harmonious relationship between these two entities) is of the utmost importance in the example of Georgia, since the classic models of Caesaropapism or Papoc-aesarism existent worldwide have never taken hold in the country. It is also an indisputable fact that the role of the Georgian Orthodox Church is utterly special in the life of our nation, which always protected and continues to protect the teachings of the Church, the Holy Orthodox doctrine, which is of essential significance, and the Holy Church has always exhibited the greatest support for the Georgian state. On 14 October 2002, the signing of a Constitutional Agreement between the Church and State was of the utmost importance in the life of the Church and the nation. The Agreement is a legal document and regulates all important issues in the relationship between the Church and the State.

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