Beyond New Jerusalems and New Romes:
Toward the Triangle of Church, Society, and State
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This text explores the premodern patterns of the church-state relationship, as they became prominent in the eastern Christian tradition, and suggests some new patterns for our time. The departure point of the paper is that the church traditionally treated any state, with which it developed sustainable partnership, either as Jerusalem or as Rome. To be more precise, the church shared with the state its proper self-perception, and there were two modalities of sharing: the Jerusalem-type modality, and the Rome-type modality. This means that the ‘self’ of the church after coalescence with the Roman empire blended with the political ‘self’ of the state. Both ‘selves’ should not be understood as personalities, but as collective perceptions of the same people of what they are as members of the church and what they are as citizens of the state. Blending the ‘self’ of the church with the ‘self’ of the state led to numerous abuses of the nature and of the purpose of the church. These abuses can be overcome when the church realises its distinct ‘self’ and develops a partnership with the civil society.

The shared self-perception of the church and of the state implied that not only the church had its autonomous ‘self’ blurred, but also the state lost its distinct self-awareness. The Christian state, along with the Christian church, began considering itself in terms of Jerusalem and Rome. The evolution of the Christian states up to the modern era could be classified as a sequence of Jerusalems and Romes, or better to say, New Jerusalems and New Romes.

Constantinople was the most famous instance of a New Rome, and the archetype of this kind of shared church-state self-perception. We should say a few words about historical circumstances of transition of the capital of the Roman empire to the shores of Bosphorus. By the time of Constantine, Rome ceased to be a de facto capital of the empire. The Roman rulers preferred to stay away from the eternal city, where they felt pressure from what they regarded as political atavisms of the republican times - the Senate and other institutions that challenged their monarchy. They felt more free in such cities as Nicomedia, Antioch, Trier, Milan, Aquileia, Thessalonika, etc. Constantine himself, before moving to Constantinople in 330, stayed in Trier, perhaps Arles (306-316), Sirmium, Serdica, perhaps Thessalonica (317-324), and Nicomedia (324-330). He particularly liked Serdica, modern Sofia, which he used to call ‘my Rome.’
Constantine chose the city of Byzantion for the new capital not out of blue. Diocletian was reported to intend establishing a new eastern capital. For this purpose he chose Nicomedia, which was close to Byzantion. Later in 311, Licinius fortified Byzantion against Maximinus and made it his own capital. Thus, Constantine followed a well-paved path when he moved capital from Rome to Byzantion, which later on was renamed after him.

Constantine made his new capital not just as a copy of the old Rome or a suburb of it, as it had been intended by Diocletian and Licinius, but as Rome’s qualitative upgrade: not Rome 2, but Rome 2.0. It was not a Second Rome, but a New one. Initially, the difference of Constantinople from Rome was intended to be even more radical. There are reasons to believe that Constantine wanted to establish Constantinople as a New Jerusalem and not just New Rome. As Sir Steven Runciman put, it was set up as ‘the earthly copy of the Kingdom of Heaven.’ Constantine wanted to completely redesign the structure and logic of the statehood and to set up a Christian theocracy. To some extent, he managed
to accomplish this vision, but its outcome was more realistic and Constantinople turned out to be quite different from other instances of New Jerusalems.

Its favourite model of church-state relations was symphony. This model was conceived by Eusebius of Caesarea and developed further by the later Byzantine legislation. In the symphony, the state was regarded as body, while the church as soul, according to the *Epanagoge* of the emperor Leo VI:

‘As the polity (*politeia*) consists, like man, of parts and members the greatest and most necessary parts are the Emperor and the Patriarch. Wherefore the peace and felicity of subjects in body and soul is [depends on] the agreement and concord of the kingship and priesthood in all things.’

The ‘New Rome’ type of Christian statehood featured hierarchical structures with a single ruler on top of them embodying the law. In most cases, the ruler was above the law and was the ἐπισκοπός
Regarding church-state relations, this political type could declare equality of the church and the state, but in fact endorsed the state to dominate over the church.

Constantinople became an archetype for a series of new New Romes - reincarnations of Byzantium. To continue using the IT analogies, these reincarnations were not Rome 3, Rome 4, etc, but Rome 2.1, Rome 2.2, and so forth. In this regard, the most famous upgrade of Rome 2 - Moscow, was not the third Rome, but a version of the Second Rome. Moscow was not even Rome 2.1. It looks more like Rome 2.4 - before Moscow, a number of other cities and empires pretended to be successors of Constantinople.

Less famous but much earlier were the incarnations of Constantinople in the medieval Slavic tsardoms of Bulgaria and Serbia. Moscow only imitated them in the attempts of transitio imperii. The earliest attempt to clone Constantinople occurred under the Carolingian dynasty. Charlemagne established his Frankish empire as a renovatio imperii Romani. The city of Rome was placed to the centre of the ideology of the Carolingian empire. Although Charles intended to set up his capital Aachen as a ‘second Rome’, the church of Rome timely intervened to his plans and reorientated him to Rome proper by coronating him as the ‘emperor of the Romans.’

An alternative to the typology of New Rome was the typology of New Jerusalem. It was an eschatological model of politeia, which found the political ideal not in the past, nor in the future, but in the eschaton. Therefore it was neither regressive nor progressive; it was eschatological. Its golden age was not in the merry old days, nor in the promising future, but in the age to come. In realistic terms, it means that it is unachievable as a result of human efforts and development of the human civilisation. The political type of New Jerusalem featured inclination to theocracy and republicanism. This does not mean that it favoured democracy in the modern sense. It also featured hierarchism, but not the same strong as in the New Romes. In the church-state relations, this model gave preference to the church, which often substituted for the state.

One of the early political incarnations of New Jerusalem was discovered recently on the territory of ancient Phrygia (now the Turkish province of Uşak): the settlements of Pepouza and Tymion. The
two cities constituted the spiritual and administrative centre of the Montanist movement, which was active in the Roman empire between the mid-second and mid-sixth centuries. Montanism was a chiliastic and charismatic movement relying on prophetic gifts. The sacred structure of Pepouza, the more important of the two places that constituted the Montanists' 'New Jerusalem,' was built around the cathedral where the Montanist chief bishop or 'patriarch,' resided. A shrine with the bones of the founders of the movement - Montanus, Maximilla, and Priscilla - was an important sacred spot.

The city was a self-sufficient sacred complex distinct from the rest of the profane world. It produced in those who stayed there a feeling of proximity to the divine and of being special and elected, different from others. Pepuza and Tymion illustrate the dualistic character of the theocratic New Jerusalems, their inclination to exclusivism: of place, of prophecy, of knowledge, of access to the
divine, of membership, *etc.* At their basement was a black-and-white vision of the world, a belief that places can save and that saving places should be walled off from the rest of the bad world.

In the Middle Ages, the typology of New Jerusalem can be illustrated with the Italian cities-republics. Particularly interesting in this regard is the case of Siena. This city located on *Via Francigena* - one of the medieval busiest pilgrim routes - was promoted by its authorities as a New Jerusalem. A number of liturgical rites and paintings commissioned by the fathers of the city stressed resemblance between Siena and Jerusalem. The civil model of Siena was utopian. In this regard, it perfectly fits the type of New Jerusalem. At the same time, Siena was not a theocratic state and was not dualistic. The role of the ecclesial authorities was limited in the city, which was ruled by the rotating council of nine merchants. Siena featured something that made it distinct among the medieval incarnations of Jerusalem - republicanism. Its government was not monarchical, but closer to democracy. The role of the citizens was significant. Its rulers shared authority and were accountable to the people and to the law. Remarkably, republicanism of Siena was not secular, but sanctioned religiously.
Political theology behind the Sienese republic is best depicted on the frescos by Ambrogio Lorenzetti at Siena’s Palazzo Pubblico. The frescos were painted between 1337 and 1339. They cover three walls of the Sala dei Nove - the Hall of the Nine - the meeting place of the city council.

The frescos depict a city in two states: peace and war. The two images cover the opposite walls and effectively allude to Augustine’s two cities. All around the walls are allegories that represent political virtues and vices: justice/injustice, concord/discord, and security/fear. They also contain scenes of urban and rural life, as they can be affected by peace and war, as well as good and bad ruling. The presence of the citizens of all classes is overwhelming - they dominate the picture.
The community and its shared values are depicted as a noble man vested in the colours of the city, holding a shield and sceptre, and bearing a crown. That this is not an individual ruler, but a community, is indicated by the initials of the phrase ‘Commune Senarum Civitas Virginis,’ which surmounts him. This figure sits right under three theological virtues of love, faith, and hope, and under the figure of the blessing Christ. A conjuncted hall of meetings is also blessed by the hands attached to the ceiling. Thus, the frescos and other decorations of the city hall stress the communal character of the Sienese political authority. Sienese republicanism, from the point of view of the people of the city, was a divine institution. Not the power of monarch, but the collective authority of community was divine.

Speaking about the medieval Catholic milieu, it should be noted that the papal state can be interpreted as an incarnation of New Jerusalem as well. It was a sort of theocracy, where secular power was substituted with hierarchy. From this perspective, the Crusades that aimed at conquest of the Holy Land effectively sought for authorisation of the papal theocratic power and bringing to Rome the charism of Old Jerusalem.

The age of Reformation produced a number of socio-political models based on the Christian apocalyptic narratives. Jerusalem occupied a central place in many of the seventeenth century’s utopias: Bensalem, a ‘Son of Jerusalem’, in Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis (1624); Samuel Gott’s Nova Solyma (1648); Christianopolis with its Jerusalem-based architectural structure in the novel of the same name (1619) by Johannes Valentinus Andreeae, and others. These utopias were composed not as phantasms to be contemplated, but as realities to be implemented. They were intended as programs of social and political reformation that received momentum from the success of the religious reformation, as a continuation of the latter. In Europe, however, any attempt to implement these programs stumbled on the established political structures and crossfire of too many political agendas, and eventually proved to be impossible, as the failed attempt of John of Leiden to establish a New Jerusalem in Münster demonstrated. There was, nevertheless, a chance to implement these programs in the New World. Europe was an architectural studio that designed handmade New Jerusalems. The New World became their construction site.
The most ambitious attempt to build a Christian utopia was undertaken in New England. Its proponents were the radial Reformers, English Puritans. It seems that they were the only Protestant group who had enough vigour and stubbornness to create a completely new socio-political reality, which would be built on the uncompromised theological convictions. Some features of this group made a decisive contribution to the success of their undertaking: on the one hand, the Anglo-Saxon practical skills in social engineering, which proved to be successful in building the British empire; on the other hand, their radical non-conformism, which became their primary concern through the struggles with the British crown over the issue of church-state relationship.

John Winthrop summarised the political ideal of the Puritans in the image of the ‘City upon a Hill’ borrowed from Matt 5:14. Winthrop employed this image upon his arrival in 1630 at the Massachusetts’ settlement of Salem - one of quite a few Puritan Jerusalems in New England. Another prominent Jerusalem in the seventeenth century New England was Boston. At least so the author of the visionary *Theopolis Americana* (1710) Cotton Mather believed. Mather spoke on behalf of the Puritan pilgrims to the American wilderness expressing their hope to make it one day a shrine, to
transform the local ‘Geography’ to ‘Christianography.’ Mather was religiously excited about the entire New England, which would turn to a Holy Land:

‘Glorious things are spoken of thee, o thou City of God! The street be in Thee, o New England; the interpretation of it, be unto you, o American colonies <…> There are many arguments to perswade us, that our glorious Lord, will have an Holy City in America; a City, the street whereof will be Pure Gold <…> Yea, the Day is at hand, when the Voice will be heard concerning thee, put on thy beautiful garments o, America, the holy City!’

With the passage of time, some members of the Massachusetts colonies felt that the social order there became excessively liberal and compromising the vision of their founders: puritanism was not pure enough anymore. This dissatisfaction urged them to leave Massachusetts and establish new micro-theocracies down to the South, in Connecticut. In 1638, one such group left Massachusetts and landed at the harbour of New Haven. This group was led by John Davenport and Theophilus Eaton.
Upon their arrival, the settlers entered to a ‘plantation covenant,’ which was neither a typical church covenant nor a civil one, but combined the two in the affirmation that they would ‘be ordered by those rules which the scripture holds forth.’ They explicated this covenant in the *Fundamental Agreement*, which provisioned how concretely the purest form of puritanism was to be upheld and embodied in the civil order of the new colony. They laid down the Scripture to the fundament of this order as ‘a perfect rule for the direction and government of all men in all duties which they are to perform to God and men, as well in families and commonwealths as in matters of the church.’ They agreed to ‘be ordered by those rules which the scripture holds forth to us.’ For instance, in accordance with Prov 9:1 they decided that twelve electors would pick up ‘seven men who, as piles, were to begin the new church.’

They also divided the colonists into groups, which would be similar to the tribes of Israel, and allotted for them separate plots of land to stay. They outlined a central square, which is now New Haven Green, to serve as a public place for congregations. Its size was approximately equal to the size of the sanctuary according to Eze 43. They built on this square a meetinghouse. It was fifty feet square - equal to roughly fifty-two feet square of the Tabernacle. They circled the central square with similar squares, eight in number. Each of them constituted an autonomous district with private homes. The homes of Davenport and Eaton were built in the eastern part of the central square - in imitation to the tents of Moses and Aaron.
Thus, the New Haven colonists decided to implement the Scriptural guidance not only in the patterns of governance, but also in what Darryl Hart called ‘redemptive urbanism.’ They designed the new city to be built in imitation to the holy places of Israel. They used the contemporary reconstructions of those places. One of them might be the model suggested by the Spanish Jesuit Juan Bautista Villalpando. It is possible that while still in Amsterdam, Davenport could have met the Jewish scholar Jacob Juda Leon, who had his own ideas about how the Temple could have looked. Another source of inspiration for the apocalyptic urban planning of New Haven were utopias, such as Johan Valentin’s Andreae Christianopolis.

The theocratic idyll did not last in New Haven for a long time. As with other New England’s micro-theocracies, it compromised its purity and devotion to the biblical principles of political life. The most zealous inhabitants of this New Jerusalem left it and went further to the south. One can see a wave of theocracies coming down from Boston to New Jersey from the 16th through the 18th century. This was a wave of zeal and disappointment about attainability of biblical ideals in politics and church-state relations.
The New England experiment showed that political incarnations of New Jerusalem are unstable and cannot live long. New Romes historically were more viable than New Jerusalems. Any New Jerusalem had two options: either to turn to a New Rome or to perish.

The dialectics of New Jerusalems and New Romes ended in the age of Enlightenment, which introduced separation of the church from the state. To be more precise, first the state was separated from the church, and then the church from the state. The most notable protagonist of the former separation was Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679). According to Hobbes, when the state emancipates from the church, it has to lose a lot - primarily its religious legitimacy. However, it also gains a lot, in particular the source of its legitimacy shifts from the zone of metaphysical to the zone of political. Hobbes suggested looking for the foundation of the state’s legitimacy in the natural order of things. He presented his secularised state as a biblical Leviathan (in the treatise of the same name published in 1651), which remains unaffected by the power of religion and yet capable to force different religious groups to peace.

The separation of the church from the state was fostered first in France. It should be said that the French revolution at its initial stage did not envisage the separation between the state and the church. However, resistance of the Catholic clergy to the new political order and their hyperactive royalism urged the Republic to adopt brutal ant clerical policies. The French revolution attempted at expulsion the church from the public square. In 1795, under the Directory, France became the first European state with a formal separation of the church from the state. A year later, the Dutch Batavian Republic, which was an offspring of the French revolution, made it clear that ‘liberty, equality, and fraternity do not allow for a privileged church.’

The separation of the state from the church and later on of the church from the state has been a subject of many debates since the beginning of the modern era. Secular thinkers unanimously advocate it. It has become an intrinsic feature of the liberal democracy. Religious political thinkers, however, tend to criticise it.
Among the concerns of the critics is the limited ability of the modern liberal framework to accommodate religious world-views. They argue that social practices stemming from the religious believes often experience resistance from the liberal state and society. This, in fact, contradicts the very principle of liberal democracy, which is supposed to facilitate the entire array of social practices, as far as they do not harm one another. According to David Fergusson:

‘The diversity and incompatibility of values, lifestyles and practices exhibited by different social groups cannot be accommodated on a classical liberal model which attaches a primary significance to the autonomous individual. The historical antecedents and philosophical commitments of this position reveal it to be only one amongst several options. Liberalism remains a worthy and necessary strategy for enabling the coexistence of rival perspectives, creeds and lifestyle. But, as a unitary politico-ethical theory to which everyone can be expected to subscribe, it has ceased to be credible.’

Separation of the state from the church has produced secularist political theories, which are a priori ‘heretical,’ according to John Milbank. They are misleading per se and harmful for the church. They corrupt public morality, encourage secularisation of the society, and impede the church to do its edifying work. Instead of protecting the church, a secular state - Leviathan - ‘has rather swallowed the Church into its yawning maw,’ as William Cavanaugh has put it.

Cavanaugh is among those critics who challenge the classical liberal perception that goes back to Hobbes. According to this perception, the secular state saves people from the violence incurred by religious arguments. The criticism of this thesis reverses the accusations of violence to the secular state, which is violent in its nature: ‘Secular is complicit with an “ontology of violence”, a reading of the world which assumes the priority of force and tells how this force is best managed and confined by counter-force,’ according to John Milbank.

The Orthodox often object the separation of the church and state, because they still entertain the ideal of the Byzantine ‘symphony’ as a model applicable even in our days. The problem is that the model of symphony was not applicable even in Byzantium. As Steven Runciman noted about it: ‘The theory was clear and simple. The practice was more complicated.’ In practice, in the symphonic partnership, the state dominated over the church in most cases. According to Theodore Balsamon, the emperor was a ‘subject neither to the laws of the empire nor to the ecclesiastical canons of the church.’ He was the ἐμψυχος νόμος. Consequently, he could revoke the canons as they were a part of the civil
law code. He appointed and deposed the patriarchs of Constantinople, arranged episcopal sees, and summoned councils of the church. Sometimes the Byzantine emperors arrogated to themselves the right of priesthood. Thus, Marcian and Justinian called themselves ‘king-priests’ (*rex et sacerdos*), especially in correspondence with the popes of Rome. The Byzantine canonists referred to them as ‘archpriests’ (ἀρχιερεῖος), ‘anointed of the Lord’ (Χριστοτὸς Κυρίου), and ‘living icon of Christ’ (ζῶσα εἰκόνα Χριστοῦ). Orthodoxy in this system of relationship between the church and the state was often defined by the state. It started with Constantine, who endorsed Arianism despite the decisions of the First Ecumenical Council; continued with Zeno and Anastasius who wanted the church to revise Chalcedon; reached peak with Heraclius who designed and promoted Monoenergism and Monothelitism as a political project, and forced the Pentarchy of Patriarchs to accept it as official Orthodoxy; and concluded with the Isaurians who tried to arrange piety of their subjects by introducing iconoclasm.

Symphony profoundly influenced the self-awareness of the church. As it was mentioned in the beginning, it blended the ‘self’ of the church with the ‘self’ of the state. In result, the church, with a few exceptions like John Chrysostom and Maximus the Confessor, could not clearly understand and formulate its own interests, especially when they diverged from the interests of the state. Church’s self-perception was conditioned by the political agenda of the state.

After the symphonic models began collapsing as a result of secularisation, the church was given an opportunity to develop its distinct self-awareness. The church realised its own churchness - a distinct subject with its own goals, which do not always concur with the goals of the state. As a reaction to the emancipation of the church’s ‘self’ from the shared ‘self’ of the church-state symphony, ecclesiology as a distinct theological discipline was born. It is noteworthy that ecclesiology practically did not exist in the period of symphonies, and flourished only after emancipation of the church from the state.

This emancipation had another positive consequence: the church discovered society as a partner distinct from the state. This happened in the same way as when, after the state had emancipated from the church, the society emerged with its own self-awareness different from the state. The processes of detachment of the church from the symphonic models, thus, led to formation of the triangle church-
society-state, which replaced the binary church-state. This triangle constitutes the main matrix that should define the position of the church in the modern society.

It has a potentiality to replace the traditional and much criticised Orthodox nationalism. During last two centuries, alignment of the church with the people, when it happened, was often embodied in the forms of nationalism. In the 19th century, not the monarchs but people became the bearers of political sovereignty in many European countries, including the newly established national states in the Balkans. In these states, the Orthodox churches adjusted themselves to this shift of authority and adopted the national identity of the state. State and people remained undistinguished in the national identity of the church. In the triangle church-society-state, however, the identities and interests of society and state are not confused, especially when the society understands itself as a civil society. The church in partnership with the civil society avoids being affected by nationalism. This partnership helps the church keeping unaffected by the diseases, which are common for the two-dimensional church-state relations: corruption, injustice, and unaccountability. At the same time, it helps the society to hear the moral teaching of the church. To make this teaching heard by the society, the church should avoid practices of coercion, which it inherited from the symphonic models of relations with the state. Only through the dialogue and partnership with the civil society the church can influence the modern society. Another mistake of the symphonic model that the church should avoid in dealing with the modern society is to lose its self, to make it blended with the agendas of the society. The church should remain firm in what it is as the church, and keep its voice prophetic.