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Ideology and Religion

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Abstract

The article explores the genesis and varieties of the phenomenon of ideology, and its relationship with religion. It begins with the origins of the notion and term in Antoine Destutt de Tracy and Karl Marx, and then continues up to the most recent developments of conservative and liberal ideological schemata. The author pays particular attention to the totalitarian ideologies of Communism and Nazism. The article argues that ideology sometimes tried to replace religion, and sometimes mimicked it. In any case, it exercised a profound impact on churches. This impact is in most cases polarizing for the church, when the latter identifies itself with ideology and thus dramatically reduces itself. Among the instances of such an impact are “political Orthodoxy” in Ukraine, and the “Russian world” in Russia. The author concludes that the church should learn to distinguish what is ideological and what is theological.

Key Words: ideology, secularism, totalitarianism, conservatism, liberalism.



Secular Roots of Ideology

If Carl Schmitt was right that “all significant concepts of the modern theory of the state are secularized theological concepts,” then this dictum is applicable primarily to ideologies. Ideology is a secularized epitome of theology.¹ Like the latter, it offers a holistic worldview, easily mobilizes masses, and acts with the power of a myth.² In this sense, it is a “secular religion” with its own “priests” — the intellectuals.³ Ideology can act as a supplement to religion, or as its replacement.

“Ideology” was invented at the end of the eighteenth century as an alternative to religion and was intended to exercise the same impact on people’s minds and behavior. The French philosopher Antoine Destutt de Tracy (1754–1836), who coined the term “ideology,” used *les éléments d'idéologie* as a foundation for his secular epistemology. Being a faithful follower of

¹ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), 36. This statement has been criticised on the basis of the argument that the modern concepts of the state derived from Roman law and the political philosophy of Antiquity. I owe this observation to David Heith-Stade from Lund University.

² See Daniel Bell, *The End of an Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties* (New York: Collier, 1962), 399.

³ See Bell, *The End of an Ideology*, 400, 394.

the Enlightenment, de Tracy constructed ideology as a way of cognition of the truth without engaging “religious bias.”⁴ Ideology, thus, at its very inception was anti-religious.

Almost half a century later, ideology re-emerged in the works of Karl Marx (1818–1883). Now ideology itself became an object of criticism for its bias and distortion of reality: from an accusing party it turned into an accused party. Marx in his work *Die deutsche Ideologie* (1846) blamed German idealistic philosophy for misrepresenting reality.⁵ Marx pointed out that when a picture of reality is drawn on the basis of ideas alone, something that the idealist philosophers in the early nineteenth century tended to do, it produced false consciousness. A true picture of reality can be drawn only when it is interpreted through the prism of the social and economic interests of social classes. For Marx, ideologies in effect promoted the interests of those social groups that were in hold of political power and capital.

Marxism has demonstrated that fighting ideologies is like hunting dragons, according to Evgeny Shvarts’ famous play, *Dragon* (1942–1944). The dragon-hunters often turn into dragons and become worse than the ones they had fought. Marxism that wrestled with the idealist ideologies turned into an ideology itself. In its Soviet edition, it became a totalitarian ideocracy. Fascism of different modifications that came to power on the pretext of fighting against Communism also turned into a totalitarian ideology.⁶ In the twentieth century, ideology became a blueprint for gigantic projects of social engineering and led to bloodbaths with millions of human lives sacrificed at its altars. Isaiah Berlin put it right:

The great ideological storms of the twentieth century have altered the lives of virtually all mankind: the Russian Revolution and its aftermath — totalitarian tyrannies of both right and left and the explosions of nationalism, racism, and, in places, of religious bigotry which, interestingly enough, not one among the most perceptive social thinkers of the nineteenth century had ever predicted. When our descendants, in two or three centuries’ time (if mankind survives until then), come to look at our age, it is these two phenomena that will, I think, be held to be the outstanding characteristics of our century — the most demanding of explanation and analysis. But it is as well to realize that these great movements began with ideas in people’s heads: ideas about what relations between men have been, are, might be, and should be; and to realize how they came to be transformed in the name of a vision of some supreme goal in the minds of the leaders, above all of the prophets with armies at their backs.⁷

⁴ Destutt de Tracy’s main work *Eléments d’idéologie*, published in 5 volumes in the period 1801–1815, has the same title. See Bell, *The End of an Ideology*, 394–95.

⁵ See Harald Bluhm, *Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Die deutsche Ideologie* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2010).

⁶ See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1951); Tama Weisman, *Hannah Arendt and Karl Marx: On Totalitarianism and the Tradition of Western Political Thought* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014); Peter Baehr, *Hannah Arendt, Totalitarianism, and the Social Sciences* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

⁷ Isaiah Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, ed. Henry Hardy (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013), 1.

The End of Ideologies?

The tragic consequences of the totalitarian ideologies led to the crisis of ideology as a genre. In 1960, Daniel Bell declared that ideology by his time had run its course.⁸ In some sense, he was right, as ideology had indeed lost its spell over the minds of people, at least in the West. This happened largely owing to the advances of postmodernism, which emerged at the beginning of the century, but came to fuller fruition after World War II. Postmodernism is not just another philosophical doctrine, but a “discourse” communicated through the means of philosophy, literature, theatre, cinema, etc. By these means it has penetrated into every pore of the intellectual and cultural life of the West. One of the reasons why postmodernism was constructed and promoted was to weaken the grip of the totalitarian ideologies on the masses. Ideology and postmodernism excluded each other by definition — at least this was the intention behind the latter.⁹ However, as has happened with all ideology-hunters, postmodernism gradually began turning into an ideology, with relativism as one of the elements of the ideological approach to reality.

This feature of postmodernism scares many in the realm of religion and theology, and not completely without good reason.¹⁰ However, postmodern relativism is two-edged. Although it may challenge the integrity of theological doctrine, it can also help it to get rid of the atavisms of totalitarian ideologies. In their struggle for human minds and souls, the totalitarianisms of the twentieth century either attacked religion or flirted with it. In both cases, they infected religion with ideologies. Postmodernism has the power to liberate the church from the impact of totalitarian doctrines. Of course, postmodernism cannot supply the church with truth. It helps, however, the church to clean up its own sources of truth by impeding secular ideas turning into theological maxims, or “objects into idols,” as Graham Ward has put it in his introduction to *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology*.¹¹

As *The Economist* in its December 2005 issue remarked, “Mr. Bell could hardly have been more unlucky with his timing. If the 1950s was a graveyard of ideologies, the 1960s proved to be a breeding ground.”¹² Indeed, the “end of ideology” launched a new epoch, which became dominated by ideologies of a new type.¹³ At the turn of this epoch, Samuel Huntington as early as in 1957 defined ideology as “a system of ideas concerned with the distribution of political

⁸ Bell was not the first and not the only intellectual who came to such conclusions. Before he published his book, the Congress for Cultural Freedom in Milan in 1955, for instance, discussed the same issue with the participation of Raymond Aron, Seymour Martin Lipset, and others who have also contributed to the idea of the “end of ideology.”

⁹ David Hawkes, *Ideology* (London: Routledge, 2003), 5.

¹⁰ See Hawkes, *Ideology*, 12.

¹¹ Graham Ward, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2008), xxiii.

¹² “The End of Ideology: On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Bush Era,” *The Economist*, December 1, 2005, accessed April 12, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/node/5249826>.

¹³ See Kathleen Knight, “Transformations of the Concept of Ideology in the Twentieth Century,” *The American Political Science Review* 100.4 (2006): 619.

and social values and acquiesced in by a significant social group.”¹⁴ From a driving force of wars, ideology turned into “one of the basic forms of social cognition that at the same time define the identity of a group,”¹⁵ and a “cultural software”¹⁶ that helps society to reflect on itself and to shape social and political action. In this sense, ideology became a more neutral and descriptive concept applicable to a wide array of social phenomena.

Ideological Liberalism and Conservatism

This next stage in the evolution of ideology was best described by American political science and sociology. Scholars like Philip Converse and Anthony Downs developed it as a binary of liberalism-conservatism.¹⁷ This new framework, which was designed to explain ideology, reflected the American political system with its two antagonist parties: the Democratic and the Republican. The ideological bipolarity of liberal-conservative was in some sense tuned up to fit the American two-party political system.¹⁸ In this bipolar framework, “liberals,” who are supposed to support the Democratic party, share “concern for social progress and human betterment, especially for the poor and powerless.”¹⁹ They believe that the well-being of a person is conditioned by the state. Therefore, they advocate constant political and social reforms as a way to improve the human condition. They acknowledge “the potential perfectibility of man and his capacity to manage his own affairs in a responsible and reasoned fashion.”²⁰ The bottom-

¹⁴ Samuel Huntington, “Conservatism as an Ideology,” *The American Political Science Review* 51.2 (1957): 454.

¹⁵ Teun A. van Dijk, *Ideology: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (London: Sage, 1998), 18.

¹⁶ This image has been employed by J. M. Balkin: “The metaphor of ‘cultural software’ proposes that we can compare certain features of culture, and of the way that culture operates, to the software that is installed on a computer and that allows a computer to process information. Simply put, cultural software enables and limits understanding as software enables and limits a computer.” J. M. Balkin, *Cultural Software: A Theory of Ideology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 4.

¹⁷ See Philip E. Converse, *The Dynamics of Party Support: Cohort-Analyzing Party Identification* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1976); Anthony Downs, *Political Theory and Public Choice* (Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: E. Elgar, 1998); Knight, “Transformations of the Concept of Ideology,” 623. Sometimes socialism is added as a third interlocutor to liberalism and conservatism. See Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper, eds., *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (London: Routledge, 2004), 162.

¹⁸ The dilemma of liberalism versus conservatism is reductionist and neglects many in-between tints of the ideological spectrum. Moreover, the bipolar system of American democracy is not the only explanation of the dichotomisation of the conservative and liberal ideologies. As Marina M. Schlotzhauer has suggested in response to the draft of this article, this dilemma can be expressed in the terms of the gender juxtaposition of masculine and feminine, or in the terms of nationalism versus realism.

¹⁹ Herbert McClosky and John Zaller, *The American Ethos: Public Attitudes Toward Capitalism and Democracy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 190.

²⁰ McClosky and Zaller, *The American Ethos*, 190.

line of liberalism is that “all individuals are in theory free and equal,” and liberalism therefore “refuses to accept that repressive hierarchies are natural.”²¹

Conservatism historically developed as a criticism of liberalism. Its founder, Edmund Burke (1729–1797), criticized the French revolution and the social contract suggested by Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Therefore, while liberals normally do not object when their doctrine is referred to as an ideology, conservatives often do. Nevertheless, conservatism is an ideology. This ideology holds that “most people need strong leaders, firm laws and institutions, and strict moral codes to keep their appetites under control.”²² According to the conservative credo, “conventional norms and practices are essential to human wellbeing.”²³

Despite all its reductions and the America-based agenda, the distinction between liberalism and conservatism is helpful in examining the relationship between global ideologies and theology. Liberalism and conservatism correlate (but should not be fully identified!) with two universal attitudes of human nature and human communities, which can be characterized as *open* and *closed*. The open (“liberal”) attitude to human nature and the community is inclusive, extravert, and centrifugal. It is eager to discover new territories and trusts that what is to be discovered there is good. The closed (“conservative”) attitude does not trust new experience as much. Its main concern is to preserve the integrity of the individual and community. In the dilemma of either going further at the risk of losing what he or she has, or to maintain possession without knowing what is beyond the horizon, a “conservative” always chooses the latter. Liberalism and conservatism thus reflect the two archetypical approaches to organizing human communities, which can be traced throughout centuries of human thought.

Anthropological Roots of Ideologies

These two approaches are rooted in anthropology, which developed around two poles: one pessimistic and the other optimistic.²⁴ In the Western tradition, these two poles can be approximated to the theological positions of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.²⁵ Augustine saw human nature as deeply corrupted by sin and radically disabled in exercising its activities in a proper way. In order to function normally, it requires the intervention of divine grace. Thomas, although recognizing the impact of original sin on human nature, considered nature to be more integral and capable of acting in accordance with natural law.

At the core of these two anthropological paradigms, pessimistic and optimistic, is the issue of freedom. Optimistic anthropology holds that despite all their imperfection, human beings are capable of handling their freedom without external assistance. There are abuses of freedom, of course, but they occur because of the very nature of freedom. Freedom cannot be what it is, if

²¹ Bryan Turner, ed., *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 337.

²² McClosky and Zaller, *The American Ethos*, 190.

²³ McClosky and Zaller, *The American Ethos*, 190.

²⁴ See Elizabeth Phillips, “Teaching Political Theology,” *Political Theology* 13.6 (2012): 675.

²⁵ See Elizabeth Phillips, *Political Theology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2012), 32.

it does not imply a possibility of abuse. In other words, it is impossible to say “yes” to God, to self, and to other people, without the potentiality of saying “no.” There is no “yes” without “no,” as there is no freedom without the possibility of failure. Abuses of freedom cannot cancel freedom as such. On the contrary, they demonstrate that human freedom is real.

Pessimistic anthropology looks at human freedom with a suspicion: as at a source of evil. Which indeed can be the case. Those who favor this anthropology try to limit the negative consequences of human freedom by limiting freedom as such. They invoke the falseness and sins of human nature as an excuse to impose restrictions on freedom. These restrictions can be moral and political, imposed on individuals as well as on groups. This anthropology favors different kinds of coercion to “correct” human behavior and belief.

These two anthropological approaches project themselves onto the political scene as liberal and conservative political doctrines. For the former, human beings are “fundamentally unencumbered” in exercising their freedom and rationality. As a result, they do not require paternalism from the state.²⁶ In contrast to this, political conservatism builds on the “argument about the corrupted soul after the fall from paradise.”²⁷ It develops a “profoundly pessimistic view of the human condition,” which has been profoundly affected by the original sin.²⁸

Eastern Christian anthropology can be an alternative to the radically “pessimistic” and radically “optimistic” anthropological poles developed in the West. Its mainstream was probably best articulated by the Byzantine monk Maximus the Confessor (c. 580–662). In the course of the controversies concerning the activities and wills of Christ, he suggested that sin affects not so much human nature as such, but the “gnomic” will of a person.²⁹ The “gnomic” will is a function of the human mind (*nous*) and a subject to ignorance, doubts, and an opposition of opinions and evaluations.³⁰ Thus, the corruptness of human nature is concentrated in the deciding and willing part of it, where freedom resides. Nature in total, however, remains a good creature of God. By putting the gravity of the capacity to make mistakes on the human will (not to be confused with freedom!), Maximus avoided the extremes of both optimism and pessimism regarding human nature.

This does not, however, mean that Eastern anthropology did not feature its own extremes: “Monophysite” and “Nestorian.” The former was developed by the Byzantine monk Eutyches (c. 380 — c. 456), who believed that human nature was so imperfect that it had to mix up

²⁶ Austin Harrington, Barbara Marshall, and Hans-Peter Müller, eds., *Encyclopedia of Social Theory* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), 320–21.

²⁷ Harrington et al., *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, 95.

²⁸ Harrington et al., *Encyclopedia of Social Theory*, 95.

²⁹ “Disputatio cum Pyrrho,” in *Patrologia Graeca*, ed. J. — P. Migne, v. 91, coll. 308C-D, 325A.

³⁰ See Vlasios Pheidias, *Ekklesiastiki Istoría* I, 2nd ed. (Athens, 1994); Nikolaos Matsoukas, *Dogmatiki kai Symboliki Theologia* II (Thessaloniki: Pournara, 1992), 341; Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Chicago, Ill: Open Court, 1995), 215; Joseph P. Farrell, *Free Choice in St. Maximus the Confessor* (South Canan, PA: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 1989), 123; Andrew Louth, *Maximus the Confessor* (London; New York: Routledge, 1996), 61–62; Andrew Louth, *St. John Damascene: Tradition and Originality in Byzantine Theology* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 168.

with divine nature in order to be saved. This anthropology was close to Augustine's, though expressed in different, and more extreme, terms. The other extreme was articulated by the Syrian theologian Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350–428), and was promoted by the Patriarch of Constantinople, Nestorius (c. 386 — c. 450). According to their standpoint, human nature does not require the intervention of the divine in order to be sound. Human beings can improve through their own effort, following the moral example of Christ. This anthropological position would be appreciated by Rousseau and his confederates.

One could expect that the well-balanced Maximian anthropology, which was adopted by the Eastern church, would have produced a model of statehood that would be more appreciative of human freedom and dignity. This did not happen, however, and the Eastern type of state became notoriously abusive of human rights. The explanation to this striking incoherence between the anthropological and political models in the East is that the latter was built not on anthropology, but on cosmology. Indeed, Eastern Christendom adopted the Neoplatonic model of the universe, which features a strict hierarchism and subordination as a pattern of building relations between the state and its subjects. In this model, all fine Eastern concepts of human nature were ignored.

The Role of Freedom

At the core of all anthropological models of modern political systems is the issue of freedom. Freedom is a keyword of our time, as “*logos*” was a keyword of antiquity, and “reason,” of the Enlightenment. Liberal models consider personal freedom an ultimate value, which needs to be protected from the state and any other agent. These models, however, often vulgarize freedom and reduce it to the freedom of choice: the more choices a person has, the freer he or she is believed to be. The “conservative” models also accept the value of personal freedom, but have serious reservations about the ability of a person to handle it responsibly. They believe, therefore, that the state should be authorized to control the limits of human freedom. The two ideological approaches disagree on the issue of freedom. Each of them tries to impose its own interpretation of human freedom and nature. Exclusive dominance of either the liberal or conservative anthropological model would threaten the integrity of the community and individual correspondingly. As Stanley Hauerwas puts it:

The problem in liberal societies is that there seems to be no way to encourage the development of public virtue without accepting a totalitarian strategy from the left or an elitist strategy from the right. By standing as an alternative to each, the church may well help free our social imagination from those destructive choices.³¹

Indeed, the interpretation of freedom suggested by the church can be a way to resolve some social and political tensions in modern society. However, the problem is that there is no single *theological* interpretation of what freedom is. Another problem is that it is difficult to

³¹ George Wolfgang Forell, ed., *Christian Social Teachings: A Reader in Christian Social Ethics from the Bible to the Present* (Lanham, MD: Augsburg Fortress, 2012), 504.

translate a healthy theological interpretation of freedom into a political *praxis*. In other words, even though the churches have a huge potentiality to overcome ideologies, they often get trapped in them. Let us consider several cases of how this happens.

The Influence of Ideology on the Modern Church

The interaction between theology and ideology should be considered in the light of the similarities between them: ideology in many respects imitates theology and uses its communicative instruments. Historically, their relationship was dialectical. When ideologies emerged from the cradle of theology, the latter supplied ideologies with many of its insights and vocabulary. Ideologies emancipated from theology, either radically or moderately, and then influenced theology back. After the eighteenth century, the churches both in the West and in the East found themselves under the permanent influence of ideologies of all varieties. This happened because the churches traditionally had a significant presence in the political sphere and did not want to leave it. The presence of the churches in the political sphere led to many distortions of their purpose and mission. As Darryl Hart has rightly remarked, “where Christians have tried to use their faith for political engagement they have generally distorted Christianity.”³² Ideologized theology often produced this kind of distortion and became a subject to ideology. Among the essential features of ideology is the distortion of objective reality.³³ The impact of ideologies on theology can be interpreted in a similar way: ideologized theology is unable to clearly see objective theological truths: it mixes them up with various political *desiderata*.

Political Orthodoxy and its Condemnation

Among the relatively recent instances of polarisation and division of the church under the influences of ideology is Ukraine. The country has three Orthodox churches, which do not recognize each other. The largest of them is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) in communion with the Patriarchate of Moscow. This is the only Ukrainian church recognized by the fellowship of the Orthodox churches worldwide. The second largest church is the Patriarchate of Kyiv (UOC KP), which was founded in 1992. The smallest church is the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), which originates from the Autocephalous movement that began in 1918. There is also a Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC), a Catholic Church *sui iuris*, which follows the Eastern rite.

Although the Orthodox churches in Ukraine pretend that their divisions have canonical reasons, the real reasons of the divisions are political. The churches are divided along ideological lines. However, these lines do not lie exactly along the borders between “conservatism” and “liberalism.” The division started in the early 1990s between the pro-Russian and anti-Russian parts of Ukrainian society after Ukraine gained independence in 1991. It gradually developed

³² Darryl Hart, *A Secular Faith: Why Christianity Favors the Separation of Church and State* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006), 11.

³³ See Craig Calhoun, ed., *Dictionary of the Social Sciences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 223.

to a form of ideological opposition. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in unity with the Moscow Patriarchate is large, and the majority of its members do not demonstrate their political preferences, which are diverse. However, the politically active minority of this church is loud in proclaiming the ideas of political unity with Moscow, advocates the concept of the “Russian world” and even the restoration of the Soviet Union. They share conservative and sometimes ultra-conservative views. Many in the Patriarchate of Kyiv demonstrate pro-Western and pro-democracy sympathies. This does not necessarily mean that this church is “liberal,” but that people with liberal views feel at home there. As for the UAOC, its ideological profile was formed in the Soviet period. This church absorbed anti-Soviet sentiments and dissidence. When it was brought back to Ukraine from exile after 1991, many people from the Ukrainian intelligentsia associated themselves with this church, which opposed the presumably “Soviet” Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchates. By now, however, this church has largely lost its anti-Soviet and dissident charm. Ideological standpoint regarding “Sovietism” has become the main divisive line in Ukrainian society and among the Ukrainian churches.

The UOC MP tried to deal with ideologization, which it identified as “political Orthodoxy,” by condemning the openly pro-Soviet ideological movement lurking inside it at its council in 2007: “We condemn the so-called ‘political Orthodoxy,’ which provisions bringing political slogans to the church.”³⁴ This was the only registered conciliar event in the post-Soviet context, by which a local Orthodox church tried to distance itself from a political ideology. Other conciliar events in the same context rather enhanced the affiliation of the churches with ideologies.³⁵

The term “political Orthodoxy” was coined with the concept of “political Islam” in mind. This concept has been defined as “the mobilization of Islamic identity in pursuit of particular objectives of public policy, both within an Islamic society and in its relations with other societies.”³⁶ In the case of “political Orthodoxy” in Ukraine, there is a mobilization of the Orthodox identity in pursuit of the particular objectives of public policy, namely expansion of the “Russian world” and restoration of the Soviet project in post-Soviet countries. This intention of the adherents of “political Orthodoxy” precisely fits the definition of ideology as a form of the translation of beliefs into social and political action.

The Ukrainian controversy concerning “political Orthodoxy” resembles the earlier controversy on the issue of “political theology” in the interwar period in Germany between Eric Peterson and Carl Schmitt. At that time, when “political theology” was coined as a term, it was regarded as a justification of conformism with the National-Socialistic ideology of the Third Reich. Peterson condemned this conformism and claimed that “political theology” has nothing to do with Christianity. His opponent, who also happened to be his personal friend, Carl Schmitt,

³⁴ Protocol 2 of the council of bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (December 21, 2007), available on the official website of the UOC, accessed February 7, 2013, <http://orthodox.org.ua/article/protokol-%E2%84%962-zas%D1%96dannya-soboru-%D1%96piskop%D1%96v-ukra%D1%967nsko%D1%967-pravoslavno%D1%967-tserkvi-1>.

³⁵ I primarily mean the World Russian People’s Councils organised by the Moscow Patriarchate.

³⁶ Abdullahi A. An-Na’im, “Political Islam in National Politics and International Relations,” in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Washington, DC; Grand Rapids, MI: Ethics and Public Policy Center; Eerdmans, 1999), 103.

in contrast, supported the idea of “political theology.” The controversy between Peterson and Schmitt was essentially about the role of ideology in theology. Peterson was strongly against the ideologization of theology, while Schmitt considered this process as normal. History, however, proved that Peterson was right.

New Orthodoxy and New Heresy

Even though the history of the German churches during the Nazi period demonstrated how dangerous an alliance of ideology and theology could be, ideologies are still welcomed by the churches. Ideologies also continue creating divisive lines within the churches, particularly along the watershed between “conservative” and “liberal” doctrines. Thus, for instance, in the Greek Orthodox Church, the issue of conservatism and liberalism of the hierarchs is usually exploited in the wake of the elections of a new primate. Because it is widely accepted that a liberal hierarch cannot be elected a primate of the church, to make someone unelectable, rivals campaign against him as a “liberal.” The Russian Orthodox Church has adopted the dualism of “liberal” — “conservative” in order to fit state propaganda, which targets the “liberal” class as non-patriotic, pro-Western, and “Russophobic.”

In effect, “conservatism” in this new ideological framework, widely accepted by the churches, has become a sort of new Orthodoxy, while “liberalism” — a new heresy. When a clergyman is declared liberal, he can be penalized as if he were a heretic. At the same time, un-Orthodox views can be forgiven for those who promote them under the mask of conservatism. Ideology has thus established new criteria of Orthodoxy and heresy in the church.

Moreover, new supra-confessional alliances are being attempted on the basis of the criteria of conservative *versus* liberal ideologies. Hierarchs from the conservative camp can more easily find a common language with hierarchs from a similar ideological group in a different confessional tradition, than with hierarchs or lay people from a liberal camp in the same confession. The same applies to the “liberals” who more easily find a common language with the liberals from another confession than with their own conservative brethren. Ideology thus creates a new ecumenical framework, which brings closer the “conservatives” and “liberals” from various confessional or even religious groups. Ironically, “conservatives” who foster such a new ecumenism often declare themselves anti-ecumenical. This means that the separation between “conservative” and “liberal” appears to be preeminent to the separation between political and theological. This also explains why churches easily collaborate with totalitarian political regimes — because they share with them the same ideological agendas.

Conclusions

Ideologies function in the realm of theology in the same way as they do everywhere else: they stereotype the truth; make it more comprehensible and translatable into social and political action. This comes at the expense of various aberrations in the perception of truth. Paul Lakeland is right when he observes that “ideology [...] whether it is political or religious [...] distorts the

gospel.”³⁷ When the church identifies itself with one of the ideologies, it dramatically reduces the truth, which it expresses. Ideologies reduce the relationship of human beings with God to moral and civil values, and turn metaphysics into a civil religion.³⁸ As Daniel Bell put it: “Religion symbolized, drained away, dispersed emotional energy from the world onto the litany, the liturgy, the sacraments, the edifices, the arts. Ideology fuses these energies and channels them into politics.”³⁹ Ideologies polarize religious groups. They make the church, in the description of Daniel Izuzquiza, “divided between traditionalists and progressives, conservatives and liberals, those accentuating identity and those stressing dialogue, ‘Christians of presence’ and ‘Christians of mediation,’ and so on.”⁴⁰

Can the liberal and conservative ideologies be exiled from the church as constant troublemakers? One wishes they would, but, unfortunately, this will always be a good wish. It would be very naïve to believe that the church could be set free from ideologies, whatever definition of ideology we adopt. Any campaign in support of liberation of the church from ideology can soon turn into an ideological campaign. The ideologies will mutate, but not go away. Does this make the church a hostage to ideologies? I think not. The church cannot create an ideology-free zone, but it can disarm ideologies. It can provide a framework where ideologies would not harm. The first step to the disarmament of ideologies would be to recognize that there *are* ideologies in the church and they are different from the church as such and from theology. “The terrible paradox,” as Olga Sedakova puts it, is that “ideology penetrates into Christianity and is not recognized as opposite to it.”⁴¹ Ideologies thus should be recognized in the church, and the church should accept that it is dangerous to be identified with them.

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³⁷ Paul Lakeland, *Freedom in Christ: An Introduction to Political Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), 94.

³⁸ On the role of values in ideologies, see: Milton Rokeach, *Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values: A Theory of Organization and Change* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1968); Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973); Milton Rokeach, *Understanding Human Values: Individual and Societal* (New York: Free Press, 1979).

³⁹ Bell, *The End of an Ideology*, 400.

⁴⁰ Daniel Izuzquiza, *Rooted in Jesus Christ: Toward a Radical Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), x.

⁴¹ Olga Sedakova, “Subkultura ili ideologija [Subculture or Ideology]?” *Religio.ru*, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://religio.ru/columns/14179/comment-page-1>.

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