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## SPECIFICS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN STATE AND CHURCH IN MODERN GEORGIA

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Features of the model of state-religious relations that have developed so far in Georgia are being considered. The position of the Georgian Orthodox Church in Georgian society is due to the historical and social significance of its activities in the most difficult post-Soviet period of the formation of Georgian independence. It is argued that the presence of religion, using the example of the Georgian Orthodox Church in Georgian society, is a special model, different from Russian, and generally uncharacteristic for Orthodoxy. This model allowed the clergy of the Georgian Orthodox Church to actively participate in the ongoing internal political and socio-cultural processes, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the power of the Church in society. As a result, the Georgian Orthodox Church has become a powerful institution in the public sphere, although the principle of separation of church from state is legally binding.

Key words: Georgian Orthodox Church, state-church relations, public space, secularism.

**[Н.Г. Келеберда, А.И. Рябошапка Специфика отношений государства и церкви в современной Грузии]**

Рассматриваются особенности той модели государственно-религиозных отношений, которые сложились к настоящему времени в Грузии. Положение Грузинской Православной Церкви в грузинском обществе обусловлено той исторической и общественной значимостью ее деятельности в труднейший постсоветский период становления независимости Грузии. Утверждается, что присутствие религии, на примере ГПЦ в грузинском обществе, представляют собой особую модель, отличную от российской, и в целом нехарактерную для Православия. Такая модель позволила духовенству ГПЦ активно включиться в происходящие внутривластные и социокультурные процессы, что в свою очередь способствует усилению власти Церкви в обществе. В результате ГПЦ стала мощнейшим институтом в общественной сфере, хотя принцип отделения церкви от государства является юридически обязательным.

Ключевые слова: Грузинская Православная Церковь, государственно-церковные отношения, общественное пространство, секуляризм.

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In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it has become apparent that religion is a tool for influencing mental values and priorities in people's social practices. Modern social processes are characterized by the removal of tightly structured standards and the peculiar representation of this process in the aspect of state-religious relations. One of the most important trends is rethinking of

public space by the introduction of digital technologies and, in this regard, the role and significance of relations between the state and religion, which function precisely in public space. Modeling the processes of state-church relations in public space has various approaches. Researchers [6] distinguish eight established models, in particular, the Balkan model, the Central European Catholic model, the Austro-Hungarian historical model, the Catholic subregional model, the Protestant Central European models, the Romanian historical and cultural model, the East Slavic Orthodox model, the Greek Orthodox model, among which the Georgian model stands out for the uniqueness of historical and cultural principles of interaction with the authorities.

Orthodoxy began to spread in Georgia in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and was very soon adopted as a state religion. In the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Orthodoxy in Georgia received autocephaly, that is, independence from Byzantium. After Georgia became part of the Russian Empire in 1801, the Georgian Orthodox Church lost independence, receiving the status of exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church, which lasted until 1917. In 1943, the Moscow Patriarch recognized Georgian autocephaly. In other words, being a Soviet republic, Georgia had its own patriarch.

Unlike the Russian Orthodox Church, the Georgian clergy had and now have more considerable authority in the public space. In particular, historically, Georgian bishops could, for example, command troops, as well as perform important secular functions.

The fundamental difference is the factor that the modern Georgian model of state-religious relations rests on a bedrock of "ethno-religious nationalism," which establishes a close connection between ethnic Georgians and Christianity.

In addition, the public space of modern Georgia is freer from the influence of Soviet ideology, but also more concentrated around Georgian culture. On the other hand, the European orientation of the public space of Georgian society after the Rose Revolution in 2003 reformed its configuration towards the European legal system with democratic institutions. At the same time, the Georgian church, according to Patriarch Ilia II, is not an obstacle to European integration, provided that Georgian culture is preserved. He stressed that "European structures are necessary, but at the same time we should not lose our values, that is, our Georgian... values" [3]. At the same time, the Georgian clergy actively participate in protest actions if European values pose a threat to the ethno-religious dominants of Georgian society. The example is the strong disagreement of the Georgian church with the 2011 amendment to the Civil Code [2] concerning religious organizations, which proposed to level traditional and non-traditional religions in rights by granting everyone the status of a legal entity. The clergy organized protests, expressing disagreement with the European demand for equality of religions. Thus, the Georgian Orthodox Church is able to mobilize citizens, which in turn indicates the serious internal political weight of the Georgian clergy.

At the same time, article 9 of paragraph 1 of the Constitution of Georgia [1], recognizing the special status of the Georgian church, guarantees the separation of the church from the state. But since no other religion is granted a special status, it can be considered that legally the church in Georgia retains a privileged position.

The specifics of the Georgian model are the conclusion of a special agreement, concordat between the church and the state in 2011 [4]. This is a unique model that has no analogues in the Orthodox world. The concordat is a model of relations between the state and the church, enshrined in a special Constitutional agreement, which is adopted by a vote in Parliament. With the adoption of the concordat, the state assumed responsibility for material and moral damage caused in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the Georgian church gained the right to compensation for damage, the right to purchase state property, exemption of clergy from taxes, from compulsory military service. In addition, the Georgian church performs an advisory function in matters of education and cultural heritage.

The concordat is a phenomenon of the Catholic world resulting from disputes about investiture, that is, the question of the jurisdiction of the church hierarchy: who should appoint bishops and determine the range of their duties, the pope or the king? The result was the conclusion first of London Concordat in 1107, and then of the Concordat of Worms in 1122. The concordat is a compromise agreement recognizing the duality of the position of the clergy, endowed with signs of both secular power on the part of the state and signs of spiritual power on the part of the pope, that is, the bishop becomes acceptable to both church power and secular. The concordat points to the close connection of Catholicism with state power, which is reflected in the consolidation of these relations in the Constitutions, for example, of Italy, Poland.

The concordat is being perceived not so much as separation but as cooperation, and this cooperation manifests itself in giving religious associations and organizations a different legal status. The goal is to recognize the religious requests of the majority of citizens and at the same time to strive to avoid discrimination on religious grounds. The papal throne, which is located in Italy, provides a large influence of the Catholic Church on political and social life, so it is not surprising that the conceptual framework of the concordat fits into the idea of cooperation. So, the concordat is a Catholic historical-cultural tradition of state-church relations based on agreement in strictly defined areas, enshrined in the constitution of the state.

The Georgian concordat suggests that the model of the presence of the Georgian church in the public space developed in post-Soviet Georgia fundamentally stems not so much from the historical and cultural significance of Orthodoxy for Georgian society but from an attempt to adapt to the requirements and spirit of the European Union. It is likely that the concordat for the Georgian Orthodox Church was an effective opportunity to resist the onslaught of Central European religious expansion into the territory of Georgia. In this case, the word "separation" is clear in the definition of state-church relations according to the Constitution of Georgia [1].

On the other hand, during the post-Soviet transformation of public space in Georgia, the nature of nationalist sentiments during the reign of President Z. Gamsakhurdia had an ethno-religious colouring. Z. Gamsakhurdia, being the most influential politician, tried to unite Georgians around an ethno-religious sign, while discriminating against those who did not belong to Orthodoxy. It was he who, according to Vakhridze [6, p. 84] established a specific "form" of Georgian nationalism on the basis of a close connection between ethnic Georgians and Orthodoxy, which remains today, influencing the ethnic minorities of Georgia.

Thus, Georgia has developed a special model of relations between the state and religion, the uniqueness of which is due to the desire of the Georgian people to preserve the identity of the national Georgian culture and statehood. However, this model does not correspond to the doctrine of the nature of Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church. Dogmatically, the Orthodox Church is ecumenical, which means it is impossible to limit its contours to local national ideas. In this sense, the concordat of the Georgian Orthodox Church contradicts the dogmas of Orthodoxy and can be regarded as a retreat.

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