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A Theme Issue on the Impact of the Ukrainian Crisis on the Church and Christian Ministry

Since I began editing the *East-West Church and Ministry Report* in 1993, perhaps no development in post-Soviet states has had more potential import for churches and Christian ministry in Europe's eastern reaches than the present political crisis in Ukraine. Already the impact has been widespread and profound with, sadly, no end in sight.

The conflict between post-Maidan Ukraine and Putin's Russia has had substantial—and will have ongoing—consequences for 1) relations among Ukraine's three Orthodox jurisdictions; 2) relations between Orthodox in Ukraine and Orthodox in Russia; 3) relations between Protestants in Ukraine and Protestants in Russia; 4) relations among Ukrainian Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches; 5) the status of missionaries and foreign clergy in Ukraine and Russia; and 6) last, but arguably as important as all of the above, growing Russian restrictions on freedom of conscience for non-Orthodox believers—in play before the Ukrainian crisis but definitely exacerbated by it. The present issue—by far the lengthiest in the *East-West Church and Ministry Report's* 22 years of publication—includes contributions from Ukrainians, Russians, and Americans; and from indigenous church workers, missionaries, and academics. Authors, predominately Protestant, hail from Kyiv, Donetsk, Moscow, Washington, DC, and Wilmore, Kentucky, U.S.A. In future issues the editor heartily welcomes Orthodox and Catholic as well as evangelical responses. ♦

Mark R. Elliott, Editor

The Ukrainian Revolution and Christian Churches

Roman Lunkin

The dramatic events that have unfolded in Ukraine in 2013-14 have revealed major, painful issues of Ukrainian life: a country pressed to make the torturous choice between Russia and the West (the European Union and the U.S.) and ineffective attempts to overcome the schism between Ukraine's East and West. The Christian churches of Ukraine are also facing serious questions that they have tried to answer throughout the past 23 years of the country's independence. In this stressful period Christian churches have undertaken a most important task: to identify a socio-political ideology to unite Ukraine—or at least not split it even more.

Ukrainian Religious Devotion and Diversity

Russian believers can only envy the religious freedom that churches enjoy in Ukraine, and Ukraine's religious diversity makes it the only country of the former Soviet Union with no ruling, "traditional" religion. Russia does not fully understand that Ukraine is one of the most church-minded countries in Europe with its 35,000 churches in a population of 50 million. In addition to the large number of churches, Ukraine possesses a great diversity of Christian confessions: three different Orthodox patriarchies, Eastern- and Latin-Rite Catholics, and many different Protestant churches. Baptists, Pentecostals, Adventists, and many other evangelical denominations are spread all over the whole territory of Ukraine, including mega-churches with thousands of members in both eastern and western Ukraine.

With close to 20,000 Orthodox parishes and over 9,000 Protestant congregations, it is obvious that in Ukraine, Orthodoxy and Protestantism are the leading Christian churches. Among Orthodox jurisdictions the leading church is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP), with just over two-thirds of all Orthodox parishes in Ukraine. Since 1996 the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches has united 18 major confessions and unions, including Orthodox Churches of the Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchies, Eastern-Rite Catholics, Baptists, Pentecostals, and even Muslims.

Where the Churches Stand on Maidan

The Orange Revolution of 2004-05 was triggered by the 21 November 2004 announcement of the victory of pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich in a fraudulent presidential election. In a subsequent revote, pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko won the election. The more recent Euromaidan Revolution, dating from 21 November 2013 on Kyiv's Maidan Square, has supported European integration. Its protests were triggered by President Yanukovich's decision not to sign a European association agreement in favor of closer ties with Russia. Both in 2004-05 and 2013-14 all Christian churches actively supported first "Orange Power" leaders Viktor Yushchenko and Yulia Timoshenko, then Euro-integration and President Yanukovich's removal from power (after 21 February 2014), essentially recognizing the legitimacy of the government of Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenuk and acting president Olyksandr Turchynov. The Eastern-Rite Catholic and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP) have consistently supported pro-Western positions (the Orange Revolution and the 2014 ouster of Yanukovich), as befits the nationalistic preferences of central and

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western Ukraine where these churches are strongest. In the meantime, it should be noted that unlike the pro-Western churches, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate did not take public political positions that might be expected (pro-Russian statements in either 2004-05 or 2013-14 to date) and has not supported any political party to date.

The All-Ukrainian Church Council, whose members called upon all parties to seek a peaceful resolution of differences, played a public role of peacemaker in the most recent 2013-14 crisis without acting on behalf of any party. After President Yanukovich's flight on 23 February, the Council had meetings with Turchynov and Yatsenuk, and after the actual loss of Crimea (18 March 2014), the Council supported the territorial integrity of Ukraine and spoke against Russia's aggression in Crimea. UOC MP Metropolitan Anthony (Pakanich), head of the Council, signed the above statements. Because of the illness of UOC MP Metropolitan Vladimir (Sabodan), Metropolitan Onufry (Beresovsky) was elected *locum tenens* of the UOC MP and became head of the Council on 24 February 2014.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP)

The UOC MP navigated the situation with agility. Its priests were standing in prayer between protestors and police trying to prevent bloodshed. The internal affairs of the UOC MP were stabilized by the fact that its leadership changed almost at the same time as the government of the country. The head of the UOC MP Information Service, Archpriest Georgy Kovalenko, played an important conciliatory role, explaining the church's Christian position, asking Russian mass media not to address all Ukrainians as fascists and Nazis. Active pro-Russian supporters of Yanukovich in the UOC MP lost out. Metropolitan Pavel (Lebed), head of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra, supported Yanukovich, comparing him to Christ and the opposition He faced, but other UOC MP clergy reacted to this comparison with indignation. Most UOC MP bishops tried to support the well-balanced position of Metropolitan Onufry, who did not call for pro-Maidan actions, but in letters to Putin and Patriarch Kyrill did condemn Russia's attempts to split Ukraine. Nevertheless, other UOC MP clerics, whose Ukrainian national pride was hurt and who could not keep silent, did make harsh statements. For example, UOC MP Metropolitan Cherkassky Sophrony (Dmitruk) declared that Putin was a bandit and that Russian politicians who have Ukrainian ancestry were aggressors and traitors. On 2 March UOC MP Metropolitan Alexander (Drabinko) of Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi condemned Yanukovich, and together with a group of parishioners addressed a letter to Patriarch Kyrill explaining the role of the UOC MP in revolutionary Ukraine: "Our bishops are being rebuked, and even though the accusations are not objective, they are not unreasonable. We are called the Church of Moscow, the Kremlin, Putin, and Yanukovich." Metropolitan Alexander asked Kyrill not to use Orthodoxy in the conflict between Russia and Ukraine: "Even today when we are witnessing the crimes of the previous regime, we still have those who are ready to justify cruelty to effect the supposedly right 'civilization choice – restoration of Holy Russia's unity'." Metropolitan Alexander regrets that the UOC MP is often identified with former President Yanukovich's pro-Russian positions. In contrast, in fact, he declares, "In the first place, we are the Church of Christ, the Church of the Ukrainian people." UOC MP Bishop Lvivsky Filaret (Kucherov) addressed Putin directly on 3 March with a plea not to start a fratricidal war and to take Russian troops away from Ukrainian territory.

Patriarch Kyrill

Patriarch Kyrill reacted to the Ukrainian crisis relatively late, carefully calling all parties to reconciliation. In his second statement Kyrill recognized Ukraine's de facto right to democratic national self-identification. The Patriarch denied any imperial territorial pretensions with which Ukrainian nationalists typically accuse Moscow. However, on 14 March, during his sermon in Christ the Savior Cathedral, Patriarch Kyrill did state,

> For at least 400 years attempts have been made to break and divide the Russian world. When we say "Russian" we mean something different from our detractors speaking of the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union. We mean the Russian world, the great Russian civilization which emerged from the baptismal font of Kiev and spread across the broad lands of Eurasia…. Today there are independent states on this territory, and we respect their sovereignty, their readiness and desire to build their national life independently. But this does not mean that pursuit of legitimate sovereignty should be followed by destruction of common spiritual space.

Also very important were the steps that Patriarch Kyrill did not take. He was not present for the 18 March ceremony signing the Treaty of Crimea and Sevastopol, joining them to Russia. Also, the Russian Orthodox Church Synod has made no decisions regarding parishes in Crimea which at present remain under the jurisdiction of the UOC MP. The Synod's statement of 19 March was also very discreet. It said that the Church should be above any controversies and parties and that "The Church's borders are not defined by political preferences, ethnic differences, and even state borders."

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP)

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP), together with the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church, actively criticized the rampant corruption under Yanukovich and his Party of Regions and called for protection of the Ukrainian Motherland against Russian aggression. Patriarch UOC KP Filaret (Denisenko) also strongly criticized the Moscow Patriarchate and Patriarch Kyrill, accusing them of supporting a totalitarian ideology and Putin's attempts to reconstruct an empire. Patriarch Filaret began regularly using militaristic rhetoric. For example, on 19 March he aired a public accusation:

> On 18 March 2014 Russian leaders publicly broke three of God's commandments: thou shalt not steal; thou shalt not bear false witness

> against thy neighbor; and thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house,…nor anything that is thy neighbor's (Exodus 20: 15-17)…. President Putin in his 18 March speech in the Kremlin used the Devil's methods—mixing together the true and the false. I am positive that the half-truth that all the world heard from the Russian leader's mouth is worse than a pure lie—the same way poison hidden in food is more dangerous than an obvious toxin…. Vladimir Putin officially started using such phrases as "the Russian world," "historical Russia," "Russians are a divided nation," and "Ukrainians and Russians are one people." Such language, together with Putin's regret over the fall of the U.S.S.R. and his longing for the Soviet Union's former prominence, resembles German and Italian fascist ideology and rhetoric of the 20th century….That is why I am speaking primarily to the Ukrainian people: Our homeland has been invaded by an enemy who has occupied part of Ukraine and is trying to terminate our statehood and independence, bringing us back under Kremlin slavery.

UOC MP Senior Chaplain Metropolitan Belotserkovsky Augustine also blessed Ukrainian warriors protecting the Motherland from Russia. Here it is important to note that there is no theological difference separating Ukraine's three Orthodox churches, only emotional and political accents.

The Ukrainian Eastern-Rite Catholic Church

Ukraine's Eastern-Rite Catholic Church was the most obvious church presence in Maidan Square in downtown Kyiv. Numerous videos of the Maidan stage from which orators spoke included icons of Our Lady and Eastern-Rite Catholic priests with crosses in the background. Many Catholic activists came to Kyiv from the Lviv Region and other parts of western Ukraine. Sermons of Eastern-Rite Catholic priest Mikhail Arsenich (from the Ivano-Frankovsk Region) gained particular fame. A December 2013 sermon of this priest called for the slaughter of Russians, Chinese, Blacks, Jews, and Party of Regions members—for which his church superiors punished him with an enforced month-long season of repentance in a monastery. Eastern-Rite Catholic Patriarch Sviatoslav (Shevchuk) enjoined his priests not to back any political position. Yet he himself declared Russia to be the main aggressor and urged Western support against Moscow. On 7 February Shevchuk asked for U.S. mediation in the Ukrainian conflict. On 17 February 2014 Latin-Rite Catholic Church of Ukraine Metropolitan Lvivsky Mechislav declared in an interview with the Catholic Information Agency:

> I believe that Maidan demonstrations give Ukraine a chance if they lead to changes in the political system and westernization in politics. Thanks to them there now is hope for healing, justice for all, simplification of international travel, and improved conditions for foreign investment…. On Maidan we had our prayer tent. Franciscan fathers served Holy Mass there and prayed daily…. Believers of the Roman Catholic Church also took part in demonstrations of Maidan. Priests accompanied them in order to create an atmosphere of solidarity, peace, and mutual respect. This atmosphere of mutual solidarity and respect prevails on Maidan. We have seen a totally different Ukraine there.

Protestants and Maidan

Beginning in December 2013 the Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine, together with other churches, called for civil reconciliation, condemned abuses of power by the authorities, and supported Euromaidan protestors. Baptist and Pentecostal pastors were the most active. Nevertheless, none of the largest Evangelical churches or unions took part in Maidan. In 2004, the Charismatic Church of the Embassy of God participated in the Orange Revolution, protecting its participants, but in the Maidan demonstrations its senior pastor Sunday Adelaje backed Yanukovich prior to his flight from Ukraine. On 16 March evangelical churches took part in a prayer gathering on Maidan and later decided to have such prayers on a regular basis. Secretary of Independent Churches Brotherhood and Baptist Missions Sergey Debelinsky noted when speaking at Maidan, "We should not just be called Christians; we should be Christians. Thousands of people are volunteering to join the National Guards. Even though we do not have enough strength to stop the forces that threaten our country, we do have the all-powerful Word of God." Chairman of the Council of Independent Churches of Ukraine Anatoly Kaluzhny stated, "Today Ukraine has woken up, and God wants to bless her. He has big plans for our country. With Europe now sleeping in sinful dreams and Russia still holding to its idols, we have to bring the Word of God to both." With the same passion, Senior Bishop Mikhailo Panochko of the Christian Evangelical Church of Ukraine (Pentecostal) reminded Maidan listeners of the parable from the Gospel of Luke about the poor widow who asked the judge for help and later received it. "Jesus told his disciples that we should always pray and not grow weary. But the question arises: How can we avoid being depressed when such a fully armed Russian armada stands by our borders? How can we avoid being depressed when churches in Russia keep silent and are afraid to say to their country's leader that such things should not be done?... The church exists not just for rituals; it should also be standing in the gap for her people. Her ministers should not be afraid to speak the truth to the faces of high authorities."

Sergey Kosyak, pastor of the Assembly of God Church in Donetsk, explained the position of the church in eastern Ukraine in this difficult moment: "Christians are praying here the same as in the rest of Ukraine. Some declare their positions openly; some do not. We try not to raise political issues in the church because we have people with different views. But during prayer we emphasize unity and intercede for Ukraine. Most people in Protestant churches back the idea of the preservation of Ukraine as a whole" (16 March 2014 interview, Invictory.com).

President Olyksandr Turchynov

On 23 February 2014, in the midst of the revolutionary crisis, Baptist minister Olyksandr Turchynov, a close associate of former Prime Minister Yulia Timoshenko, became acting president of Ukraine. The country's Protestants felt pride as one of their own

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for the first time headed the government of one of the successor states of the former Soviet Union. Turchynov, born in 1964 in Dnepropetrovsk, headed the propaganda department of Ukraine's Communist Youth League before the breakup of the Soviet Union. Later, while working for President Leonid Kuchma, Turchynov first was baptized in an Orthodox Church, but later in 1999 joined a Baptist church where he serves as a lay preacher.

Unlike Orthodox-oriented politicians who try to defend the elusive idea of Orthodox unity in Ukraine, evangelical President Turchynov has initiated regular interreligious dialogues. He is one of the founders of the All-Ukrainian Church Council. Regarding creation of the Council, Turchynov said, "Being present at this gathering I was able to see the difference between those whose words do not match their deeds and those who place God and faith in the first place, with all other issues secondary" (*Faith and Life* interview, No. 1, 2001).

The new Kyiv government and President Turchynov had no difficulty building relationships with all Ukrainian churches. It was Turchynov who created the place for dialogue between believers and the government, a task which Yanukovich could not and did not want to undertake. As early as 2 March Turchynov spoke by phone with Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kyrill, with the new acting president guaranteeing the rights of all churches and confirming his desire to continue dialogue with Russia.

After the 2004 Orange Revolution, Protestantism, together with Orthodoxy, became an important factor in Ukrainian public life. Time demonstrated that the desires of Ukraine's evangelical leaders fully corresponded with the new government's desire for further post-Soviet democratization of state institutions. Basic political positions of Ukrainian Protestants include a rejection of Soviet-style domination of public life, a strong orientation toward Europe, recognition of Ukraine's cultural and historical bonds with Europe, and defense of democratic values.

One result of the Maidan Revolution has been the recognition by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches of their common support for an independent, democratic Ukraine.

Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant Common Ground

One result of the Maidan Revolution has been the recognition by Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches of their common support for an independent, democratic Ukraine. Orthodox, Eastern-Rite Catholics, and Protestants all took part in a series of joint prayers on the Euromaidan stage in Kyiv. Of course, differences among Christian confessions have not disappeared. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate went their separate ways at the beginning of the 1990s, but during Euromaidan a commission for dialogue between the two Orthodox jurisdictions resumed work. Meanwhile, Ukraine's Eastern-Rite Catholic Church is staunchly pro-Western in its orientation, as are most Protestants in central and western Ukraine and many in eastern Ukraine. Unlike Orthodox and Catholics, Protestants are spread equally across the whole territory of the country.

Churches Taking Increasingly Pro-Ukrainian Positions

The political consequences of the recent revolutionary upheavals in Kyiv are mostly visible in Orthodox churches of the Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchates. For these churches the events of 2013-14 became the moment of truth: Both have chosen to take pro-Ukrainian political positions, their representatives meet more openly and more often, and they more frequently make joint statements regarding Ukrainian political affairs. It is increasingly recognized by both patriarchates that as long as the UOC MP is subordinate to Patriarch Kyrill, no unification of the two jurisdictions will occur.

To date the UOC MP has not sought to sever ties with the Moscow Patriarchate. For his part, Patriarch Kyrill has been careful not to place any pressure on the UOC MP so as not to precipitate a rupture. The Patriarch's statements have been circumspect, unlike the harsh, anti-Ukrainian propaganda of the Russian mass media, Russian politicians, and President Putin.

It is too early to predict Ukraine's future, and an objective understanding of such a complex crisis is difficult to achieve. But it is clear already that during Euromaidan the UOC MP and Protestant churches were able to speak and act in ways that bridged the political, cultural, and linguistic divide between western and eastern Ukraine. In contrast, the UOC KP lost ground strategically because of its one-sided position, speaking against the Party of Regions and federalization and supporting only pro-western political positions.

Escalating tensions in southeast Ukraine, in Donetsk, Kharkiv, and Luhansk, as well as attempts to establish a Donetsk Republic in April-May 2014, moved Ukrainian churches to increasingly take an anti-Russian stand. Rev. Leonid Padun, senior pastor of the Word of Life Church in Donetsk, has preached messages opposing the intervention of Russian forces in Ukraine (http://wolua.org). Similarly, Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Anthony (Pakanich) in the Easter season called upon clerics to support Ukrainian patriotism and to resist separatist tendencies.

On 19 April Patriarch Kyrill knelt and prayed for peace in Ukraine and in Moscow, for upcoming elections in Kiev, and unity in Ukraine. He said, "We respect religious minorities. Nevertheless, we will continue to assert that Ukraine has an organic connection with Holy Rus'. It is an Orthodox country."

Ukrainian and Russian Evangelicals At Odds

Evangelicals tried to overcome a deadlock in their relationships as well. On 9-11 April major Protestant leaders of Ukraine and Russia met in Jerusalem. Ukrainians in attendance were dissatisfied with the outcome of the meeting. Rev. Mikhail Panochko, head of the Churches of Christian Evangelical Faith (Pentecostal) said that Russian evangelical leaders would not take a well-defined stand against Russian aggression in Ukraine and would not characterize Russian intervention in Crimea as the act of an aggressor. They also declined to condemn anti-Ukrainian rhetoric in Russian mass media.

In contrast, Rev. Konstantin Bendas, representative of the Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostal) headed by Rev. Sergey Ryakhovsky likened the stance of Ukrainian evangelical leaders to that of "aggressive politicians" and declared that "church and brotherly love are things that are not compatible with politics and state and inter-state

conflicts" (http://afmedia.ru). As a result, the parties could not agree upon a joint statement for the press.

Theologian and publicist Dr. Mikhail Cherenkov summarized the position of Ukrainian churches as follows:

> At the dawn of a new period in the history of the Evangelical movement in Ukraine, despite all the difficulties involved, we chose freedom and dignity. We have chosen to be loyal to the people, whereas Russians have chosen to be loyal to the authorities. When Russians begin to see a strong church in Ukraine that enjoys the love and respect of the people, they will come to visit, strike up friendships, and learn from us. God will delight in this (from the interview to mirvam.org).

What Next?

In 2013 and 2014 to date Ukraine has endured political convulsions, Russia's seizure of Crimea, and deepening East-West political and linguistic cleavages. It is too early to say whether or not the nationalistic euphoria of Euromaidan will be followed by national destruction. What is clear is that most of Ukraine's churches so far have prayed and worked on behalf of national unity and peaceful resolution of differences.

The growing political activism of various Ukrainian churches, however, can also have its negative consequences: the possibility of church splits precipitated by differing political preferences, elected officials not meeting expectations, or guilt by association with ultra-nationalist and/or corrupt authorities. Ukrainian Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants are still in the process of overcoming mutual distrust in their search for a common Ukrainian identity and their proper place in a European geo-political scheme. Going forward, Ukraine's churches face the formidable task of helping create a country that can reconcile the linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious differences between its western and eastern halves. ♦

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Ukrainian Christian Congregations by Church Affiliation (2013-2014)

Roman Lunkin, compiler

	2013 (including Crimea)	In Crimea	2014 (without Crimea)
Orthodox Parishes			
Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP)	12,895	532	12,363
Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP)	4,702	44	4,658
Ukrainian Orthodox Antocephalous Church (UOAC)	1,247	10	1,237
Other Orthodox Churches	186	10	176
Orthodox Subtotal	19,030	596	18,434
Ukrainain Eastern-Rite Catholic Church (UERCC)	3,919	9	3,910
Latin-Rite Roman Catholic Church (RCC)	1,110	13	1,097
Old Believer Church	77	3	74
Armenian Apostolic Church	29	7	22
Protestant Churches			
Evangelical Christian-Baptist Church	3,094	76	3,018
Evangelical Christian Church	349	13	336
Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches	4 ,419	164	4,255
Seventh-day Adventist Church	1,124	27	1,097
Lutheran Church	105	21	84
Other Protestant Denominations	378	8	370
Protestant Subtotal	9,469	309	9,160
Totals	33,996	937	32,697

Source: Ukrainian Ministry of Culture; http://mincult.kmu.gov.us.

Ukrainian Christian Congregations by Regions and by Major Affiliation (2013)

Region	Orthodox (UOC MP; UOC KP; UAOC)	Catholic (UERCC; RCC)	Protestant	Regional Populations
West	*5,094*	*3,894*	*2,489*	*9,374,276*
Center	*7,142*	*615*	*3,011*	*15,012,372*
South	*2,113*	*128*	*1,133*	*7,054,220*
East	*2,462*	*99*	*1,864*	*14,913,774*
Totals	***16,811***	***4,736***	***8,497***	***46,354,642***

Source: Katherine Peisker, "Mapping Religion and Politics in Ukraine," Table 1, data from the Ukrainian State Committee on Nationalities and Religions; http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic923280.files/finalproject.pdf.

The Impact of the Ukrainian Crisis on Religious Life in Ukraine and Russia

Mark R. Elliott

Editor's note: The author wishes to thank Paul Steeves (Russian Religion News), *Darlene Elliott, Joy Ireland, and Kathryn Brown for their contributions to this article.*

In late November 2013, Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich declined to sign an agreement with the European Union, opting instead for closer ties with Russia. This move, in turn, triggered the Maidan (Independence Square) demonstrations (November 2013 to February 2014) that forced Yanukovich from office and led to the emergence of a pro-Western government in Kyiv. In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin, deeply angered by his loss of leverage in Kyiv, seized and annexed Crimea in March. Ethnic violence has since rocked both eastern and southern Ukraine.

Only time will tell if Ukraine's new president, chocolate billionaire Petro Poroshenko, will be able to stem separatist efforts and restore peace.

Slaviansk may serve as illustration of once hopeful trends in Christian ministry now threatened by heated ethnic passions.

Hopeful Trends Now Threatened

All the above has had myriad consequences for religious life, both in Ukraine and in Russia. Events in strife-torn Slaviansk in eastern Ukraine, may serve as illustration of once hopeful trends in Christian ministry now threatened by heated ethnic passions. In recent years in this city of 130,000, an evangelical church, an indigenous mission, and international ministries have been working together on behalf of homeless children, but they now see their collaboration jeopardized by supercharged nationalist agendas at loggerheads.

In June 2010 I attended a worship service at Moscow's Pentecostal Word of Life Church. A guest speaker that morning was a pastor visiting from Ukraine. Sergiy Demidovich shared how he and his wife and other families in their church in Slaviansk had been led by faith to adopt. Their Good News Church (membership of 600; weekly attendance of 1,000) has spearheaded a movement in their congregation that at that point had resulted in the adoption of 100 orphans.[1]

Since then Good News Church members and like-minded evangelicals in Kyiv and Mariupol, all sharing a burden for their country's homeless children, have together launched a ministry called Ukraine Without Orphans (UWO). This campaign to encourage Christian families to adopt has now spread not only to Russia, but worldwide. In Ukraine alone some 120 national parachurch groups working with at risk children are connected in some way with UWO.[2]

Back in Slaviansk, through Ukraine Without Orphans, to date hundreds of orphans have now been adopted or are living in Christian foster homes. Tragically, however, in this city deeply divided between pro-Russian separatists and those who want to remain part of Ukraine, some now distrust local Ukraine Without Orphans activists on the basis of their ties with adoption advocates in Russia and abroad. Even the word *traitors* has been hurled at them. Pro-Russian forces in Slaviansk now occupy the Good News Church as a base of operations, and on 16 May Sergiy Demidovich's brother Aleksey, a bishop in Ukraine's Church of God denomination, was abducted, held in isolation for seven hours, and then released.[3]

A Legacy of Ukrainian-Russian Discord

One may ask: how far in the past can the discord between Ukraine and Russia be traced? Does the present conflict only date back to this past winter, Viktor Yanukovich's ouster from power, his replacement by a strongly pro-Western government, and Russia's move into Crimea?

Or does the present conflict date back to the Orange Revolution of 2004-05? In this case, public protests over the fraudulent presidential victory of Yanukovich forced a new election that was won by Viktor Yushchenko.

Or does the present crisis find its roots in the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and the Civil War (1918-21)? In those years Ukraine momentarily proclaimed its independence, only to be reabsorbed into a new Soviet version of the old tsarist Russian Empire.

Or can the present conflict be traced back to Muscovy's seizure of Ukrainian lands from the Poles and Ottoman Turks in the 17th and 18th centuries? In the train of those victories Moscow gave no cultural quarter to its new Ukrainian subjects, pejoratively calling them "Little Russians" and suppressing use of the Ukrainian language.

Russian and Ukrainian Orthodoxy in Contrast

Whatever the ultimate origins of the conflict, a starting point for comprehending its religious dimensions involves recognition of the fundamental contrast between Orthodoxy in Ukraine and Orthodoxy

in Russia. In Russia the Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate is so revered as a cultural linchpin and unifying force that in public surveys even Russian non-believers identify themselves as Orthodox. Putin recognizes this fact, sees benefit in Orthodox hierarchs' political support, and, in turn, grants privileges to the Orthodox Church at the expense of other Christian confessions and faiths.

In contrast, in Ukraine three different Orthodox Churches vie for followers, and strong Eastern-Rite Catholic and Protestant churches must also be taken into account. As a result, religious tolerance and freedom of conscience, of necessity, are much more in evidence in Ukraine than in Russia. In addition, for whatever reasons, the dynamism of Ukrainian church life, be it Orthodox, Eastern-Rite Catholic, or Protestant, compared to Russia, is striking. The strength of Christian expression in Ukraine compared to Russia may be illustrated by the number of churches per capita. With a population of 46 million, Ukraine, for example, has 16,811 Orthodox parishes, while Russia, with a population of 142 million, has 14,616 Orthodox parishes.[4] In the Soviet period, for good reason, Ukraine was referred to as the Bible Belt of the U.S.S.R. Today, in the post-Soviet era, this characterization is just as appropriate. Unfortunately, counter balancing the vigor of Ukraine's church life is the troubling reality that it suffers as much from moral disarray as Russia: widespread corruption and bribery in business, government services, education, and medical care; human trafficking; wealthy oligarchs out for their own interest; and high rates of drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, divorce, poverty, and homelessness.[5]

The Impact of the Ukrainian Crisis on Religion

As will become evident, the present Ukrainian-Russian conflict undermines confessional unity across political borders, sows seeds of strife within faith communities, and jeopardizes the presence and ministry of foreign religious workers, in particular Catholic priests and Protestant missionaries, in parts of Ukraine and in Russia. In coming to terms with the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on churches and their mission, six topics deserve special attention: 1) the status of Ukraine's three Orthodox jurisdictions; 2) the relationship between Orthodoxy in Ukraine and Orthodoxy in Russia; 3) the role of the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church; 4) the relationship between Ukrainian and Russian Protestants; 5) the related question of the impact of the crisis upon non-Orthodox churches in Russia; and 6) the impact of the crisis on missionaries and foreign clergy serving in Ukraine and Russia.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate

Arguably the most complex of these five issues is the question of multiple Orthodox jurisdictions in Ukraine. To make sense of the divisions, a brief description of Ukraine's three Orthodox churches is in order. By far the largest is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate (UOC MP), claiming just over two-thirds of all Orthodox in Ukraine, some 35 million adherents in 12,895 parishes.[6] Given a degree of autonomy by Russian Orthodox Patriarch Alexis II in 1990, it nevertheless is subordinate to the Moscow Patriarchate. This Russian affiliation pleases many of its faithful in eastern and southern Ukraine and displeases many other of its faithful in central and western Ukraine. That is to say, the UOC MP is not monolithic: many of its parishioners and hierarchs support continuing close ties with Moscow, while many other of its parishioners favor autocephalous status under the aegis of Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.[7] At the grassroots level such divided loyalties can translate into UOC MP parish celebrations of the Divine Liturgy that do and do not offer blessings for Moscow's Patriarch Kyrill, depending upon the location.[8]

On 24 February 2014 Metropolitan Onufry (Berezovsky), from southwestern Ukraine, replaced ailing Patriarch Volodymyr (Sabodan) as acting head of the UOC MP. A long-shot candidate to become Patriarch of Moscow following the death of Patriarch Alexis II in 2009, Metropolitan Onufry, back in the early 1990s, had opposed those Ukrainian hierarchs who had favored severing ties with the Russian Orthodox Church.[9] However, in the wake of the Maidan overthrow of pro-Russian Yanukovich and with the fate of Crimea in the balance, Metropolitan Onufry on 2 March 2014 appealed directly to President Putin and to Patriarch Kyrill "to prevent the division of the Ukrainian state and not to permit an armed confrontation between our peoples."[10] In a 19 March video UOC MP Metropolitan Sofrony of Cherkassy was even more blunt, describing Putin as "a bandit who sent troops here upon our compatriots," who, along with Patriarch Kyrill, "betrayed the Orthodox peoples of Ukraine."[11]

But, as noted, Onufry's church is not of one accord. Disagreements within the UOC MP over the proper tack vis-à-vis Moscow may be illustrated by a text deleted from its official website. Just prior to Yanukovich's ouster and flight, the UOC MP website declared, "We unequivocally condemn the criminal actions of the governing authorities [Yanukovich loyalists] that provoked bloodshed on the streets and squares of golden-domed Kyiv." However, by 24 February this harsh assessment of pro-Russian Yanukovich disappeared, replaced by a more generic declaration: "We unequivocally condemn the sin of murder, especially when the innocent die." Yet the original text, with its strident opposition to Moscow-backed Yanukovich, survived on a number of UOC MP diocesan websites, including that of Kherson, close to Crimea.[12] On the one hand, on 29 March, the UOC MP website carried a report that "in accordance with the blessing of Metropolitan Onufry, the Kyiv, Borispol, and Kherson Dioceses have acted jointly to give spiritual support to the border troops of Ukraine."[13] UOC MP Chancellor Metropolitan Anthony, in supporting collections for the Ukrainian Army, declared, "This is not only our civic duty but also our Christian duty."[14] On the other hand, reports have surfaced of UOC MP priests allegedly offering support and blessings to Russian separatists in the east in Donetsk and Lugansk Regions.[15]

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate

The second-largest Orthodox jurisdiction in Ukraine is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP), with close to six million adherents in 4,702 parishes.[16] Following Ukrainian independence in 1991, this church emerged in 1992 with the support of Orthodox parishes embued with Ukrainian patriotic

In Ukraine three different Orthodox Churches vie for followers, and strong Eastern-Rite Catholic and Protestant churches must also be taken into account. As a result, religious tolerance and freedom of conscience are much more in evidence in Ukraine than in Russia.

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fervor and deep distrust of the UOC MP's subordination to Moscow. Absent the canonical recognition enjoyed by the UOC MP, it labors under the added burden of leadership lacking popular respect. Patriarch Volodymyr (Romanyuk), the UOC KP's first head, was a revered survivor of the Soviet Gulag, but he died in July 1995, just a few years after assuming leadership. He was succeeded by the present opportunistic and thoroughly compromised Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko). This former Soviet-era Ukrainian Exarch of the Russian Orthodox Church had previously worked closely with the KGB in the suppression of religious dissidents. Also, for decades he has violated the monastic vow of celibacy, keeping a mistress and family, and he is widely suspected of misappropriation of church funds.[17]

When in 1991 Alexis II bested Filaret in the Moscow Patriarch election, the latter bolted ranks to the UOC KP, and in 1992 was excommunicated by the Russian Orthodox Church. Since then, in the words of researcher Janice Broun, Filaret has "metamorphosed from an anti-Ukrainian, Soviet church bureaucrat into a militant [Ukrainian] nationalist."[18]

During Kyiv's Maidan demonstrations Filaret opened his St. Michael's Gold-Domed Monastery for use as a shelter and temporary hospital for anti-Yanukovich activists. He later condemned Russia's takeover of Crimea, addressing a public appeal to Putin for the "immediate withdrawal of troops from Ukrainian territory."[19] He and other UOC KP hierarchs have repeatedly called for donations for support of the Ukrainian Army.[20] Most recently, in his 2014 Easter address, Partiarch Filaret decried Russian "aggression" against "peace-loving" Ukraine, which "voluntarily gave up nuclear weapons." Here he referenced the 1994 Budapest Memorandum in which Russia, the United States, and Britain provided Ukraine "security assurances" in exchange for relinquishing its Soviet-era nuclear stockpile.[21] Undoubtedly, the Kyiv Patriarchate's condemnation of Russian actions in Ukraine would carry more weight if they came from a less-compromised quarter.

The Russian Orthodox Church risks gradually losing Ukraine if it just goes on repeating word for word the Kremlin line.

The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church

The third Orthodox jurisdiction in Ukraine is the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), with an estimated 1.5 million adherents in 1,247 parishes.[22] Like the UOC KP, unrecognized by other Orthodox jurisdictions, it emerged during Ukraine's fleeting moment of independence during the Russian Civil War (1918-21), only to be suppressed by Stalin in 1930. It revived briefly during German military occupation (1941-44), was banned again with Soviet victory in World War II, and reemerged beginning in 1989 with Gorbachev's *glasnost* and Ukrainian independence in 1991. Lacking continuity on Ukrainian soil, its dream of a united, truly autocephalous, canonical Orthodox Church in Ukraine was kept alive through the 20th century by means of its parishes in immigration, primarily in the United States and Canada.[23] The UAOC has been as vociferous as the UOC KP in its support for the Maidan Revolution and its opposition to Russian forays into Crimea and eastern and southern Ukraine. However, the UAOC's smaller size has limited its visibility and its impact upon the ongoing Ukrainian crisis.

Tensions Between Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox

The relationship between Orthodoxy in Ukraine and Orthodoxy in Russia is at least as complex as that of the interplay among Ukraine's three Orthodox jurisdictions. As noted, the Moscow Patriarchate manages strong ties to Ukraine through its semi-autonomous UOC MP, but rejects out of hand any association with Filaret's non-canonical UOC KP or the equally non-canonical UAOC.

Since his election as patriarch in 2009, Kyrill has supported Kremlin political positions more openly than did his predecessor Alexis II. For example, he publicly supported Putin's reelection as president in 2012. In turn, the pro-democracy, anti-Putin demonstrations in Moscow in 2011-12 drove Russia's president into closer collaboration with the conservatively oriented Russian Orthodox Church. On 21 February 2012 Pussy Riot punk rockers protested Orthodox support for Putin in Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior. Subsequently on 17 August 2012, a Russian court convicted four of the group of "hooliganism motivated by religious hatred" and sentenced them to two years' imprisonment. The Orthodox Church's acquiescence in what many considered an unjustifiably harsh punishment seemed to confirm the growing defensiveness of church and state, drawing Russia's patriarch and president into an ever-tighter embrace.[24]

This church-state tandem, however, is being sorely tried by the Ukraine crisis. Patriarch Kyrill finds himself in the painfully awkward position of trying to support Kremlin positions on Maidan, Crimea, and eastern and southern Ukraine without so alienating the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate that the latter chooses to sever its ties with Russian Orthodoxy.[25] Alexei Malashenko, religion specialist at the Carnegie Moscow Center, lays out the Russian Patriarch's predicament: "The Russian Orthodox Church risks gradually losing Ukraine if it just goes on repeating word for word the Kremlin line; it risks becoming only a national church of Russia. If Kirill loses out in Ukraine, he also becomes less attractive for the Kremlin."[26]

How has Kyrill attempted to simultaneously satisfy Putin and his coreligionists in Ukraine? Rendering unto Caesar, Kyrill, in Kyiv in 2010, blessed Yanukovich, Ukraine's pro-Russian president.[27] On 19 March 2014 in a session of the Russian Orthodox Holy Synod, with Russian forces in full control of Crimea, Kyrill opined that an "internal political crisis" was what was threatening Ukraine's territorial integrity.[28] On 7 April, following prayers near the relics of Patriarch Tikhon in Moscow's Donskoy Monastery, Kyrill likened the Maidan violence to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 which "was accompanied by outrage and terrible injustice under slogans for achieving justice."[29] On Easter eve, 19 April, in a service in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior, with President Putin and Prime Minister Medvedev in attendance, Kyrill declared that God should put "an end to the designs of those who want to destroy holy Russia." Ukraine, he said, stood in need of officials who are "legitimately elected," parroting the Kremlin position that Kyiv's post-Maidan government lacked legitimacy.[30]

At the same time, Patriarch Kyrill has sought to minimize tensions with the pro-Maidan UOC MP for fear of losing its loyalty. On 18 March the patriarch chose not to attend the signing ceremony incorporating Crimea into the Russian Federation.[31] At the same 19 March Holy Synod meeting that Kyrill soft-pedaled Russia's incursion into Crimea, he supported the appointment of UOC MP Metropolitan Onufry as a permanent member of the Russian Orthodox Holy Synod.[32] In addition, at the same session Kyrill chose not to transfer UOC MP parishes in Crimea to the Russian Orthodox Church.[33]

The Patriarch's tightrope performance involves juggling the appearance of respect for Ukrainian sovereignty while championing a concept that frightens many Ukrainians – the idea that Russian-Ukrainian spiritual solidarity transcends political borders. In response to UOC MP Metropolitan Onufry's appeal for the Patriarch's help in staving off Russian moves against Crimea, Kyrill, on 2 March on the Moscow Patriarchate website, promised: "I will do everything possible in order to convince all those who have power in their hands that one must not permit the deaths of peaceful people in the Ukrainian land that is dear to my heart." On the one hand, "The Ukrainian people must determine its own future by itself, without outside interference." On the other hand, "The brotherhood of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belorussian peoples" should "determine our future."[34]

Since his accession in 2009, and emphatically since March 2014, Patriarch Kyrill has sought to enshrine the principle of *"Russky mir,"* the "Russian world," which he understands to be a spiritual union of the Eastern Slavs.[35]

> There are people in Ukraine who belong to different ethnic, language, and cultural communities and have different political views. Some of them look after maximum integration into political structures set up by western European countries. Others, on the contrary, strive for the development of relations with the peoples of historical Russia and for preservation of their original culture. Whatever happens in the relations among the states and whatever development the political confrontation takes, the unity in faith and brotherhood of people baptized in one and the same baptismal fount cannot be deleted from their common past.[36]

The fact is that Kyrill cannot avoid contradictions in his awkward balancing act: either "the Church is above these differences and cannot identify itself with any particular point of view" or "we know that every time that enemies have attacked our fatherland, the chief thing that they have wanted to do is divide our people, and especially to rip the southern and western Russian lands from the single world."[37] In the end, for Kyrill, Ukraine's sovereignty and its "wish to build independently its own national life" is trumped by a cherished "common spiritual space," that is, "the brotherhood of the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarussian nations…hard won by history and many generations of our ancestors."[38] Kyrill seems to hopelessly intertwine spiritual and political considerations and caroms erratically between Great Russian patriotism and conciliatory gestures toward Ukrainian Orthodox whose fealty he hopes to retain.[39]

Ukrainian Churches Making Common Cause

Putin, whose Ukrainian gambit has placed Patriarch Kyrill in such an awkward position, has also paradoxically accomplished the seemingly impossible task of giving Ukraine's diverse churches common cause. Throughout the winter of 2013-14, Ukrainian Orthodox and Eastern-Rite Catholic priests and Protestant pastors played a central role in Kyiv's Maidan demonstrations. Father Cyril Hovorun, former head of the UOC MP Department of External Church Relations, now studying at Yale Divinity School, considers the anti-Yanukovich protests not only a political phenomenon but "an important religious event" as well. Day in and day out, morning and night, priests and pastors said prayers on the Maidan. Evangelicals passed out Scriptures. Prayer tents provided counseling, food, and first aid. *New York Times* reporter Sophia Kishkovsky referenced "dramatic images of clergy with crosses standing between protestors and government forces that went viral as the standoff escalated in January and February."[40]

Orthodox, Eastern-Rite Catholics, and Protestants thus found common purpose in supporting the Maidan demonstrations. Christians of various churches first protested the corruption and the pro-Russian tilt of the Yanukovich presidency. Then Russia's direct intervention further solidified ecumenical common cause, bringing together "many church leaders who had never really conversed publicly with each other."[41] As Father Hovorun put it, Christians of different confessions and denominations, in becoming "brothers in arms," were becoming "brothers in Christ."[42] On 18 February Yanukovich forces tore down a Maidan ecumenical chapel, only to see a tent erected in its place to serve as a funeral chapel for demonstrators killed by snipers.[43] On 30 March on the Maidan, in commemoration of those who died there, prayers were offered by bishops and clergy of UOC MP, UOC KP, UAOC, Roman Catholic, and Protestant churches.[44] "When all is said and done, it is the Churches above all that are enabling Ukrainians to rediscover themselves as members of the same nation."[45]

Not only in street demonstrations, but in Orthodox and Catholic church chanceries and Protestant pastors' conclaves, Maidan forged a multi-confessional spiritual camaraderie unknown in previous Ukrainian experience. The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, representing 18 religious bodies, became the focal point of the churches' shared support for political change in Ukraine.

On 22 February, the same day Yanukovich lost effective hold on power, the Council issued a statement opposing regional separatism signed by all its members including, notably, its presiding chair, UOC Moscow Patriarchate Metropolitan Anthony. Three days later the Council met with Ukraine's new acting president, Oleksandr Turchynov, following which it publicly affirmed its support for Ukraine's new government. On 4 March U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met in Kyiv with the Council and complimented its members for their peacekeeping role in the demonstrations and their inter-confessional harmony.[46]

Two knowledgeable Moscow academics have aptly sized up the seismic shift now altering Ukraine's spiritual terrain. Andrei Zubov, historian and church-state specialist, lost his post at the prestigious Moscow

Kyrill caroms erratically between Great Russian patriotism and conciliatory gestures toward Ukrainian Orthodox whose fealty he hopes to retain.

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State Institute of International Relations for publishing an editorial comparing Putin's move against Crimea with Hitler's seizure of Czechoslovakia's German-speaking Sudetenland in 1938. Zubov expects that the longer the conflict between Ukraine and Russia persists, the greater likelihood of the formation of a single Ukrainian Orthodox Church recognized by the Eastern Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch: "One thing is certain: A united Ukrainian church could redraw the map of Orthodoxy."[47] According to Roman Lunkin, senior researcher on religion at the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Science, the Maidan demonstrations "managed to achieve what was almost unthinkable and impossible earlier: the main Protestant churches and the Orthodox churches of different jurisdictions began acting together. Whereas in 2005 [during the Orange Revolution] the churches were divided among various political camps, now they – and this inspires great hope at least in the religious sphere – now they are acting in a united patriotic position… clearly recognizing the new government in Kiev."[48]

Maidan managed to achieve what was almost unthinkable and impossible earlier: the main Protestant churches and the Orthodox churches of different jurisdictions began acting together.

Ukrainian Orthodox Unification?

Not surprisingly, discussions aimed at overcoming Ukrainian Orthodoxy's decades-old divisions have taken place in tandem with inter-confessional cooperation. On 22 February the Synod of the UOC Kyiv Patriarchate proposed "a dialogue leading to reunification" of Ukraine's Orthodox churches.[49] To avoid being left out of negotiations, the UOC Moscow Patriarchate seems willing to discuss the possibility, but as long as Filaret (excommunicated by the Russian Orthodox Church on multiple counts decades ago) heads the UOC KP, the schism is likely to persist. In the interim a complete break between the UOC MP and the Russian Orthodox Church would seem to be much more likely. Later, at the point where Filaret passes from the scene, conditions for ending Ukrainian Orthodoxy's multiple fractures would appear to be much more promising.[50]

The Ukrainian Eastern-Rite Catholic Church

Another complexity in the Ukrainian religious landscape is the Ukrainian Eastern-Rite Catholic Church, the product of an Orthodox schism that is centuries rather than decades old. Emerging in the late 16th Century in Ukrainian lands then part of Catholic Poland, this confession retains its Orthodox liturgy and a married priesthood, but submits to the authority of the pope in Rome. Often distrusted by Latin-Rite Catholics and always despised by Russian tsars and commissars, this Uniate church (referencing the Russian pejorative for it) suffered the most complete repression of any Christian community in the Soviet Union. Banned outright earlier under Tsar Nicholas I in 1839 and again in 1923 and 1946 under Lenin and Stalin, it was the largest underground church in the U.S.S.R. Vanquished not only by the KGB but by the Russian Orthodox Church, to whom in 1946 Stalin had bequeathed all Uniate parishes, Eastern-Rite Catholicism reemerged in 1989 in western Ukraine thanks to Gorbachev's *glasnost*.[51] Today it numbers four to five million faithful in 3,919 parishes.[52]

Needless to say, many Eastern-Rite Catholics remain bitter over the Moscow Patriarchate's partnership with Stalin in perpetrating its post-World War II Golgotha. Russian Orthodox in western Ukraine likewise are embittered over the loss of many of their churches as a result of the legalization of Eastern-Rite Catholicism.[53] Ex-KGB agent Putin is perfectly aware of the fierce opposition to Soviet rule by the banned Eastern-Rite Catholics of western Ukraine. In a malevolent speech in Brussels on 28 January 2014 Russia's president counted allegedly "racist and anti-Semitic Uniate priests" among the dark forces undermining Yanukovich, his man in Kyiv.[54] Suffice it to say, with the centuries of bad blood between Orthodox and Eastern-Rite Catholics, it is striking that the latter, inspired by Maidan ecumenism, is entertaining the dream of a single Ukrainian church including both.

A Ukrainian Protestant Overview

A major consequence of Ukraine's church divisions (three Orthodox jurisdictions and two Catholic confessions—Eastern Rite and Latin Rite) is that no one church can work its will as Russian Orthodoxy does in Russia. As a result, evangelicals have had much more freedom to exist and to evangelize than has been the case in Russia.

The Ukrainian crisis has also deepened Ukrainian Protestant involvement in political life and has strained relations between Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals. However, before addressing these issues, a few observations are in order regarding Ukrainian evangelical history and demographics. Ukraine, along with St. Petersburg and the Caucasus, were the three earliest seedbeds of evangelicalism in tsarist Russia. Beginning in the 1860s and 1870s, continental pietism spread among German Mennonite colonists in Ukraine and from them to their Ukrainian peasant neighbors. Dramatic growth occurred in the resulting Baptist and Evangelical Christian denominations in the late nineteenth century, and even more so following Russia's 1905 Edict of Toleration. In the 1920s these same evangelicals, plus newly emerging Pentecostals, grew rapidly. In the halcyon 1920s Protestants were relatively free of communist interference because the infant Soviet regime was then concentrated on eliminating the formerly privileged Orthodox Church.

Following intense persecution of all religions in the 1930s, Stalin, during World War II, even accepted the help of believers in the fight against Nazi Germany. This new lease on church life was nowhere in greater evidence than in Ukraine which, as noted, was aptly designated as the Soviet Union's Bible Belt. Churches that were disproportionately strong in Ukraine compared to Russia – and that remain so to this day – include Orthodox, Catholics, Evangelical Christians –Baptists, Pentecostals, and Adventists. To give but one example, Ukraine, with a population of 46 million, is home to 125,000 Evangelical Christians–Baptists (ECB), whereas Russia, with a population of 142 million, is home to 76,000 ECB faithful.[55]

Protestant Separatism Versus Political Engagement

In the course of 70-plus years of persecution and discrimination, Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals developed an isolationist, siege mentality, rejecting any involvement in Soviet political or social life. However, in Ukraine, following independence, evangelical

isolationism began to erode, first in the 2004-05 Orange Revolution, but especially in the Maidan demonstrations between November 2013 and February 2014.

Kyiv-based evangelical scholar Sergiy Tymchenko finds three political orientations among Ukrainian Protestants today. Some, as in Soviet times, still eschew any involvement in political life. They "want to stay away from politics altogether and view themselves as citizens only of the 'heavenly fatherland'." Others, especially in Ukraine's east and south, Tymchenko notes, "approve the Kremlin's actions." A third stance – and this is new in post-Soviet experience – is the view that active participation in politics is a Christian duty, in this case supporting the Maidan demonstrations in a "struggle…for an independent and just society."[56]

Ukrainian-Russian Evangelical Strained Relations

Another of the consequences of the Ukrainian crisis has been increasingly strained relations between Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals, which run counter to longstanding, intimate ties that previously had united them. As with the general population, many Ukrainian evangelicals have family relations in Russia. Not a few Russian Evangelical Christian–Baptist (ECB) leaders are of Ukrainian origin.[57] For example, before the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukrainian Hrihorii Komendant served in Moscow as general secretary of the All-Union Council of the ECB; and prominent Moscow ECB layman and academic, Alexander Zaichenko, was born in Sevastopol, is Ukrainian by nationality, but is Russian by working language and education. In addition, after the fall of the Soviet Union many hundreds of Ukrainian Pentecostal and Baptist missionaries moved to Russia, especially to Siberia and the Russian Far East, serving as church planters.[58]

Given the Ukrainian contribution to the spread of the Gospel in Russia, many Ukrainian evangelicals have been disappointed by the attitudes of their northern brethren in the current political crisis. They sense correctly that, as a rule, many Russians, including many evangelicals, cannot understand why Ukrainians want to be independent: "Many Russians think that Ukraine is and should remain a province of Russia,"[59] and they reject the idea that the two peoples "truly represent two distinct and different cultures."[60] As a pastor in Kharkiv put it, "Russians see even Ukrainian independence as an unfortunate misunderstanding."[61]

As noted earlier, some Russian evangelicals hold to the traditional, isolationist position of non-involvement in worldly politics, blended with passive submission to authority, in this case Putin, as defined in Romans 13.[62] Russian evangelicals of this persuasion were taken aback by the active participation of many Ukrainian evangelicals in the anti-Yanukovich Maidan demonstrations.[63] The gulf between the two sides causes some to yearn for days of old when evangelicals had in common their opposition to an atheist state. Journalist William Yoder sensed "sadness and nostalgia" in the prayer of a Russian Baptist layman in a 2 March service: "Remind us of how it was when we were still brothers!"[64]

Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, and later *Mission Network News*, posted an anonymous but particularly insightful evangelical critique of Russian Christian perceptions of the Ukraine crisis that bears repeating. Boris Holowka (a pseudonym) notes that many Russian evangelicals hold positions on the Ukrainian crisis that parallel those of the Kremlin.

1. The European Union [EU] is considered to represent "dissolute western culture with its promotion of the LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] agenda, so by opting for the EU, Ukraine will sink into immorality."
2. "The West is being hypocritical in condemning Russia, while it has violated many international laws, e.g. regarding Kosovo, Iraq, Vietnam, etc."
3. "Scripture tells us to respect our rulers and laws; those supporting the coup in Ukraine are violating God's law. And Putin must be obeyed because his authority comes from God."
4. "Justice (a Biblical virtue) is served by returning Crimea to Russia, because it was unjustly severed in 1954." And in contradiction of the above,
5. "Christians should be concerned with heavenly matters and not be involved in politics."

A Belarus pastor points out that Russia has never repudiated its communist past. Russia never had a Nuremberg trial, or sent KGB operatives to jail. In fact, all of its sordid past was covered up and the archives closed. Russians excuse themselves by laying all the blame on the USSR. Yet the USSR is still strong in the hearts of the Russian people, a significant number of whom would call themselves "atheist Orthodox." Putin called the fall of the Soviet Union a great tragedy and the recent toppling of the statue of Lenin in Kyiv a violation. Pro-Russian protestors in Ukraine and Russia wave the old, hammer-and-sickle Soviet flag with religious fervor. Popular Russian newspapers are still entitled *Soviet Sport* and *Moscow Komsomol.* While it persists in living in the past, Russia continually imagines external threats: Jews, The U.S. military, fascists, West European liberalism and immorality, etc.

The predominantly Orthodox majority in Russia has always viewed evangelicals as subversive. Today this is compounded by official Russian propaganda which plays up the fact that the interim, "illegal" president of Ukraine Oleksandr Turchynov was a Baptist, that is, "not one of us"….So Russian Evangelicals' new nationalist spirit also appears to include an effort to prove that they are not "foreign agents." the new pejorative.[65]

Many Russians, including many evangelicals, cannot understand why Ukrainians want to be independent.

In contrast to Boris Holowka, Mennonite journalist William Yoder, affiliated with the Russian Evangelical Alliance and the Russian Evangelical Christian-Baptist Union Department of External Relations, has interpreted events surrounding the Ukrainian crisis in ways that run counter to prevailing Western and Ukrainian perspectives:

1. Russia is justifiably nervous over the possibility of Ukraine joining NATO;
2. "Ukrainian Protestant leadership has toed the line of the country's pro-Western and pro-EU parties;"
3. In July 2013 Ukrainian Evangelical Christians-Baptists opposed Ukrainian President Yanukovich's introduction of Russian as a

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secondary official language in parts of Ukraine. Yet attempts in February 2014 by Kyiv's Parliament to repeal the Russian language's official status naturally alarmed Ukraine's Russian minority; and

4. As regards Maidan casualties, Christian ministries should consider support for the families of slain policemen as well as the families of slain protesters in order to "underline the non-partisan peacemaking character of the Gospel.[66]

In sharp response one ministry reacted as follows:

> The commentary of Dr. William Yoder is a mix of naïve faith in the authority of Russia, loyalty to his employers, and lack of understanding…. You cannot talk about peacemaking while avoiding the truth and failing to distinguish between the aggressor and the victim….Yoder should have begun with an acknowledgement of the obvious fact of Russian intervention…. What is even more noticeable and sad is his lack of empathy and sympathy for the tragic events in Ukraine.[67]

For the most part, Russian evangelicals have not aired their political preferences, choosing instead to maintain a low profile in the Ukraine conflict. Russian evangelical leaders in particular were slow to comment on the Ukrainian crisis in public, and many of their pronouncements demonstrated pained discomfort as they attempted not to take sides. Vitaly Vlasenko, head of the ECB Department of External Relations, for example, on 13 March, wrote "God is not for one side at the expense of the other….We want to demonstrate our love – and God's love – for those on all sides."[68] Undoubtedly, the reticence of some Russian evangelical leaders stems from a fear of the consequences, should they take exception to Kremlin policies on Ukraine.[69] As Tetiana Mukhomorova observed, Putin has "such vertical control in spiritual circles" that any church pronouncement not in conformity with government policy "is going to be very expensive."[70]

The reticence of some Russian evangelical leaders stems from a fear of the consequences, should they take exception to Kremlin policies on Ukraine.

Exceptions to the Russian Evangelical Low Profile

Two exceptions to the Russian evangelical low profile are Yuri Tsipko and Sergey Ryakhovsky. The former, previously president of the ECB, but now taking independent positions with no official imprimatur, wrote on 3 March, "Russia can never wash away the shame for such brazen lies and aggression against the brotherly people of Ukraine. There is never any excuse for violence. There is no justification for an armed intervention in Ukraine."[71] Bishop Ryakhovsky, head of the Charismatic and Pentecostal "Associated Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith," is the sole Protestant representative on the Russian presidential Council for Cooperation with Religious Organizations. Known for his frequent support for Kremlin policies, he has already visited Russian-occupied Crimea to facilitate ties between the peninsula's Pentecostal churches and those in Russia proper.[72] Thus lending indirect legitimacy to Russia's annexation of Crimea, he has taken a political step that not even Patriarch Kyrill has seen fit to indulge.

The nationalistic, patriotic fervor that is sweeping Russia is another reason few of the country's evangelicals are likely to object to Kremlin moves against Ukraine. Increasingly xenophobic Russia equates dissent of any kind with support for the enemy, and the enemy of convenience today is the West in general and the U.S. in particular. Many Russian evangelicals believe it prudent to stress their native roots, their Russian patriotism, and to downplay their historic ties with Western churches and missionaries.

Two Ukrainian-Russian Evangelical Meetings

Two meetings of Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals in April 2014 sought to reconcile growing differences. In Kyiv on 8 April Evangelical Christian–Baptist presidents Vyacheslav Nesteruk of Ukraine and Alexey Smirnov of Russia met to seek common ground. In reference to the Maidan demonstrations, their joint communique managed to "mourn those killed in mass clashes on both sides of the conflict….We call on our brothers and sisters in the churches of Russia and Ukraine to pray for a peaceful resolution of the political confrontation between our two countries."[73] In contrast to Ryakhovsky's Crimean foray, Vitaly Vlasenko, a Russian ECB participant in the Kyiv meeting, assured Ukrainian Baptists that the 68 ECB congregations in Crimea are free to remain a part of Nesteruk's Ukrainian union, notwithstanding Russian annexation.[74]

The second, larger meeting on 9-11 April lacked the harmony of the first and ended with no joint declaration. Even agreeing upon participants and venue proved difficult. Ukrainian evangelicals found it discomforting dealing with a Russian delegation headed by so pro-Kremlin a figure as Sergey Ryakhovsky, while Russian evangelicals would not agree to Maidan activist Mikhailo Cherenkov serving as a mediator for such a meeting.[75] For this second conclave Ukrainians would not concede to any venue in Russia, Belarus, or Turkey, and Russians declined to meet again in Ukraine. For their deliberations the two sides finally settled upon Jerusalem, a city sadly steeped in its own religious discord. Bishop Konstantin Bendas of the Russian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostal) sought to steer discussions away from Ukrainian-Russian conflict, favoring instead to focus on "our spiritual responsibility for the unity of the church, that is, about things that are above politics." For their part, Ukrainians in Jerusalem could not move Russian evangelicals to condemn Russia's takeover of Crimea. Bishop Myhailo Panochka of the Ukrainian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostal) recalled, "One got the impression that they were simply afraid of the word *aggression*, and they did not admit that Russia had robbed Ukraine by seizing territory." [76] Siberian Bishop Edward Grabovenko of the same Pentecostal union as Panochka later wrote that the Jerusalem meetings brought him "pain, grief, and resentment. I returned home with a heavy heart."[77]

The Impact of the Ukrainian Crisis on Missionaries

The impact of the Ukrainian crisis on missionary efforts in the former Soviet Union varies dramatically depending upon location. Missionaries serving in western and central Ukraine, including the capital of Kyiv, have not been affected negatively – to the

extent that their work is centered in Ukraine. However, missionaries based in Ukraine with significant involvement in ministry in other post-Soviet republics, particularly Russia, have experienced major disruption. Since independence Ukraine has frequently served as a venue for church and ministry meetings involving participants from many former Soviet republics, and those gatherings are now being scaled back, postponed, or cancelled. Likewise, Ukrainian-based missionaries working throughout the former Soviet Union cannot expect to travel as freely as they have previously.[78] Western Christian missions headquartered in Ukraine, such as Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries and the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN), do not have the easy relationship with Russian evangelicals that they enjoyed even a year ago. Thus, Ukrainian evangelicals and missionaries based in Ukraine have a much harder time speaking or carrying out ministry projects in Russia. Russians even consider "a Christian Russian-language website for children…suspect because it originates in Ukraine."[79]

Of course, most directly and immediately affected is ministry in Crimea, now annexed by Russia. An evangelical journalist in Kyiv and an evangelical educator in Odesa report efforts to provide aid and housing to Tatar refugees leaving Crimea in the wake of the Russian takeover.[80] A missionary survey respondent in Russia wrote, "We have a mobile medical clinic ministry in Ukraine, and every summer we go to Crimea. That trip will not be possible and the crisis may prevent other outreaches."[81] A Kyiv-based missionary assisting private Christian elementary education relates that a school in Sevastopol, Crimea, has offered to donate its Ukrainian-language textbooks to a school in Ukraine because they will be shifting to a Russian curriculum.[82] Meanwhile, Evangelical Christians-Baptists, Pentecostals, and Orthodox in Crimea are all facing tensions over whether to continue affiliation with headquarters in Kyiv or Moscow.[83]

As the U.S. increases support to Ukraine, American and other Western missionaries are likely to continue to be welcome, especially in western and central Ukraine, but less so in eastern and southern Ukraine and Crimea.[84] Missionaries across Ukraine report rising levels of anxiety as the crisis drags on. One missionary in Kyiv writes,

> As we drove past the entrance to the city zoo with its ever-present balloon vendors…[we] both experienced almost a sense of confusion at the surreal scene before us. Is Ukraine really on the brink of war with Russia? For the most part, life on the surface in Kyiv has returned to normal after a long winter of violent demonstrations.

Still, there are those "dull headaches, frequent insomnia, and constant fatigue."[85] A missionary counselor reports increased stress, depression, and anxiety.[86] Some missionaries have moved from eastern to western Ukraine, and others have departed the country. However, from survey responses it appears most missionaries hope, short of war, to stay the course. Suitcases may be packed and evacuation plans may be in place,[87] but missionary respondents stated that they hoped to remain in Ukraine. "Embedded missionaries with good relationships with nationals should be able to weather any storm."[88] "I know people in my team would stay here as long as we can."[89] "Of course the level of anxiety is high," but we "will stay except in the event of war."[90] A particularly nuanced reflection comes from Sue Fuller, an American missionary serving in the Russian Far East:

> Please be praying for the situation with Ukraine and Russia. I, of course, have my opinions, but as far as everyone else is concerned I try and be as neutral as possible. There is so much culture, history, politics, money, nationalism, pride, etc. tied up in this situation, it would be hard for anyone to make sense of it. So let's focus on praying for the families who have lost loved ones in the uprisings in Ukraine. Pray for the people of Crimea who are in a time of transition. Pray for wisdom, cool heads, and diplomacy. No matter what decisions are made by our countries the Russians who I have contact with are very kind and good to me and can separate people from their governments and what they do. Let's do the same and continue to love and pray for good things for the Russian people.[91]

Not surprisingly, most of all, missionaries call for prayer. Back in Kyiv, "We cannot even imagine how this current conflict will play out. Please join us in prayer."[92]

Missionaries based in Ukraine with significant involvement in ministry in other post-Soviet republics, particularly Russia, have experienced major disruption.

Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries: A Case Study[93]

A case study of the impact of the Ukraine crisis on one Christian mission may prove instructive. Peter Deyneka Russian Ministries, known as the Association for Spiritual Renewal in the former Soviet Union, was founded in 1991 by its namesake and his wife, Peter and Anita Deyneka. This mission is a spinoff of Slavic Gospel Association, founded in 1933 by Byelorussian immigrant to Chicago, Peter Deyneka, Sr.

Russian Ministries is widely respected in mission circles for its diverse, good work in radio broadcast programming, Scripture and Christian literature distribution, promotion of networking among post-Soviet Protestant churches and Western missions, support for theological education, especially through the Bible Pulpit Series which has published dozens of texts for use in Protestant seminaries, the promotion of evangelism and church planting, and training for the next generation of Christian leaders in the former Soviet Union. In 2007-08 Wheaton-based Russian Ministries moved its overseas headquarters from Moscow to Irpen, a suburb of Kyiv, because conditions were freer for Protestant ministry in Ukraine than in Russia.

Following the death of Peter Deyneka, Jr. in 2000, his wife Anita served as a worthy successor from 2002 until 2010 when the presidential mantle was passed to Sergey Rakhuba. A Russian from Ukraine who immigrated to the U.S., he attended Moody Bible Institute and began working with the Deynekas in 1991. Today this mission continues its tradition of multi-faceted outreach by assisting Slavic refugees, by hosting conferences, workshops, and training sessions for Slavic Christian workers, and through Christian literature distribution. Currently Russian Ministries is having 200,000 copies of the Gospel of Luke printed in Russian for eastern Ukraine and 200,000 copies in Ukrainian for western parts of the country. This publication of the Gospel of Luke includes "prayers for

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repentance, peacemaking, and healing for the nation."[94]

On 21 March 2014, Russian Ministries hosted a conference at its Irpen headquarters for young Christian doctors, lawyers, educators, and entrepreneurs entitled "Missions in the Professional Sphere: Christian Responsibility for Transforming Society." Over 100 attended the event, but "escalating violence and the Russian annexation of Crimea" led to a decision to scale back a gathering originally planned to include over 1,000 participants.[95] Even before the beginning of the Maidan demonstrations in November 2013, Russian Ministries was finding work in Russia less rewarding than in Ukraine. Arguably its most ambitious outreach for years has been its School Without Walls, a decentralized, non-formal training program for Christian leaders. In the 2012-13 school year, out of a total of 2,972 students across 11 former Soviet republics and Mongolia, sessions in Ukraine accounted for 1,017 students (34 percent), compared to Russia accounting for 465 students (16 percent).[96]

Western missionaries will likely continue to face growing impediments in Russia, Crimea, and possibly eastern and southern Ukraine.

A Turning to God

While Western missions such as Rakhuba's face new challenges in adapting to political instability, a silver lining in Ukraine's present ordeal deserves note. Increasing numbers of people are looking to God for solace and peace of mind. Over and over again, the author's email survey conducted in late March and early April 2014 confirmed this spiritual dimension. An assistant pastor and journalist from Odesa wrote, "In the period of anger people remember God."[97] A Protestant believer in Kyiv wrote, "During the tension…many are more open to thinking about deep questions of value and purpose in life." Ukraine's best hope is "that the pressure will help people… recognize that we all have sin and selfishness," that "we need to repent…and submit…totally to God's authority."[98] A Protestant missionary in Moscow desires that "people will watch how Christians handle this crisis and hopefully begin to ask questions and feel the need to draw closer to God."[99] A Protestant missionary in Kyiv wrote, "My hope is that…many will have a greater hunger for God and His Word."[100] Another missionary in Kyiv hopes the crisis "will lead unbelievers to see their need for something beyond themselves and turn to God."[101]

Worst Fears

In contrast to the above positive answers to a survey question soliciting best outcomes for the crisis, when asked for their worst fear, over half of respondents cited the prospect of war and a Russian takeover of Ukraine.[102] In such a case, many anticipate trying times for evangelical believers and missionaries in Ukraine. An American Protestant human rights lawyer fears the prospect in Crimea of "discrimination and bad feelings toward Protestants and other non-Orthodox groups, particularly Tatar Muslims."[103] The possibility of Russia expelling missionaries from Ukraine is a frequently noted concern.[104] A Protestant missionary in Dnepropetrovsk in eastern Ukraine also fears Russian "suppression of evangelicals."[105] An evangelical pastor in Kharkiv, also in eastern Ukraine, believes a Russian invasion of Ukraine would mean a "cancellation of Ukrainian independence,…civil war, devastation of the country, a Putin dictatorship" and "the Russian Orthodox Church as the only recognized confession."[106]

A less apocalyptic scenario for possible consequences of a Russian occupation of Ukraine given by a Protestant missionary in Kyiv would appear to be closer to the mark:

> I fear that people will not have the freedoms they desire if they come under the control of Russia. I fear that the minority faith groups will be placed in a role of second class faiths and that those who serve as missionaries alongside the minority faith groups will find access to Ukraine more difficult.[107]

The reason this prediction seems perfectly plausible is because what the respondent describes is exactly what has been happening in Russia over the past decade, but especially in the past few years. Human rights lawyer Lauren Homer, with expertise in religious rights infringements in Russia and China, has documented this regrettable trend under Putin in painful particularity.[108]

Religious Trajectories: Seven Projections

Whether or not Russia ends up seizing more of Ukraine than Crimea, several current religious trajectories will likely continue.

1. Western missionaries will likely continue to face growing impediments in Russia, Crimea, and possibly eastern and southern Ukraine.
2. Western missionaries in Ukraine free of Russian interference will likely continue to be welcome and active.
3. In the midst of ever-mounting violence across eastern and southern Ukraine, it will likely become ever more difficult for missions based in Ukraine to function in Russia.
4. Evangelical churches in Russia will likely continue to face increasing restrictions to their freedom of worship, with the same consequence for any part of Ukraine that Russia might occupy.
5. Relations between Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals will likely continue to remain strained.
6. In an independent Ukraine, the Ukrainian Eastern-Rite Catholic Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church will all strongly support the country's European orientation.
7. Finally, short of Russian occupation of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate will likely succeed in resisting Patriarch Kyrill's "wide-scale plans for consolidation of the 'Russian world,'" and may, in time, achieve autocephalous status with the support of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.[109]

In Conclusion

From the perspective of those who favor a stable, independent Ukraine, whether the worst- or the best-case political scenario is realized, the experience of the church in communist China suggests that even a dreaded political outcome need not spell decline for

people of faith. The encouraging fact is that Christianity in China has grown dramatically since 1949 despite concerted government attempts to suppress it. Christians in Ukraine and Russia will hopefully take heart in the biblical promise that, in the end, "the gates of hell will not prevail." ♦

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Christians in Ukraine and Russia will hopefully take heart in the biblical promise that, in the end, "the gates of hell will not prevail."

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Growing Russian Restrictions on Religious Activities

Lauren B. Homer

In recent years Russia has dramatically increased restrictions on activities of religious and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Negative attitudes of the public toward "nontraditional" religious groups have also increased. These trends are due to propaganda campaigns and the overall consolidation of power by security service forces in the government. President Vladimir Putin, a former KGB officer, clearly believes that Soviet-style suppression or manipulation of religion serves as the proper blueprint for the future. The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC), and favored Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist religious minorities are again used to support nostalgic nationalism and obscure the authoritarian nature of Putin's goals.

Like all repressive regimes intent on total political hegemony, the government has used restrictive laws, propaganda, and pliable and compliant parliamentarians to silence dissenting voices, create common enemies, and secure power. NGOs were a primary source of independent ideas and hopes for the development of Russian civil society after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Unfortunately, a virtual avalanche of laws enacted since 1997 now seriously restricts these NGOs and non-Orthodox faiths. The Ukrainian uprising of 2013-14 has given Putin the opportunity to further extend his personal control and solidify his popularity. It has also provided the rationale for additional repressive laws adopted or pending at the time of this writing. Putin's strong hand can only be expected to tighten in the near future within Russia and in territory once part of Ukraine.

Timeline of Restrictive Legislation on Religion

This article provides a timeline of key Russian legislation (enacted and proposed) that undermines freedom of religion and thwarts even-handed law enforcement. It then seeks to assess possibilities for ameliorating current trends from inside and outside Russia.

- 1997: Amendments to the 1992 Law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations" restrict religious rights. The "15-year rule" requires re-registration of religious bodies but only allows those that existed in 1982 or earlier (the Soviet period) to re-register. Substantial external pressure resulted in rules waiving the 15-year rule for religious groups registered by 1997. Many other groups were still unable to re-register due to other adverse provisions in the law.
- 2002: A new law restricts foreigners' visas and rights to engage in religious activities and imposes a quota system for temporary residence permits. This legislation and the high cost of frequent visa renewals abroad has caused numerous foreign missionaries, mission organizations, and NGOs to discontinue work in Russia.
- 2002: The "Extremism Law" criminalizes "incitement of religious animosity," advocating "superiority or inferiority" based on religion, advocating the overthrow of the state, acts dangerous to health or safety, vandalism based on religious hatred, possessing "extremist" literature, and participating in banned "extremist" groups. Penalties for violations were increased in May 2013. A federal list currently identifies over 2,000 works as extremist, including many Muslim writings, virtually all Scientology literature, and some translations of the Bible and Christian tracts. Authorities regularly seize and destroy religious literature deemed extremist or printed by unregistered groups.
- 2006: Legislation creates extremely burdensome legal and regulatory requirements and oversight of NGOs. Even unregistered "public association activities" require prior government notification. Special restrictions are placed on foreign NGOs and foreigners, including targeted amendments to the Extremism Law. A new registration chamber for foreign NGOs, including faith-based organizations, has made it impossible for many of them to re-register or comply with new rules.
- 2011: Proposed amendments to the 1997 Law on Religion would further restrict the rights of non-Orthodox faiths and possibly bar unregistered religious activity. Registration would require "expert analysis" of religious beliefs and approval by a centralized religious organization of the same faith. Rights of religious organizations that are not part of a centralized religious organization would be reduced for 10 years following registration. They could not operate educational institutions or Sunday schools, invite foreigners for missionary purposes, hold religious ceremonies in hospitals, prisons, or schools, or publish or distribute religious literature. Distribution of all religious literature would be restricted, and grounds for liquidation of smaller religious organizations would be expanded. Objections from the Russian Orthodox Church caused the proposals to be withdrawn.
- June 2012: A law "On Public Assemblies" requires advance government approval of all "public assemblies" and imposes harsh fines and restrictions on organizers of unapproved assemblies. The new restrictions apply to outdoor religious events and festivals and indoor events that interfere with public order, providing authorities with many possibilities to impede the free exercise of religion.
- July 2012: A new "Foreign Agents" law requires any NGO that "influences public opinion" and receives funding from foreign sources to register as a "foreign agent." NGOs designated in this way must submit financial and other reports to several government bodies and brand their offices and publications (including websites) with the term "foreign agent." NGOs believe that this requirement implies that they threaten Russian national security. Religious organizations and educational institutions are expressly exempt from the law but still undergo inspections and enforcement actions under this law. The "Foreign Agents" Law severely

A virtual avalanche of laws enacted since 1997 now seriously restricts NGOs and non-Orthodox faiths. The Ukrainian uprising of 2013-14 has given Putin the rationale for additional repressive laws.

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restricts civil society, democracy, and religious freedom advocates. A number of NGOs have closed in protest.

- July 2012: A new "Libel Law" criminalizes and increases fines for "knowingly disseminating false information defaming the honor and dignity or undermining the reputation of another person." This legislation makes challenging government officials and other public figures quite dangerous.
- July 2012: A restrictive Internet law enables the government to blacklist websites and monitor Internet use.
- October 2012: A new "Treason Law" expands criminal treason to include assisting international or foreign organizations in acting against the security of the Russian Federation and sharing "state secrets," including publicly available materials. Activists are concerned that reporting human rights and religious freedom violations to international bodies and foreign governments could be considered treasonous.
- November 2012: President Putin orders increased and burdensome inspections of all NGOs for compliance with extremism, foreign agents, and other laws.
- December 2012: The "Dima Yakolev" Law bans adoption of children by U.S. citizens and bans NGOs that engage in "political activities," receive U.S. funds, or threaten Russia's interests. Russia may prosecute U.S. officials who violate the human rights of Russian Federation citizens. Here Russia is responding to the U.S. Magnitsky Act requiring visa bans and confiscation of assets of Russians and other foreign nationals if U.S. officials decide they are responsible for human rights violations of Russian citizens. The law led to the closure of the Moscow offices of the United States Agency for International Development, among other NGOs, and ended U.S. citizens' adoption of Russian orphans.
- December 2012: Proposed amendments to the 1997 Law on Religion would require special educational qualifications for clerics and religious personnel and written labor agreements with religious organizations. Many religious workers could be disqualified based on their lack of formal education, their education abroad, or their lack of formal working relationships with registered religious organizations.
- March 2013: After the Ministry of Justice publicly refuses to implement the Foreign Agents Law and other agencies fail to act on his November 2012 order, Putin holds a news conference demanding NGO inspections. The State Prosecutor then orders tax, Ministry of Justice, and other authorities to inspect all NGOs for legal noncompliance, including religious and educational organizations, which are exempt from the Foreign Agents Law.
- June 2013: Proposed restrictions on renting property for religious purposes would require religious bodies to use only facilities that they own.
- July 2013: Amendments to the 1997 Law on Religion bar persons previously convicted of extremism, money laundering, or terrorism, and foreigners previously barred from entering Russia from holding leadership posts in religious organizations or attending services. Religious bodies convicted of violating these restrictions or of extremism are forbidden to operate on either a registered or unregistered basis. Thus, allowing a convicted "extremist" to attend a worship service or publishing materials deemed "extremist," even once, could result in the closure of a religious body.
- July 2013: Responding to serious acts of desecration and destruction of church property and lesser insults, a new "Blasphemy Law" criminalizes "offending the feelings" of religious believers or destroying religious books, sites, or symbols. This legislation could potentially criminalize exclusive truth claims ("my faith is the one true path") by clerics or believers. To date, enforcement has been limited.
- July 2013: A new law further facilitates government inspections of NGOs. At least 528 inspections in 49 regions occurred in 2013. Organizations with foreign funding faced intense scrutiny, and many were closed due to minor non-compliance issues.
- November 2013: Proposed amendments to the 1997 Law on Religion, similar to the 2011 proposals, would restrict locations available for worship and religious activities to properties owned by registered organizations, eliminating religious use of rental or loaned, non-residential property.
- November 2013: A proposed amendment to the Russian Federation Constitution would designate Orthodoxy as the basis of the national and cultural identity of Russia.
- March 2014: The Anti-Sect Working Group of the Duma and the Prosecutor's Office proposes that the Russian Supreme Court clearly define the term "sects" in order to combat "destructive religious organizations." Among other claims, proponents contend that "sects" assist foreign intelligence services and undermine the state, acting as a "fifth column." As proof, they assert that the new acting president and prime minister of Ukraine are respectively a Baptist (true) and a Scientologist (false). "Sects" are described as religious groups "formed within the last 200 years, mainly in North America" and as "a secluded religious group that positions itself against the main culture-forming religious community…of a country or region"—in short, groups outside the four "traditional" religions (Russian Orthodoxy, Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism) named in the 1997 Law on Religion.
- March 2014: Proposed amendments to the 1997 Law on Religion would delete the 15-year rule and remove redundant reporting requirements.

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However, substantial new restrictions would be added: (i) unregistered religious activities become illegal; (ii) unregistered religious "groups" must notify government authorities of their existence and provide detailed information about their beliefs, meeting places, leaders, and members; (iii) "groups" may meet only in places specifically approved by the government for such use; (iv) "groups" that are not affiliated with centralized (national) religious organizations must prove prior compliance with point (ii) in order to register and will have restricted rights for 10 years; (v) only centralized religious organizations may invite foreigners to engage in religious activities.

- April 2014: New legislation requires all foreigners seeking temporary or permanent residency in Russia to prove competency in the Russian language, history, and legislation. Other foreigners will be unable to obtain work-related visas, with exceptions for persons over the age of 60 and a few others.
- Effective in August 2014: Laws bring Internet content under stronger government control, with civil and criminal penalties for violations. Those involved in website creation, hosting, or blogging must register with the government, keep records of published materials for six months, and cooperate with government surveillance. Website owners must determine the truth or falsity of published material and immediately remove false information as well as barred content which include violations of election laws, invasion of privacy, and information that offends individuals, discredits religion, reveals state secrets, or promotes extremism or terrorism. Pornography and foul language are also banned. Bloggers must disclose their full names and contact information online. The Internet has been one of the few remaining outlets for often anonymous criticism of Kremlin policy. The new rules will stifle dissent and could justify closure of sites used by religious bodies and religious freedom advocates. Russia is already blocking or closing many websites and prosecuting popular bloggers, and for some time the government has strictly controlled television and radio programming.

The Gradual Curtailment of Dissent

Enacted over the past 17 years, these increasingly restrictive laws and decrees provide myriad grounds for harassing and prohibiting activities of "non-traditional" and "foreign" religions, as well as traditional groups, and impose crushing regulatory burdens on registered organizations. Proposed legislation to remove existing rights to freely express religious ideas and organize religious activities without registration and to restrict locations of religious activity is potentially devastating. The gradual elimination of public forums for expressing dissent ensures that Russia will move in a nationalistic, anti-Western direction. In the current climate, few government officials will moderate the trend of increasing infringements on freedom of religion for religious minorities.

Pentecostals and Charismatics Under Assault

The avalanche of restrictive legislation has been accompanied by numerous incidents that have seriously violated the religious freedoms of Russian citizens and have often resulted in court cases. It is impossible to do more here than provide an overview of these events, with primary focus on Christian minorities. Prosecutors have frequently attacked Pentecostal and Charismatic groups, particularly in Siberia and the Russian Far East where they were until recently numerically and socially prominent, characterizing them as "extremist" or harming citizens' health. Religious activities considered normal outside Russia are targets: healing prayer, weekend spiritual retreats, video presentations on the Christian faith, and praying in tongues. Some video and audio materials are alleged to manipulate worshippers through hidden visual and audio messages. One pastor was sued for causing a psychotic breakdown of a parishioner through prayer. Church-sponsored alcohol and drug rehabilitation, housing of orphans and street children, summer camps, and other outreaches to orphans, the elderly, the ill, and students, have been prohibited. Many other pretexts are used to close churches and their ministries. Authorities have asked "harmful" churches to produce detailed identification information on their leaders, clergy, and members, echoing classic Soviet abuses.

In September 2012, religious groups were shocked by the nighttime demolition of the Pentecostal Church of the Holy Trinity in Moscow, which began while parishioners were inside. Authorities charged that the congregation's land lease had expired. Recently, the Russian Supreme Court denied an appeal from St. Petersburg's Harvest Church, which was closed based on alleged illegal educational activities—allowing use of its property for children's classes. Even the Salvation Army was closed for "extremist" activities, for the alleged creation of military units. It did not regain legal status as a recognized religious organization until it successfully appealed to the European Court of Human Rights.

Property, Rental, and Other Restrictions

Rental of public and private spaces for religious events is increasingly difficult for churches that are not part of the Russian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate. They often face major government hostility, and sometimes opposition from local Orthodox clergy, when they seek to build new churches or purchase property. In contrast to Russian Orthodox parishes, Protestant congregations almost never receive government land or subsidies for new church buildings. Proposed legislation barring them from using public or private rental properties or conducting services in homes would make corporate worship difficult or impossible.

Limits on religious activities and visas for foreigners have had a particular impact upon Catholic parishes and other churches dependent upon foreign priests. Orthodox churches that do not accept the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate have suffered. In some cases, government officials have arbitrarily "returned" Catholic, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, and Old Believer churches to the Russian Orthodox Church because local congregations had lost registration rights due to lack of clergy.

Newer religious groups have been primary targets of extremism prosecutions, including Jehovah's Witnesses, Scientologists, Hare Krishna devotees, and Mormons.

Increasingly restrictive laws and decrees provide myriad grounds for harassing and prohibiting activities of "non-traditional" and "foreign" religions.

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Muslim groups not affiliated with the centralized Muslim religious organization formed during the Soviet period are regularly accused of terrorist links and extremism. Jewish groups not affiliated with the one government-favored centralized Jewish organization have also lost rights and properties. Although the government has spoken out against anti-Semitism, Jews are once again targets of racial slanders and their temples are targets of vandalism.

Alexander Dvorkin, Anti-"Sect" Activist

Many government officials are considerably misinformed or ignorant of religious beliefs, leading to erroneous conclusions about the activities of minority groups. Local officials are also reluctant to permit activities of minority faiths for fear of being accused of allowing violations of the law. Since 2009 Orthodox anti-sect activist Alexander Dvorkin, Chairman of the Ministry of Justice's Expert Council for Conducting State Religious Studies and advisor to the Duma Working Group on Sects, has had a major negative impact upon the treatment of religious minorities. On his own organization's website, Dvorkin chronicles and lauds prosecutions of minority religious groups.

Federal and regional expert council members and other bureaucrats have been trained to accept Dvorkin's far-reaching definition of "sects," along the lines the Russian Supreme Court is now asked to adopt, which he has also successfully propagated in Europe. The head of the Duma Committee on Public and Religious Organizations is a member of the Liberal Democratic Party, one of Russia's most extreme nationalistic parties. If xenophobia prevails in Russia, its minority religions are likely to suffer to the extent that they are viewed as having western origins, even if they have existed in Russia for hundreds of years.

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Guardians of Religious Rights

Nonetheless, as of now, Russians retain rights of religious belief and association under their 1997 Law on Religion, their Constitution, and international laws and treaties signed by Russia. The most meaningful guardians of the rights of Russian religious organizations and believers are lawyers who have courageously defended them since the early 1990s. In particular, the Slavic Center for Law and Justice led by Anatoly Pschilentstev and Vladimir Ryakhovsky has had a huge impact in maintaining the rights of minority believers through litigation, expertise, and education of political leaders and other lawyers. Religious freedom think tanks and websites run by other specialists in the field, such as Roman Lunkin and others at the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, Credo-Portal.ru, and Forum 18, monitor developments and contribute analyses and ideas that influence opinions in political and religious circles.

Surprisingly, litigation does work: many churches have won court cases, and NGOs have won most lawsuits involving the Foreign Agents Law. Unfortunately, litigation is not always feasible because of financial constraints and the limited time and energy of lawyers willing to fight these battles. Also, an effort is clearly underway to reduce the independence of the judiciary. The European Court for Human Rights in Strassburg is overwhelmed with cases from Russia. Even when it takes a case and rules in favor of Russian religious organizations, authorities on the ground do not always comply with its decisions.

Orthodox Conformity to State Policy

The Russian Orthodox Church has been given an increasingly high public profile as it functions as an arm of state religious and social policy and as a supporter of government political positions. In addition to substantial government subsidies for construction and repairs of hundreds of churches, a December 2011 law provides the Orthodox Patriarch secret service protection, like high-level governmental officials. Orthodox prominence, however, has come at the price of reduced autonomy. During the 2011 pro-democracy rallies, Patriarch Kyrill commented that the Russian government should listen to the "legitimate aspirations of the Russian people, " which reportedly resulted in harsh threats of an anti-clerical campaign and a direct assault upon Orthodoxy's public standing. In response, Kyrill and other Orthodox leaders hastened to support Putin's re-election enthusiastically. As recently as 2013, one could find dissenting Orthodox voices and proponents of church reform advocating more energetic approaches to outreach, including an increased emphasis on discipleship and education of the general public and of Orthodox believers. Today, however, the more open and tolerant elements of the Orthodox Church seem to have been silenced.

Church Tensions Over Ukraine

The Ukrainian conflict has produced complex developments for relations among Russian religious organizations and their counterparts in Ukraine and the rest of the world. The Moscow Patriarchate and the three Orthodox jurisdictions in Ukraine have leveled charges against each other, including allegations of the seizure of each other's churches and participation of priests of the opposing jurisdiction in terrorist activities. Their hierarchs have made public professions of patriotic loyalty to their respective governments, as have leaders of evangelical organizations in both Russia and Ukraine. Deeper divisions based on nationality in Orthodox and Protestant churches are increasingly in evidence. Certainly, continuing military conflicts could quickly erode church bonds and trust carefully rebuilt following the collapse of the Soviet Union. They could also stoke the fires of propaganda against religious minorities, which are increasingly characterized as disloyal and untrustworthy.

Possibilities for Inter-Confessional Cooperation

Dialogue and cooperation between the Russian Orthodox Church and other Christian churches within Russia have been limited in recent years, in stark contrast to the 1990s. Metropolitan Ilarion, head of the Russian Orthodox Department of External Relations, did meet with his counterparts in the Catholic and Evangelical Christian-Baptist churches on 14 February 2014 to discuss, among other topics, religious freedom. However, Orthodox officials meet more often with leaders of non-proselytizing Muslim, Jewish, and Buddhist religious organizations that are favored by the Kremlin.

One issue has the potential to unite efforts of the various Christian confessions within Russia and their counterparts outside Russia despite their differences: the defense of persecuted Christians in the Middle

East, Africa, and other parts of the world. These communities are suffering existential threats from hostile Islamist groups and are experiencing massive deaths and casualties. The Moscow Patriarchate has taken numerous public and private steps to bring attention to the plight of Christians in the Middle East, particularly Syria, during the last year. In a major interview on 29 April 2014, Metropolitan Ilarion expressed concern that the conflict in Ukraine was being allowed to overshadow the need to focus on the terrible assaults on Christian communities in the Middle East. He emphasized the need for interreligious cooperation to stop the violence directed against Christians there, in Nigeria, and in Muslim majority countries. These expressions of concern are sincere and could open the door to ongoing communication and collaboration with the Russian Orthodox Church on these issues, and such cooperation could lead to improved interfaith dialogue within Russia about other concerns.

The Legacy of Religious Repression

It must be said that the effects of 70-plus years of communism, with its systematic efforts to suppress religious belief and subjugate religion to the will of the state, is still having a negative impact 23 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches were decimated by the murder and imprisonment of clergy and lay believers, the closure of seminaries and churches, and the systematic marginalization and demonization of believers and clergy. Believers today still suffer from lingering anti-religious propaganda, unhealthy traditions of church submission to state power, and fear of outsiders and other religious traditions. Too often churches turn inward to avoid confrontation or criticism. Much Orthodox energy has been devoted to reconstruction of church physical structures and institutions rather than encouraging others to follow Christ. Since 1992 these legacies have seriously undercut outreach, the training of members, and the church's potential positive social influence.

In a recent discussion, the former heads of Evangelical Christian-Baptist Unions in Russia and Ukraine both stated that they felt that their churches had failed to take full advantage of the opportunities they had had in the 1990s to influence their societies. Russian Orthodox leaders have similar regrets and have begun to look to Protestant churches for models for evangelism and discipleship, educational programs, and ways to increase their positive impact on Russian society. Russia has never been more in need of true people of faith to help restore the downtrodden, the addicted, the orphaned, and the abandoned and to give hope to masses of hopeless and despairing people. Russia's political and social order still bears the scars of the brutality of the Soviet period with now an overlay of excessive materialism and self-centered ways of living. Most Russians need to learn basic Christian moral teachings as an antidote to corruption, materialism, moral decline, and apathy. Cooperation between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christians is essential to meet these enormous needs.

Recent Acceleration of Restrictive Legislation

The current trajectory of events within Russia is alarming. It is extremely significant that restrictive legislation accelerated so quickly after Putin's May 2012 reinstatement as President and again after the Ukrainian crisis began. Repressive regimes typically impose authoritarian control through unjust laws to present the appearance of being law abiding. They initially focus on disfavored groups, including minority religious groups, and then turn to the task of eradicating political opponents. This was certainly true of the Nazis, and Soviet and Chinese communists, among others. As many of us in the human rights field are fond of saying, religious freedom is like the canary in a coal mine; when it dies, all freedoms are likely to soon meet their demise.

In fact, the Russian Orthodox Church is in as much peril as other faith groups. All churches in Russia are endangered minorities in a sea of secularism and unbelief, as in so many other parts of the world. The precarious position of churches is particularly true in an authoritarian environment when one day's favorite may quickly become tomorrow's villain. It is important to remember that legal restrictions and persecution of Russian Christian religious minorities were quickly followed by legal restrictions and severe persecution of the Orthodox Church after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. The Russian Orthodox Church is the one religious institution with the strength and moral authority to steer the government away from efforts to re-impose controls on religious life that are reminiscent of the Soviet period, and it should do so.

In Defense of Religious Liberty

Ultimately, the fate of religious freedom in Russia, and of Russian civic life as a whole, is in the hands of the Russian people and their political and social leaders. They have had 23 years since the Soviet Union collapsed to learn to think without ideological manipulation, to enjoy freedoms provided by post-Soviet laws, and to accumulate financial assets and electronic devices that enable life and communication independent of their government. From the perspective of people of faith, an entire generation has had the opportunity to learn about God and explore life's spiritual dimensions. In the days to come, it will be up to Russian citizens of faith to defend themselves, propagate their beliefs, and fight for their rights. They received freedom in 1992 as the result of what most viewed as a sovereign act of God and will now have to struggle to keep it through actions and prayer. As Paul noted in his Epistle to the Galatians, "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great German theologian, witnessed firsthand Hitler's rise to power and his subversion of the German elite and the German church. As is typically the case with tyranny, very few Germans saw clearly that Hitler was leading their nation to destruction, not dominance. Many of the few Germans who did oppose were motivated by their faith. Bonhoeffer said that the only meaningful questions for German Christians at that time were "What does God want?" and "What is He calling me to do?" His own refusal to accept Hitler's rule led to his early death. Sadly, however, he had to note, prior to his execution, that most Christians outside Germany had failed to support the dissident "Confessing Church" when it might have made a difference. Let us hope that Christians, inside and outside Russia, will not make the same mistake in this critical time. ♦

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The Current and Possible Impact of the Ukrainian Crisis on Ukrainian Protestants

Sergiy Tymchenko

Any crisis brings both pain and the opportunity for change and growth. The socio-political crisis currently being experienced by Ukrainians has been very painful not only because of Russia's unexpected violation of their territorial integrity and the threat it poses to their independence, but also because of the shocking realization that many of their personal friends and relatives in Russia actually support their treacherous political leaders. At the same time this crisis offers them an opportunity to grow as a nation as they have been challenged by questions of identity: Who are we? What are our values? What can we do together? How do we view others? These are the questions that also became important for those Ukrainian evangelicals who took seriously the challenge of the current crisis.

The questions of a social group identity can be answered, of course, only by processing them through a common worldview framework, which is usually supported by a group's culture and its perception of history. Ukrainian evangelicals, facing this crisis together with the rest of Ukrainian society, therefore, can either find some common perspectives with the majority or some part of Ukrainian society or develop an altogether apolitical perspective.

Isolationist Versus Activist Evangelicals

Today Ukrainian evangelicals present quite a diverse group, not homogeneous culturally and often with no solid theological foundation for discussing socio-political issues. From previous generations of evangelicals persecuted by the atheist government in the U.S.S.R. many of them inherited an isolationist approach to society. Others, especially those who were involved in some evangelistic or social Christian ministries, developed an activist perspective of the world, with an emphasis on transforming secular culture through the message of the gospel that brings God's Kingdom values of justice, mercy, and human dignity to a sinful world.

Ukrainian evangelicals, whose identity was more firmly determined by Scripture than by the surrounding culture, were almost never divided by cultural differences between eastern and western Ukrainians. Today, when Ukraine faces a threat from Russia, Ukrainian evangelicals have realized that they must make a choice. They can somehow combine their eternal Christian social identity with a temporal, earthly one, or they can withdraw into a separatist, escapist religious posture.

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The Political Context

To better understand the dilemma faced by evangelicals, we should take a brief look at the political crisis in Ukraine. Protests began in late 2013 against a horribly corrupt regime, driven by Ukrainian aspirations to establish a society which valued the rule of law, human dignity, and human rights. Maidan – the central square in Kyiv that became the epicenter of protest – also became the people's symbol of hope for establishing a renewed, just society. Russian propaganda presented the development of these protests as a violent overthrow of the Yanukovich regime -- a gross distortion of what actually happened. As further developments (especially the annexation of Crimea) made clear, Yanukovich was only a puppet in the Russian plan to subdue Ukraine. Contrary to Russian misinformation, Maidan demonstrations should not be regarded as a civil war. The unrest in the East has been provoked and fueled by Russian interference. The Kremlin interpreted a possible Ukrainian entry into the European Union and the desire of Ukrainians to live in a society free from corruption as a betrayal of Slavic brotherhood. To prevent this western relationship, the Kremlin is ready to use the Russian army.

Ukrainian Evangelicals Who Approve of Russian Actions

Reacting to this political crisis, Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals formed three distinct positions, at least two of which can be found in almost every evangelical church in Ukraine. The first position is held by those who became victims of Russian state propaganda directed against Ukraine. This group is represented by some Ukrainian evangelicals in the country's eastern regions and Crimea and the majority of evangelicals who live in Russia. They approve the Kremlin's actions, viewing them as necessary for the protection of Russia's political interests.

Ukrainian Evangelicals Who Disapprove of Russian Actions

The second position is held by a significant number of Ukrainian evangelicals who supported the Maidan demonstrations and Ukrainian independence. Many of them began to gather daily on the squares (maidans) in their own cities and towns to pray for a just society and the protection of peaceful protesters. In many places in Ukraine they established prayer tents, places where anyone could pray and receive spiritual and physical support, including Scripture and food. It is important to note that a certain (though not high) number of Russian evangelicals support the struggle of their Ukrainian brothers and sisters for an independent and just society.

Ukrainian Evangelicals Who Are Apolitical

The third position is held by a good number of Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals who want to stay away from politics altogether and view themselves as citizens only of the "heavenly fatherland." One pastor from a Baptist church in Kyiv recently claimed, "I am not concerned about the territorial integrity of any country on Earth. My Fatherland is in Heaven, and it is painful to see how earthly rulers divide God's people." From his perspective Maidan was guilty of dividing the church. Ironically, such escapist believers often find common ground with those evangelicals who firmly support earthly rulers in Russia and believe anti-Maidan propaganda.

The Challenge of Identity

The crisis in Ukraine inflicted two deep wounds upon Ukrainian evangelicals: one was the division within its churches and the other was the division between Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals who share a common history, close friendships, and family ties. In the current crisis how do these three groups of evangelicals perceive themselves, their place in the world, and each other? The issue of identity has become

the major challenge for Ukrainian evangelicals. Are they only citizens of the "heavenly fatherland," or do they also belong to an earthly realm, resident aliens with some social obligations? Or do they identify themselves with those in their earthly society who stand for justice and truth against corruption and violence? And if they do, can they be patriots of the country where they live and understand their call to be *Ukrainian* Christians, or must they view themselves only as global Christians?

The challenge of identity corresponds to the challenge of values. All evangelicals claim that their ultimate value is God's Kingdom revealed today in the presence of the Church in the world. But do they see any value in this world as being created by God and loved so much that Christ died for it? Do they want to see this world become more just and loving through the mission of the Church in the power of the Spirit? Or do they see this world as so certainly destined to perish that attempts to right social or political wrongs would be futile? Or maybe their immediate value in everyday life is earthly well-being, however they understand it, while the value of God's Kingdom belongs to their spiritual life only?

These questions demand an immediate response, particularly from Ukrainian evangelical pastors as the political crisis deepens and widens with every day. When Christian leaders do not have the time to think through all the theological and political ramifications of the positions they take, many of them tend to follow the lead of the social milieu to which they belong. Moral reflection is one element that is often overlooked as Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals discuss the current crisis. Without deliberating the issues that challenge them today, evangelicals may be deceived and manipulated by mass media that distorts the truth.

Evangelical Attitudes Toward "the Other"

One issue Ukrainian and Russian evangelicals need to consider is their attitude to "the other": as examples, their neighbors who suffer from violence or injustice; their evangelical brothers and sisters whose views on politics differ from their own; and their brothers and sisters of other confessions. Evangelical aloofness from the struggles of society may in the future produce a stumbling block for the success of the mission of the Gospel. The growing socio-political differences among Ukrainian evangelicals could lead to a new division similar to the well-known schism between Soviet-era registered and unregistered ("underground") churches. It is worth remembering that this split within Soviet evangelical ranks beginning in the early 1960s was also a result of different views of Christians' responsibilities toward the state.

Interestingly, when evangelicals lose unity, they sometimes find more in common with believers of other confessions, particularly in the Slavic context with Orthodox and Eastern-Rite Catholics who have similar socio-political perspectives. In the future, this phenomenon may lead to the development of a more complimentary, synergetic relationship among Ukrainian Christians of different confessions.

Reflecting on the Interface of Theology and Politics

Perhaps the most far-reaching impact of the current crisis on evangelicals in Ukraine will be seen in their new interest in political theology and the theology of mission. However they choose to answer all the new challenging questions, they will be forced to ponder in new ways the relationship of theology to political and social issues. A likely renewal of interest in theology may spur a search for solid answers to painful questions, with Scripture providing a prism through which experience can be interpreted. It will not be long before we see fresh theological reflection coming from a new school of Ukrainian evangelical scholars. When that happens, we will know that in spite of all the pain of the present crisis, it will have helped us to become more mature. ♦

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A Donetsk Evangelical Perspective on the Ukraine Crisis

Vyacheslav Khalanskyy

Western Versus Eastern Perceptions

Events in Ukraine are moving fast and changing rapidly every day. At the beginning of the Euromaidan protests, all attention focused on events in Kyiv (late November 2013—early March 2014). Now all attention has shifted to eastern and southern Ukraine. It is very difficult to characterize these events because they are so dissimilar. While events that occurred on the Maidan in Kyiv leading to the fall of President Viktor Yanukovich were mostly perceived positively by residents of Kyiv and the western regions of Ukraine, the opposite was the case in eastern Ukraine.

From 15 to 21 March 2014, the Association of Political Psychologists of Ukraine conducted a nationwide survey polling 1,998 adults over the age of 18, with 82 percent of respondents Ukrainian and 15.3 percent Russian. A majority (77.7 percent) of those surveyed supported Acting President Oleksandr Turchynov and 9.5 percent did not. Similarly, 76.9 percent supported Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk and 9.7 percent did not.

Increasing Church Support for Ukrainian Unity

Believers in eastern regions of Ukraine are more likely to support Ukrainian unity than is the general population in eastern Ukraine. From 20 February 2014 representatives of various Christian confessions organized an interfaith prayer tent in Donetsk. However, the Russian Orthodox Church Moscow Patriarchate does not participate in this interconfessional movement and the Baptist Church only to a degree. Baptist pastors have attended such meetings, but their church members do not. The prayer tent was mostly the initiative of Pentecostals and Charismatics, with support as well from the Eastern-Rite Catholic Church, the Latin-Rite Catholic Church, and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate. The priorities of the participating Christian churches in Donetsk are praying for peace and safety and condemnation of the actions of Russia. Political neutrality in Donetsk is gradually being replaced by support for Ukrainian unity and opposition to Russia's efforts to threaten that unity. A minority of believers in

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Donetsk churches (about 10 percent) favor unification of eastern Ukraine with Russia.

More and more Ukrainians, whether they live in western, central, or eastern Ukraine, are asking the question, "Who are we?" The events in Ukraine (the Maidan demonstrations and prayer events in the east as well as the west) show that the Church plays an important and even decisive role in society. Churches in Ukraine are increasingly identifying with the society in which they function. They are rethinking what it means to serve their people and to walk with them together during these most difficult times ♦

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After Maidan

Mykhailo Cherenkov

Maidan – that is how historians will designate the new era in Ukraine and the post-Soviet world. It is a marker not only of social and political change, but of a deep, tectonic shift in thinking, culture, and relationships. Here are some of the consequences of Maidan that have been long in the making.

Russia Apart

After Maidan, Russia launched its takeover of Crimea, and it became immediately clear who supported the Yanukovich regime and its criminal activities. Moscow removed its mask. The "brother at the gates," was armed with weapons and outright hatred. The launch of Russian aggression marked the final end of the "Russian world," about which President Putin and Patriarch Kirill speak so eloquently. Ukraine can be a good, solid neighbor to Russia, but Ukrainians do not believe for a moment the rhetoric about brotherhood and unity among Slavic people. An uncontrolled chain reaction of decay has been set in motion. The idea of Russia as a unifying territorial power in post-Soviet space is receding into the past. None of the former Soviet republics, now independent, wants to join forces with her; she is left alone.

Ukraine Apart

After Maidan, Ukraine, too, is left alone, but for now this is to its benefit. She breaks away from the rough, Russian bear hug. However, her place in Europe is not yet ready, and she herself is not yet ready for Europe. It is a good time for Ukraine to be between East and West, looking around, getting ready, and taking a conscious step toward the European family. At the same time Ukraine should be aware of her special status as a middle ground, on the edge of Europe and in close proximity to Russia. Membership in the European Union will protect Ukraine, but its long-term advantage lies in not belonging completely to either Eurasia or Europe, an intermediary position between two different worlds.

The Force of Civil Society

After Maidan, the entire post-Soviet world can no longer ignore the genuine force of civil society. Maidan demonstrated citizens' remarkable ability to organize and mobilize for battle against a criminal state. Ukrainians themselves were dubious about their abilities, and Russians and Belarusians were even more dubious.

Maidan has set a precedent of successful action by civil society against a corrupt and out-of-touch regime. Post-Soviet states deaf to the yearnings of their subjects must now contend with this new threat to arbitrary rule and will attempt to crush it. As it turned out, it was not pressure from the West, but rather it was the solidarity and determination of ordinary people that proved to be the critical factor in Maidan's success.

Maidan has set a precedent of successful action by civil society against a corrupt and out-of-touch regime. Post-Soviet states deaf to the yearnings of their subjects must now contend with this new threat to arbitrary rule.

Students and Journalists as Change Agents

After Maidan, two human forces, students and journalists, strode onto the stage of history, the real significance of which is underrated to this day. Ukrainian students have no connection with, or remembrance of, the Soviet past and are hardly susceptible to traditional forms of propaganda. In Maidan they proved to be the advocates and engineers of change by their unwavering presence, day in and day out, in the ranks of demonstrators.

The same can be said of journalists. Seeking out and disseminating accurate and timely information, they proved to be the enemies of the totalitarian state which resorted to lies, fear, and violence in its attempts to silence opposition. Journalists provided critical support for Maidan protestors and were a primary target of government forces seeking to curb them. In the days to come the best hope for transformation, transparency, and accountability in government, the best hope for checking power-hungry oligarchs, the best hope for effecting modernization, and the best hope of "rebooting" the system rests with journalists.

Maidan and the Church

After Maidan the role of the Church and society's attitude towards it are changing. Previously, in an environment of corrupt institutions, the Church enjoyed the highest confidence rating, but took little advantage of its influence. Instead of serving society, the Church served the interests of the state. Maidan, passing judgment on the state, also passed judgment on the Church. Churches that supported Maidan have a future. In contrast, church leaders who preached neutrality or reassured the Yanukovich regime of their complete devotion have proven themselves to be spiritually bankrupt.

Maidan hammered a stake into the remaining vestiges of Soviet-style rule. Maidan also thrust up shoots of new life, not just post-Soviet life, but life that is totally new. In the near future we will witness more changes in the wake of Maidan, but it would be much better if we became active participants in building a nation committed to religious liberty, honest government, and economic modernization.♦

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Some Personal Thoughts on the Cauldron of Troubles in Ukraine

Anonymous

Voices from all points on the political spectrum, both here in Ukraine and in other countries, continue to shout vehemently about who is at fault in the current crisis in Ukraine and how best to resolve it. It is getting harder every day to make any sense out of the mind-numbing cacophony and to really know the truth in all cases because contradictions, misinformation, and preposterous lies abound. Only the worst of the information war has been reported in Western media. As believers here attempt to wade through the confusion, many discern that this struggle involves much more than the usual culprits of lust for power, money, and control.

Threats Abounding

Hatred is very obviously and deliberately being brewed among average Russians and Ukrainians, people who have long been close culturally. Blatant provocations, urban warfare tactics, and abuse of innocent people appear well-planned and systematic. A choreographed campaign has been launched to destabilize Ukraine and to spread paralyzing fear through every means imaginable. Open combat is the case in some locations where local rebels and foreign mercenaries launch salvos at Ukrainian forces from residential areas where people are still living. Also very troubling are the destruction of property, thefts, kidnappings, and physical abuse, including torture and murder of those who oppose the rebels. Also alarming are the Ukrainian politicians, businessmen, military personnel, and police who frequently betray their own country and change sides in exchange for payments or for commercial or political advantage.

Everyone is shocked, but for believers, all the turmoil indicates that Ukraine is experiencing not just a political and socio-economic crisis, but a diabolical onslaught that is intended to disrupt and control far more than just governmental, commercial, and social structures. Given the inevitable consequences of wide-scale societal breakdown, the enemy also seems intent on rendering Ukraine incapable of developing further as a center of moral and spiritual influence in the region. A nation's political and socio-economic health always affects the Church at least in the short run, although God ultimately accomplishes what He wills no matter what happens.

Ukraine as a Center of Christian Outreach

For many years, in spite of its very rocky, often mafia-like political and commercial life, Ukraine has been blessed with a climate in which religious tolerance and freedom have been able to grow far more rapidly than in any other country of the former Soviet Union. It is home to some of the largest churches in Europe. Almost every variety of Christian denomination is represented here, and the trend is not merely to respect one another's right to exist, but to cooperate for the good of society. For the past 20-plus years Ukraine has been the center of Christian evangelistic, humanitarian, and social activity in the former Soviet Union and has long been the major sending country for local missionaries to Russia and other countries, some of which are dominated by Muslims. Christian missions and NGOs of various kinds – both local and foreign - have long worked for spiritual, social, and even political change at national and municipal levels while providing practical assistance to orphans, street children, victims of addictions and disease, and the poor. Ukraine is also home to hundreds of theological institutions of various sizes, and it has the greatest number of Christian schools in the region despite the lack of adequate legislation in their favor.

Spiritual Gains Despite the Odds

None of these gains have come easily. Every parcel of "spiritual ground" has been won in large part through dedication, determination, prayer, and persistence in the face of enormous financial deficits, shortages of personnel, poor infrastructure, less-than-adequate technology, and sometimes conflicting visions and priorities within the Church. Nevertheless, the advances that have been made by the Christian community in Ukraine that only 25 years ago was dominated by atheistic communism and discrimination against Christians are nothing short of miraculous. That these developments have occurred over such a short period of time attests to the amazing grace and working of God's Spirit. While we cannot describe this situation as a major, historic spiritual awakening with accompanying large-scale social changes, the region may well be on the cusp of precisely that. Unmistakably the Spirit has been moving, preparing the soil and sowing seeds. However, because still far too few have heard the message of God's love and forgiveness through Jesus Christ or have been adequately discipled, we doubt that current events mark the beginning of the end times as some seem to believe. Future missiologists may consider this point in the history of this region as truly pivotal and view Ukraine as the nation chosen by the Lord to fulfill particular kinds of missions in this part of the unreached world. For all of these reasons and more, it should have come as no surprise to us that forces of darkness would be unleashed against Ukraine. But surprise us it did and still does every day.

For the past 20-plus years Ukraine has been the center of Christian evangelistic, humanitarian, and social activity in the former Soviet Union.

Good Days and Bad

We can only truly speak for ourselves, but we sense that we are not alone in reacting inconsistently to what is going on around us. On good days we see the hand of God bringing good out of what man intends for evil. We see Him moving people and events into place in order to accomplish His ultimate purposes. On other days we confess to giving in to feelings of pessimism and despair. Hearing triumphant clichés, even biblically based ones, often seems hollow and unconvincing because the threats and potential dangers are real. Evil and defeat do seem to be knocking at the door. Some days we feel paralyzed and just want to leave this place. Is it fear? Lack of faith? Maybe some of both? Probably. *Forgive us, Lord. It's just that while we know what the final end will be, we can't be sure about what Your will is right now, in this place, for Ukraine, Russia, and the Church.*

What Gives Us Hope

We were counseled recently to "just wait." For what, we aren't sure, but we are willing. We are trying to do what we know is right in the meantime, but everything in us cries out for a return to normal life, whatever that is. All we know for certain is that the Lord is good and righteous in all His judgments, and that evil is not of His doing. The current situation is not what He desires for Ukraine, and only He can bring good out of present circumstances. It is this that keeps us going, keeps us praying, and gives us hope. ♦

Slaviansk, Ukraine: An Epicenter of Charity and War

Karen Springs

Slaviansk, a city in eastern Ukraine with about 130,000 residents, has suddenly gained international notoriety, as it has become one of the epicenters of the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. A gateway city to the eastern regions of Donetsk, Lugansk, and Kharkiv, it is a strategic location for pro-Russian separatists. However, prior to the international attention the city has gained in recent months, Slaviansk was the epicenter of another revolution, a revolution surrounding adoption.

Adoption in Ukraine

Since 2004 a national adoption and orphan-care movement has been on the rise in Ukraine. A country where adoption was once considered taboo or strange has experienced a dramatic shift in embracing the fatherless--so much so that in 2013 Ukraine was recognized by UNICEF as the nation showing the most progress in child protection and welfare reform in Eastern Europe. Much of this success can be attributed to the activity of the Christian community and to an alliance of like-minded individuals, organizations, and churches that banded together in 2010 to launch Ukraine without Orphans. Its vision can be traced back to a movement that began 11 years ago in Slaviansk, the very same Slaviansk that today is making international headlines.

A Movement Begins

Good News Church, a congregation of 600 members and five daughter churches in Slaviansk, has been at the forefront in promoting national adoption in Ukraine and Russia for the last decade. Thanks to its campaigns and promotion of adoption and foster care, over 100 Ukrainian children have been placed with families in the Slaviansk area alone. The Good News Church's example has served as an inspiration to hundreds of churches across Ukraine and Russia, and as a result the adoption movement has continued to grow.

The Current Situation

But today Slaviansk is recognized by the world, not for its transformational work in adoption, but because of the pro-Russian separatists who have taken control of the city, and because of the violence taking place there. By early May, active fighting intensified in Slaviansk, and it was apparent that proactive steps needed to be taken to ensure safety for adopted children and their families. Safety for Sails of Hope Children's Home, that Good News Church supports, became a top priority for this congregation's pastors, Sergiy Demidovich and Peter Dudnik.

Evacuating Children and Families

Getting the children out of what had become a war zone was critical. "I know what a traumatized child is," said Pastor Peter Dudnik, "and we don't want kids to see what is going on here. We do not want these kids to go through more trauma than they already have." In early May, 17 children from Sails of Hope were evacuated to a Christian camp near Kyiv. Since the evacuation of the orphans, Pastor Peter Dudnik and his wife Tamara have helped coordinate the departure of other foster and adoptive families as well as other families in need. With the city completely shut down and no forms of public transit running, coordinating transportation for families to leave the city has become a challenging, daily task for Pastor Peter.

Just in Time

As it turned out, the evacuation of the children's home happened just in time. Within a day, separatists occupied the territory, and only several days later the orphanage became the site of a battle, which caused extensive damage to the outside of the building and shattered many windows. Those who evacuated could only thank God for His provision of a safe place at the right time.

Evacuations Continue

But the efforts in Slaviansk have not stopped with the evacuations. After seeing his own family to safety, Pastor Peter chose to remain in Slaviansk to see that the needs of those who are not able to evacuate are met. Food supplies are short and most stores in Slaviansk are now closed, so Pastor Peter and his team are regularly visiting families in need and providing them with groceries and other essentials. Supplying food and meeting basic needs has been an opening for Pastor Peter and his helpers to pray with people and share the Gospel. "Everyone is living in fear. We are able to give out prayer booklets, prayers that contain the Psalms." People are open to listening and are turning to God in prayer like they never have before.

Pastor Peter does not want to talk politics or sides. For him the crisis is an opportunity for the church to be the church and to remain as a light in a very dark time. "We as the church need to be higher than this situation. We need to rise higher than the flags that are being waved. We cannot focus on politics. We are serving everyone – the injured and the hungry on both sides….That is our calling." So he continues distributing food and making house calls to those who label themselves pro-Russian and to those who are patriots of Ukraine. For Pastor Peter it is a chance to share the love of Christ, and he says he will remain in Slaviansk as long as he possibly can, doing what he has always done, serving the people of his city. ♦

"We as the church need to rise higher than the flags that are being waved. We cannot focus on politics. We are serving everyone – the injured and the hungry on both sides…. That is our calling."

Karen Springs *serves with Orphan's Promise, a ministry of The Christian Broadcasting Network-CIS, Kyiv, Ukraine.*

attempting to maintain ties with other evangelicals in both western Ukraine and Russia.

The second camp sympathizes more with Russia and seeks to maintain Russian ties. Some issues of identity are involved ("I have family in Russia"), but the main arguments are economic. These Christians lived reasonably well under President Yanukovich and fear losing their jobs if Ukraine joins the European Union. Often relatives have told them that life is better in Russia. So this group would prefer to join the Russian Customs Union, and some would even be open to joining Russia, but practically everyone would still like to avoid war.

Impact on the Missionary Community

The current crisis in Ukraine has also affected many foreign missionaries' ministry. In Kyiv's large missionary community, numerous missionaries have left the country. For those who have remained, significant amounts of time are spent discussing evacuation strategies. Often national believers are surprised to see that foreign missionaries are still present, asking "So you are still here?"

In Donetsk the missionary community is much smaller, but due to the military tensions on the border, some missionaries have left the country, and some have, at least temporarily, retreated to other parts of Ukraine. Since Westerners are often blamed for the Maidan protests, anti-Western feelings have developed in eastern Ukraine. These feelings have led some missionaries from the West to wonder if their presence is detrimental to their national co-laborers. Many missionaries are unsure if their ministry in Donetsk will be possible to continue in the future if Russia does invade or if strong anti-Western feelings remain.

Encouragement and Unity amidst the Crisis

Despite the fears and tensions, some evangelicals in eastern Ukraine have drawn together for mutual support and to seek God. For example, a graduation ceremony at Donetsk Christian University in late March was filled with mixed feelings. Some students and staff had already left the school in the midst of the crisis, moving to new places of residence and work. Yet, for those staff and students who remained, graduation was a time of remembering what God had done and an encouragement for His provision in the future. Those gathered included representatives from Central Asia, Russia, western Ukraine, southern Ukraine, and Crimea, in addition to a large contingent from eastern Ukraine. This show of unity has been common in many evangelical theological schools in the former Soviet Union, but it could become more difficult in years to come if tensions between Russia and Ukraine remain.

Donetsk has also seen the establishment of a prayer tent with daily inter-confessional prayer meetings, called a "Prayer Marathon for Ukraine," focusing on prayer for unity and peace. Christians from at least 15 different churches, including Pentecostals, Baptists, Eastern-Rite Catholics, Latin-Rite Roman Catholics, and Kyiv Patriarchate Orthodox gather on Constitution Square in the center of Donetsk.[1] The numbers of participants vary, but range from 30 to 70 people.[2] Local Christians give to meet the needs of the ministry. The prayer tent participants have been able to pass out literature, talk to people on the street, and pray for people's needs.

Despite this positive ministry, the prayer meetings have faced some aggression as well. At various times, bricks and eggs have been thrown at prayer meeting participants and threats have been made to set their tent on fire. In one case, after numerous threats, a pro-Russian group stole a sign from the prayer tent ("We pray for Ukraine here") and threw it in the river. Police standing nearby did not intervene.[3] One night in late March, shots were fired into the car of the organizers of the inter-confessional prayer meeting. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the incident, although the threatening message was clear.[4]

Even though there have been numerous cases of aggression, Christians in Donetsk continue to seek opportunities to witness to their faith. For example, in mid-April two men in gas masks with clubs came and stole the prayer meeting's flags. They threw the Ukrainian flag into the river and walked away with the Donetsk region flag. After they were a little ways away, a car pulled up next to them. Two men got out of the car and beat up the men in gas masks, breaking their noses. The men from the car returned the flag to the prayer meeting, apologizing that it was smeared in blood. Prayer meeting participants then brought the two bloodied men back to the prayer tent and gave them medical attention. The men were prayed for and given New Testaments.[5] Thus, for these prayer meeting participants, their identity as Christians was more important than their ethnicity, their spoken language, or their physical or economic well-being. They continue to pray and reach out to others. ♦

Notes:

[1] "Donetskie katoliki, pravoslavnye i protestanty provodyat sovmestnuiu molitvi za mir i edinstvo v Ukraine," http://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news25435-doneckie-katoliki-pravoslavnye-i-protestanty-provodyat-sovmestnuyu-molitvu-za-mir-i-edinstvo-v-ukraine.html (4 April 2014).

[2] "V Donetske napali na molitvennuiu palatki," http://www.invictory.com/news/story-50431-молитвенная-палатка.html (31 March 2014).

[3] "V Donetske uchastniki prorossiiskogo mitinga razgromili palatku, gde liudi molilis' za Ukrainu," http:// allday.in.ua/politics/news.php?id=223526 (31 March 2014).

[4] "V Donestske obstrelyali mashinu organizatorov molitvennoi palatki," http://www.invictory.com/news/story- 50384-Донецк.html (27 March 2014).

[5] Marc Ira Hooks, "Attacks Don't Hinder Ukrainian Christians," http://www.commissionstories.com/eurasia/stories/view/attacks-dont-hinder-ukrainian-christians (24 April 2014).

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Evangelicalism in Eastern Ukraine: Drifting between Division and Unity

John E. White

In Donetsk people stay home and watch the news and read the latest information on the Internet. Fear of Ukrainian nationalists from the West and Russian invasion from the East drive people to keep reading and watching and waiting. Everyday life continues here as the streets continue to be busy, although certain public events, such as an important Donetsk Shakhtar football match, fail to draw the crowds that they normally would attract. Tension and uncertainty abound, and people grow tired as the crisis stretches into weeks and months.

The Ukrainian crisis that began with protests on Maidan in central Kyiv drew some attention in eastern Ukraine, but it did not alter life much at all. Now, with the Russian annexation of Crimea, with thousands of Russian troops on the eastern Ukrainian border, and with separatists holding Donetsk government buildings, the tensions and divisions have grown significantly, and evangelicals have been affected as well.

More conflict between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian positions has been apparent within families than within church services. Likewise, more discussions and arguments have occurred on social networks than in church buildings.

Identity versus Economy

What are the issues that have led to divisions? To paint in broad strokes, we can label the most important issues as ones of identity and economy. Tensions between Ukrainian and Russian ethnicities, the Ukrainian versus the Russian language, and what it means to be a Christian are all issues of identity. The largest and most violent divisions have formed when these issues have been the main points of contention in Ukraine.

For example, one middle-aged woman in early March 2014 stood alone in front of the Taras Shevchenko statue in downtown Donetsk holding a sign which said, "Kremlin: hands off Ukraine." When pro-Russian people approached her, demanding an explanation, the woman replied that she was Russian, she had lived in the Donetsk area for 30 years, but she still held her position for Ukrainian unity. Some police stood nearby to protect the woman, but before they could react, a large man jumped forward and ripped up the woman's sign. The police stopped anything further from happening, but the damage had been done. The woman's position of identity would not be tolerated to be broadcast further.

In contrast, issues of economy started the protests on Maidan. Is it best for Ukraine to join the European Union or the Customs Union initiated by Russia? In Eastern Ukraine, more people's businesses are tied to Russia, so the Customs Union is more attractive here than in the West. Economic issues are very important, but they have generally not been as divisive or violent as issues of identity have been.

Tensions in Evangelical Churches

Issues of identity have led to some amount of fear and division in eastern Ukrainian evangelical churches. Some Christians have been afraid that western Ukrainian nationalists would come and oppress or even kill native Russian speakers. Some feared that joining the European Union would lead to secularization and greater permissiveness for homosexuality. Thus, being "pro-Russian" for many has been a matter of supporting Christian values and the right to speak the Russian language.

These rather exaggerated fears, however, have not often openly arisen in churches. Sermons have generally focused on other issues, and in church many people avoid bringing up controversial issues. In some cases, sermons encourage Christians to be peacemakers in the midst of conflicting positions. More conflict between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian positions has been apparent within families than within church services. Likewise, more discussions and arguments have occurred on social networks than in church buildings.

The situation continues to fluctuate, however, and it does seem that two camps have formed, especially after the seizing of the main Donetsk government administration building by pro-Russian separatists. The larger camp supports the unity of Ukraine and generally supports the current government, praying for President Oleksandr Turchynov (often pointing out that he is a Baptist). Factors that have won over this group include the exposure of former President Viktor Yanukovich's corruption (especially showing his grand Mezhyhirya estate), Russian military moves in Crimea and on the Ukrainian border, and attempts by the new Ukrainian government and western Ukrainians to reach out in acceptance of Russian speakers. Speakers from the pulpit warn congregants not to get too involved in politics and to be discerning in following the news, since much false information is being spread. In order to promote unity, the leader of a local church union in Donetsk was invited to Moscow to share what was really happening in Ukraine. Thus, this group is

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