



EAST-WEST CHURCH REPORT

VOL. 26, NO. 4, 2018

Autocephaly: Balm or Bomb for Ukraine's Orthodox?

GERALDINE FAGAN

“They’re singing the Lord’s Prayer, you might take off your hat!” Hearing the elderly woman’s reproach, a man of similar age meekly slides his cap down to his chest. The pair stand near the editor of the *East-West Church Report* amid a 5,000-strong crowd facing the iconic St. Sophia’s Cathedral, built a thousand years ago by the first Christian rulers of Kyiv. The occasion is a government-sponsored Prayer for Ukraine on the morning of 14 October. This is both the Eastern Christian feast day of the Intercession of the Mother of God and—as of 2015—Defender of Ukraine Day, a public holiday honoring the armed forces.

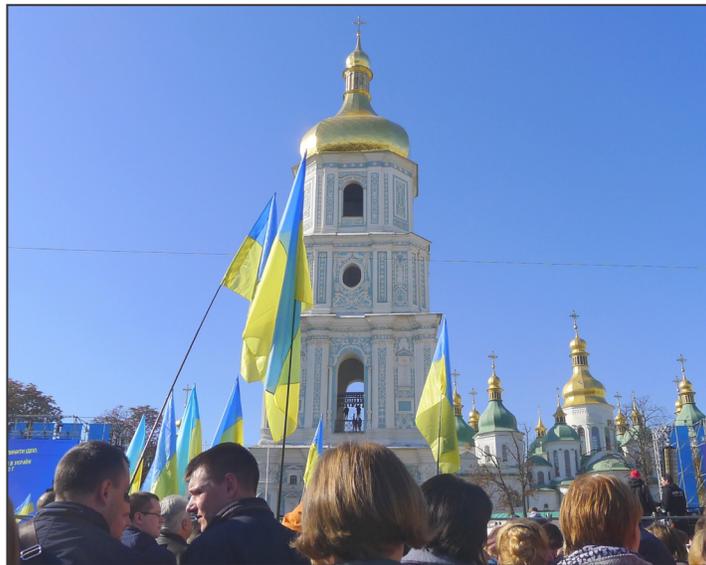
A day prior, some news reports claimed that local bureaucrats had pressured people into attending the event.¹ Yet perhaps a third present spontaneously cross themselves and join in prayers. Many more sing the unofficial national anthem, “O Lord, Almighty and Only” [Ukrainian: “Bozhe Velykyi, Edynyi”] and respond to the customary western Ukrainian greeting, “Glory to Jesus Christ!” [Ukrainian: “Slava Iisusu Khristu!”].

These official prayers are in thanksgiving for a decision to grant autocephaly—or full independence—to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, affirmed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople on 11 October. The move has implications for the development of all Christianity in Ukraine, as witnessed at the event by speakers from the country’s Greek and Roman Catholic Churches, and Bible Society.²

Rivals for legitimacy

Ukrainian Orthodoxy is unusually factious. Inside the country, the post-Soviet period has seen the emergence of three major contenders to the status of canonical—or legitimate—

Ukrainian Orthodox Church, one under the Patriarchate of Moscow and two breakaway entities. Until now, only the first of these has been acknowledged by the wider Orthodox world. (In diaspora, two further Ukrainian Orthodox structures formally under the Patriarchate of Constantinople are headquartered in Canada and the United States.)



Thanksgiving for autocephaly outside St. Sophia’s, 14 October
(G. FAGAN)

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) retains the largest number of registered parishes in Ukraine, with approximately 12,000 (Russia has approximately 17,000). Its main rival, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate), has approximately 5,000. A third body, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC), has some 1,000 parishes, concentrated in three far western regions of Ukraine that lay outside the Soviet Union before World War II.³

This ratio did not shift dramatically for 20 years. But since 2014—when clashes with pro-Kremlin forces erupted in eastern Ukraine—public allegiance to the Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchates has see-sawed. Respectively 35 and 22 percent in 2010, it is now 19 and 43 percent.⁴

National security concern

The Kyiv Patriarchate’s anti-Kremlin stance is a key factor. During the 2013-14 demonstrations centered upon Kyiv’s Maidan Square which ultimately toppled the pro-Kremlin regime of Viktor Yanukovich, the Kyiv Patriarchate’s nearby St. Michael’s Monastery provided refuge to those fleeing police batons. Today, the monastery’s perimeter forms a Memory Wall displaying the names and photographs of 3,367 Ukrainian combatants killed in the Donbas conflict during 2014-17.

(continued on page 2)

Ukrainian Autocephaly *(continued from page 1)*

Addressing the 14 October crowd and television audience, Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko thus characterized autocephaly as a question of national security. Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, he explained, prays for the Russian authorities "who have committed aggression against our country."⁵ The Orthodox leader conspicuously absent from the podium was Onufry, the Moscow Patriarchate's Metropolitan of Kyiv. 14 October is also a special feast day for the nearby Intercession Convent, and he leads worship there for approximately 1,000 faithful. Most senior Moscow Patriarchate clerics in Ukraine, including Onufry, oppose the autocephaly project.⁶



Metropolitan Onufry at Kyiv's Intercession Convent, 14 October
(G. FAGAN)

For them, the ambitious figure of Patriarch Filaret, head of the Kyiv Patriarchate, is a particular obstacle.⁷ Nearly 90, Filaret was staunchly pro-Kremlin when a predecessor to Metropolitan Onufry. As late as 1990 he expressed alarm that the growth of "the so-called Ukrainian autocephalous church" might contribute to the independence of Ukraine from the Soviet Union. Such a separation from Moscow, he maintained at that time, "fundamentally contradicts our thousand-year tradition in which the Russian Church has always been the source of unity."⁸

After failing to be elected Moscow Patriarch that same year, Filaret reversed his position on Ukrainian autocephaly and state independence in 1991. Today, notwithstanding Kyiv's ongoing efforts at de-Communization, he still vigorously defends his and other Soviet-era bishops' collaboration with the KGB.⁹

Given Moscow's aversion to full independence for the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, President Poroshenko made overtures to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople—the senior Patriarchate in the Orthodox world. Following the president's April 2018 meeting with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, the Ukrainian parliament voted to support an appeal for autocephaly on the part of the state. In late August Patriarch Bartholomew hosted Patriarch Kirill of Moscow at his Istanbul headquarters. According to an alleged transcript of the meeting, Kirill disputed that Poroshenko and

the Ukrainian parliament were legitimate representatives of the Ukrainian people, having "seized power as a result of a coup d'état during the Maidan uprising."¹⁰

A week later, Constantinople dispatched two exarchs—bishops of its Ukrainian diaspora structures—to Kyiv as its representatives "within the framework of the preparations for the granting of autocephaly."¹¹ The Russian Orthodox Church responded by suspending senior-level relations with Constantinople.¹²

On 11 October Constantinople went further, lifting Moscow's disciplinary measures against the heads of the two breakaway Ukrainian Orthodox entities, Filaret and Makary; restoring their faithful to Orthodox communion; and rescinding Moscow's authority to ordain the Metropolitan of Kyiv, granted in 1686.¹³ Roundly rejecting these rulings, Moscow broke off all relations with Constantinople on 15 October.¹⁴

Unification council

A unification council tasked with forming the new Orthodox Church of Ukraine met at St. Sophia's Cathedral in Kyiv on 15 December. It elected a senior Kyiv Patriarchate hierarch, Epifany (Dumenko), as the entity's Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine, beating Metropolitan Simeon of Vinnytsia of the Moscow Patriarchate by eight votes. Out of 10 Moscow Patriarchate hierarchs reportedly among the 64 who voted, two participated publicly. Their synod took disciplinary action against them on 17 December.¹⁵

The situation is murky and volatile. Some Ukrainian Orthodox under Moscow fear the creation of the new church will lead to violent property seizures. While the Ukrainian government rejects this suggestion, it may prove powerless to curb ultranationalist groups hostile to any perceived Russian influence.

Such a possibility was also plain on the afternoon of 14 October, when over 8,000 Ukrainian nationalists—some bearing Nazi insignia—took to the streets elsewhere in Kyiv. Although marginal, these elements could swiftly mobilize against Orthodox remaining under Moscow. As one youth engaged in such harassment in the far western region of Ivano-Frankivsk explained in a 4 November BBC documentary, "These people don't love Ukraine. They is Russia [sic]."¹⁶



Ukrainian ultranationalist demonstration, Kyiv, 14 October
(G. FAGAN)

Yet the situation is also less binary than may appear. The wife of a Ukrainian-speaking Moscow Patriarchate priest whose Ivano-Frankivsk village church was seized by nationalists also told the BBC that her son had fought against Russian-backed rebels in the eastern Donbas region: “What kind of enemy are we?”

Local opinion overlooked

Such nuanced local opinion within Metropolitan Onufry’s church lies unnoticed beneath the Moscow-Constantinople polemic. Particularly overlooked is patriotic defense of Ukraine combined with loyalty to the Moscow Patriarchate, still understood by many as the only canonical Orthodox option. Indeed, such sentiments are mainstream: Onufry himself may not have been at the 14 October event, but Metropolitan Avgustin of Bila Tserkva and Bohuslav—his church’s representative to Ukraine’s armed forces—read out a statement praising the Ukrainian military’s committed defense of the Motherland. He was warmly applauded.

Over the following pages, the *East-West Church Report* presents diverging views—for and against autocephaly—held by two hierarchs of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate). Both are auxiliary bishops of Kyiv, were born and raised in Ukraine, and are in their 40s. (The pro-autocephaly hierarch is one of those now facing disciplinary measures for participating in the 15 December unification council.)

In forthcoming issues, the *East-West Church Report* will feature less prominent Orthodox voices in Ukraine, as well as a range of other local views on the situation for Christians in the country, including with respect to religious freedom and the Donbas conflict. ♦

Notes:

¹ For example, [in Russian] <https://123ru.net/kyiv/169810378>.

² [In Ukrainian] https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=61&v=bo_7FE9a-QQ.

³ The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) is officially called the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. “(Moscow Patriarchate)” is added here for clarity.

[In Russian] <https://religsvoboda.ru/content/religioznaya-statistika-na-1-aprelya-2018-goda>; [In Ukrainian] http://mincult.kmu.gov.ua/document/245234300/Form1_MCU_Nakaz260-29032017.xls.

⁴ [In Ukrainian] Biblioteka Tsentru Razumkova, *Osoblyvosti Religijnoho i Tserkovno-Religijnoho Samovyznachennia Ukraïns’kikh Gromadian: Tendentsii 2010-2018 rr.*, Kyiv, 2018, 17.

⁵ [In Ukrainian] “Vystup Prezidenta Ukraïny pid chas uchasti u molytovnomu zakhodi za Ukraïnu,” 14 October 2018; <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/vistup-prezidenta-ukrayini-pid-chas-uchasti-u-molitovnomu-za-50446>.

⁶ [In Russian] <http://news.church.ua/2018/11/13/postanovlenie-sobora-episkopov-ukrainskoj-pravoslavnoj-cerkvi-ot-13-noyabrya-2018-goda/?lang=ru>.

⁷ [In Russian] “Mitropolit Cherkasskii Sofronii: UPTs MP dolzhna uchastvovat’ v ob’edinitel’nom sobore,” *Akhilla*, 26 October 2018, <https://ahilla.ru/mitropolit-cherkasskij-sofronij-upts-mp-dolzhna-uchastvovat-v-obedinitelnom-sobore/>.



The Kyiv Patriarchate’s Patriarch Filaret, Metropolitan Epifany (Dumenko), and President Petro Poroshenko are broadcast to the crowd outside St. Sophia’s, 14 October (G. FAGAN)

⁸ Russian State Archive of Social and Political History, Fond 89, Opis 8, Delo 41.

⁹ “A Conversation with Patriarch Filaret,” Atlantic Council, 19 September 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29J7coFPcqs>; [In Ukrainian] “Kisel’ov. Avtors’ke. Gist’ patriarkha Filaret,” *Telekanal Priamii*, 31 December 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVsbQbUNWYE>.

¹⁰ [In Russian] “Ekskliuziv: Dialog Varfolomeia – Kirilla po ukrainskomu voprosu,” *Orthodoxia Info*, 28 September 2018, <https://orthodoxia.info/news/экслюзив-диалог-варфоломея-кирилла/>.

¹¹ [In Greek] <https://www.ec-patr.org/docdisplay.php?lang=gr&id=2563&tla=gr>.

¹² “Statement of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church concerning the uncanonical intervention of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the canonical territory of the Russian Orthodox Church,” 14 September 2018, <https://mospat.ru/en/2018/09/14/news163803/>.

¹³ “Announcement of the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople,” https://www.ucofusa.org/news_181013_1.html.

¹⁴ [In Russian] “Zaiavlenie Sviashchennogo Sinoda Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi v sviazi s posiatatel’stvom Konstantinopol’skogo Patriarkhata na kanonicheskuiu territoriiu Russkoi Tserkvi,” 15 October 2018, <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5283708.html>.

¹⁵ [In Russian] “Stalo izvestno, kak budut vybirat’ Predstoiatelia novoi Tserkvi,” *RISU*, 15 December 2018, https://risu.org.ua/ru/index/all_news/orthodox/orthodox_world/73913/; “Stalo izvestno, skol’ko golosov na vyborakh poluchil Predstoiatel’ Epifanii,” *RISU*, 17 December 2018, https://risu.org.ua/ru/index/all_news/orthodox/ocu/73933/; “Sinod UPTs (MP) nazval ob’edinitel’nyi Sobor ‘raskol’nicheskim’ i zapretil v sluzhenii mitropolitov Simeona i Aleksandra,” *RISU*, 17 December 2018, https://risu.org.ua/ru/index/all_news/orthodox/uoc/73950/.

¹⁶ “Ukraine’s Church – Rejecting Russia,” BBC News Channel, 4 November 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/b0brfr0m/our-world-ukraines-church-rejecting-russia#>.

Geraldine Fagan is editor of the *East-West Church Report*.

“If we have full independence, in what way would that be unsatisfactory?”:

An Interview with Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko)



Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) of Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi and Vyshneve is one of two bishops in Ukraine who publicly supported autocephaly while under the Patriarch of Moscow; on 17 December he announced his transfer to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. From the Rivne Region in northwestern Ukraine, he was secretary to the late head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), from 2006 until his death in 2014.

Metropolitan Oleksandr is rector of the Transfiguration Cathedral in Teremki, Kyiv, in whose Metropolitan Volodymyr Museum he met with the editor of the East-West Church Report in early October. The original conversation took place in Russian.

Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) of Pereiaslav-Khmelnytskyi and Vyshneve. On the wall hangs a portrait of the late Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan) (G. FAGAN)

As you know, a Greek Orthodox website recently issued a transcript of the 31 August meeting between Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople at the latter’s headquarters in Phanar, Istanbul. The transcript attributes the following words on Russia and Ukraine to Patriarch Kirill: “We have never stopped recognizing that we are one country and one people.” To what extent do the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) consider themselves to be part of the Russian lands or the Russian World?

What can I say? We have a proverb for when someone moves from the countryside to the city and retains certain habits: “You can take the man out of the village, but you can’t take the village out of the man.” This is exactly how I evaluate the situation here. Patriarch Kirill no longer lives in the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union still lives in him, unfortunately. The imperialistic attitude remains. The Russian Church was always a stronghold of autocracy and suffered for it after 1917, when it was considered a pillar of the tsarist regime. Following on from the Tsarist Empire and the Soviet Empire, the current president of Russia is now trying to recreate a Third Empire. And once again the Church is propping up this regime. But the Church is not of this world and should be above politics. It may be pleasant to receive preferences from the state now, but there will be a very bitter price to pay for all this in the end.

I read those words of our patriarch with regret, because a person doesn’t say something like that on the spur of the moment, which means they must constantly think about us in such a way. It means that Russia, in the final instance, is not aware that Ukraine is a separate state in which the Ukrainian people live on their native land with their own language and faith, received by baptism in the year 988.

But it was something else about those statements that bothered me most. Our warden here at the Transfiguration Cathedral has never been aggressively disposed towards Russia or the Russian Church, but when he heard those words he was outraged. He said, “I’m a patriot, I also love Russia and

Kazakhstan”—he has relatives there—“so why am I, as a son of this land, considered a lesser person? It follows that my state is a lesser state, and my church is a lesser church.” And so with these words the patriarch pushed away reasonable people here, those who are neither Ukrainian nationalists nor strong Russophiles.

It is clear from Metropolitan Onufry’s official statements that he fully accepts the legitimacy of the current Ukrainian government. Is this the case in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) generally?

Metropolitan Onufry says he accepts the legitimacy of the [Ukrainian] authorities, while Patriarch Kirill says in his statement [the 31 August transcript] that there was a coup d’etat—you understand what spiritual schizophrenia we have ended up with here? The overall leader of the church says it is a coup, and locally they say it is not a coup. So what is the ordinary person supposed to think? Who is right, Metropolitan Onufry or Patriarch Kirill? Someone has to be lying.

How do you view the prospect of autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church?

Autocephaly is not a new question. Independence, including church independence, is part of the mindset of the Ukrainian people. Throughout history the issue of church independence arose in tandem with that of the state. It was during the Hetmanate period of Cossack rule in the 17th century that the Orthodox hierarchy was restored following the Union with Rome in 1596. The movement for autocephaly appeared as soon as a Ukrainian state emerged in the early 20th century. When the Germans occupied Ukraine there was hope that they would allow the restoration of the Ukrainian state. Clearly, the fascists would never have allowed that—that is not what they came to do—but the autocephalous movement arose alongside this hope for an independent state in the 1940s and subsequently went into exile. When the Soviet Union collapsed the movement for autocephaly re-emerged, but Moscow never permitted it to develop further. In 1991

Filaret, then Metropolitan of Kyiv, wrote a letter to Moscow, also signed by the local Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, asking that we be granted full autocephaly. Moscow rejected it, and Filaret was punished for it.

So the movement for an independent church is a natural process that is now finally acquiring visible forms, perhaps because the second Maidan, the Revolution of *Gidnist'* [Ukrainian: Dignity] has taken place. De-Communization is underway here, finally.

How do you imagine a scenario of autocephaly in which Ukrainian Orthodox are kept together to the maximum extent?

“All is flux, nothing stays still.” What we have today is only the beginning of the process. The ingredients are on the table, but what dish will be produced, and how that pie will bake, depends upon circumstances, the freshness of the ingredients, their proportions, the temperature of the oven. It is a process.

Are there any formal reasons why the Ukrainian Orthodox Church may not be autocephalous?

No, according to canon law it has absolutely all the prerequisites. Our church has its own territory, its own Orthodox people—a people who are believers, even according to statistics. We have enough dioceses, clergy, and seminaries for an independent existence.

Did Patriarch Bartholomew’s actions this year to further Ukrainian autocephaly surprise you?

Not particularly. The same situation arose with Poland in 1924 when Constantinople gave the right of autocephaly to the Polish Orthodox Church, which at that time was part of the Russian Church. You recall the conflict between Constantinople and Moscow over Estonia in 1996, and Constantinople’s recognition of Czech autocephaly in 1998. We also know that Stalin wanted to transfer the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarch to Moscow, and such aspirations have gained momentum in Putin’s Third Empire. It is my understanding that the last straw for Constantinople was when Moscow did not attend the Pan-Orthodox Council in Crete in 2016.

However, I think the most important factor here is that the schism in Ukraine has gone on for 25 years, and Moscow—which in fact created it—has done nothing to heal it. This cannot continue. A whole generation has now grown up in schism—this does not accord with the Gospel, you will agree. To call your brothers schismatics, without grace, without valid sacraments... and what has Moscow done to make them valid?

We must also recall that when the 1020th anniversary of the Baptism of Rus’ was celebrated here ten years ago, Patriarch Bartholomew visited Ukraine and there were discussions on this topic then. In 2009 His Beatitude Metropolitan Volodymyr [Sabodan] addressed representatives of the Local Churches at the Synaxis [gathering of hierarchs] in Constantinople and asked them to participate in discussions of this issue and its resolution. This should have been resolved back then, not now, when in practice it is being resolved unilaterally by Constantinople.

Has there been any research into the likely response to autocephaly within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)?

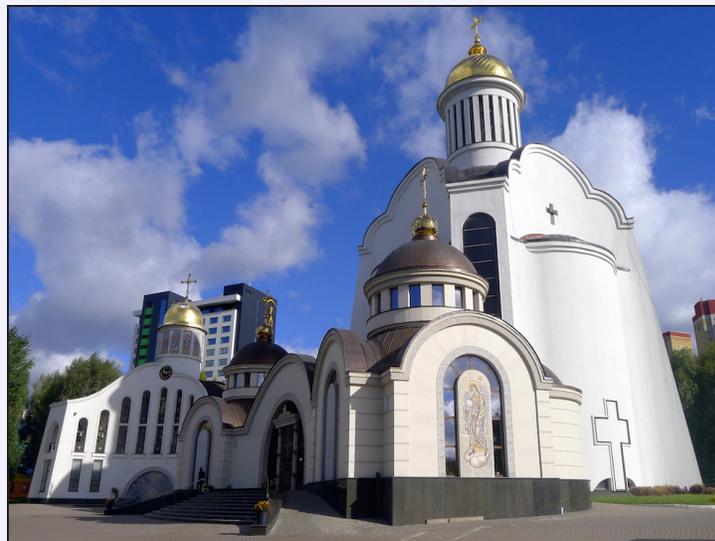
When the question of autocephaly arose, Fr. Nikolai Danilevich, who heads our Department for External Church Relations, called it “a huge puff of air.” When the issue became more serious, Metropolitan Onufry spoke with President Petro Poroshenko but did not consult with the bishops. There has been no Bishops’ Council that might have taken a decision on this issue. The positions expressed on this issue came individually from Metropolitan Antoni (Pakanich), Fr. Nikolai Danilevich, and Metropolitan Mitrofan (Yurchuk), the head of our Department for External Church Relations. Positions expressing some degree of indignation—and even then only after Moscow has spoken—are adopted by the Synod. And what about the rest? We have not had any discussion of this issue.

You must discuss it with various people within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate). What do you believe to be the degree of support?

Seventy percent would like canonical autocephaly.

Has the Ecumenical Patriarchate long known this?

Of course. If they didn’t know, they wouldn’t have undertaken to resolve this question.



Transfiguration Cathedral complex in Teremki, Kyiv (G. FAGAN)

Has the shift in statistics following Maidan played a role here? Before 2014 more Ukrainian Orthodox told pollsters they belonged to the Moscow Patriarchate. After 2014 more began to say that they support the Kyiv Patriarchate.

It’s not quite like that. You understand that statistics are very deceptive, because everything depends upon how the question is phrased. You could ask the question, “Which do you support, the Moscow Church or the Kyiv Church?” “Of course we are for the Kyiv Church, the Ukrainian Church, our church!”

It is nominal believers who answer this way.

Yes, these are nominal people. But this is also evidence of patriotism, and suggests that, if there were a canonical Ukrainian Church not termed “Filaret’s” or “schismatic” in

(continued on page 6)

Metropolitan Oleksandr Interview *(continued from page 5)*

the questions, people would answer that they support and attend that Kyiv Church.

Does the degree of support depend upon the region?

Yes, geographical differences are a factor. Western regions that were under Poland before 1939 were not so completely gutted by the Soviet regime. Eastern regions were under Soviet rule from the 1920s and whole villages died out in the famine, the Holodomor. The faith was gutted there, and pro-Russian influence has been very strong in eastern Ukraine; we cannot get away from this. Donetsk and Luhansk Regions were always categorically against autocephaly, along with Odesa. But western Ukraine preserved its character, its desire for independence.

Does that mean that opposition to autocephaly will be marginal?

Not geographically. Everywhere there will be people who want to remain in the Russian Church. To begin with, there will be a very large percentage, up to 40 percent. In different places it will vary, but 30-40 percent will wish to remain subject to the Russian Church. They will be like ROCOR [the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia], the Russian Church in Ukraine.

That's how they will be called?

Well, there will probably be re-registration.

Is there also a big difference in views between the generations?

Yes. We should not forget that over the past 25 years a whole generation has matured who studied in Ukrainian schools, who grew up with different rhetoric, who have a different interpretation of history, who have been raised in their own state, without the migratory movement of the Soviet period, when military families moved across the Union. Our soldiers are now in their home state.

The war [in the Donbas] has also left a very strong mark. We are called brother nations, but what if our brothers kill us? How do we prove that we are brother nations to the village grandmother who has to tend the grave of her son? And it is not just one grandmother. It is thousands of families. Will they call the Russians brothers? No. This generation has grown up with a different understanding of Russia and the processes that are taking place, and it is rather harsh.

Why do you think strong opposition to autocephaly nevertheless exists within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)?

A representative of Phanar, Metropolitan Elpidophoros (Lambriniadis), once remarked to me that we Ukrainians are an unfathomable people. "You strive for autocephaly for centuries," he said, "and when it is handed to you, you don't want to take it!" I replied that there is also a lot that I do not understand. What is happening within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is absolute nonsense. I understand Moscow and the Kremlin—they don't want to lose Ukraine because it gives status in the Orthodox world. After all, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is 12,000 parishes: "If these 12,000 leave, who are we then?" On the geopolitical side, the Russian Orthodox Church



A baptism at the Transfiguration Cathedral (G. FAGAN)

also trades on its image when dealing with the Kremlin: "The Soviet Union fell apart, only the Church remains." And this is a sphere of influence for Russia—if not politically, there remained a single Church as an inalienable part of the Russian World. But it burst like a soap bubble. That theory, as Fr. Nikolai said, turned out to be a huge puff of air! (Laughs.)

Might opponents of autocephaly see distant authority in Moscow as defense from a local despot?

It is true that we are independent in our administration. But it must not be forgotten that this is an internal status. We have rights of broad autonomy, but we don't have the broadest autonomy. We have the rights of a citizen, but we are not citizens. At any moment we could be told, "Sorry, your authorization has expired, we cannot give you these rights any longer, we are rescinding them, so please return to the status of an Exarchate" or something else.

There is nothing to be afraid of in obtaining independence. "We are satisfied with the current situation," the Ukrainian Orthodox Church says. But in that case, why would you not be satisfied with being independent? If we have full independence, in what way would that be unsatisfactory?

From the viewpoint of Moscow, would there be any financial losses involved?

No financial losses would be involved. The only thing that might be considered an economic factor is Sofrino, the company near Moscow that has long been the major producer of liturgical and other Orthodox goods in the post-Soviet region. But other, smaller factories have now appeared; we have some companies in Vinnytsia, Lutsk, and Kharkiv that meet our requirements.

What about the legal situation? According to church statutes, do church buildings—if they are not historical monuments—belong to the parish, the diocese, or the whole Church?

Everything depends upon how the documentation is drawn up. They could belong to the parish community or to the diocese or be in private ownership, but not to the whole church. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church as a whole is not a legal entity.

But whatever happens, property ownership remains within Ukraine? Moscow cannot claim anything?

No, no. There can be no claims to property, or land, or anything else. ♦

“What we see here is an order to turn everyone into a state church”: An Interview with Archbishop Iona (Cherepanov)



Born and raised in Kyiv, Archbishop Iona (Cherepanov) of Obukhiv is abbot of the Ukrainian capital's Trinity St. Jonah's Monastery, home to some 35 monks. The community is renowned for its youth work: Over 150 teenagers and young adults attend weekly discussion meetings with the monks, and these gatherings have inspired Molodost' Neravnodushna [Russian: Youth Is Not Indifferent, www.molodost.in.ua], a volunteer movement active in hospitals, old people's homes, and orphanages across Ukraine. Archbishop Iona has chaired the youth outreach department of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) since 2010.

The East-West Church Report met Archbishop Iona at Trinity St. Jonah Monastery in mid-October. The original conversation took place in Russian.

Archbishop Iona (Cherepanov) at St. Jonah's Monastery, Kyiv (G. FAGAN)

How do you view the prospect of autocephaly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church?

If Ukraine were a civilized country, there would be nothing bad about autocephaly. But on an economic and social level—and most importantly, on the level of relations between state and society—Ukraine is currently at the stage of so-called banana republics.

We fear that if autocephaly is granted to schismatics and a portion of our parishes, or if an Exarchate of the Patriarchate of Constantinople is created here, the state authorities will begin to interfere actively in church life, both directly and indirectly through the radical nationalist groups under their control, and in this way take churches, monasteries and other property away from people. This is already being discussed openly, both by state officials and leaders of the schismatic movement. If similar processes were taking place in a free country—in the USA or the countries of Old Europe—it would be unpleasant but not tragic. In these countries different religious groups coexist peacefully and the state recognizes and respects every group. But what we see here is an order to turn everyone into a state church.

All manner of people other than Orthodox believers are engaged in this autocephaly: the government of the USA is concerned about it; the government of Ukraine—which consists of non-church people; people of the Greek Catholic faith, and schismatics. But among believers autocephaly is deemed necessary only by a very small group of parishioners who are active on the Internet. Most don't need autocephaly at all.

Within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) several hierarchs publicly support the possibility of canonical autocephaly, however, including Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabinko) and Metropolitan Simeon of Vinnytsia. Is there a possibility of specifically canonical autocephaly in which the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) determines the direction of development? If so, what percentage would support that possibility?

It is a minority, that's for certain. I have said why Ukraine can't have an independent church right now. As soon as a church gets independence from some external center, it immediately becomes dependent upon the local political center. History has testified to this on multiple occasions. The goal of those now trying to obtain autocephaly is to completely subjugate the church to the state, to make the church compliant and manageable. Once the ideology of Communism collapsed, the state no longer had a unifying ideology, and there is clearly a desire in this country to create some kind of state church dependent upon political trends. And this is being pursued by completely non-church people and forces—we are not talking about salvation or repentance, we are talking only about achieving personal political goals.

The idea of autocephaly is totally compromised by its executors and ideologists. We know from church history that whatever the hierarchs may decide, there is still the question of how it is received by the people of the Church, who, in the first instance, are oriented not on politics or beautiful words, but on spiritual authority. Thank God, we don't have a single person of high spiritual authority who even closely sympathizes with autocephaly. Starting with Metropolitan Onufry and ending with monks and nuns in monasteries, and spiritual people.

Metropolitan Onufry always asks: “Why do we need to change the Church? Are our sacraments insufficient, do we not have services? May we not repent or arise spiritually after a fall? What do we need? What will we gain by having autocephaly?”

Is the figure of Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko) of the Kyiv Patriarchate key to the impasse in this situation?

Filaret is key to the fact that the situation has continued as the status quo for rather a long time, because he is feared and not liked by anyone. The Constantinople Patriarchate knows who he is, and the breakaway Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and our Church—no one

(continued on page 8)

Archbishop Iona Interview *(continued from page 7)*

wants to be together with him. Even some of our bishops who would like to be autocephalous—on no account do they want to be together with Filaret. Our Metropolitan Sophrony of Cherkassy, for instance, has spoken about that. So there is unlikely to be any real unification while Filaret is alive.

Of course, there are also sincerely believing people with Filaret who are truly lost, but for the most part supporters of the Kyiv Patriarchate are people for whom nationality is more important than Christ.

A year ago Filaret submitted a letter of repentance to Moscow.

To this day no one understands what that was. It was completely unclear. On the one hand there was a letter and a commission created, but the next day Filaret said he never signed anything—that it was a provocation and no one was going to repent. I was at the Bishops' Council in Moscow when that letter was received, and there was great joy that there might finally be some kind of contact. But one elderly metropolitan who knows Filaret well said, "Don't believe it."

Have the exarchs appointed to Kyiv by the Ecumenical Patriarch consulted with anyone from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)?

Common decency—to say nothing of church canons—dictates that such visits should be agreed beforehand, not after we have been informed about them. So Metropolitan Onufry has refused to meet with these exarchs as with uninvited guests.

Ecumenical Patriarch recognized the Renovators and their deposition of Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow in the 1920s. And now, as soon as things become difficult, they respond to the assistance our church gave over centuries with ingratitude.

In March 2014 Metropolitan Onufry publicly appealed to Patriarch Kirill to speak out in support of the integrity of the Ukrainian state. By comparison, in the transcript recently issued of the 31 August meeting between Patriarch Kirill and the Ecumenical Patriarch in Phanar, Patriarch Kirill says of Russia and Ukraine: "We have never stopped recognizing that we are one country and one people." Given this difference in perception, do you think that representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate in Russia fully grasp the reality here?

I think that they are aware of what is happening here. But we can influence processes within the Moscow Patriarchate—we elect the patriarch, and our hierarchs take part in the Synod—whereas Moscow has no reciprocal action over us. They cannot influence our elections or decisions in any way, even the election of the Metropolitan, to say nothing of dioceses or the appointments of new hierarchs. We are truly significantly more independent than many so-called autocephalous churches, such as the Polish and Czech Churches, or those which strictly depend upon Constantinople.

Nevertheless, could representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church speak about Ukraine more diplomatically?



Issues of *Otrok* [Russian: *Teenager*], an Orthodox magazine for young people produced at St. Jonah's Monastery

For you this was entirely unexpected?

Yes, it was an arbitrary decision by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Our hierarchs have noted with regret that when things were difficult for the Greek Church during Ottoman rule and other oppression, the Russian Church helped however it could, but when things were difficult for the Russian Church—as under the Communists—the Greek Church immediately took the side of the persecutors. The

First of all, that transcript has not been confirmed as official by either Constantinople or Moscow. It is what is known as a leak, but it isn't clear how reliable it is, so it cannot be taken seriously.

Secondly, when Metropolitan Onufry became *locum tenens* of the Kyiv Metropolia in 2014, he came here from Chernivtsi [a city in far western Ukraine], the periphery, and many steps he took were oriented on the advice of those who

were alongside him at that time. And he did try to influence some political situations. But over time he understood that the whole Church must genuinely stand outside politics, because state politics is very fickle. The art of politics is the art of betrayal and deception. So he is engaged purely in church life and helping people as far as he is able. The large exchange of prisoners a year ago, for example, took place with the direct participation of the Church.

In the final analysis no one listens to the Church, either in Russia or Ukraine; whatever might be said about the Church, politicians do everything in their own way. State policy is so mercurial that if you support or do not support one or other side you can end up in a different political situation in six months' time. Metropolitan Onufry understood this very quickly.

He continues to participate alongside representatives of other churches and faiths in the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, though? He even chaired it in 2014.

Yes. He or one of our representatives always attends.

Is it true that Metropolitan Onufry has allowed parishes not to commemorate Patriarch Kirill during services?

Yes. In parishes where commemoration of Patriarch Kirill is awkward, the parish priest may choose to decide not to name the patriarch. But it is not a very widespread practice—it depends upon the region. In western regions perhaps a third of parishes do not name Patriarch Kirill. But I have talked to many priests in Rivne Region, for example, who name Patriarch Kirill on principle. If they stop commemorating the patriarch, they told me, they will be asked, “Why don’t you serve in Ukrainian?” And next, “Seeing as you don’t commemorate the patriarch and you serve in Ukrainian, you’re with us, so let’s go over to the Kyiv Patriarchate.”

Has the practice of serving in Ukrainian been formally accepted, and if so, is it a recent development?

Under the late Metropolitan Volodymyr [Sabodan], parishes where the majority wished to worship in Ukrainian were permitted to do so. This practice has its place, mostly in western regions.

A question regarding property: By law, do historical church buildings belong to the state?

Parish communities have indefinite use of them.

And monasteries? Are there any rights that may be lost?

In civilized countries the question of real estate

is always resolved in a civilized manner. Here, though, the country in many ways still lives as in the Soviet Union, and if the state sees fit, there could be difficulties. They could order the transfer of all historical Orthodox buildings to the newly created Ukrainian Church. Clearly, people will defend and not give up their churches. Of course, this will provoke clashes, because people will be forced out. But the Church survived Soviet power. There were cases when the authorities wanted to close churches—for example, they tried to close Pochayiv Lavra many times, and neither the KGB nor the army nor the police could do anything.

Who would engage in such attacks now, the state or a different force?



St. Jonah's Monastery belltower and parish library (G. FAGAN)

Over the past four years around 50 churches have transferred to the Kyiv Patriarchate, of which about half went voluntarily—the priests and their flock wanted it—while around half were seized. A technique for how to do this has been devised. It relies upon the fact that there is no precise legal division of the church community and the community of a particular village. If you take a large village with 1,000 residents, 50 of those attend church. This is the church community. They want to pray as they did before. Then a call comes to the village council from higher up in the bureaucracy saying that the church should belong to the Kyiv Patriarchate. Some Kyiv Patriarchate guys come and organize a demonstration of the 1,000 living in the village. They ask, “Do you support the Moscow or the Kyiv

Patriarchate?” The villagers shout, “We support the Kyiv Patriarchate!” And that’s it; the community has decided that the church should be transferred to the Kyiv Patriarchate. They throw out the people who have always prayed there and the church is transferred to the Kyiv Patriarchate. And the church stands empty because all the believers move to a house or some other premises.

How would this happen in the case of monasteries?

Monasteries are generally in historical buildings, so the government is able to exert pressure.

And you think this is a real possibility once autocephaly is granted?

Absolutely. There have been many cases of village churches being seized in which the church community didn’t want to leave, and Right Sector, Svoboda or some other nationalist groups came. The police stood by and watched as these groups threw people out of church. ♦

BOOK REVIEW

The Tsar's Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia by Paul W. Werth

Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016
304 pp., \$39.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-198-78661-0

GERALDINE FAGAN

In his introduction to *The Tsar's Foreign Faiths*, Paul Werth is almost apologetic for selecting a topic of such enormous chronological and geographical scope. His study—16 years in the making—charts state policy towards non-Orthodox faiths throughout Imperial Russia, spanning Armenian Apostolic, Catholic (including Eastern Rite), and Protestant Christians, as well as Buddhists, Jews, and Muslims.

While some academic specialists may raise eyebrows, the more general observer is treated to a refreshingly readable tour of the challenges faced by tsarist administrators dealing with burgeoning religious diversity in an expanding empire. Maps and tables detailing population size and confessional distribution by region augment the narrative.

Werth argues convincingly that a rudimentary notion of religious toleration existed in Russia even before 1700. This saw faiths initially regarded as “foreign” in Muscovy—such as Protestantism and Islam—go on to become accepted features of the imperial landscape. Yet their special treatment (by contrast with dissenters from state-sanctioned Orthodoxy, such as Old Believers) rested squarely upon pragmatic considerations. A still-skeletal government apparatus sought to enlist non-Orthodox elites as conduits of imperial authority over newly acquired territories.

While partially successful, the administrative framework devised for these “foreign” creeds drew on the dubious understanding that each ethnic community had a particular “natural” faith (Germans=Lutheran, Tatars=Muslim, and so on). Such an arrangement was soon put under strain by real-life phenomena like conversion and intermarriage. Growing awareness of freedom of conscience as an individual right in the late 19th century further pressed the regime into recalibrating its religious policy. The ensuing debate saw some question support for Orthodoxy as the “ruling and predominant” faith of the Empire; others argued it should be boosted as a counterweight to the “politicized” religion of emerging nationalist movements. Affairs thus

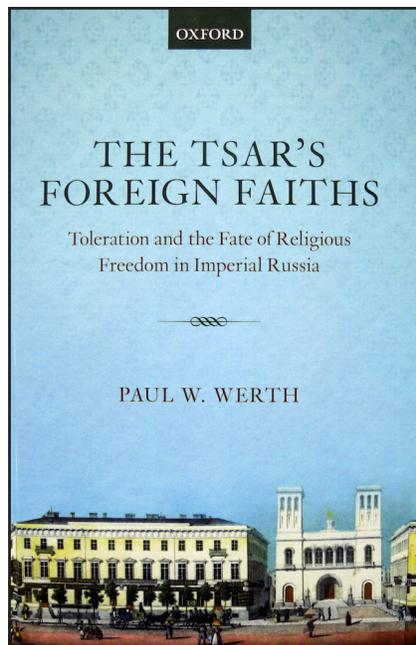
reached an impasse, only to be swept aside by a radically different Bolshevik agenda in 1917.

The particular richness of Werth's account comes from vivid archival glimpses into rulers' deliberations, with sources ranging from the Russian State Historical Archive in St. Petersburg to regional collections held in Riga and Tbilisi.

In the 1840s, for example, Education Minister Sergei Uvarov struggled to administer “foreign” faiths along the lines of the Orthodox Church—namely, by upholding an officially sanctioned version of each—remarked with evident exasperation, “Protestant orthodoxy, in truth, does not exist anywhere.” By the 1860s Baltic Governor-General Petr Shuvalov had hit upon political loyalty as a simpler condition for toleration: “The spread of Baptists who recognize the civil authorities is in no contradiction to the interests of the empire.”

We also hear from humbler folk on the receiving end of tsarist religious policy. In the 1860s descendants of Tatars who had been forcibly converted to Orthodoxy submitted a mass petition citing the recent abolition of serfdom as grounds why the tsar should “Condescend to us as well... and give us the freedom to live according to the Mohammedan faith.” By the 1880s such appeals were more likely to be individual: a Jew declaring “with a true heart I wish to be a Catholic,” a Catholic officer explaining that, “having become acquainted with the truths of the Episcopal-Reformed religion, I found in them answers in complete accord with my convictions.” Indeterminate beliefs also emerge: In 1902, for example, a nominal Lutheran from Riga appealed (unsuccessfully) for the space indicating religious affiliation in his passport to be left blank, as he no longer identified with a religion “that has any particular name.”

The authorities were not always indifferent to such demands; as early as 1865, Interior Minister Petr Valuev confided that he was “fighting for freedom of conscience.” Following the 1863 Uprising in the Kingdom of Poland, however—and especially the 1881 accession to the throne



of Alexander III—russification efforts were stepped up in a bid to consolidate imperial rule through cultural assimilation. Ultimately though, even the Orthodox Synod’s chief procurator Konstantin Pobedonostsev—“among those most adamant about upholding the Orthodox Church’s prerogatives,” as Werth notes—came to admit the unsatisfactory nature of a subject remaining “in the empty space of the Orthodox Church, which he does not attend, and the Lutheran pastor, to whom he does not dare go and who by law cannot receive him.”

For scholars of religion in today’s Russia, Werth’s study elucidates the distant origins of numerous reflexes in current public discourse, notwithstanding the long Soviet interlude. Ripples of imperial attitudes may be found in key features of the post-Soviet era outlined in my own book, *Believing in Russia—Religious Policy after Communism*: Patriarch Kirill’s insistence on the priority of communal over individual religious rights; the Kremlin’s preference

for “traditional” religious organizations, a status contingent upon political loyalty rather than doctrine; fear of threats to the nation’s “spiritual security.” The 142-year-old sentiments of an imperial governor of Minsk, who feared converts to Anglicanism would become “spies for England,” are sadly all too familiar.

Remarkably, some imperial developments identified by Werth compare favorably with the Putin era: Long before the uproar in Russia over the Vatican’s re-organization of its local structures into dioceses in 2002, the first diocese for Russia’s Catholic subjects, we learn, was set up in 1773, and by none other than Catherine the Great. Werth has done a great service by recalling the truncated pro-freedom vectors in Russia’s religious past. The vast canvas of his work offers a wealth of insight to anyone interested in religion in Russia. ♦

Geraldine Fagan is editor of the East-West Church Report.

Non-Orthodox and Religious Freedom: Challenges to the Confessional Order in Tsarist Russia

PAUL W. WERTH

The following text is excerpted from a keynote lecture delivered by Professor Werth in Moscow in 2014. It relates some of the principal findings of his book, The Tsar’s Foreign Faiths: Toleration and the Fate of Religious Freedom in Imperial Russia, reviewed in this issue of the East-West Church Report.

The East-West Church Report would like to thank Paul Werth, Alexander Agadjanian and Dmitry Uzlaner for permission to publish this extract. The full version may be found in State, Religion and Church, Vol. 2 (1), 2015, 7-18.

I would like to offer the fairly straightforward thesis that a distinct tradition of religious toleration appeared in Muscovy and the early stages of the empire. It is of course true that one can point to various examples of religious intolerance and even violence rooted in religious difference: the xenophobic statements of certain Orthodox bishops; mass conversions secured by elements of violence and coercion; the refusal to allow Jews into the country or the determination to expel them from it, and so on.

Yet at the same time the very fact of Muscovy’s considerable religious diversity (especially in the eastern and southeastern borderlands) created the conditions for a distinct kind of religious toleration in practice. To the extent that there was no effort in Muscovy, as far as I am aware, actually to develop a clear concept of religious toleration as such, one may even speak about the presence of religious toleration without a specific consciousness of it.

For example, most people at the time seem to have accepted the basic proposition that every people (*narod*) had its own faith that was entirely appropriate to it. One can see

this even in the way that religions were sometimes named: the “Tatar faith” (Islam), the “Russian faith” (Orthodoxy), the “German faith” (Lutheranism), and so on. Even in the 19th century one encounters references to the idea of the “natural faith” (*prirodnaia vera*) of one or another community. I would venture to say that Muscovite authorities were more concerned about—and more hostile towards—“heresy” within the Orthodox community than they were about the adherents of other confessions.

“One may even speak about the presence of religious toleration without a specific consciousness of it.”

Beyond this, two important circumstances eventually compelled state authorities not only to effectuate religious toleration in practice (as it were, unconsciously), but also to articulate that ideal more explicitly. In the first instance, I have in mind efforts of the tsarist autocracy to attract foreigners to Russia in light of their knowledge and expertise. Such

(continued on page 12)

Non-Orthodox in Tsarist Russia *(continued from page 11)*

foreigners, whether technical experts or farmers, demanded certain guarantees for the inviolability of their faith before resettling to Russia. And despite some resistance from the Orthodox Church, state authorities in many cases proved willing to oblige.

An excellent example of this is the decree of Peter I in 1702, designed to attract foreigners with expertise to Russia. Among other things the decree declared: “By the power given to Us by the Almighty, We have no desire to compel the human conscience, and We readily grant to each Christian the responsibility of caring for his soul’s bliss.”¹ I will add here that “mixed marriages” involving an Orthodox spouse marrying a non-Orthodox one also became legal at about the same time for essentially the same reason.

The second circumstance leading to more explicit statements about toleration concerns the annexation of new territories where the population was primarily non-Orthodox. The late Muscovite and early imperial period were of course times of tremendous territorial expansion, and to a growing degree the annexations in question involved populations that confessed non-Orthodox religions. Such annexations were a good deal easier to effectuate and were less likely to produce strife when the tsarist state openly granted new subjects the right to confess their historical faiths and refrained from the application of coercion to their spiritual affairs. Thus in declarations announcing the annexation of many territories—the Baltic provinces, partitioned Poland, Crimea, and so on—one encounters explicit recognition of non-Orthodox faiths and promises not to encroach on their beliefs.

“Tsarist religious toleration presumed the subordination of each imperial subject to clerical authority.”

These practical considerations—the need to recruit foreigners and imperial expansion—were reinforced by a series of ideological developments in the second half of the 18th century and the first part of the nineteenth. These included the Enlightenment, the “mysticism” and ecumenism that characterized the reign of Alexander I, and the famous triad of Minister of Education Sergei Uvarov. (The final of these—Orthodoxy, autocracy, nationality [*Pravoslavie, samoderzhavie, narodnost'*])—actually placed its emphasis more on traditional religion than on Orthodoxy as such; the concern was that a religion—it did not matter so fundamentally which one from the standpoint of doctrine—had deep historical roots in a given community.) These, then, were the ingredients of the tradition of religious toleration that developed in early modern Russia—initially without much consciousness about the matter, and later in a more explicitly articulated fashion.

I will turn in a moment to the issue of religious toleration as an ideology of the tsarist regime, but before doing so, I would like to make three points about the situation

that I just described and that formed a crucial element of life in Russia until the middle of the 19th century.

First, there remained numerous restrictions on non-Orthodox proselytism, certain forms of marriage, conversion from one religion to another, and so on. One could say that religious toleration in that early modern sense granted a certain degree of freedom to entire faiths and churches, but not to individual believers as such. On the contrary, tsarist religious toleration presumed the subordination of each imperial subject to clerical authority, which was itself in turn recognized by the autocracy and regulated by its laws and decrees. In short, there is little basis here to speak of the right of subjects to determine their own religious identity.

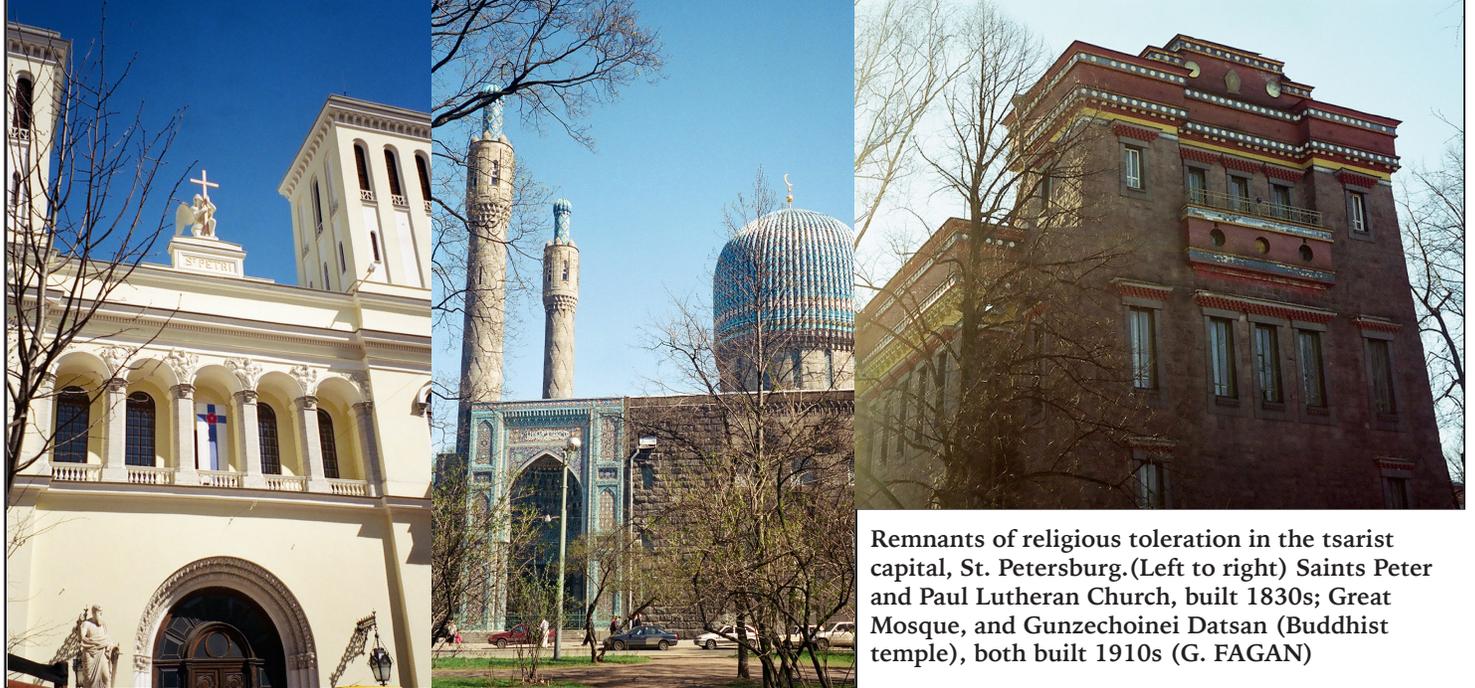
“Religious toleration was... not so much a value or principle in its own right as it was an instrument of rule.”

Second, this religious toleration by no means signified the equality of all religions in Russia. On the contrary, aside from a brief period during the so-called Dual Ministry (1817 – 24), the Orthodox Church consistently retained its “ruling and predominant” status, which otherwise remained unquestioned.

Finally, in my view the early modern Russian tradition of religious toleration was based on practical considerations to a much greater degree than it was on moral ones. One is indeed struck by the largely utilitarian character of proclamations of even prominent figures of the European Enlightenment. Consider Montesquieu, who at one point wrote that “it is not so much the Truth or Falsity of a Doctrine which renders it useful or pernicious to Men in civil Government, as the Use or Abuse of it.”² In this regard Russian tsars and tsarinas were excellent students of the *philosophes*. In other words, religious toleration was at this point not so much a value or principle in its own right as it was an instrument of rule.

The last observation leads, in turn, to two others. First, precisely because toleration represented an instrument for ruling the country, its contours remained vague. Its precise meaning depended a good deal on the concrete situation at hand, and there was little effort to provide a concrete articulation of its nature. To my knowledge, the expression did not appear in the empire’s Fundamental Law (*Osnovnoi zakon*) or even in the statutes on the foreign confessions in the Law Digest (*Svod zakonov*), though there were a few references to it elsewhere in the Digest. In effect, the presumption seems to have been that the meaning of religious toleration was somehow self-evident or could be derived from the specific situation to which it might apply.

And yet at the same time—and this is the second point—this concept gradually became part of the identity of the tsarist regime. By this I mean that tsarist statesmen and their allies in the public convinced themselves that “religious toleration” was a core characteristic of Russia and its history; and that Russia granted its non-Orthodox confessions an



Remnants of religious toleration in the tsarist capital, St. Petersburg. (Left to right) Saints Peter and Paul Lutheran Church, built 1830s; Great Mosque, and Gunzechoinei Datsan (Buddhist temple), both built 1910s (G. FAGAN)

appropriate degree of religious freedom—that is, liberty consistent with the historical conditions that had appeared over the decades and centuries.

“One author remarked in 1826, ‘Russia has always distinguished itself before all states by its sensible and prudent religious toleration.’”

In this context I cannot resist citing an example of the term’s usage from the 1806 *Dictionary of the Academy of Sciences*: “Before all others, Russia alone may boast of its religious toleration.”³ Many commentators likewise insisted that religious toleration had a long history in Russia. Thus one author remarked in 1826, “Russia has always distinguished itself before all states by its sensible and prudent religious toleration.”⁴ Officials in general tried to prevent situations that would produce “justified censure” (*spravedlivye narekaniia*) in response to the government’s violation of toleration. And in specific situations non-Orthodox subjects themselves referred to this principle in their attempts to secure the expansion of religious freedom on their behalf. To take just one example, in 1875 two dissident Mennonites in Saratov province wrote to the governor with a request that they be exempted from military service with the following appeal: “We dare to think that Your Excellency, as a representative of our enlightened age, will stand up for the idea of religious toleration.”⁵

In time the degree of religious freedom in Russia began to look inadequate in comparison to what had been obtained in other countries of Europe. The concept of “religious toleration” in Europe gradually gave way to the idea of “freedom of conscience,” according to which religious freedom represented not a privilege bestowed by the state but rather a natural right existing independently of it. From this standpoint, the state represented not the *source* of religious freedom but rather its *guarantor*. And the freedom in question pertained not so much to entire churches or communities

but rather to individual subjects or citizens. Against this background, the degree of religious freedom in Russia appeared less impressive.

How, then, should we describe that development of religious freedom in the last half-century or so of the tsarist regime? In my view, we may identify two contrasting tendencies that simultaneously drew Russia in different directions—one backward and one forward. These two tendencies coexisted in a rough equilibrium, which brought Russia to an impasse in its religious policy by the early twentieth century.

“The concept of ‘natural faith’... meant that religious rituals... acquired ‘political significance with ever greater frequency as nationalist aspirations grew.’”

In the case of the first tendency, the principal factor in question was the national question. One of the main “limits on religious toleration,” about which statesmen and commentators spoke with some frequency, was the proposition that under no circumstances should toleration extend to any “political” manifestation of religion. But if in one sense this principle—the non-interference of religious institutions in “politics”—was fairly straightforward, the situation became a good deal more complicated in the context of rising nationalism. The concept of “natural faith”—the tight connection between faith and ethnicity—meant that religious rituals, confessional institutions, the actions of clergies, and so on, acquired “political” significance with ever greater frequency as nationalist aspirations grew.

Likewise, the autocracy’s own efforts to deal with the national question in Russia, for example by promoting “Russification” (*obrusenie*), compelled it to intrude with ever greater frequency into the spiritual affairs of the “foreign confessions,” for example by imposing regulations on parish schools and requiring the use of Russian in confessional

(continued on page 14)

Non-Orthodox in Tsarist Russia *(continued from page 13)*

administration. The January Insurrection of 1863 in the Kingdom of Poland and the western provinces occupied a particular place in this process, but the dynamic in question appeared in other cases as well—in the Volga region, in relations with the Armenian Church, and so on.

But as already noted, there was also a second tendency, one that pulled Russia in a different direction. Here I would point to three principal factors serving to produce this tendency. The first took the form of growing activism on the part of believers in Russia, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox. True, some people in Russia began to incline towards unbelief and even atheism, but others now aspired to more conscious and active participation in the confession of the faith of their ancestors, while still others engaged in various forms of religious innovation. Some adopted confessions that were non-traditional to Russia—the Baptist faith, Methodism, and so on. Others transferred to other recognized confessions, thus repudiating the faith of their ancestors, and in some cases people even created new religions. In all these cases, believers sought to define their relationship to God more consciously. (This was even true, albeit in a negative sense, in the case of unbelief and atheism.) The question accordingly arose: Was Russia’s confessional system—based as it was on suppositions about “natural” faiths, on the custodial role of the state over religious affairs, and on the absence of any mechanism for the recognition of new faiths—really in a position to deal with this dynamic religious situation?

“By the early 20th century, [freedom of conscience] was being invoked... also by conservative circles.”

The second factor pushing the regime to expand religious freedom was an intellectual one and concerned the appearance and development of more robust conceptions of religious freedom. We noted already that in Europe “religious toleration” was giving way gradually to the ideal of “freedom of conscience.” The latter idea also began to occupy its place in Russian discourse, first in the 1860s and then again, with even greater force, on the eve of the Revolution of 1905. Most strikingly, by the early 20th century this ideal was being invoked not only by the liberal intelligentsia but also by conservative circles and by defenders of the regime.

A third factor, finally, was the problem of chronic “apostasy” from Orthodoxy. By the end of the 19th century there were various groups of people who had been converted to Orthodoxy in the past but now sought to return to the religion of their ancestors. These were Tatar converts from the 18th century whose descendants aspired to confess Islam legally; former Greek Catholics (“Uniates”) who had been forcibly “reunited” with Orthodoxy (especially the communities in the Kingdom of Poland, “reunited” in 1875) who wished to become Catholics; and finally Latvians and Estonians in

the Baltic provinces who had abandoned Lutheranism in the 1840s for material incentives and now desired to return to that faith.

By the laws of the empire, neither the converts themselves (if they were still alive) nor their descendants could leave Orthodoxy legally. The presence of such large numbers of “apostates” and “recalcitrants”—they numbered in the tens if not hundreds of thousands—created all kinds of practical complications and eventually a certain moral malaise among administrators. On both practical and ethical grounds, then, there were good reasons to embark on a reform of Russia’s religious order.

“Post-Soviet Russia’s embrace of certain attributes of the old tsarist confessional order signals the continued need to study the imperial past.”

Such a reform indeed began in 1905, when “freedom of conscience” appeared in the October Manifesto and became the touchstone for debates about this issue in the era of the State Duma. Russia’s religious order was substantially liberalized, and yet even so significant contradictions within it remained. In its last decade the autocracy proved unable to decide whether it preferred to close ranks with all traditional religions for the purposes of combatting liberalism and radicalism, or whether it made more sense to close ranks with the Orthodox Church and the forces of Russian nationalism against heterodoxy and non-Russians. Unable to choose definitely between the two, the tsarist regime hesitated and wavered in its last decade.

Even today, these tensions seem still only partially resolved, and post-Soviet Russia’s embrace of certain attributes of the old tsarist confessional order signals the continued need to study the imperial past. ♦

Notes:

¹ Preobrazhenskii, A. A. (ed.), *Zakonodatel'stvo Petra I*, Moscow: Iuridicheskaiia literatura, 1997, 536.

² Montesquieu, Baron de, *Spirit of the Laws*, vol. 2 (trans. Thomas Nugent), New York: Hafner, 1949, 38.

³ *Slovar' Akademii Rossiiskoi, po azbuchnomu poriadku raspolozhennyi*, vol. 1, St. Petersburg: Imperatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1806, 1046.

⁴ A. L. [Andrei Leopol'dov], “O veroterpimosti v Rossii,” *Vestnik Evropy*, 147 (12) 1826, 260, 263.

⁵ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Saratovskoi Oblasti, f. 1, op. 1, d. 2429, ll. 73–73 ob., petitions of Wilhelm Weber and Johannes Permlauer, 7 February 1878.

Paul W. Werth is a professor of history at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

A Curious Missionary Encounter in Imperial Russia

DONALD MACKENZIE WALLACE

Born in Scotland, Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace (1841-1914) lived in Russia for most of the period 1870-78, latterly as foreign correspondent for The Times of London. In the following extract from his book Russia (London: Cassell, 1912) he gives a glimpse of the extraordinary religious diversity he encountered while travelling through the Russian Empire in the 1870s.

National peculiarities are not obliterated so rapidly in Russia as in America or in British colonies. Among the German colonists in Russia the process of assimilation is hardly perceptible. Though their fathers and grandfathers may have been born in the new country, they would consider it an insult to be called Russians. They look down upon the Russian peasantry as poor, ignorant, lazy, and dishonest, fear the officials on account of their tyranny and extortion, preserve jealously their own language and customs, rarely speak Russian well—sometimes not at all—and never intermarry with those from whom they are separated by nationality and religion. The Russian influence acts, however, more rapidly on the Slavonic colonists—Serbians, Bulgarians, Montenegrins—who profess the Greek [Eastern] Orthodox faith, learn more easily the Russian language, which is closely allied to their own, and in general possess a nature much more pliable than the Teutonic.

Some years ago the government attempted to accelerate the fusing process by withdrawing the privileges enjoyed by the colonists, and abolishing the peculiar administration under which they lived. These measures, especially the imposing of universal military service, may perhaps eventually break

down the extreme exclusiveness of the Germans, because the youths, while serving in the army, must at least learn the Russian language, and may possibly imbibe something of the Russian spirit; but the immediate effect of the new policy was the reverse of what the government intended. During the first years of the new regime I often overheard in these colonies bitter complaints of Russian tyranny and uncomplimentary remarks about the Russian national character.

The Mennonites considered themselves specially aggrieved by the so-called reforms. They came to Russia in order to escape military service and with the distinct understanding that they should be exempted from it, and now they were forced to act contrary to the tenets of their religion. This was the ground of complaint which they put forward in the petitions addressed to the government, but they had at the same time another, and perhaps more important, objection to the changes which were being introduced. The men of the old school felt that they could not long maintain, in the new order of things, that stern Puritanical discipline which protected the young generation against immoral influences and contributed largely to the material welfare of the community. Hence, though the

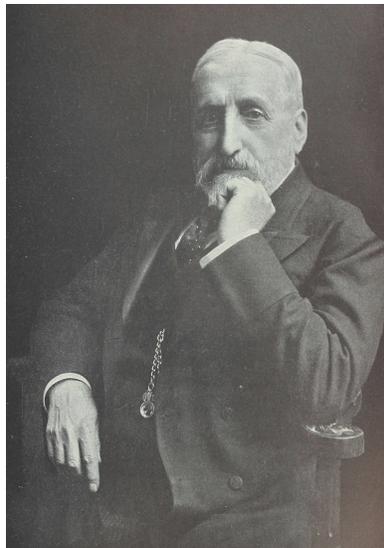
government was disposed to make certain concessions to their religious beliefs, hundreds of families sold their properties and emigrated to America. The movement, however, did not become general. At present the Russian Mennonites number, male and female, about 50,000, divided into 160 colonies and possessing over 800,000 acres of land.

It is quite possible that under the new system of administration the colonists who profess, in common with the Russians, the Greek Orthodox faith, may be rapidly Russianized; but I am convinced that the others will long resist assimilation. Greek Orthodoxy and Protestant sectarianism are so radically different in spirit that their respective votaries are not likely to intermarry; and without intermarriage it is impossible that the two nationalities should blend together.

As an instance of the ethnological curiosities which the traveler may stumble upon unawares in this curious region, I may mention a strange acquaintance I made when travelling on the great plain which stretches from the Sea of Azov to the Caspian. One day I accidentally noticed on my traveling-map the name “Shotlandskaya Koloniya” (Scottish Colony) near the celebrated baths of Pyatigorsk. I was at that moment in Stavropol,

a town about 80 miles to the north, and could not gain any satisfactory information as to what this colony was. Some well-informed people assured me that it really was what its name implied, while others asserted as confidently that it was simply a small German settlement. To decide the matter I determined to visit the place myself, though it did not lie near my intended route, and I accordingly found myself one morning in the village in question. The first inhabitants whom I encountered were unmistakably German, and they professed to know nothing about the existence of Scotsmen in the locality either at the present or in former times. This was disappointing, and I was about to turn away and drive off, when a young man—who proved to be the schoolmaster—came up, and on hearing what I desired, advised me to consult an old Circassian who lived at the end of the village and was well acquainted with local antiquities. On proceeding to the house indicated, I found a venerable old man, with fine regular features of the Circassian type, coal-black sparkling eyes, and a long grey beard that would have done honor to a patriarch. To him I explained briefly, in

(continued on page 16)



Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace

Imperial Missionary Encounter *(continued from page 15)*

Russian, the object of my visit, and asked whether he knew of any Scotsmen in the district.

“And why do you wish to know?” he replied, in the same language, fixing me with his keen, sparkling eyes.

“Because I am myself a Scotsman and hoped to find fellow-countrymen here.”

Let the reader imagine my astonishment when, in reply to this, he answered in genuine broad Scotch, “Och, man, I’m a Scotsman tae! My name is John Abercrombie. Did ye never hear tell o’ John Abercrombie, the famous Edinburgh doctor?”

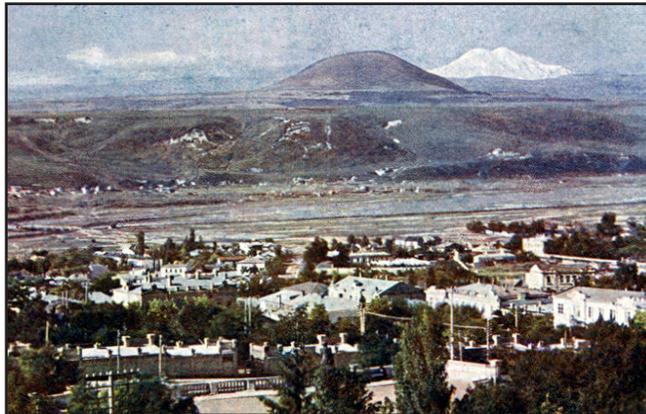
I was fairly puzzled by this extraordinary declaration. Dr. Abercrombie’s name was familiar to me as that of a medical practitioner and writer on psychology, but I knew that he

was long since dead. When I had recovered a little from my surprise, I ventured to remark to the enigmatical personage before me that, though his tongue was certainly Scotch, his face was certainly Circassian.

“Weel, weel,” he replied, evidently enjoying my look of mystification, “you’re no’ far wrang. I’m a Circassian Scotsman!”

This extraordinary admission did not diminish my perplexity, so I begged my new acquaintance to be a little more explicit, and he at once complied with my request. His long story may be told in a few words:

In the first years of the last century a band of Scottish missionaries came to Russia for the purpose of converting the Circassian tribes, and received from the Emperor Alexander I a large grant of land in this place, which was then on the frontier of the Empire. Here they founded a mission, and



View of Mount Elbrus from Pyatigorsk, early 1900s
(Source: <http://prokudin-gorskiy.ru>)

began the work; but they soon discovered that the surrounding population were not idolaters, but Mussulmans [Muslims], and consequently impervious to Christianity. In this difficulty they fell on the happy idea of buying Circassian children from their parents in times of famine, and bringing them up as Christians. (The missionaries had no scruples about adopting this practice,

because they knew that the Circassian tribes were in the habit of exporting their superfluous children to Constantinople, to be brought up in the Turkish harems.) One of these children, purchased about the year 1806, was a little boy called Teona. As he had been purchased with money subscribed by Dr. Abercrombie, he had received in baptism that gentleman’s name, and he considered himself the foster-son of his benefactor. Here was the explanation of the mystery.

Teona, *alias* Mr. Abercrombie, was a man of more than average intelligence. Besides his native tongue, he spoke English, German, and Russian perfectly; and he assured me that he knew several other languages equally well. His life had been devoted to missionary work, and especially to translating and printing the Scriptures. He had labored first in Astrakhan, then for four years and a half in Persia—in the service of the Bâle [Basel] mission—and afterwards for six years in Siberia.

The Scottish mission was suppressed by the Emperor Nicholas about the year 1835, and all the missionaries except two returned home. The son of these two (Galloway) was the only genuine Scotsman remaining at the time of my visit. Of the “Circassian Scotsmen” there were several, most of whom had married Germans. The other inhabitants were German colonists from the province of Saratov, and German was the language commonly spoken in the village. ♦

The quarterly *East-West Church Report* explores Christian life in the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe. We focus on:

- church-state, interfaith, and interchurch relations
- emerging threats to religious freedom for all
- innovative Christian charitable projects and mission
- latest academic research into Christian history and culture in the region

Annual subscription rates are \$23 (individuals) and \$54 (institutions). Payment is either by check (in U.S. Dollars only and payable to *East-West Church Report*) or by PayPal via the “Subscribe” page at www.eastwestreport.org.

Whichever way you pay, please provide (with your check or by email) the e-mail address to which the *Report* should be sent, the subscriber’s name and address, and the type of subscription required (individual or institutional).

East-West Church Report holds 501(c)(3) non-profit status and is largely reliant upon subscriptions and voluntary labor. Please consider adding a donation to your subscription.

Institutional subscribers may distribute issues to those within the institution (e.g. students using a university library). Other distribution/

reproduction of whole issues or individual articles requires the permission of *East-West Church Report*. Once permission is granted, the following statement is to be carried with the reproduced material: “Reproduced with permission of the *East-West Church Report*.”

The *Report* values feedback from readers, including suggestions for potential topics and authors. Please write to the editor at: eastwestchurchreport@gmail.com.

EAST-WEST CHURCH REPORT

P.O.Box 76741
Washington, DC 20013
U.S.A.

Geraldine Fagan, Editor
eastwestchurchreport@gmail.com
Mark R. Elliott, Editor Emeritus
emark936@gmail.com
Ray Prigodich, Book Review Editor

©2018 ISSN 2576-344X (formerly 1069-5664)
Indexed by American Bibliography of Slavic and East European Studies (ABSEES), OCLC Public Affairs Information Service (formerly PAIS), Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI), and Christian Periodicals Index.