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Ukraine's Orthodox Dispute and the Outside World

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The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople granted independent status to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine on 6 January 2019. The following day—Orthodox Christmas—the news on Russia's state-controlled Channel One allotted special attention to this development.[1] The report was revealing. The news presenter stressed that the *tomos*—the Ecumenical Patriarch's document awarding autocephalous (independent) status—came from Istanbul. The audience was led to think that the Ecumenical Patriarch's residency in Istanbul means "foreign" control over the Ukrainian Church. Yet the Russian Patriarch's residency in Moscow does not? Such a mental construct is only possible if Russia and Ukraine are not seen as separate countries.

Entrance to the Kyiv Caves Orthodox Monastery (G. FAGAN)

This is, in fact, the Russian position. Putin has famously said that Russians and Ukrainians are one people.[2] The view of the Russian Orthodox Church is not much different. The Church has occasionally shown limited independence in the political sphere, as when it did not entirely back Russian government action against Georgia, another historically Orthodox country, in 2008.[3] But since then the Church has increasingly become a government instrument in the promotion of Great Russian nationalism, a role also performed by the Orthodox Church in Imperial Russia. Today, the policy concept promoted in the immediate neighborhood is that of the "Russian World" [Russian: *Russky mir*].

The elusive Russian World extends beyond the territory of the Russian Federation, and Ukraine and Belarus are counted as self-evident parts. These three nations are seen as tracing their origins back to a single proto-state, Rus', which flourished a thousand years ago.[4] Crucially, this history is fused with the formation of Christian identity, and reflected in the long title of the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church, "Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus'."

As Russia's current rulers seek to monopolize the territory that was ancient Rus', the Moscow Patriarchate's sway over it helps to substantiate the view that—although Ukraine and Belarus gained independence simultaneously with Russia when the Soviet Union collapsed—they are not truly sovereign foreign countries. They are, and must remain, dependencies of Moscow. If the Russian Church loses its position in Ukraine, a key element of the Russian World disappears.

If we are to believe a leaked transcript of his August, 2018, discussions with Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, Patriarch Kirill—like Putin—does not really consider Ukraine a separate nation.[5] In Ukraine, Metropolitan Onufry—head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under Moscow—has tried to walk a finer line. He has appealed to Putin to preserve Ukraine's territorial integrity, and expressed his firm support for "all peace initiatives of the Ukrainian authorities."[6] Still, this does not quite amount to support for national efforts to defend Ukraine with armed force.

Given Moscow's efforts to belittle and undermine Ukraine's independence, Onufry's position is no longer enough for Kyiv. Growing suspicion that some Moscow-loyal prelates are aiding separatist forces now means that Church affairs cannot remain outside politics.[7] Putin is right when he describes the new Ukrainian Church as a political project; it is a response to his own.[8] President Poroshenko of Ukraine on 15 December

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described the new Constantinople-loyal body as a "Church without Putin" and "without prayers for the Russian authorities and Russian troops, because they kill Ukrainians."[9]

Parishioners, not patriarchs

This is not the proper place to argue whether events have moved in a correct way from a canonical point of view. Not everyone feels that they have. There will never be an absolute and objective answer to this, due to the complexities of Eastern Orthodoxy. Constantinople and Moscow, the senior and the largest of the Patriarchates respectively, have never agreed upon certain ecclesiastical rules: Who has authority to award autocephaly and so create a new local Orthodox Church? How should ecclesiastical boundaries between local Orthodox Churches be decided?

The international community should follow these developments closely, as they have potential for far-reaching social and political fallout. Within Ukraine, the key factor to watch is how ordinary Ukrainians now act. To date, there have been reports of relatively small-scale movement to the new Church—the transfer of some 300 parishes from the Moscow Patriarchate's 12,000 in Ukraine, largely in the Ukrainian-speaking northwest.[10] However, we are talking of potentially significant numbers.

It may be naïve to expect ordinary parishioners to show their colors very quickly. The situation on the ground may remain unclear for quite some time. After all, many Ukrainians seem to go to their nearest Orthodox church without much thought of its affiliation in the wider context. Maybe they will become more conscious now; the appearance and formal recognition of the new Church makes for a clear-cut choice. The stigma of complete non-recognition has been removed with the *tomos*, while the political stigma of siding with the Russia-backed Church—seen as supporting the adversaries of the Ukrainian state—is growing.

And maybe these parishioners will not be given the luxury of neutrality amidst the clash of the Orthodox Titans.

Campaign billboard, Kyiv: "We are Ukraine. A Local Church is a guarantee of independence - Petro Poroshenko." (G. FAGAN)

New schism?

By attacking the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople's interpretation of the canons, Moscow goes against a mighty and experienced adversary. Yet, preeminent as the Ecumenical Patriarch may be, he is not an eastern Pope. He cannot command other independent Orthodox church leaders.

One of the first reactions from Moscow to the appearance of the new Church in Ukraine was to claim that Constantinople's action creates a new schism along the lines of the one that divided Western and Eastern Christianity in the year 1054. This comparison appears exaggerated, as there is no theological dispute involved this time. But a split there is, and it may widen, not least because Moscow has cut ecclesiastical ties with Constantinople. The Moscow Patriarchate is now mustering ranks to support its call of foul play in the establishment of the Ukrainian Church, and not unsuccessfully.

So far, the heaviest-weight backer of Moscow has predictably been Irinej, Patriarch of Serbia. In his Christmas message, he proclaimed that in Ukraine, "passion filled chauvinist-Russophobes … [have] deepened and spread the existing schism and seriously jeopardized the unity of Orthodoxy."[11] In the background here is not just centuries of Russo-Serbian fraternity and Russia's support against the independence of Kosovo, but also fear of newly independent Montenegro and North Macedonia seeking autocephaly for their Orthodox Churches with the support of Constantinople. Patriarch John of Antioch—one of the four senior-most Patriarchates—has also criticized the Ecumenical Patriarch's action.[12] Residing in Syria, whose government is propped up by Russia, his hands may be tied. Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, has met with Patriarch Theophilos III of Jerusalem, but it seems this meeting did not produce the outcome that Moscow wished.[13]

In January Metropolitan Sawa of All Poland rejected the consecration of the newly created Metropolitan Epifany of Kyiv, referring to him as a layman.[14] Other Orthodox Churches—including Georgia[15]—have expressed an intention to stay out of the quarrel, but sooner or later they at least will have to decide if they will commemorate Metropolitan Epifany during services.

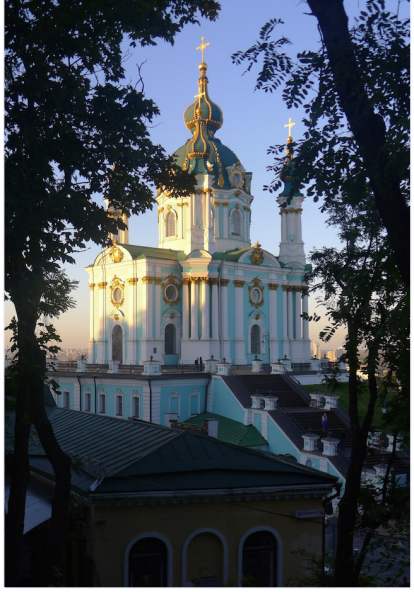
A permanent split among the Orthodox Churches is not inevitable, however. After all, what is happening in Ukraine follows the lines of earlier developments in newly independent Finland and Estonia. Moscow disputes the autonomy of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church, granted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1923 and restored in 1996. In Finland, the local Orthodox Church was also granted autonomy by the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1923, and this status was recognized by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1957. Neither of these cases provoked Moscow to sever ties with Constantinople more than temporarily—but Ukraine may be felt to be too important to lose.[16]

Rocky road ahead

Unfortunately, one thing is for sure: There is now a great risk of provocations and even violence. Ominous warnings came as early as October from President Putin's spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov: "Just as Russia defends the interests of Russians and Russian speakers—and Putin has spoken about this many times—Russia will defend the interests of the Orthodox."[17] What Moscow's "defense" of Russian speakers may mean has already been seen in Ukraine: use of force on foreign sovereign territory in disregard of international norms.

The Ukrainian government and the new Orthodox Church in Ukraine have guaranteed that no parish will be forced to leave the Moscow-led Church, which will be able to continue to operate in Ukraine, albeit under a new name that links it to Russia. But how exactly will new parishes form, express, and change their loyalties? What happens to potentially thousands of church buildings? Besides Russia-sympathizers, there is also cause to keep an eye on Ukrainian ultranationalists. Yet, given the complex balance of loyalties within local communities, claims of property seizures are extremely difficult for outsiders to verify.

There is also the question of the monasteries. The Moscow Patriarchate has around 500 in Russia and approximately a further 200 in Ukraine.[18] Those in Ukraine include three *lavras*—the largest and most important category of monastery; Russia has only two. Such important symbols as the Kyiv Caves, Pochayiv, and Sviatohirsk *lavras*—whose oldest buildings belong to the Ukrainian state as historical landmarks—may be scenes of particular confrontation.



St. Andrew's Orthodox Church, Kyiv, transferred to the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople in October 2018 (G. FAGAN)

What is to be done?

The religious landscape in Ukraine is evolving rapidly, but as long as the rights of Ukrainian citizens are respected, this evolution should remain an internal issue. Rearranging parishes and their possessions needs to be done peacefully and in a dignified manner. No doubt there will be hurt feelings in some places. Provocations—by any actor—must be called out and assessed in a transparent manner. This will be a test for Ukrainian law enforcement. The international community needs to stay alert as it seeks to vet and verify the information and disinformation emanating from Ukraine and across the Orthodox world.

At the same time, the international community should also resist the temptation of interpreting Orthodox canon law. There is no need to take sides in the Church dispute itself. In the end, it should be individual Ukrainians who decide, without any pressure, to which Church they prefer to adhere. That is religious freedom. ♦

Notes:

[1] [In Russian] "Vypusk programmy 'Vremia' v 21:00, 7 ianvaria 2019 goda," 1 News Channel, 7 January 2019, https://www.1tv.ru/news/issue/2019-01-07/21:00#5.

[2] [In Russian] "Kontsert, posviashchennyi vossoedineniiu Kryma i Sevastopolia s Rossiei," 18 March 2015, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/47878.

[3] "Appeal by His Holiness Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and All Russia," https://www.jordanville.org/news_080816_1.html.

[4] For a good recent monograph on Russia's battle over history, see Serhii Plokhy's *Lost Kingdom: The Quest for Empire and the Making of the Russian Nation*, New York: Basic Books, 2017.

[5] [In Russian] "Ekskliuziv: Dialog Varfolomeia - Kirilla po ukrainskomu voprosu," *Orthodoxia Info*, 28 September 2018, https://orthodoxia.info/news/эксклюзив-диалог-варфоломея-кирилла/.

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[7] Andrew Higgins, "Evidence Grows of Russian Orthodox Clergy's Aiding Ukraine Rebels," *New York Times*, 6 September 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/07/world/europe/evidence-grows-of-russian-orthodox-clergys-aiding-ukraine-rebels.html.

[8] [In Russian] "Interv'iu serbskim izdaniiam 'Politika' i 'Vechernie novosti'", 16 January 2019, http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/59680.

[9] "Ukraine will no longer be drinking Moscow's poison from Moscow's cup," 16 December 2018, http://commonspace.eu/index.php?m=23&news_id=5000.

[10] "Over 300 parishes of UOC-MP joined OCU so far," *RISU*, 12 February 2019, https://risu.org.ua/en/index/all_news/confessional/orthodox_relations/74674/.

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[17] [In Russian] "Rossiia zashchitit interesy pravoslavnykh na Ukraine," *5 TV*, 12 October 2018, https://www.5-tv.ru/news/224093/rossia-zasitit-interesy-pravoslavnyh-naukraine/.

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Between the Barricades: the Conflicted Loyalties of Ukraine's Orthodox

GERALDINE FAGAN

With elections looming on 31 March, Ukraine's President Petro Poroshenko has campaigned on a platform of an independent national Orthodox Church in addition to a strong army and Ukrainian as the state language. The autocephaly (independence) of this Church is "a question of our national security," he told crowds outside Kyiv's St. Sophia's Cathedral on 15 December, moments after the formation of the new "Orthodox Church in Ukraine."[1]

Russia's political leadership similarly views Orthodoxy in Ukraine as a security concern. President Vladimir Putin discussed "the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine" at a session of his Security Council on 12 October.[2]

These positions suggest a clear division of national loyalties, with Orthodox Christians in the newly independent Church supporting Ukraine and those under the Moscow Patriarchate supporting Russia. "If a church's headquarters are in a foreign country that is an aggressor state, then what kind of citizen will it produce?" asked Poroshenko during his 15 December address. "Certainly not a citizen of Ukraine."[3]

Support for Russia clearly exists among Orthodox in Ukraine under the Moscow Patriarchate. While visiting Kyiv in October 2018, however, the editor of the *East-West Church Report* also found strong patriotic defense of Ukraine among Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox, and even sympathy for the pro-democracy aspirations of demonstrators on Maidan Square in 2014.

Importance of canonicity

Here, the crucial factor determining affiliation to the Moscow Patriarchate is the belief that it is the only canonical (legitimate) Orthodox structure in Ukraine. This is now being tested by the appearance of a second structure, recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The newly independent body is largely composed of the former Kyiv Patriarchate. This was created in the early 1990s by the late Soviet-era Metropolitan of Kyiv, Filaret (Denysenko), and has been broadly rejected as schismatic by the wider Orthodox world. In October 2018, the *East-West Church Report* found its members' position to be close to that of President Poroshenko. "Autocephaly means the triumph of common sense," Tatiana Derkatch, a former charismatic Protestant who joined the Kyiv Patriarchate in 2005, maintained. "A Church from an aggressor state will not be able to influence the inhabitants of a country which that aggressor state attacked." According to Kyiv Patriarchate military chaplain Fr. Igor Mayak, the Moscow Patriarchate "serves Moscow, while the Kyiv Patriarchate serves Ukraine."

Before a weekday service at the Refectory Church of Saints Anthony and Theodosius, Kyiv Caves Orthodox Monastery (G. FAGAN)

In Kyiv, unreserved support within the Moscow Patriarchate for the new Orthodox Church in Ukraine appears rare. Icon-painter Oleksandr Klymenko criticizes Ecumenical Patriarchate theologians for casting their Patriarch of Constantinople as the head of the Orthodox Church, "whereas the head of the Church is Christ." Yet, while he previously saw excessive emphasis on national identity only within the Kyiv Patriarchate, "now I don't see any difference between Patriarch Kirill [of Russia] and Filaret." Kirill's theology of the Russian World, explains Klymenko, is presented as "a mystical, cultural body in addition to that of the Church of Christ" and so is "definitely heresy." It reminds him of sophiology—belief in a unifying principle of Divine Wisdom rejected by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1935 as coming dangerously close to suggesting a fourth element of the Trinity.

Support for autocephaly

Since 2014—when clashes with pro-Kremlin forces erupted in eastern Ukraine—Orthodox allegiance to the Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchates has see-sawed. Respectively 35 and 22 percent in 2010, by 2018 it was 19 and 43 percent.[4]

Concerned that thousands of people have been transferring from the Moscow to the Kyiv Patriarchate due to Russia's backing of the separatist enclaves in eastern Ukraine, Klymenko suggests that autocephaly is now "the only possibility of keeping these people within Christ's Church."

Moscow Patriarchate parishioner Vladislav Golovin similarly points out that, after more than two decades of existence, young Ukrainians join the Kyiv Patriarchate either unaware of or indifferent to its origins, just as he was attracted to the Moscow Patriarchate as a student in the early 2000s due to positive interaction with a particular priest. "They are just praying, asking God for His blessings," reasons Golovin. "They do not have such sins as Filaret has, so why do they have to bear his condemnation?"

Officially, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under Moscow has rejected Constantinople's offer of autocephaly as "artificial, imposed from outside, and not reflecting the internal needs of the Church."[5] Statistics provided to the *East-West Church Report* by the Kyiv-based Razumkov Center suggest a more nuanced internal picture, however. A nationwide poll conducted by the Center in August 2018 found support for autocephaly as high as 27 percent among self-declared adherents of the Moscow Patriarchate. Forty-two percent were opposed, and a further 31 percent proved either indifferent or unable to answer.

Kyiv Patriarchate activist Tatiana Derkatch (G. FAGAN)

While he approves of autocephaly in principle—"an independent state should have its own national Church"—Golovin believes it to be dangerous in the current circumstances. His concern is that "radical nationalists will take weapons and say that we [the Moscow Patriarchate] have no right to be here anymore because of the *tomos*: independence [received] from the Ecumenical Patriarchate." He further fears that the Russian government could use such developments as grounds to intervene; "for further expansion, not only in Donbass, but into other Ukrainian territory." Golovin is confident the Poroshenko government would not support attempts by largely secular radical nationalists to drive the Moscow Patriarchate out of Ukraine. "But if he doesn't intervene, that will be enough; that is the problem."

Personal relationships

One reason repeatedly cited to the *East-West Church Report* for why autocephaly is unlikely to produce a swift and stark division along national identity lines is that so much depends upon personal relationships. Chair of Ukraine's parliamentary subcommittee on freedom of conscience, Viktor Yelensky recounted how parishes typically transferred from the Moscow to Kyiv Patriarchates after 2014 "if the priest preached about the Russian World, or where they were forced to commemorate Patriarch Kirill: 'We can't bury soldiers one day and the next commemorate the name of Kirill, who blesses this war.'" But Yelensky also noted the example of a Moscow Patriarchate priest who prayed all night with three parishioners as their husbands fought to defend the city of Debaltseve from separatist forces in early 2015. "They didn't transfer [to the Kyiv Patriarchate], because for them this priest was an authority figure."

The importance of personal relationships is also noted by Fr. Georgi Kovalenko, who recently founded the Open Orthodox University in Kyiv as a center for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. "Many of those who support the idea of autocephaly will look at what foundations this new church is built upon, and to what extent it will not be like the Moscow Patriarchate," he points out. "What are we swapping for what? If the relationship between bishop and priest will be the same, then what is the point of a priest transferring? Especially if he knows the current bishop, and has very negative information about the alternative one."

Fr. Georgi Kovalenko, founder of Kyiv's Open Orthodox University (G. FAGAN)

The Moscow Patriarchate broke off all relations with Constantinople on 15 October, five days after the *East-West Church Report* met with Fr. Georgi. In the light of this decision, another of his suggestions now seems portentous. "For 25 years we have been building our identity on the basis of being part of universal Orthodoxy; that is why we are part of the Moscow Patriarchate, not because we love Moscow and it is our center of the universe," he maintained. "But the current conflict surrounding the fact that we do not want to accept the actions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate is creating a new reality. Those priests and laypeople for whom being part of world Orthodoxy is valuable are not going to follow Moscow in breaking with world Orthodoxy. Because then they will end up in the very same situation for which they were constantly criticizing Filaret and the Kyiv Patriarchate."

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Archangel Michael Zverinets Caves Monastery, a popular Moscow Patriarchate parish in Kyiv. The tablets at the new church entrance display the Ten Commandments. (G. FAGAN)

Participation in Maidan

Even more striking—given the official position of the Moscow Patriarchate—is the degree of sympathy among its Kyiv adherents for what is known locally as the "Revolution of Dignity": the pro-democracy demonstrations that toppled the Putin-backed regime of President Viktor Yanukovych in 2014. Russian Patriarch Kirill of Russia publicly condemned these protests as a "revolutionary riot" reminiscent of the 1917 Bolshevik takeover.[6]

By contrast, Fr. Georgy Kovalenko was actively involved in the "Revolution of Dignity" as *de facto* official spokesperson for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under Moscow, he told the *East-West Church Report*, "including speaking from the Euromaidan stage."

"I'm for Ukraine," Vladislav Golovin asserted. "I participated in Maidan, and I do believe that Crimea was an illegal annexation, and I do believe that the Donbass is an undeclared war against my state." Countering typical claims from Russia, he also insisted that the Maidan protests were not orchestrated by the West. "You can't pay people to stand on the streets for three months, because no one will put his life under threat for money. A hundred people were killed in two days; they were just moving with wooden shields under Kalashnikov fire. I cannot believe that they did this for money or because the Americans told them to do so. They do believe in the Ukrainian national idea; that Ukraine is a separate country from Russia."

In early 2014 Golovin was one of a small group of Moscow Patriarchate Orthodox, including clergy, who attempted to prevent violent clashes during the Maidan events by standing in prayer midway between demonstrators and police. "That was the behavior that I expected from Patriarch Kirill," Golovin told the *East-West Church Report.* "Maybe not here [in Kyiv], maybe in the Donbass, but to stop the war [there], the killings. If we are believers on both sides, if we believe in one God, it is an absolutely idiotic idea to kill each other. But there were only words, statements; that we are deeply disappointed, that we are praying. Okay, you are praying. But what are you doing? Will God listen to your prayers if you are doing nothing?"

Independently of Golovin, icon-painter Oleksandr Klymenko was also among the small group that stood between the opposing sides. Acknowledging that Maidan "wasn't always a victory of the forces of light over the forces of darkness," he believes it revealed Russia and Ukraine as having two different political—and spiritual—cultures. "Russia is a monologic culture, from the word 'monologue'; that is, power speaks and the people listen. Yanukovych was totally from this monologic system; 'I speak, you listen.' It is very close to the Old Testament tradition in which the Lord speaks through the prophets, and 'Israel hearkens'."

In addition to that of the New Testament, Klymenko believes Ukraine is closer to another Old Testament tradition: "When Job argues with and makes claims upon God." He suggests Maidan was in this way an example of Ukrainians trying to establish dialogue with power: "This attempt to build dialogue isn't always polite, and it isn't always successful." Klymenko sees the same process underway in the Church. "In Ukraine we are also trying to establish dialogue between parishioners and priests; to build a society where people won't be just 'servants of God,' but brothers of, and in, Christ." ♦

Notes:

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[3] "Vystup Prezidenta za rezul'tatami…," *ibid.*

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

[5] [In Russian] "Postanovlenie Sobora episkopov Ukrainskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi ot 13 noiabria 2018 goda," 13 November 2018, http://news.church.ua/2018/11/13/postanovlenie-sobora-episkopov-ukrainskoj-pravoslavnoj-cerkvi-ot-13-noyabrya-2018-goda/?lang=ru.

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"A lot of people support Moscow, but there are also a lot of people who are pro-Ukrainian": An Interview with Svitlana Korenkova

Svitlana Korenkova's parents hailed from mostly Russian-speaking northeastern Ukraine, and she grew up in the similarly Russian-speaking region of Zaporizhia [Russian: Zaporozhye] on the Black Sea. Yet Ukrainian identity was central to her upbringing, and she has spoken Ukrainian and Russian since childhood. Svitlana became a practicing Orthodox Christian as a young adult in the early 2000s. She attends a Moscow Patriarchate parish in Kyiv, where she now lives with her husband and six-year-old daughter.

In the light of the ongoing moves to establish an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church, she spoke in late October 2018 with the editor of the East-West Church Report *in Kyiv about the challenges of Christian and national identity. The conversation took place in English.*

Svitlana Korenkova with her daughter as an infant (Source: S. KORENKOVA)

How did you become a practicing Orthodox Christian under the Moscow Patriarchate?

Initially I attended both Moscow and Kyiv Patriarchate churches. I very much liked [the Kyiv Patriarchate's] St. Volodymyr's Cathedral [a 19th-century landmark decorated by renowned Russian artists such as Mikhail Nesterov and Viktor Vasnetsov]. My father told me stories about how he attended this church as a child during holidays with a great-aunt in Kyiv. I also attended the *lavra* [Kyiv Caves Monastery] and St. Florus Women's Monastery in the Podil district of Kyiv [both Moscow Patriarchate]. But when I began to attend church regularly, I started to read and learn more, and it became very important for me to attend the canonical Orthodox Church. But the way to meeting Christ is very personal; different people come to Christ in very different ways. The Bible says that the Holy Spirit can be present wherever He wills. We cannot say for certain which church He is in, and in which He is not.

Ultimately, my decision to keep to the Moscow Patriarchate was greatly influenced by priests abroad, in Paris and Strasbourg—I travelled a lot due to my work with the Council of Europe. A few days after Easter in 2006, I went on a training course in Tbilisi, Georgia, and I asked to arrive early so that I could attend the Easter night liturgy. A priest there explained to me that it is crucially important to know which church I am attending. Later that year I found the Moscow Patriarchate parish that I still attend in Kyiv, St. Agapit.

At that time, this was perhaps the most popular church in Kyiv. The main parish priest, Fr. Andrei Tkachev, was famous for his sermons. It was really something special—relations inside the community were very friendly, and Fr. Andrei contributed a lot to this distinct spirit. On Wednesdays we had teas at which he would speak about the Gospel and how to connect the Bible with everyday life. We also started an Orthodox English-speaking club to help Orthodox who can speak English enrich their vocabulary so that they are able to speak about the Church. As these meetings were after Sunday liturgy, we would read that morning's Gospel passage in English. We also read sermons by Western priests, such as Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh, and material on the website of the Orthodox Church in America.

At the same time, another person was important to me personally—Bishop Panteleimon [now the Moscow Patriarchate's Archbishop of Rovenki in Luhansk region]. He helped me to build this relationship with the Church, to find my own way. At that time he was a priest at the *lavra*, and he impressed me with his accessibility. He was very inspiring and motivating—a monk, but at the same time open-minded and open to communication.

At the Council of Europe, I was a trainer in human-rights education, and I always asked myself how my work there related to the Orthodox Church, especially when you can hear very controversial things in sermons! Here, a personal encounter cemented my relationship with Orthodoxy. Most priests were critical of the Orange Revolution [2004-05 pro-democracy protests in Ukraine], but at the inauguration event of the new president, Viktor Yushchenko, I met Metropolitan Volodymyr [then head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate)] on Maidan Square. He and his security detail came down from the stage out into the crowd, and at that very moment I came face to face with him and asked for his blessing. To receive this personal blessing was for me a sign that I was on the right path.

How did you and your parish perceive the 2013-14 pro-democracy demonstrations on Maidan Square, and the subsequent loss of Ukrainian territory?

Our Fr. Andrei Tkachev became very famous in Ukraine as a pro-Russian priest when he spoke against Maidan, and he decided to move to Moscow. Earlier, there were both opinions—pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian—and this wasn't an issue. But in 2014 our parish became more pro-Russian. Unfortunately, a lot of people decided to leave.

I was for Maidan—perhaps not the most ardent supporter, but I mostly shared its pro-democracy values. Because my daughter was very young at the time, I did not attend any kind of demonstrations, but a lot of my friends were there, and I prepared sandwiches to give to the Maidan activists. I still cannot agree 100 percent that everything was done correctly on the Maidan side. There were a lot of provocations and right-wing nationalists. At the same time, that is not an excuse for killing. Even if there was a lot of disorder, those in power did what should not have been done in that situation, when police and the army crushed the peaceful protests.

Korenkova Interview *(continued from page 7)*

I am pro-Ukrainian—I grew up as a Ukrainian child–but in the past few years this focus on a national idea has become too much. It is not being explained in terms of internal values. It's like trying to rebuild the systems of the Pioneer and Komsomol [Soviet youth organizations] but with different content, while supposing that we think differently now. There is fear that anything said against the strong rhetoric of the nationalists will be considered pro-Russian.

As for Crimea—and the separation in eastern Ukraine—to me it was obvious that it would happen at some point. When I travelled to Vladikavkaz, North Ossetia, after the 2008 war with Georgia, I spoke with people there and understood that we could have this very similar situation in Ukraine. It was discussed, but unfortunately nothing was done to prevent it, even though it was not a secret that a lot of people in Crimea were applying for and receiving Russian citizenship. At least we didn't have a war in Crimea—although the ongoing hybrid war that we have is very real, and the annexation of Crimea is in fact a result.

Why might Ukrainian Orthodox support Russia?

There could be many different reasons, starting from feeling real support for the Russian people. The main idea is that we are brothers with Russia, that we are one people who should not be separated; that this separation of Russia and Ukraine is very artificial, and our culture is almost the same, not two different things. We should also respect this position. When we speak about diversity now—including in religious dialogue—we actually stress what we have in common. But we should also recognize differences for what they are, and accept them. Real dialogue can take place only where differences are accepted and respected.

How do you feel about the opposition of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) to autocephaly?

I was very disappointed by the position of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. When we spoke within our parish about autocephaly, I could not agree with people who immediately connected it with the Kyiv Patriarchate. I expected that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church [Moscow Patriarchate] would form the fundamental part of the new Ukrainian Church. But what happened? The Ukrainian Orthodox Church became more and more oriented towards Moscow. Yes, a lot of people support Moscow, but there are also a lot of people who are pro-Ukrainian.

I do like Russia—when I travelled there on business with the Council of Europe, I connected my trips with pilgrimages to some holy sites: monasteries in Diveyevo and Murom, St. Sergius *lavra* near Moscow. But I feel that as far as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church [Moscow Patriarchate] is concerned, those people who support Moscow exist and are recognized, while everyone else is on their own. Those who support connections with Moscow therefore form a more cohesive group, and because of that it appears as if they are the majority. And the Moscow Patriarchate has found the best way to manipulate that—either we are all together, or not at all.

There are some parts of western Ukraine that are strongly Ukrainian culturally, but where support for the Moscow Patriarchate is also very high. How is that possible?

I am not sure if for them the word "Moscow" has any special meaning. I have a good example: My family has spent several summer holidays in the Carpathian Mountains, in the far West. We rented accommodations from a young family from the local region of Ivano-Frankivsk. They turned out to be very strongly Orthodox of the Moscow Patriarchate. But they avoided saying "Moscow Patriarchate," and they never called it the Russian Church. They just said that there was more emphasis upon the Ukrainian national idea than Christ in other churches. Their nephew and niece—aged 11 and 14—just called it "our Church." They protect and support it not because it is with Moscow, but because of canonicity. I have the greatest respect for their priests who can explain to these people the value of that.

Ukrainian state award presented by President Viktor Yushchenko to the late Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan). Both are shown in the photograph to the right (G. FAGAN)

How do these questions affect your six-year-old daughter?

For me it is important to give her an Orthodox upbringing, but at the same time the question of building a relationship with God is her business. I should create the conditions for her rather than force her. But with our situation in Ukraine, I have problems with explanations even at her young age, especially when we travel in western Ukraine [where the breakaway Kyiv Patriarchate and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church have been strong]. "Such a nice church, the priest looks like ours. Mummy, let's go here to take communion!"

While we were in the Carpathians, I took her to a Moscow Patriarchate church from time to time, but it was in another city more than half an hour away by bus; it was also a very small parish in a private house. And this was while there was a large non-Moscow Patriarchate church right where we were staying. I have asked other mothers, "How did you explain?" They said to me, "I told my children that they are not real priests." But is that not the same as saying that they are bad, and we are good? For me it is very important not to build this division for children. Even to say it is not a real church–what does that mean to her? What my daughter sees is a real church and real priests.

Will the situation change for you if the alternative becomes a recognized autocephalous Ukrainian Church, especially if the Ukrainian Orthodox Church is forced by law to rename as, say, the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine?

Just recently I said I never thought I would be a parishioner of the Russian Church. But now it looks this way, and this is once again a question I will have to ask myself. I don't know. Church is like family. But it would not be fair to say here, "You can't choose your family." This is family we can choose. But changing family is very hard for a person. That is how I feel. It would not be an easy decision at all. But to remain and attend the Russian Church—that would also be very hard for me to accept.

When the Revolution of Dignity took place and the war started in the Donbass region, I asked myself if I still wanted to belong to the Moscow Patriarchate. I had a lot of disputes with my father; he did not like the fact that I was connected with the Moscow Patriarchate. My father died in 2014, in the month following the death of Metropolitan Volodymyr on 5 July. When Metropolitan Volodymyr died, my father called to tell me about his death—and my father was not a churchgoer. But in those days we spoke about Metropolitan Volodymyr and the Church a lot; what will happen next, what is waiting for us. I recall this because even if everything will remain the same, just the name changed and our church called the Russian Church, I am not sure whether attending would honor my father, who wanted to see a Ukrainian Church. To be honest, I would prefer to avoid such a choice.

As for my child—I'm not sure that I would prefer to bring her up within the Russian Church. It's not a question of language, but of identity. So far this issue is not so pressing, but what about a year from now, when she starts Ukrainian school? What I would like is to give her general Christian values, and national values inside those.

It seems as if much depends upon what happens and how it happens. I imagine that if a significant number of Moscow Patriarchate priests switched to a recognized autocephalous Ukrainian Church, you might feel comfortable going to those rather than to former Kyiv Patriarchate priests, even though technically they would be under the same jurisdiction.

Exactly. Yes, this process of building a new church is political, but for me it means yet more separation. On the one hand, we are building an inclusive society; on the other hand, we enforce this division more and more. Situations where a husband attends one church, and a wife another, or the child was baptized in one church and so can't attend another one. (Sighs) It is a family matter, and only after that is it political or national. I don't feel politically about it; I don't see it from the point of view of a national idea or independence. Such things are important, but everyday life is about relations within families. But I don't hear this kind of argument much. About politics, a national idea, independence—sure. Those kinds of discussions are had by non-church people; for them it is very easy. But when you have friends in different churches and you avoid speaking about this question, it is a very personal problem. ♦

"No matter what the revolution, you must protect and guarantee basic human rights and freedoms": An Interview with Vitaly Sorokun

Raised in Kharkiv [Russian: Kharkov], Vitaly Sorokun is both pastor of New Hope Baptist Church and an associate professor at Yaroslav the Wise National Law University in that city. His PhD dissertation (2009) examined international protection of freedom of religion or belief.

Kharkiv is situated in northeastern Ukraine, less than an hour from the border with Russia, and the local population is largely Russian-speaking. Unlike parts of neighboring Donetsk and Luhansk regions, attempts by pro-Russian separatists to take control of the city in 2014 did not succeed.

In addition to his native Russian, Vitaly speaks fluent Ukrainian, French, and English. The following conversation with the editor of the East-West Church Report *occurred in the last of these. It took place in downtown Kharkiv in mid-October 2018.*

How did you become a Baptist pastor?

Shortly after the Soviet Union collapsed, when we saw the first fruits of freedom of religion, I was studying at the school of languages of what was then called Kharkov State University. All of a sudden there were many conversations about faith, Christianity, and the Bible. Many missionaries were coming from the West and introducing Christianity to us. I began to search and went to many churches—Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant—just to observe and find answers. At the same time, someone gave me a Bible, and I began to read it. I felt more comfortable in Protestant churches, and I liked a more conservative type of service, so I stayed with the Baptist Church. That is where I gave my life to Jesus Christ.

Later on, while in my PhD law program, I began to grow spiritually and to preach at the church. That got me moving into a pastor's role. In 2001 we planted a new church, and I withdrew from my PhD program to focus my attention there. In 2005, once the church was growing and its administration more stable, I returned to the PhD program. It was funny—by that time I was already an ordained pastor, and historically Yaroslav the Wise University was a KGB school. So when I went to re-enroll, many eyebrows were raised: "Are we training clergy here now?!"

Tell me about your church, New Hope [Russian: *Novaia Nadezhda*].

(continued on page 10)

Sorokun Interview *(continued from page 9)*

We are a Baptist church, part of the Baptist Union here. There are at least 80 Baptist churches in Kharkiv region, and around 4,000 members altogether. Overall, the Baptist Union of Ukraine is the largest in Europe, and we are the oldest Protestant group in this part of the world. In this area, our history goes back around 160 years.

Right now, New Hope Church focuses primarily on international students. Our services are in English, and we have a congregation of about 100. Most come from African countries and the Middle East; there are also a few from India. We have additional services in Chinese for a separate congregation of some 50 students from China.

We never actually thought about this in the beginning. We were just a church for Russian-speaking Ukrainians, but one Easter Sunday three students from Uganda came looking for a church, and we discovered there was nowhere they could worship in English. We interpreted our services for them, and they started coming.

Soon we saw that this was where God was moving, and we redirected the entire vision of our church. Kharkiv receives the second-largest number of international students in Ukraine—approximately 23,000 a year. We try to create a place where they are loved and feel safe.

When all is said and done, they are with us for only three to six years. We have accomplished our mission when they go back home as "God's workers approved and unashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" [2 Timothy 2:15]. We have been doing this ministry for 17 years. I have had the chance to go to Africa a few times—to Uganda, Kenya, and Rwanda—and meet with our graduates who are now doctors and business professionals. They have such deep faith, and they are now upcoming leaders of their societies. We were able to shape them in the formative stages of their life and to give them a solid foundation. We are grateful for that.

Vitaly Sorokun (**G. FAGAN**)

The religious diversity in Ukraine is striking. How far is this supported by legislation on freedom of conscience?

Ukraine has always had this religious dynamic. It is a melting pot of religions. Historically, just among Christians, we have had various Orthodox, Greek Catholics [whose worship is similar to Orthodoxy, but who recognize the Pope], and also Roman Catholics, if not so many. We had Lutherans in Kharkiv for many years. And when you look at Evangelicals—especially Baptists—Ukraine had the largest number even in Soviet times. When the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine began sending missionaries to Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union.

By God's grace, we have been enjoying tremendous freedom of conscience. Not counting the Baltic States, Ukraine has been the former Soviet republic that has enjoyed this freedom the most. We have a very progressive law on freedom of conscience and religious organizations, adopted in 1991 and still in force. We have had positive Church-state relations.

Of course, this has depended upon the time period. We actually experienced a tightening-up under the regime of Viktor Yanukovych [president from 2010-14]. Yanukovych was clearly pro-Russian, pro-Putin, and pro-Orthodox. He did not change the religion law, but every law is written in such a way that it depends upon how you implement it. You can implement it by giving people a tremendous margin of freedom, but you can also claim that there is freedom when everything is tightly controlled, as is the case in Russia now. They have freedom, but can you move without being supervised? That is a different matter.

That is what they tried to do here under Yanukovych. We no longer have the KGB, but the security service of Ukraine, the SBU. While Yanukovych was in power, an officer of the SBU would call me three or four times a year trying to arrange a meeting to get information from me, mostly about pastors. Did I know why an American team came to a particular church? Were they planning big events for the city, like rallies or congresses? Were any foreign missionaries staying here? If so, who were they, and how long would they be staying? What was the purpose of their visit, and what was their schedule? Those kinds of questions.

However, since the collapse of the Yanukovych regime in 2014 with the Revolution of Dignity, I've never had a call, thankfully. It surprises me how much President Poroshenko and his administration have been open to Protestants. We are able to represent ourselves at the highest level of society. For two consecutive years we have celebrated Thanksgiving Day right on Khreshchatyk Street in central Kyiv. Over 100,000 people are said to have attended in the second year. [See the *East-West Church Report*, Vol. 26, No. 3, 2018, 15-16]

President Poroshenko strongly backs the creation of a Ukrainian Orthodox Church not subject to Russian political influence. How did the situation differ under Yanukovych?

Under Yanukovych it was quite the opposite. Patriarch Kirill came here regularly from Russia; the Moscow Patriarchate was building churches and given freedoms no one else enjoyed. Then, when unrest began in eastern Ukraine, it was no secret that [Moscow Patriarchate] priests were telling their flock whom to support. There was only one option: to support Moscow, Russia, pro-Putin candidates, whereas by law, Church and state are separate. I cannot use my pulpit to tell people whom to vote for. That was wrong, and people did not like it at all. Now society is swinging in the opposite direction.

There is already a bill seeking to force the Ukrainian Orthodox Church under Moscow to change its name to reflect its affiliation with the Russian Orthodox Church. [Subsequent to this interview, on 20 December 2018, the Ukrainian Parliament adopted corresponding amendments to the religion law (Bill No. 5309). According to these, a religious organization operating in Ukraine with headquarters in an "aggressor state"—defined

as Russia—must change its name to reflect this affiliation. Such a religious organization may also not conduct military chaplaincy.]

When this bill first appeared it was written in neutral terms, as imposing some limitations and special requirements on religious organizations with centers outside Ukraine. But everyone knew it was a bill against the Moscow Patriarchate; they would have to re-register in a special way. It was curbing religious freedom.

Easter celebration at New Hope Church, Kharkiv (Source: V. SOROKUN)

If passed in its original form, it would have affected others, because are not the Catholics in the same situation? What about the Lutherans, even the Baptists? We are autonomous, but we have so many ties to the West. Who can say that my center is not in Ukraine, but Frankfurt, Germany, or Dallas, Texas? You cannot prove that.

It is actually similar to Russia, where legislation often appears designed to target particular groups.

When you have a revolutionary mindset, the pressing needs of today can justify anything. That is how they justified persecution in the past against a particular group or class: "The bourgeoisie are the guilty ones." Now it's, "Let's make these Orthodox believers the guilty ones." Well, no, you don't do that. Especially against one particular group, that is discrimination. No matter what the revolution, you must protect and guarantee basic human rights and freedoms.

Our government does know that, and they are not so stupid as to lose the support of Europe over something like this. But this idea of an independent Ukrainian Orthodox Church is everywhere just now; the president talks about it, and the Prime Minister, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the one hand, I understand that it is a positive dynamic if the Orthodox Church can be independent, especially if its leading metropolitan need only be appointed locally, rather than having to be approved in Russia, now an aggressor state.

But where I see red flags rising: Isn't there too much involvement of the government in these affairs? I understand that it is rather like international affairs: You have to obtain that *tomos* from Istanbul, you can't just fly there and meet with the Patriarch [of Constantinople] without politics being involved. But after this is done, what will the situation look like for the churches under Moscow? Will they have to re-register? Will they have to change their name?

And what will it mean for the general religious landscape of Ukraine? In the long term, will the autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church claim, as in Greece, that they are the historical, the state Church? They will have all the balls in their court to say it, and even to begin demanding changes to the Constitution. They are not going to do that now, but what about 20 or more years down the road, when the dust has settled? How will that affect the Protestants? How will that affect the Muslims and the rest? This is what has to be considered. If Ukraine is to develop as a liberal state—as a state that guarantees human rights and freedoms—there must be some balance, otherwise we actually could go to the other extreme.

There are already fears of disputes over church property.

Hopefully they will be peaceful, just within the courts. But even then, how can a court be neutral in this situation, when it is all so political, so emotionally charged? Let's say a case is filed in court, and the judge decides to transfer a church building. If he takes it from the Moscow Patriarchate, it will be called discrimination. But if he does not give it to the Kyiv Patriarchate [subsumed into the new Orthodox Church of Ukraine in the months following this interview], he will be acting against the overall dynamic of the country.

The issue is especially difficult to resolve when Orthodox parishes do not have a fixed membership.

They were actually considering adopting other legislation, and thankfully did not, under which fixed membership could not determine the current state of your congregation, only personal attachment to it. That would have caused a tremendous threat to everybody. Let's say we have 50 church members, and they decide our affairs. What if 100 physically fit young men come to my church service one day and say, "This is our church, and we'll be voting." Who are you? "Well, you don't know us, but we feel attached, and we are the majority right now, so we're taking control." That would be insane. I'm thankful that the current law does have a provision stating that the government does not interfere in the internal statute of the church or how we make decisions.

Overall though, it is sad to me as a Christian that there are these fights, as people may easily lose the most important thing. What matters is that you have Jesus Christ as the foundation of the Church. When you lose that, you get into all sorts of fights. Let's say I'm under Constantinople, and my friend is under Moscow. Now that the Moscow Church proclaims that it doesn't have any ties with Constantinople, does that mean we can't even pray with one another when we eat together?

Jesus said to love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you [Matt. 5:44]. I hope the priests teach parishioners in the Orthodox churches that, because if a person is so charged emotionally, it is easy to begin actually hating. I pray that both Moscow and Constantinople would keep Jesus as the foundation and work from that, rather than dividing. Jesus said, "If anyone wants to take your shirt, give them your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles" [Matt. 5:40-41]. That should be the spirit. If they take your building, just give it. You can always build a building. Show them you are the owner, and that you are free to give, and God will bless. If you come to people with an open hand, the Lord will put something back in your hand. But if you come with a clenched fist, God can't put anything in it. ♦

New Amendments to Hungary's Religion Law Don't Make Amends

H. DAVID BAER

Editor's note: In late 2018, Hungary amended its religion law of 2011, which replaced pro-freedom legislation introduced in 1990. In 2012 around 300 faith groups lost their legal status as "churches" and were forced either to register as civil associations or else de-register. A faith group could obtain revised "church" status only with two-thirds support in the Hungarian Parliament.

Facing objections to this politicized process—including from the European Court of Human Rights—Hungary soon amended both its Constitution and the 2011 law, but largely to consolidate the restrictions. While able to function, non-established faith groups were still deprived of rights they had enjoyed for two decades, including the ability to receive one percent personal income tax donations ("church tax") and to conduct hospital, military, and prison chaplaincy. (For a primer on the 2011 law and its effects, see the East-West Church Report*, vol. 26, no. 1, 7-8.)*

H. David Baer, a theology professor at Texas Lutheran University, spent 2013-14 in Hungary researching the impact of the 2011 law. His commentary below on the latest 2018 amendments is abridged from analysis originally posted on the Hungarian Spectrum *blog (http://hungarianspectrum.org.)*

Amendments to Hungary's religion law introduced on December 11, 2018 are supposedly intended to redress the violations of human rights occasioned by the law's introduction in 2011. Instead, the revised law simply repackages these violations.

The new legislation introduces a four-tiered classification system for religious groups: lowest are Religious Associations (*vallási egyesület*), then Listed Churches (*nyilvántartásba vett egyház*), Registered Churches (*bejegyzett egyház*), and Recognized Churches (*bevett egyház*). (In Hungarian, "church" is the common term for religious communities of any faith.) The rationale for these tiers appears to be based upon size. Only 10 members are needed to register a Religious Association. Listed Churches need to have received church tax from at least 1,000 individuals; Registered Churches from at least 4,000. The top category of Recognized Churches consists of Registered Churches with which the government has established "comprehensive agreements" bestowing special rights and benefits.

Faith groups in the bottom three tiers are accorded a few rights denied them before. They will be allowed to collect the church tax, a clear accommodation to the European Court of Human Rights. In addition, the law grants them autonomy to determine their organizational structure—a provision which, had it been in effect earlier, would probably have prevented the liquidation of numerous de-registered churches. (Most religions believe their organizational structure is theologically mandated, while civil associations are required to have a particular organizational structure, with an executive board, a president, and voting rights for members. De-registered churches converting to civil associations were thus forced to adopt an organizational structure dictated by the state.)

In creating a tiered system, the amended Hungarian law gives the appearance of being modelled upon other tiered systems in Europe, perhaps those in Germany or Austria, which conform to European norms. These require that the state adopt an impartial posture toward religion, but do not necessarily preclude differential treatment. Thus, after a superficial read, the amended law might appear typical for Central Europe.

Expanded government role

Closer examination reveals this to be anything but the case. The different tiers in the Hungarian law disguise a thoroughly arbitrary treatment of faith groups. As compared to the old, the new legislation actually expands the role for government discretion in the treatment of religion.

One example is the manner in which faith groups acquire membership in the top tier. In the bottom three tiers, membership is determined by courts in accordance with objective criteria. That might appear to address objections to the power given Parliament to assign "church" status. However, Parliament's power remains in relation to the top tier of Recognized Churches. This category consists of Registered Churches that have entered into "comprehensive co-operation agreements" with the state, which include state subsidy for both "public interest" and "faith-based" activities and are of unlimited duration. The decision to enter into a "comprehensive agreement" is made by the government, which must refer the "comprehensive agreement" to Parliament for a two-thirds vote. The amended law thus preserves Parliament's political prerogatives in relation to Recognized Churches, ensuring a constitutionally distinct class of "churches" with substantially greater rights and privileges than any other tier.

The new legislation further extends discretionary power to pick favorites to the lower three tiers, as the government may also now enter into "agreements" with groups there. Such agreements are not "comprehensive," and thus do not appear to require the approval of Parliament.

Nevertheless, they can include substantial state subsidies for both "public interest" and "faith-based" activities. This means that even within a single tier, the state has discretionary power to treat religious communities differently.

According to the newly amended law, Religious Associations may enter into agreements for a term of up to five years; Listed Churches—for up to 10 years, and Registered Churches—for up to 15 years. This leaves the impression that membership in a higher tier entitles a group to longer, better agreements. But the agreements described in the law need not extend the full length of the term; conversely, they can be renewed indefinitely. In practice, the government could make a five-year agreement with a bottom-tier Religious Association that renews indefinitely, while simultaneously making a three-year agreement with a higher-tier Registered Church that will never renew.

Intentional discrimination

The most transparent explanation for the poorly delineated lower tiers, in fact, is that they express an intention to discriminate. The tiers function as a series of hurdles preventing de-registered churches from making a claim on the top status of Recognized Church.

Thus, the newly amended law includes a transitional provision stipulating that the churches de-registered after 2011 shall be classified as Religious Associations, when many of them actually meet the criteria for Listed or Registered Churches. Every de-registered organization seeking to move into a higher tier must apply for admission starting out on this bottom tier. That might not seem overly problematic given that admission into the next two tiers is determined by courts on the basis of objective criteria. However, those "objective criteria" include several unfulfillable conditions that render advancement into the higher tiers impossible.

To become a Listed Church, a faith group must have been operating in Hungary for at least five years or be affiliated with an international religious organization operating for 100 years. In addition, it must have *received church tax from at least 1,000 individuals in the three preceding years.* This latter condition, however, cannot be met by any de-registered church, because all de-registered churches have been prevented from collecting the church tax since 2011.

A similar condition applies to faith groups seeking to become Registered Churches, which need to have *received church tax from at least 4,000 individuals in the previous five years.* In short, to move out of the bottom tier into which they have been placed by de-registration, de-registered churches must meet conditions they cannot meet because they have been de-registered.

If meeting this nonsensical condition should prove too burdensome, the law does provide de-registered churches another avenue for advancing into the middle tiers. If a de-registered church officially declares that it will not accept financial support "from budgetary sub-systems, European Union funds or programs financed on the basis of international agreements, whether in the context of tender or not, for the purposes of its faith-based activities or public interest activities, and special decisions," it need not certify receipt of church tax. In plain English, provided a de-registered church meets the conditions of size and duration of operation, it can move into the higher tiers immediately if only it *abjures every conceivable means of financial support.*

"Lex Iványi"

This combination of conditions is simply too Kafkaesque to be sustained by any authentic legal rationale. The most plausible explanation for the "perplexing condition" is that it was written exclusively with the aim of preventing a particular church from acquiring the status of Registered Church. The Orbán regime is well known for passing legislation directed against specific groups. It passed "Lex CEU," for example, to drive the Central European University out of Hungary, and "Lex NGO" to restrict the activities of non-governmental organizations. In the same way, provisions in the amended law are clearly directed against the church led by Rev. Gábor Iványi, fully meriting the sobriquet "Lex Iványi."

Gábor Iványi established a reputation as a dissident back in the Communist period. Today he is one of Viktor Orbán's most prominent critics. His church, the Hungarian Evangelical Fellowship, actively assists groups marginalized under the Orbán regime, such as through its numerous schools for Roma children and homeless shelters across the country. [For an interview with Rev. Iványi, see the *East-West Church Report*, vol. 26, no. 1, 9-10.]

While European Union and Hungarian flags hang side by side in Sopron, Hungary, the EU and Hungary are increasingly at odds. (G. FAGAN)

The Fellowship is also perhaps the only de-registered church in Hungary capable of meeting the legal conditions required of a Registered Church. It has been operating in Hungary for more than 20 years and demonstrated a membership of 10,000 as recently as 2013. However, since it has been prevented from collecting church tax for more than five years, it cannot certify tax donations. To acquire status as a Registered Church, therefore, the Hungarian Evangelical

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Hungarian Amendments *(continued from page 13)*

Fellowship would need to renounce all financial support. Of course, no human organization–not even a faith group–can comply. A law that demands churches refuse even manna from heaven is blatantly cynical and unjust.

Furthermore, while the transitional provisions impose impossible burdens upon de-registered churches, no transitional provisions whatsoever are imposed upon currently Recognized Churches. They simply retain their current legal status under the amended legislation. This is so even while most Recognized Churches do not appear to meet the new conditions necessary to acquire the legal status of a Registered Church. According to data provided by the state tax authority, only 13 of 32 Recognized Churches received church tax from more than 4,000 people in 2016. (The 13 include the Catholic, Calvinist, Lutheran and several other Protestant Churches, as well as the Society for Krishna Consciousness and several Buddhist organizations. The remaining 19 include the Seventh-day Adventist and Methodist Churches, the Salvation Army, several Orthodox Churches and Muslim communities.)

To sum up, Hungary's newly amended religion law treats religious communities in a completely arbitrary manner by assigning rights and privileges on the basis of state discretion. The transitional provisions reproduce the legal situation created by the 2011 law, and hence repeat–rather than correct—the violations of human rights identified by the European Court of Human Rights. Faith groups de-registered in 2012 will be treated as Religious Associations regardless of their objective characteristics. Faith groups which kept their legal status in 2012 will retain their privileges as Recognized Churches, regardless of their objective characteristics.

Like the 2011 law, the amendments will certainly be challenged in the courts, and one easily imagines they will also be found to violate the right of religious freedom. Much less clear, however, is whether any of this matters. The Orbán regime has been flouting European norms and the rule of law for close to a decade. Those in Hungary bearing the brunt of the regime's oppressive tactics may soon lose their war of attrition. ♦

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Developing Awareness of Another Tradition: An Evangelical Perspective

JAMES J. STAMOOLIS

"All generalizations are false, including this one."[1] Mark Twain's pithy warning also applies to statements about complex theological issues. As well as being an easy temptation, generalization is a common response when encountering adherents of different Christian traditions. Yet the tendency to generalize belief and behavior, typically in a negative manner, obscures the opportunity not only to learn from one another, but also to discover areas of cooperation.

Why is this tendency to generalize so commonplace? I have identified three major factors.

1. Ignorance

We Evangelicals rarely know Orthodox history. A survey of church histories on my bookshelf demonstrates the relative lack of attention to the Eastern Churches. The church history that was the textbook when I was a seminary student at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School near Chicago in the late 1960s barely mentioned the Orthodox Church.[2] That was admittedly a long time ago, and perhaps students today use better textbooks. Yet my survey of a half dozen histories indicates that, while some contain discussions of the Eastern Churches, the coverage is still limited.[3] The different trajectories of East and West mean that most histories only comment on Eastern Christianity whenever it interacted with the West. There might be coverage of the Council of Florence (1438-9), for example, in which the Byzantine Emperor attempted to promote ecclesiastical union between Rome and Constantinople to secure military aid against the Turks.

In defense of lecturers in church history, there is not enough time allotted to the subject in the theological curriculum to allow for more than a cursory examination of all but the main protagonists, especially those who influenced one's own denomination. Evangelical survey courses barely manage to teach about our founders, let alone engage in theological discussion about key figures in other traditions. Historical study consequently loses out to the more practical disciplines that are needed for pastoral formation. There appears to be a similar situation in Orthodox seminaries. For example, while a recent catalog of the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, includes a course on the modern ecumenical movement, its church history course is devoted to the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church.[4] Some Evangelicals also remain ignorant of the themes in Eastern Christian theology. I have seen in print misunderstanding about Orthodox interpretations of sin, justification, and sanctification, including inaccurate suggestions that the Orthodox do not have a doctrine of sin.

2. Insecurity

Essentially, this comes in two forms. One is the insecurity of feeling that if the other person is right, then I must be wrong. This indicates that we are thinking in dualistic terms when we should be thinking in biblical terms, which allow for deeper understanding and nuance. Especially in the West, we tend to latch onto a biblical idea, make it the center of our theology and allow it to drive the rest of our theological understanding. We should rather accept the concept of mystery in order to help moderate our rationalism.

The second type of insecurity stems from a sense of competition between traditions, which is fostered by an aggressive attitude found among both Evangelicals and Orthodox. It is understandable, and even admirable, for us to want individuals to experience the fullness of life in Christ. Yet our fear of losing actual or potential adherents to our own position causes us at times to absolutize our tradition, and to demonize the other tradition.

Albeit founded on limited personal observation, it is my belief that some individuals thrive in one tradition and starve spiritually in the other. In the search for authenticity and meaningful worship, some find that Eastern Orthodoxy meets those needs, while others find what they are looking for in one of the Evangelical traditions. Are we able to accept this, or are we driven to prove, like the Pharisees whom Jesus condemned, that all converts must become like us? (Matt. 23:15)

3. Intransigence

Some of the tension between our respective Christian traditions comes from our unwillingness to consider that the other tradition might have something of value to show us. We often see this intransigence in an "all or nothing" attitude that excludes learning from another tradition.

This does not require interreligious dialogue with non-Christian faiths. What I am advocating here is the willingness to examine the Bible from the different perspectives held by commonly recognized Church Fathers. Chrysostom and Augustine, for instance, were contemporaries in the early Church who found different but complementary insights in Paul's writings. As things stand, Evangelicals have normalized certain hermeneutical traditions and elevated these to doctrine. Our interpretation restricts our ability to see Scripture through a different lens.

Will reading Scripture through an Eastern lens lead to doctrinal confusion? Our human limitations and cultural contexts dictate our theology. We might agree on the basic doctrines of the faith, the Trinity, and the redemption accomplished by Our Lord Jesus Christ, yet part company on ways of worship, church structure, and eschatological understanding.

Yet God accommodates Himself to us. Calvin, speaking about how God dealt with the people of the Old Covenant and how He deals with the New Covenant in Christ, says:

> Thus, God's constancy shines forth in the fact that He taught the same doctrine to all ages, and has continued to require the same worship of His name that He enjoined from the beginning. In the fact that he has changed the outward form and manner, He does not show himself subject to change. Rather, he has accommodated Himself to men's capacity, which is varied and changeable.[5]

In discussing the principles of Patristic exegesis, Fr. John Breck, sometime professor at both St. Vladimir's Orthodox Seminary in New York and St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris, makes a very important point that is all too often forgotten by both Orthodox and Evangelicals. "As a *theandric* or divine-human reality, Scripture contains elements that are historically, culturally and linguistically conditioned. Consequently, it must be reinterpreted in every new generation of the Church's life, under the inspirational guidance of the Holy Spirit."[6]

One example of what Fr. Breck is speaking about might be found in a recent essay by George Demacopoulos in which he suggests updating the language of the Greek liturgy:

> Given the Church's historical practice of employing indigenous languages, given the fact that the majority of young Orthodox in the GOA [Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America] do not know Greek, given that fluent Greek speakers struggle with Liturgical Greek, and given that our young people are leaving the Church in droves, it is time that our hierarchs, priests, and lay leaders take a hard look at the continued relevance of Liturgical Greek.[7]

Symeon the New Theologian is clear about the role of the Holy Spirit in opening up the Scriptures:

> How then will those who claim that they have never known at all the Holy Spirit's presence, radiance, illumination, and His coming to dwell in them have the power to know or perceive or think of them in any way? How shall they apprehend such mysteries, who have never at all experienced in themselves the recasting, renewal, transformation, reshaping, regeneration, that He brings about? ... Those who have not been "Born from above" (Jn. 3:3), how shall they see the glory of those who have been "born from above", ... tell me, what knowledge will enable them to understand or in any way imagine what the others have become?[8]

Are we, in each of our traditions, in danger of quenching the Holy Spirit? (1 Thess. 5:19) The International Standard Version of the Bible translates the verse as "Do not put out the Spirit's fire." This suggests that we are afraid of it.

Each tradition leaves room for the miraculous. While Evangelicals and Orthodox can agree on healing as a sign of God's work, we would disagree over whether this were

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granted via the intercession of a saint. Many Evangelicals find it difficult to accept as miracles phenomena such as weeping icons[9] or the Holy Fire, an annual occurrence many centuries old in which a light descends upon the site of Christ's tomb in Jerusalem on the Holy Saturday before Orthodox Easter.[10]

Could it be that God would use such phenomena to draw the faithful to a deeper understanding of His reality? After all, some of our Evangelical traditions practice prayer for healing and claim supernatural results. Can we be open to understanding that God can choose to act as He wills and to use instruments that might offend or disturb us in order to accomplish His stated purpose, that "God our Savior ... wants all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth"? (I Tim. 2:3) ♦

Notes:

[1] https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/m/marktwain137872.html.

[2] Williston Walker, *A History of the Christian Church*, revised ed. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1959).

[3] The best coverage is found in edited volumes with multiple contributors, such as John McManners, ed., *The Oxford History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993). Even then, only two chapters deal with the Eastern Church, accounting for 68 out of 684 pages. Adrian Hastings, ed., *A World History of Christianity* (London: Cassell, 1999) has two chapters with a total of 90 pages out of 536. David Chidester, ed., *Christianity: A Global History* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2000) has 17 pages out of 704. Tim Dowley, ed., *Introduction to the History of Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995) has 12 pages out of 616. Bruce L. Shelley, *Church History in Plain Language* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1995) has 10 pages out of 495. Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1976) mentions the East in passim. The same can be said for Martin E. Marty, *A Short History of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), where he only mentions the Orthodox Church in the modern period. (But then, it is a short history.)

[4] https://www.hchc.edu/assets/files/Catalogues/SOTCatalog2017.pdf.

[5] Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.2.13 (Ford Lewis Battles translation).

[6] John Breck, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001), 45.

[7] George Demacopoulos, "Is It Time to Relinquish Liturgical Greek?", *Public Orthodoxy*, 12 December 2016, https://publicorthodoxy.org/2016/12/12/relinquishing-liturgical-greek.

[8] C.J. deCatanzaro, trans., *Symeon The New Theologian: The Discourses* (New York: Paulist Press, 1980), 264.

[9] For example, "Virgin Mary Icon In Honolulu Produces Myrrh, Cures Man Of Blindness," *Huffington Post*, 26 November 2013, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/26/virgin-mary-icon-honolulu_n_4346591.html.
As Fr. Paul O'Callaghan explains: "Tears are pivotally associated in the tradition of the Church with the grace of the Holy Spirit. Those who strive for perfect prayer recognize genuine tears of compunction (not emotional tears) as a great gift of the Spirit. In this connection, the weeping icons are a call for all of us to reawaken to the Spirit-filled and grace-bearing nature of the Orthodox Church." http://ww1.antiochian.org/Orthodox_Church_Who_What_Where_Why/Why_Do_Icons_Weep.htm.

[10] Haris Skarlakidis, *Holy Fire: The Miracle of Holy Saturday at the Tomb of Christ, Forty-Five Historical Accounts (9th-16th c.)* (Athens: Elaia Editions, 2011), 11.

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