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## UKRAINE ORTHODOXY AUTOCEPHALY: SOCIAL AND VALUE CHALLENGES

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### Abstract

The article is devoted to the relevant aspects of the canonical autocephalous status acquisition process for Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The resonant events of the last two years are considered when crucial decisions had been made that led to the emergence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine as autocephalous on the basis of the Patriarchal and Synodal *Tomos* granted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and its acting Primate Patriarch Bartholomew. Sociocultural, geopolitical, and moral aspects of the corresponding processes are conceived. The national and cultural role of the functioning of Ukraine Orthodox Church is considered. The authors analyze the current religious and political situation in Ukraine. The results of actual sociological research dedicated to the religious network and confessional identity of modern citizens of Ukraine, their likes and dislikes as for nationwide religious leaders of Orthodox communities are presented. The research also discusses the state of affairs regarding the recognition of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine by the autocephalous Orthodox Churches of the world. Factors that can intensify or slow down the process of its further recognition are analyzed. A number of topical aspects of the relationship between the Church and the state in the course of the acquisition of autocephaly by Ukrainian Orthodoxy are systematized.

**Keywords:** Orthodoxy, Autocephaly, *Tomos*, Orthodox Church of Ukraine, Ecumenical Patriarchate, State and Church relations.

## Introduction

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) was established on December 15, 2018, as a result of the merger of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC KP), the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) and a small part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. On January 6, 2019, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, in accordance with the decision of the Constantinople Patriarchate Synod, granted the Orthodox Church of Ukraine the *Tomos* on autocephaly. The centuries-old history of Ukrainian Orthodoxy has finally led to the realization of this important right.

In this way, not only was a historically important act for church life carried out, but the movement of the Ukrainian Orthodox community also accelerated in its direction, from totalitarian, imperial forms of church life arrangement to the Church open to the challenges of the modern world and sensitive to the problems of its own flock. The decisions accepted in Constantinople during October 2018—January 2019 are important for more than their purely religious, confessional significance. They have a great moral and social effect. Formally and practically for the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate, pro-autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodoxy has ceased to be “non-canonical,” “graceless,” “unsaved.” Such markers (to which many faithful react sensitively) were actively promoted by the present Russian government and its political and church satellites in Ukraine to discredit the pro-Ukrainian church movement.

During almost three decades of independent life in Ukraine, this movement was embodied by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. For a long time, the Russian Orthodox Church, through its subordinate Orthodox structure in Ukraine—the so-called “Ukrainian Orthodox Church” (of the Moscow Patriarchate)—exerted a mental influence on the faithful—its followers. Because of Moscow’s intrigues and a number of factors of historical and geopolitical inertia, the pro-autocephalous structures of Ukrainian Orthodoxy remained unrecognized by world Orthodoxy. And the leaders of the Moscow Patriarchate were interested in preserving this status. Undoubtedly, this was among the interests of the ruling establishment of post-Soviet Russia, invariably configured to look for the various forms of direct or indirect reintegration of the former single cultural and political space existing before 1991.

Such a geopolitical position had to retain major segments of Ukrainian citizens in the orbit of pro-Russian ideological and value influence. Without any doubt the churches are factors not only of a purely sacred influence but also of a social influence. The realization of

Moscow's position was promoted by the anathema proclaimed by the Moscow Patriarchate on UOC KP Primate Filaret Denysenko (1997). This anathema had purely political motives, to pause and slow down the pro-Ukrainian, pro-autocephalous movement among the Orthodox faithful of the country.

One of the negative consequences of the anathema was the strengthening not only of religious but also moral, interpersonal barriers to understanding Ukraine's citizens who belonged to different Orthodox "camps." Of course, Kremlin's ideologists and their "partners" among Russian church functionaries are still interested in conservation of such a value deconsolidation of the Orthodox faithful in Ukraine. We must recognize that social and moral exertion between the Orthodox confessions in the country remains to some extent even after the autocephaly acquisition. By analyzing the outlined events and their contexts, we intend to crystallize markers of cultural-axiological and moral-spiritual significance of Ukraine Orthodoxy autocephaly development.

### **Ukrainian Orthodoxy Autocephaly: Between Moscow "Taboos" and Historical Justice**

In the famous work of the Ukrainian theologian Cyril Hovorun (who also works fruitfully in the academic theological environment of the United States of America) "Scaffolding of the Church. Towards Poststructural Ecclesiology" we read:

Autocephaly in its early supra-community form supported by the Council of Ephesus was a tool for ensuring the independence of the church from the state... In the nineteenth century autocephaly became a sign of cultural and ethnic maturity of the nation. In the twentieth century it became a symbol of the struggle for decolonization, a tool for the deconstruction of imperial projects.<sup>1</sup>

Therefore, granting autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in 2019 has the effect of establishing long-awaited historical justice in this important area of spiritual, cultural and social life, not only in the sense of providing a significant intra-church role, but also in changing its perception in the eyes of cogitative people in Ukraine as well as abroad.

By granting autocephaly, the Ecumenical Patriarchate made a decisive step to end the abnormal state regarding a large part of Ukraine's Orthodox faithful. Referring to historical documents (in particular, the Synodal Letter of 1686), the Center of World Orthodoxy emphasized that the Kyiv Metropolis at the end of the 17th century was transferred to the Moscow Patriarchate not under full authority but only in administration. At the same time, *de jure*, according to the mentioned historical documents, the Kyiv Church remained a part of

<sup>1</sup> Кирило Говорун, *Риштування Церкви. Вбік постструктуральної еклезіології* [Scaffolding of the Church. Towards Poststructural Ecclesiology] (Київ, Дух і літера, 2019), с. 19.

Constantinopolitan Church as it had been since the baptism of Rus-Ukraine. Here we offer a conditional analogy. Imagine there is an owner of a certain remote area and, for various reasons, it is inconvenient to manage it on his own. He concludes a treaty with another person to manage it but under the terms of the treaty, still remains its owner. With a certain degree of relativity, this analogy is illustrative here. Transferred to the Moscow Patriarchate, according to the appropriate documents, the Kyiv Metropolis still had to recognize the Constantinopolitan Patriarch as its First Hierarch (that is, the main church leader) and during the services in all churches in the corresponding territory his name was to be mentioned in this capacity. During the centuries that followed, at the time when management of the Ukrainian church territories was under the Moscow church authority (firmly united with the state), it did not adhere to all the conditions of the corresponding documents. Thus, both their letter and spirit were neglected.

Such a vision of this historical “knot” was publicly confirmed by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, particularly in his speech in July 2018:

Let us not forget that Constantinople never ceded the territory of Ukraine to anyone by means of some ecclesiastical Act, but only granted to the Patriarch of Moscow the right of ordination or transfer of the Metropolitan of Kiev on the condition that the Metropolitan of Kiev should be elected by a Clergy-Laity Congress and commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch. Listen to what is mentioned in this regard in the *Tomos* of autocephaly, which was granted by the Mother Church to the Church of Poland:

“For it is written that the original separation from our Throne of the Metropolis of Kiev and of the two Orthodox Churches of Lithuania and Poland, which depend on it, and their annexation to the Holy Church of Moscow, in no way occurred according to the binding canonical regulations, nor was the agreement respected concerning the full ecclesial independence of the Metropolitan of Kiev, who bears the title of Exarch of the Ecumenical Throne....”<sup>2</sup>

However, even after Ukraine gained state independence in 1991, senior church leadership of Russia did not take any real steps to ensure that Ukrainian Orthodoxy was granted autocephaly. Moreover, it prevented this in various ways, playing in particular on internal Ukrainian social and mental-value contradictions. However, in those countries where Orthodoxy is a historically traditional confession, it is accepted that by the acquisition of the independence of the state the people can determine the acquisition of autocephalous status by

<sup>2</sup> Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: “As the Mother Church, it is Reasonable to Desire the Restoration of Unity for the Divided Ecclesiastical Body in Ukraine,” *Ecumenical Patriarchate* (02.07.2018).<https://www.patriarchate.org/-/oikoumenikos-patriarches-einai-logikon-na-epithymomen-os-meter-ekklisia-ten-apokatastasin-tes-enotetos-tou-en-oukrania-dieremenou-ekklestikou-somat> Accessed September 26, 2020.

Orthodoxy of this country. This is a standard for most traditionally Orthodox countries of the world. But even after Ukraine gained independence, there was resistance to the implementation of this pattern. Both the Moscow Church and Russia's political chiefs understood the beneficial ideological and mental influence by retaining part of Ukrainian Orthodoxy under the omophorion of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The Ukrainian people continued to feel the contradictions of Moscow's influence and pressure throughout the years since gaining state independence. But this pressure became openly negative, explicitly aggressive during the Revolution of Dignity (late 2013 to early 2014), Russia's annexation of the Crimea (2014), and six years of military actions, which involved the occupation of part of the legal territory of East Ukraine by separatist terrorist regimes supported by Moscow. When the whole world saw the dramatic (in particular, military) consequences of Moscow's hybrid influences on Ukraine, the Ecumenical Patriarchate abolished the transfer of the Kyiv Metropolis to the Moscow church central administration. In the autumn of 2018 the Ecumenical Patriarchate restored its direct management in Ukrainian Orthodoxy (historically in the Kyiv Metropolis) and granted it full church independence and autocephaly.<sup>3</sup> In response, the Moscow Patriarchate made a demarche ceasing church and Eucharistic communication with the Ecumenical Patriarchate; it became a step towards the self-isolation of the Moscow Patriarchate from the historic center of the world Orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup>

The *Tomos* of acquisition of autocephaly was preceded by the Unifying Council which had taken place on December 15, 2018, in the St. Sophia Cathedral in Kyiv. Although participants of the event and religious experts reported that there were some internal conflicts and discussions, the Ukrainian hierarchs who took part in the Council (all the bishops of the former Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and two archbishops belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate) managed to restrain certain corporate and personal ambitions so the main agenda of the Council was implemented. In addition to bishops, ordinary priests and laity took part in the Council with the right to vote in the first "round" of the Primate's election (though two more persons were delegated to each bishop). As a result of the Council, such

<sup>3</sup> Communiqué, *Ecumenical Patriarchate* (19.11.2018). <https://www.patriarchate.org/-/communique-19-11-2018>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Заявление Священного Синода РПЦ в связи с посягательством Константинопольского Патриархата на каноническую территорию Русской церкви [Statement of the Holy Synod of the ROC in Connection with the Encroachment of the Constantinople Patriarchate on the Canonical Territory of the Russian Church], *Русская Православная Церковь. Официальный сайт Московского патриархата* (15.10.2018). <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5283708.html>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

structures as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church were abolished. Instead, the only Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) was proclaimed. Ukraine also preserves the already mentioned so-called “Ukrainian Orthodox Church” (UOC) being under the omophorion of the Moscow Patriarch. According to its own Statute, it is part of the Russian Orthodox Church. Declaratively it is self-governing but this status should not be confused with autocephaly. After this historical event, this church community is considered by the Ecumenical Patriarchate only as an aggregate of existing parishes and eparchies of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine. This is reflected in the annual official publication of a register by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of all the Orthodox hierarchs of the world and their jurisdiction submission over certain autocephalous Orthodox centers of the world. This was reported by a number of authoritative religious information services.<sup>5</sup>

From the point of view of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the head of the UOC, Bishop Onuphrius Berezovsky, finally has lost the title of “Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine.” He is now considered to be one of the metropolitans of the Russian Orthodox Church who is positioned in Kyiv. The Ecumenical Patriarch informed him of this in a special letter in October 2018 recognizing his right (as well as the right of all other bishops of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine) to participate in the Unifying Council. But they (except for two bishops, Metropolitans Oleksandr Drabynko and Symeon Shostatsky) disregarded this possibility. There was information that on the eve of the Unifying Council, a number of other bishops of the UOC of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine were ready to take part in it. However, with the exception of those two metropolitans, none of them became members of the Unifying Council. For example, Metropolitan Oleksandr Drabynko made it clear in his media speeches that he knew about pressure on a number of bishops. According to his point of view, this pressure was exerted, in particular, by well-known businessmen who were both pro-Russian politicians and closely connected with the leadership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> “Щорічне видання Вселенського Патріархату не визнає титулів єпископів МП в Україні. Релігія в Україні” [The Annual Publication of the Ecumenical Patriarchate Does Not Recognize the Titles of Bishops of the MP in Ukraine], *Релігія в Україні* (28.01.2020). [https://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian\\_news/45729-shhorichne-vidannya-vselenського-patriarxatu-ne-viznaye-tituliv-yepiskopiv-upc-mp-v-ukrayini.html](https://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news/45729-shhorichne-vidannya-vselenського-patriarxatu-ne-viznaye-tituliv-yepiskopiv-upc-mp-v-ukrayini.html). Accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Про перехід парафій, канонічність та визнання ПЦУ – митрополит Переяслав-Хмельницький та Вишневецький Олександр Драбинко в ексклюзивному інтерв'ю “Прямому” [On the Transfer of Parishes, Canonicity and Recognition of the OCU - Metropolitan Pereyaslav-Khmelnytsky and Vyshnevsky Alexandr Drabynko in an Exclusive Interview with “Priamyi”], *Прямий* (26.01.2019).

Of course, Bishop Onuphrius Berezovsky and his adherents continue to use his former title. But from the Ecumenical Patriarchate's viewpoint of the internal structure of manorial Orthodoxy in Ukraine, this church figure (as well as his potential successors) no longer has a canonical right to this title. According to the internal organizational structure of Orthodoxy, this title rightfully belongs only to the newly elected Primate of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, to Metropolitan Epiphanius Dumenko, who is also given the title of "His Beatitude" which the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognizes only for Primates of independent churches.

On January 6, 2019, in Constantinople, he received from the hands of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew an official document on autocephaly—the Patriarchal and Synodal *Tomos*.<sup>7</sup> But prior to this, on December 16, 2018, the second day after the Unifying Council, an event symbolizing that the autocephaly of Ukrainian Orthodoxy at that time was recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate took place. During the liturgy in Constantinople, together with the names of 14 Primates of the already existing autocephalous Orthodox Churches, the name of the Primate of the 15th Autocephalous Orthodox Church of the world, the newly established Orthodox Church of Ukraine, was also pronounced (commemorated). This reaffirmed once more the recognition by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of its equality with all other autocephalous Orthodox Churches of the world.

Citizens of Ukraine are generally aware of the importance of receiving the *Tomos* on autocephaly not only in religious and spiritual but also in social and even political dimensions. The results of the final annual sociological research of the Razumkov Center (2019) together with the Democratic Initiatives Fund demonstrate that receiving the *Tomos* took the fourth place among the most important political events of 2019. 2.3% of respondents called it the most important political event of 2019, weighing above the presidential and parliamentary elections, the release of captives in the East of the country and the Normandy meeting.<sup>8</sup> And here is another eloquent sociological perspective. According to an all-Ukrainian telephone survey of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology (May 2019),

[https://prm.ua/292367/?fbclid=IwAR0\\_KYyGw6Dab0S0VAmWJ7Pk-JCu7A\\_G00DU-ATPrnX7GooVMxsqitwLYUs](https://prm.ua/292367/?fbclid=IwAR0_KYyGw6Dab0S0VAmWJ7Pk-JCu7A_G00DU-ATPrnX7GooVMxsqitwLYUs). Accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Patriarchal and Synodal Tomos for the Bestowal of the Ecclesiastical Status of Autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine, *Ecumenical Patriarchate* (14.01.19). [https://www.patriarchate.org/announcements/-/asset\\_publisher/MF6geT6kmaDE/content/patriarchikos-kai-synodikos-tomos-choregeseos-autokephalou-ekklesiastikou-kathestotos-eis-ten-en-oukrania-orthodoxon-ekklesian?\\_101\\_INSTANCE\\_MF6geT6kmaDE\\_languageId=en\\_US](https://www.patriarchate.org/announcements/-/asset_publisher/MF6geT6kmaDE/content/patriarchikos-kai-synodikos-tomos-choregeseos-autokephalou-ekklesiastikou-kathestotos-eis-ten-en-oukrania-orthodoxon-ekklesian?_101_INSTANCE_MF6geT6kmaDE_languageId=en_US). Accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> Підсумки-2019: громадська думка (соціологія) [Results-2019: Public Opinion (Sociology)], *Розумков центр* (10.01.2020). <https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/pidsumky2019-gromadska-dumka>. Accessed September 26, 2020. The Normandy format" is the meeting of the leaders of Germany, Ukraine, France, Russia to address the situation in Eastern Ukraine.



54.2% of respondents had positive attitude towards the creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the granting of the *Tomos* on autocephaly. Only 10.9% expressed a clearly negative attitude. In addition, 50.6% considered this event as more likely to unite society, while only 30.5% of respondents saw it as a disintegration factor for Ukraine.<sup>9</sup>

### **Title and Territories: Controversial Interpretations of Some *Tomos* Aspects**

After the Orthodox Church of Ukraine received the *Tomos* on autocephaly, some complained that if the title of the Primate of the new Church was not Patriarch but Metropolitan, it had some “inferior” autocephaly. Such theses were spread mainly by Moscow and pro-Moscow forces in order to discredit the significance of the event that had taken place. One of the typical examples of such publications is the article “And the *Tomos* is False” in the Crimean issue of the newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pravda*.<sup>10</sup> Here, the Russian propagandist tries to ironize that the new Church has become, according to his words, an “ordinary metropolis” not a Patriarchate. There was some anxiety among some Ukrainian faithful loyal to autocephaly when it became clear about the status of the Primate as Metropolitan, not Patriarch.

But statements that this makes autocephaly “false” are either erroneous or manipulative. It is necessary to understand that the main essence of these processes is that autocephaly is granted, and Ukrainian Orthodoxy acquires an independent subjectivity in the family of Churches of the world that it has never had before. And the title of the Primate (whether “the Patriarch,” or “the Archbishop,” or “the Metropolitan”) is a minor aspect. Regardless of title, he is the Primate of the autocephalous, the completely administratively independent Church. Why was the Orthodox Church of Ukraine not immediately granted the status of Patriarchate with autocephaly, and the Primate given the appropriate title? The answer is that the OCU, *de jure*, became the youngest Orthodox Church in the world after being granted autocephaly. Another reason is the fact of continued Orthodox division in Ukraine. That is why the Ecumenical Patriarchate thinks that the Primate of this Church should have the status of Metropolitan for some time. As is known, the word “patriarch” is translated as “father-doyen.” It must take some time to acquire this symbolic status. The

<sup>9</sup> Конфесійна структура населення України і створення Православної Церкви України: травень 2019 [Confessional Structure of the Population of Ukraine and the Creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine: May 2019] (21.05.2019). <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=862&page=1>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>10</sup> “А Томос-то ненастоящий” [And the *Tomos* is False], *Комсомольская правда* (7.12.2020). <https://www.crimea.kp.ru/daily/27065.5/4133663/>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

Ecumenical Patriarchate believes that this time is needed for the new independent church and its hierarchy to gain significant experience of independent church life.

Only a few of the 15 autocephalous Churches of world Orthodoxy have the status of Patriarchates. At the head of a number of other autocephalous Churches, First Hierarchs do not have the title of Patriarchs, but are instead Archbishops or Metropolitans. Those Churches that once received autocephaly from Constantinople, whose Primate now have the title of the Patriarchs, did not immediately acquire the status of Patriarchates with autocephaly but only some years later. This is a normal practice of inter-church relations and the evolution of the internal structure of the national Church. But all autocephalous Churches, regardless of their Primate's title, are still equal and administratively independent. The Ecumenical Patriarchate is traditionally the first in honor among all other Orthodox Churches, having some special symbolic prerogatives as, for example, giving a number of autocephalous Churches a specially prepared holy chrism. The Ecumenical Patriarchate also has the right to accept and consider appeals from priests sentenced to certain penalties by the church court of each autocephalous Church. This is a historical tradition and evidence of the recognition of the primacy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in honor, but it is by no means a symbol of "command" subordination to Constantinople of one or another (including the Ukrainian) autocephalous Church. Even such an ancient autocephalous Church as the Jerusalem Church receives the chrism from the Ecumenical Patriarchate and does not consider it as encroachment on its independence.<sup>11</sup> That is why it is necessary to have adequate immunity against misinformation in the interpretation of these issues regarding the autocephaly of the OCU.

Analogically, regarding the principle established by the *Tomos* of the sojourn, all Ukrainian Orthodox communities abroad are in the jurisdiction not of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine but of the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate. There is no reason for concern and denial of the importance of such a format of autocephaly that is sanctioned by the *Tomos*. In our opinion, the fact that all Ukrainian diaspora Orthodox communities, according to the *Tomos*, will not be under the jurisdiction of the OCU but directly under the Ecumenical Patriarchate does not threaten their Ukrainian cultural and linguistic identity, nor their property rights. After all, the worship language will remain Ukrainian and traditions will be Ukrainian. As for the ownership of church buildings, land, etc., according to the legislation

<sup>11</sup> Constantinople, Jerusalem Strengthen Ties in Response to Moscow Decision, *Orthodoxia Info* (24.10.2018). <https://orthodoxia.info/news/constantinople-jerusalem-strengthen-ties-in-response-to-moscow-decision/>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

of the respective states, this property will be kept by specific communities or those owners from whom they rent it. Therefore, there is no cause for concern: this is only a manifestation of the symbolic spiritual care of the Ecumenical Patriarchate over the Orthodox communities geographically separated from the manorial (internal) Church of their historical Motherland. The status of the Ecumenical Patriarchate confers such symbolic prerogatives. In addition, the Ecumenical Patriarchate emphasizes the advisability of the widest possible participation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and is in communication with the relevant diaspora parishes and eparchies proposing to actively delegate Ukrainian priests to them.

### **The Path of Recognition**

Another very important aspect of this complex problem is the reception of new autocephalous Church of Ukraine by other Orthodox Churches of the world. Such recognition must be evidenced by the co-celebration of services (that is, mutual participation in the liturgy) of priests and hierarchs of other Orthodox Churches with priests and hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and the commemoration of the Primate of this Church by the Primates of other manorial Churches during the worship. On the eve of receiving the *Tomos* of autocephaly, there were sincere expectations that the issue of such reception of the OCU by other Orthodox Churches might be resolved or would be resolved soon enough. Unfortunately, in 2019, after the official statements of a number of Orthodox Churches it became clear that the process of recognizing of the OCU by world Orthodoxy will take a longer than hoped. Thus far, it is recognized by the Constantinople Patriarchate as well as by the Hellenic and Alexandrian Churches. On October 24, 2020, the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, Archbishop Chrysostom II, for the first time mentioned during the liturgy the name of the Primate of the OCU, Metropolitan Epiphanius. And a meeting of the Synod of this Church may take place soon which may confirm this recognition. Quantitatively these are only the first steps towards the recognition by the whole family of the autocephalous Orthodox Churches. However, the fact that both the Constantinopolitan Patriarchate and the Alexandrine Patriarchate, who already recognize the legitimacy of the OCU, are among the oldest Orthodox Churches in the world should not be disregarded. The Hellenic Church is also a prominent representative of the Greek tradition in Orthodoxy and it has both symbolic and factual authority. At the beginning of 2020, Metropolitan Epiphanius expressed the hope that the above-mentioned local Churches in terms of official recognition will be joined by the

Cyprian (which occurred in October), Georgian, Romanian, and Bulgarian Churches as conversations and negotiations considering it are underway.<sup>12</sup>

However, the real conditions that are desirable for recognition (whatever rhetoric they possess) aim the unification into a single church structure of the current Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church canonically subordinate to Moscow. It is obvious that immediately after the acquisition of the *Tomos*, the transfers of parishes from the Moscow Patriarchate to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine were quite intensive, but that the complete unification would be blocked by the current Russian government and its satellites. There is no doubt that the wealthy and powerful Moscow Patriarchate (supported by the Russian state) has various levers of influence on the quantitatively small and financially dependent Orthodox Churches. The delay in recognition by the world Orthodoxy will be used by the Moscow Patriarchate functionaries to manipulate their faithful in Ukraine in order to continue to dispose them against the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Of course, the transfers of parishes from the Moscow Patriarchate to the OCU will continue. This is an unstoppable process, the intensity of which may slow down at certain moments, but it is irreversible. Nevertheless, the most conservative core of the Moscow Patriarchate will retain its positions for some time. These positions will feed into the mental and value convictions of some citizens of Ukraine. Such mental stereotypes encourage a part of the citizenry to consider Moscow's vision especially authoritative for themselves. That is why Orthodoxy in Ukraine will not have unity for some time, as this inertia prevents the recognition of the newly created Church by other Orthodox Churches of the world for a while. Restrainedly optimistic expert predictions (and the tone of statements of some leaders of national Orthodox Churches, in particular, Cyprian and Romanian) still lead to the expectation that, if not all, then some Churches will recognize the OCU in the next few years.

One cannot ignore the events of a certain disturbance in the Orthodox Church of Ukraine related to the fact that the former head of the UOC KP, Filaret Denysenko, made a number of statements and actions with the aim to restore the Kyiv Patriarchate. Such statements reached their culmination in the spring of 2019. After the granting of the *Tomos* and the creation of the OCU, the Kyiv Patriarchate ceased to exist, *de jure* becoming part of it (within the relevant interchurch agreements). Filaret Denysenko only possesses the title of “Honorable Patriarch.” Any actions aiming to restore the UOC KP contradict the principles

<sup>12</sup> “Наступного року визнати ПЦУ можуть ще 4 церкви – Епіфаній” [Next Year 4 More Churches May Recognize the OCU – Eriphanus], *Українська правда* (Січень 7, 2020). <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2020/01/7/7236753/>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

of the *Tomos* on autocephaly and the current Statute of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. However, Ukrainian legislation does not forbid the creation of new church structures with the self-name “patriarchate.” At the time when Filaret made these statements, the situation was complicated by the fact that a lot of Ukrainian faithful associated the movement for autocephaly with Filaret. Despite the awareness of the dangers mentioned above, it was difficult for the new leadership of the OCU to make all parishioners understand the fact of the inexpediency of maintaining the administrative weight in the Church by the former Patriarch Filaret.

In May 2019, it was Patriarch Filaret whom Ukrainians noted as the religious leader with the highest level of support. About 44% of respondents stated their positive attitude towards him, another 35% treated him neutrally and a little over 8% regarded him negatively. The support to Metropolitan Epiphanius is not much less, (42% – positively; 39% – neutrally, and 5% – negatively), and more respondents stated that he would be the best option for Primate of the (35.5%), rather than Filaret (15.5%). In May 2019, the head of the Orthodox Church structure in Ukraine subordinated to the Moscow Patriarchate, Bishop Onuphrius Berezovsky, was positively assessed by only about 19% of respondents, with 40% responding neutrally, and 21% negatively.<sup>13</sup>

The status of Honorable Patriarch granted to Filaret was merited from a moral and reputational point of view and corresponded to his contribution to the creation of an autocephalous church in Ukraine. But, this title was given without also conferring church and legal power. It emphasized the moral and cultural reputation of this honored person only at the internal Ukrainian level because Bishop Filaret was given different real administrative credentials. These credentials were limited to his managing only a separate eparchy (within the city of Kyiv), and then the mission (the details are given below). Therefore, naming the Orthodox Church of Ukraine as “Kyiv Patriarchate” is a personal view of Bishop Filaret and his small following. In fact, there are several eparchies that are positioned as part of the Kyiv Patriarchate. However, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is not going to change any church administrative status established by the *Tomos* and its Statute.

Against a background of the confrontational rhetoric of Filaret Denysenko and his present surroundings, the community of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is united in its

<sup>13</sup> “Конфесійна структура і створення Православної Церкви України: травень 2019”, [Confessional Structure and Creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine], *Київський Міжнародний Інститут Соціології* (Травень 2019). [http://kiis.com.ua/materials/pr/20192205\\_tomos/Tomos\\_may%202019.pdf](http://kiis.com.ua/materials/pr/20192205_tomos/Tomos_may%202019.pdf). Accessed September 26, 2020.

overwhelming majority around Primate Epiphanius Dumenko, who did not yield to Filaret's "revisionist" complaints. However, from communicatory side, this indignation also played a certain destructive role for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. By the decision of its Holy Synod on December 5, 2019, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine decided to create a separate religious organization in its structure in the form of a mission, the care of which was assigned to Filaret Denysenko. By the same decision, Filaret Denysenko is given official guarantees of lifelong financial support and the right to worship in the Volodymyr Cathedral in Kyiv. And the decision of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine on February 4, 2020, stipulates that the Honorable Patriarch Filaret has lost his canonical rights and responsibilities related to the management of the eparchy. This document also states his status as a retired bishop of the OCU. Nowadays it is important that the followers of the OCU have an understanding of the value of unity so the vast majority of the clergy and faithful of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine do not yield to provocations.

The leader of another Orthodox confession in Ukraine, Bishop Onuphrius Berezovsky, did not recognize the newly formed Orthodox Church of Ukraine, and the Holy Synod of the UOC headed by him made appropriate statements sharply criticizing the decision of Constantinople.<sup>14</sup> Both this fact and a number of his other actions detract from his public authority in the eyes of many citizens of Ukraine, with the exception of a certain segment of his ardent adherents. As it is known in the context of Kremlin's military aggression in Ukraine, he regularly participates in church meetings, services, and anniversaries of the Patriarchate in Moscow, and reads official greetings to Moscow Patriarch Kirill on behalf of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. This is despite the fact that Patriarch Kirill fully approves the aggressive actions of the Putin authorities towards Ukraine, in particular the annexation of Crimea, which broke the basic principles of international law.

All this demonstrates that the functionaries of the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine (with its head, Onuphrius Berezovsky), in fact, share Vladimir Putin's views on Ukrainians, Russians, and Belarusians as representatives of "one nation." This cynicism is taking into account the military events of recent years. For example, in his speech in Moscow in February 2020, Onuphrius Berezovsky uttered words that could be interpreted as Russia

<sup>14</sup> Заява Священного Синоду УПЦ щодо ситуації в українському і світовому Православ'ї [Statement of the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on the Situation in Ukrainian and World Orthodoxy], *Українська Православна Церква. Синодальний інформаційно-просвітницький відділ УПЦ* (Квітень 3, 2019) Accessed September 26, 2020. <https://news.church.ua/2019/04/03/zayava-svyashhennogo-sinodu-upcshhodo-situaciji-v-ukrajinskomu-i-svitovomu-pravoslavji/>

and Ukraine (the country of which he is a citizen) are to a large extent “one country.” Addressing the Patriarch of Moscow on behalf of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, he said: “Like Christ, you attract children and young people who are especially in need of spiritual support and moral education. The future not only of our Church, but also our *country* largely depends on how they will grow up.”<sup>15</sup> Symptomatically, the word “country” is used here by Bishop Onuphrius Berezovsky in singular. Of course such rhetoric (and especially the practical position) of Russian Orthodox Church functionaries in Ukraine is clearly criticized by many citizens of our country, especially when the Russian state and church authority neglects the civilizational choice and national identity of the Ukrainians and the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

### **Ukrainian Orthodox Church (of the Moscow Patriarchate) or Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine?**

It is important to emphasize that the formation of a single autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church does not abolish in any way the rights of those communities that wish to remain within the structure of the Moscow Patriarchate. This is their right guaranteed by law. Neither the state nor the Orthodox Church of Ukraine raises the issue that this right needs reviewing. Parishes (which, according to Ukrainian law, are each their own “religious organizations”) must understand that without their wish, determined by the consensus of their community leaders and congregations, no one can change their jurisdiction. Therefore, it is very important that priests and other such figures are aware of their responsibility for the moral climate in the community and provide rational, balanced, and objective information to their followers. Religious figures at both the local and church levels must take special responsibility for interconfessional peace, because it depends upon the ideological and practical vectors of their work and their moral choice.

But if the above-mentioned church structure is a part of the Russian Orthodox Church (it is fixed in relation to the “Ukrainian Orthodox Church” both in the official documents of the Russian Church and in its own Statute),<sup>16</sup> then it is logical that its name corresponds.

<sup>15</sup> “Поздравительный адрес членов Священного Синода Русской Православной Церкви Святейшему Патриарху Кириллу с годовщиной интронизации” [Congratulatory Address of the Members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church to His Holiness Patriarch Kirill on the Anniversary of his Enthronement], *Русская Православная Церковь. Официальный сайт Московского патриархата* (02/01/2020).

[http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5584542.html?fbclid=IwAR0ojCS93I9dAKo\\_JXih2OjSGwM08DaSBvtCbiQ4RbHIVklhdLw7s2IHGIU](http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5584542.html?fbclid=IwAR0ojCS93I9dAKo_JXih2OjSGwM08DaSBvtCbiQ4RbHIVklhdLw7s2IHGIU). Accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> “Статут управління Української Православної Церкви” [Statute of management of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church], Офіційний веб-сайт: Українська Православна Церква.

Based on this reasoning, the *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine made corrections to the legislation (to Article 12 of the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations”), according to which

a religious organization (association), which directly or as part of another religious organization (association) belongs to the structure (is part of) a religious organization (association), the governing center (management) of which is located outside Ukraine in a state that is recognized by law as having committed military aggression against Ukraine and / or temporarily occupied part of the territory of Ukraine, is obliged in its full name indicated in its statute (regulations) to reflect affiliation with a religious organization (association) outside Ukraine, which it belongs to (part of which it is), by obligatory reproduction in its name the full statutory name of such a religious organization (association) with the possible addition of the words “in Ukraine” and/ or labelling its place in the structure of a foreign religious organization.<sup>17</sup>

However, these legislative innovations temporarily were ceased by court decisions, presumably due to lobbies by certain pro-Moscow political forces. The future of these laws will become known soon. This structure has retained the previous name so far: “Ukrainian Orthodox Church.”

### **Political Orthodoxy or Cultural and Social State Responsibility?**

There is abundant criticism regarding the role of state participation (such institutions as the Presidency and the *Verkhovna Rada* of Ukraine) in the spring 2018 appeal to the Ecumenical Patriarchate for granting autocephaly to Ukrainian Orthodoxy. A number of meetings occurred in 2018 and 2019 between the then-President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, and the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. These meetings dealt with the implementation of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s decisions on Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Some accused the President and Patriarch of violating the constitutional separation principle of religious organizations from the state. Such steps were interpreted by some speakers as the transformation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine into a political project, so-called political orthodoxy.

<http://orthodox.org.ua/article/statut-pro-uprav1%D1%96nnya-ukra%D1%97nsko%D1%97-pravoslavno%D1%97-tserkvi-1>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>17</sup> “Закон України “Про свободу совісті та релігійні організації”” [Law of Ukraine "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations"], *Верховна Рада України. Офіційний сайт* (31.01.2019). <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/987-12>. Accessed September 26, 2020.



Political orthodoxy (as analyzed by already mentioned theologian, Cyril Hovorun) is, in fact, a “destructive form of religiosity politicization.”<sup>18</sup> Such a transformation occurred in the Russian Orthodox Church, which has largely become a political secular community that

has lost its true nature because it has ceased to imitate the veritable nature of communion and dialogue, openness and the Eucharist grace. Instead of teaching love and mutuality, equality before God and repentance for depravity, representatives of Russian Orthodox Church popularize intolerance of others, their exclusive righteousness, and the “non-canoncity” of all ideological own opponents.<sup>19</sup>

When the Church or any other form of religious community becomes an ideological weapon, it is necessary to reiterate the danger of religion politicization, its transformation into a secular, or, in the case of Orthodox Churches, politically orthodox, institution: “When a church embrace either civil or political religion, this is a political process. It inevitably alienates the church from its original mission and purpose and makes its Orthodoxy political and unorthodox.”<sup>20</sup>

Such accusations are unfounded in the situation of granting the *Tomos* on autocephaly to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. In this case neither the President nor the *Verkhovna Rada* made certain decisions for the Church and the Church did not make any state decisions. Neither the President nor the Parliament made any decisions on this issue. They only appealed to the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate supporting the aspirations of a large number of pro-autocephalous Orthodox faithful in Ukraine. All the constituent decisions governing church life were made only by church institutions, namely the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the part of the Ukrainian Orthodox episcopate that joined these decisions.

One nuance should be understood: although the Church is separated from the state, objectively it is a part of Ukrainian culture. The actions of the then-President Poroshenko are merely measures aimed at eliminating one of the consequences of the colonial dependence of the Ukrainians and the corresponding state of its culture. The final decision on granting autocephaly depended only on the Ecumenical Patriarchate, not on the state but on the religious structure. In such cases, the Ecumenical Patriarchate traditionally expects appeals from the state and authority of the country regarding the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church that exists in that country. It is better understood not as a political act but as an expectation

<sup>18</sup> Ірина Горохолінська, *Демаркація секулярного/постсекулярного в сучасній релігійності: філософський та богословський дискурс* [Demarcation of the Secular / Postsecular in Modern Religiosity: Philosophical and Theological Discourse], Дисертація на здобуття наукового ступеня доктора філософських наук (Київ, Національний педагогічний університет ім. М.П. Драгоманова, 2019). С. 399.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Cyril Hovorun, *Political Orthodoxies. The Unorthodoxies of the Church Coerced* (Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2018), p. 87.

by the Ecumenical Patriarch of a ceremonial address from the state as a peculiar symbol of the nation unity.

Accordingly, meeting the aspirations of a large number of Ukrainian Orthodox (the faithful of that time of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church), the President and the *Verkhovna Rada* carried out such an appeal in the spring of 2018. They spoke on this issue not so much as delegates of religious organizations but as delegates of one of the quantitatively significant and ideologically influential segments of civil society of Ukraine. If it warrants an appeal of the state authority to a certain world religious center in order to improve the internal situation of any other confession in Ukraine, the state will take such a step. Nowhere in the Constitution of Ukraine is it stated that the state, the President, the Government, the Parliament have no right actively to take care of the Ukrainian national culture and the development of certain of its segments. On the contrary, it is their duty to promote such a development. Therefore, the actions of the President and the Parliament in this aspect can be hardly seen as a violation of the constitutional principles of religious organizations separation from the state. Besides, as has already been emphasized, state structures do not question the corresponding rights of those religious communities (parishes, eparchies) of Orthodoxy, whose most faithful express their intention to remain under the aegis of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The same applies to the meetings of the President of Ukraine and the Ecumenical Patriarch and the signing of documents on cooperation. Dialogue of state and religious structures (Ukrainian or foreign) is not prohibited by any legislative acts. The agreement between the state of Ukraine and the Ecumenical Patriarchate (signed on November 3, 2018, by President Poroshenko and Patriarch Bartholomew)<sup>21</sup> is only an act of communication, neither an act of state interference in church decisions nor an act of Church interference in state decisions. In addition, the state is even obliged to communicate with various structures upon which cultural progress in Ukraine depends. Such communication is an essential element of the state's performance of its functions. The acquisition of unity and independence by one of the important parts of Ukrainian culture—the Ukrainian Orthodoxy—is as much a matter of cultural progress as it is a matter of religion. It is also significant that as a result of the elections in 2019, a new President of Ukraine was elected,

<sup>21</sup> Оприлюднено текст угоди між Україною та Вселенським патріархом [The text of the agreement between Ukraine and the Ecumenical Patriarch has been published], *LB.ua* (12.03.2019). [https://ukr.lb.ua/news/2019/03/12/421722\\_opriyudneno\\_tekst\\_ugodi\\_mizh\\_ukrainoyu.html](https://ukr.lb.ua/news/2019/03/12/421722_opriyudneno_tekst_ugodi_mizh_ukrainoyu.html). Accessed September 26, 2020.

who on many issues opposed Petro Poroshenko. Regardless, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine does not need any artificial state “subsidies” or “patronage” and realizes its own spiritual, moral, and social way quite dynamically.

The most important indicator of the viability of the OCU is its support by the citizens of Ukraine. According to a sociological research conducted by the Razumkov Center in January 2020, the largest part of the representative all-Ukrainian respondents sample, 34%, identifies themselves as belonging to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. Two and a half times fewer respondents (13.8%) declare their membership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (of the Moscow Patriarchate). Interestingly, the answer “I’m just Orthodox, I do not belong to any Church” took the second place on this survey, with 27.6% of respondents.<sup>22</sup> Such a cohort of the faithful still (though not often) visit a certain church building to meet their religious needs. Usually people who hold such beliefs are internally in a state of uncertainty but with a sufficient degree of motivation on the way to arranging of their own religious life. Well-known faith psychology researcher R. Granovskaya writes: “A certain level of uncertainty in a given situation can play a positive role becoming an important factor in the personality integration as a determination and activity stimulus.”<sup>23</sup> In other words, such faithful should be the subject of attention of those religious leaders who care about the consolidation and development of their own Church. Evidence for the succession of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine is found in its activity within the chaplain movement of the Ukrainian religious communities.<sup>24</sup> Finally, the focus of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine on social service is important not only for its everyday worries but also for critical humanitarian and social political crises as an ongoing war in the East and the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Conclusions

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine is currently in the stage of active development. Its condition is peculiar because, being one of the youngest autocephaly in the world, it also represents an ancient Orthodox tradition whose roots go back to the tenth century. That is why its destiny aureole is deeply enmeshed in all those controversial historical, political,

<sup>22</sup> “Конфесійна та церковна належність громадян України (січень 2020 р. соціологія)” [Confessional and Church Affiliation of the Citizens of Ukraine (January 2020 Sociology)], *Разумков центр* (02/02/2020). <https://razumkov.org.ua/napriamky/sotsiologichni-doslidzhennia/konfesiina-ta-tserkovna-nalezhnist-gromadian-ukrainy-sichen-2020r>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

<sup>23</sup> Рада Грановская, *Психология веры* [Psychology of Faith] (Санкт-Петербург: Издательский дом “Речь”, 2004), С. 372.

<sup>24</sup> Nataliia Ishchuk and Oleksandr Sagan, “Development of Chaplaincy in Independent Ukraine: Current State and Trends of Development,” *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, Volume 40, Issue 7 (2020), pp. 69-86. <https://digitalcommons.georgefoxf.edu/ree/vol40/iss7/6/>. Accessed September 26, 2020.

cultural events and processes that accompanied the historical existence of the Ukrainian nation. These roots are both advantage and a challenge for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine was formed as a result of the integration of the jurisdictional territories of several former Orthodox communities of Ukraine. In some regions, there remains a clear or indirect exertion between the ruling bishops, and this does not contribute to the intensity of the communities' transfer of the so-called Ukrainian Orthodox Church (of the Moscow Patriarchate) to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. It also causes certain reputational wastes in the eyes of the faithful (although these wastes cannot be called critical). Of course, structural changes are among the most painful and the most difficult because they are always rooted in someone's ambitions and plans. But the Church needs these changes for its own constructive development.

The next important prospective intention is the development of theological education and science based on the world's best theological schools' models. A number of educational institutions of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine gained state licenses and accreditations for the implementation of educational services. Now there is a gradual exit of scholar-theologians who are the faithful of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine from the local confessional to the national and international level. However, for the effectiveness of theological education and scholarly development, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine needs to elaborate a clear plan and strategy of action that will work for the benefit of both the Church and the scholarly community, which will motivate the spirituality and enlightenment development in synergy. This implies high-quality training of the priesthood which should not just be "ministers of the cult" but must meet the values and needs of modern society. Such tasks include the persistent active presence of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine representatives in the public space, sensitivity, active and empathetic reaction to rapidly changing reality, and the development of social work projects of the Church as an institution trusted by a large part of Ukrainian citizens.

Despite the clear difficulties, there is a reliable platform for the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine to develop qualitatively and simultaneously with meeting the spiritual needs of its faithful to conduct socially and ethically significant activities, optimize educational initiatives, hold openly and friendly dialogue, and cooperate with others confessions and links of civil society. It must also, not in words but in deeds, extirpate from its environment the recurrence of pharisaism inherited from the Moscow Orthodoxy model. If all this is stirred to energetic and sincere activity, success, and moral authority in society will be guaranteed.

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