



Answered Prayers or a Holy War?

What does the future hold for the
Ukrainian Orthodox faithful?

James M. Waite, DMD, Ukraine, October 27, 2018

Nolan Peterson (www.nolanwpeterson.com), War Correspondent for the Heritage Foundation's Daily Signal, in Kyiv, Ukraine. October, 2018 (see bio below).

Largely on account of a discussion with Nolan Peterson, with his incredible knowledge of Ukraine and intellectual insights, I will try to make some sense of the situation in Ukraine regarding the Orthodox church. It is a confusing, complicated topic so please excuse any errors,,,

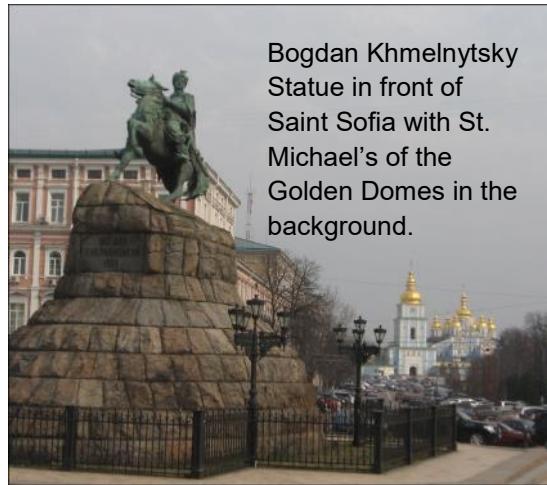
At one time the Christian church was one body with headquarters in Rome and the bishop in Rome was considered Pope. Then in 324 Emperor Constantine established Constantinople which would rival Rome for control of Christendom. The Roman influence waned as the Roman Empire collapsed under pressure from invading northern tribes and the church in the east gained prominence.

In 988, the ruler of the Kyivan Rus, Volodimyr the Great, after visiting Constantinople, marched all the Rus (Ukrainian ancestors) to the Dnipro River in Kyiv where the whole lot was baptized and converted to Christianity, which at that time was all Orthodox. Far to the north, Moscow was not much more than a village.

When in 1054 cracks that had been growing for hundreds of years ruptured and delegates of Rome and Constantinople excommunicated each other in what became known as the Great Schism, the Christian world divided into Orthodox with a Greek liturgy and Roman Catholic with a Latin liturgy. This initial split grew and widened and the Ukrainian Orthodox church aligned under the Constantinople Ecumenical Patriarch who was not regarded supreme as was the Pope, but was First Among Equals.

In 1240 the Mongols invaded Ukraine and attacked Kyiv. Moscow grew and Kyiv languished. Kyiv's influence suffered and when in 1453 Constantinople fell to the Turks, the Orthodox world began to re-align. In 1589 Moscow was granted autocephaly.

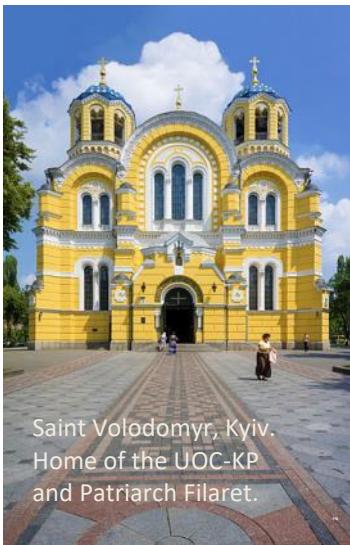
Bogdan Khmelnytsky Statue in front of Saint Sofia with St. Michael's of the Golden Domes in the background.



As political spheres changed, western Ukraine came under the influence and rule of the Polish/ Lithuanian Commonwealth and the east and southeast was the province of loosely organized Cossacks and the Zaporizhian Hetmanate. In 1648 Bogdan Khmelnytsky led an uprising against the Poles (part of the friction was Orthodox vs. Roman Catholic) and declared Ukrainian independence. Later, in 1654 Khmelnytsky approached Moscow about an alliance as protection from the Poles. That became the basis for Moscow asserting dominion over Ukraine politically and later, spiritually when the Kyiv patriarchy was attached to the Moscow patriarchy as a subordinate in 1686.

For many years then the Ukrainian church subsisted as a somewhat autonomous branch under the Moscow Patriarchy which was an autocephalous part of the Ecumenical See of Constantinople. During Soviet times, the Russian Orthodox church, even though severely limited in its activities, was the only recognized church. It was often accused of being an instrument of the State.

In 1965 the Vatican II conference led by Pope Paul nullified the anathemas from the Orthodox church that had been declared in 1054.



In 1991 the Ukrainian Orthodox church declared independence from Moscow as the Ukrainian Autonomous Orthodox Church (UAOC), its third iteration, the first formed in 1921 and the second in 1944, both having been suppressed by the Soviets. Ukraine declared independence in 1992 and in 1993 the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Kyiv Patriarch (UOC-KP) split from the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church (UAOC). Neither Moscow nor Constantinople recognized either church and they were separated from the larger Orthodox world community. In 1995 Patriarch Filaret filled the UOC-KP position of Patriarch of Kyiv and All Rus-Ukraine. He had been a bishop in the Moscow church from 1962 to 1992. In 1997 he was excommunicated from the Moscow church and hence the larger Orthodox community.

In spite of the isolation, the UOC-KP prospered and currently has only half as many parishes but three times the number of parishioners (25% of Ukrainians) compared to the UOC-MP.

Lead by Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine, Marcarius, the UAOC claims 3 million members and is the third largest church.

During the Revolution of Dignity (November 2013 - February 2014) the UOC-KP and UAOC banded together with Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim clerics to encourage and support the peaceful protesters. St. Michael's of the Golden Domes of the UOC-KP, became a sanctuary, a triage center, a medical and humanitarian aid dispensary, and morgue. On one critical night when armed forces were trying to drive the protesters from the Maidan Square, St Michael's rallied the citizenry by ringing all its bells for the first time since the 1240 Mongol invasion.

When the Russians attacked Ukraine and seized Crimea and invaded the eastern provinces of the Donbas in March 2014, the UOC-MP and its leader Patriarch Kirill publically sided with the Russians and blessed tanks and troops headed for Ukraine.

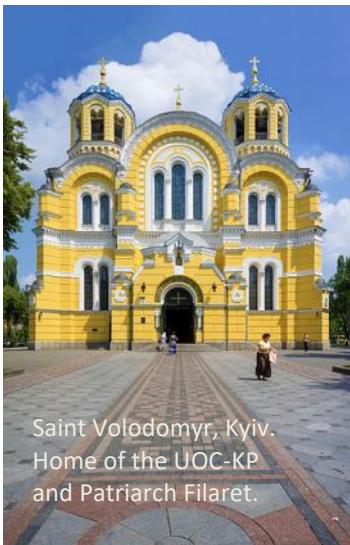
The growing animosity towards Moscow and the need for an independent Ukrainian church lead President Petro Poroshenko and the Ukrainian Rada (parliament) to issue a formal call for recognition and autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox church in April, 2018. Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, Ecumenical Patriarch, First Among Equals, called an Ecumenical Synod which, over strenuous Russian objections, determined that he had the authority to issue a tomos, or decree granting autocephaly.

In September 2018 Bartholomew nullified the anathemas against Filaret and Macarius and restored congregants to full communion with Constantinople. On October 11, 2018 Bartholomew officially renounced and nullified the 1686 decision that had joined Kyiv with Moscow. The stage is now being set for the tomas.

At this time, Filaret and Macarius are organizing an ecumenical conference of bishops and clergy between the UOC-KP, the UAOC, and the UOC-MP (which has refused to participate) to select a Metropolitan to lead the new autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church. They expect to be able to complete the work and receive the tomas by year's end.

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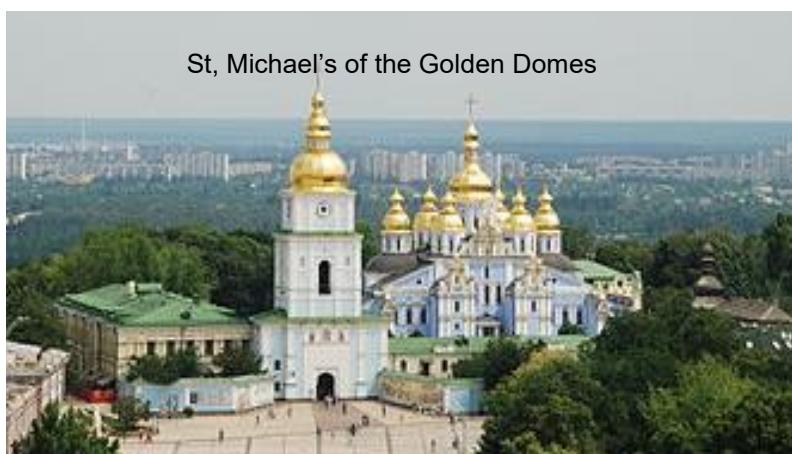


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St. Michael's of the Golden Domes

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Saint Sophia Cathedral, founded 1011 by Volodimir the Great is under government control because of disagreements between the Orthodox factions.



So, what is this all about? Well, the Russians are not happy! They stridently opposed the concept of the tomas in the Ecumenical Synod and were enraged and threatened to leave or boycott the group after their legal claim to jurisdiction over Kyiv was overturned. Currently the Russian Orthodox Church is the largest of the autocephalous churches and also has numerous autonomous churches under its wing such as Kyiv was. Losing Ukraine

would seriously undermine the clout of the Russian Orthodox Church throughout the rest of the Orthodox world. And what if others wanted to try to follow this example? There is also the matter of church property, although Filaret has explicitly stated that church property belongs and stays with the congregations and furthermore that if a congregation splits on the question of allegiance, the minority still has rights to use the local church property. Income? There would have to be some measurable loss of income for the Moscow church but I have not seen that reported.

Perhaps the biggest fear is loss of prestige. Moscow has claimed to be the "third Rome" as in the seat of Christendom, after Rome, itself, and Constantinople. The Russians are suffering from the sanctions placed on them for their voyeurism in Crimea, Ukraine, Syria, Moldova, Georgia, Ingushetia, and anywhere else they think they can get away with causing trouble. The Moscow church and the Kremlin are inextricably linked. UOC-MP Patriarch Kirill has been depicted as living an extravagant life style without care for the increasingly impoverished Russian citizenry. Putin is not near as popular as you may be led to believe - but who is willing to say so? Russia has so many accidents - people get poisoned, fall out of windows, get hit by cars, or just shot on the street....

Saint Andrew's Cathedral was recently transferred from the UOAC to Constantinople as a stauropegian monastery



Russians have always looked down on Ukrainians. Remember their treatment of Bogdan Khmelnitsky? They called them "Little Russians", suppressed their language, collectivized their farms, deported their kulaks, starved anybody who was left, conscripted their men (Ukrainians were 50% of the Soviet casualties in WWII, but "the Russians won the war"), and then just took the Crimea and Donbas.

The one thing that terrifies Putin and his cronies is that Ukraine will succeed. They cannot allow that to happen. How would they explain that the backward, provincial Ukrainians have surpassed their betters? What questions that would raise? And resentment? Such are the things of revolution in Russia. When you have no true elections, what other course is there? Hence the foreign adventures and blaming of the USA, CIA, NATO, OSCE and any other combination of letters that can be imagined to divert the public's attention.



So, what about Ukraine? What will the reaction/action of the Russians entail? They will huff and puff but they have been doing that for months to no result. The biggest question is will they do something to violate Ukrainian sovereignty? They obviously have had no qualms about that in the past. After all it is *the Ukraine*. Might a hybrid sort of action similar to the Donbas occur in the guise of protests, or even riots? What about their “sacred duty” to protect the righteous Russian-Ukrainians from the fascists? That always works! They forget they killed Stepan Bandera in Munich in the 1959 - propaganda dies a slow death. Tanks? Always an option... So who knows? What do they think they can deny and get away with? Who is going to call them out? The West? And upset the Nord Stream 2 deal with the Germans? Or their “help” in Syria? And isn’t the West getting more than a little tired of hearing about the Ukrainians and their problems? After all, they are *sooo* corrupt? And meanwhile the Chinese sit and wait patiently for an opportune time to spread their money, influence, and power to buy a new best friend without the wailing and gnashing of teeth about laws or corruption or any other such trivial notions....

Top: Pechersk Lavra Church and Monastery, home of the UOC -MP, looking towards the Dnipro River

Center: Front entrance to Pechersk Lavra

Bottom: Looking uphill from the river with the Monastery of the Caves in the foreground.



Nolan Peterson, a former U.S. Air Force special operations pilot and a veteran of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, is a conflict journalist and travel writer whose adventures have taken him to all seven continents.

Foreign correspondent for [The Daily Signal](#), he lives in Kyiv, Ukraine, with his wife Lilya.

As a war correspondent, Peterson has reported extensively from the front lines in eastern Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Iraq. In the summer of 2015 he was the first American journalist to embed with Ukraine’s regular army in combat.

In October 2015 he retraced the path of Tibetan refugees on a solo hike across the Himalayas from Nepal to China. He also spent several months on assignment in the Himalayas reporting on Tibetan freedom fighters.

A Florida native, Peterson graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy in 2004 with a bachelor’s degree in political science and a minor in French. He attended graduate school at the Sorbonne in Paris, France from 2004 from 2006, where he studied politics and French literature. After leaving the Air Force in 2011, Peterson completed a master’s degree in journalism from Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism, where he was a McCormick Foundation fellow.

Peterson’s unique life experiences are the bedrock of his unique writing and journalism style. In addition to his time in the military and work as a journalist, he has run a marathon across a glacier in Antarctica, swum across the Hellespont from Europe to Asia, climbed mountains in the Himalayas, and completed Ironman triathlons. He travelled to all seven continents before age 30.