

KYIVAN CHURCH BETWEEN CONSTANTINOPLE AND MOSCOW: A HISTORICAL EXCURSUS

by Oleh Turiy and Anatolii Babynskyi (Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv), July 2017

Since the introduction of Christianity in Rus', the Kyivan Metropolitanate was an integral part of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and covered all the territories that were under the political suzerainty of the Grand Princes of Kyiv. Substantial changes in the ecclesial structure took place with the gradual disintegration of the Kyivan state into separate principalities and with the bitter struggle for the "Kyivan heritage" among the many successors of the Rurik dynasty. In addition, after the Mongol conquest (1240) the rulers of the neighboring states were also involved in this struggle. The first (unsuccessful) attempt to divide the united metropolitanate was made by the Vladimir-Suzdal prince Andriy Bogolyubsky, who wanted to receive from Constantinople a separate metropolitan for his possessions on the northeastern outskirts of Rus'.

The desire for greater political independence of certain principalities and the reluctance of the Polish and Lithuanian rulers, under whose authority the Ukrainian and Belarusian lands fell during the XIVth century, to have citizens of the Eastern tradition dependent on foreign ecclesiastical superiority, led to the transfer of the residence of the Kyivan Metropolitans to the Vladimir-on-Klyazma (1299/1300) and Moscow (1326/1354), as well as to attempts to create a separate Galician (1303-1347; 1370-1401) and Lithuanian-Ruthenian metropolitanate (for the first time in 1299). These, however, proved incapable of prolonged existence.

The final division of the ancient Kyivan Metropolitanate took place after the secular authorities in Moscow refused to recognize the decrees of the Florentine Council in 1439, which had restored the unity of Eastern and Western Christianity, and removed Isidore, who was favorable to the Union, as the Kyivan Metropolitan. In 1448, the Moscow Church unilaterally proclaimed its autocephaly (independence from Constantinople and separation from the see of Kyiv), and in 1589, taking advantage of the decline of Greek Orthodoxy under Turkish rule, gained the status of a patriarchate, which further strengthened the imperial ambitions of the Moscow rulers and their claims for the leading role of the "Third Rome" in universal Christianity. The Kyivan Metropolitanate, however, continued to remain under the canonical superiority of Constantinople, and covered the lands under the authority of the Polish Crown and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and subsequently of the united Commonwealth.

Two events were of crucial importance for the further development of religious life in Ukraine: the Brest Union in 1596, the controversial perception of which led to the confessional division of the Kyivan Church into those united with Rome (Uniate) and those (Orthodox) remaining in subjection to the patriarchs in Constantinople (now Istanbul). The other event was the Cossack rebellion under the leadership of Bohdan Khmelnytsky and the subsequent wars, which eventually ended with a new territorial division of the Ukrainian lands among Poland, Muscovy, and the Ottoman Empire in the second half of the XVIIth century. The religious factor was used during the Treaty of Pereyaslav in 1654 to justify the necessity of the Hetman's passage with the entire Zaporozhian Army «with the land and the cities» under the «high hand of the coreligionist Moscow ruler». Moreover, the tsarist government immediately tried not only to subordinate the Ukrainian lands politically but also to extend their ecclesiastical jurisdiction over them. Notwithstanding all these, the hierarchy and clergy of the Kyivan Metropolitanate were determined to defend their autonomy under the slogan of preserving old rights and privileges.

Thus, Metropolitan Sylvester Kosiv, who presided over the see of Kyiv from 1647 to 1657, did not agree to acknowledge the supremacy of the Patriarch of Moscow and twice refused to swear allegiance to the Tsar. After his death, the bishops elected Dionysius Balaban from Lutsk as Metropolitan. Supporting Hetman Ivan Vyhovsky's actions, Metropolitan Dionysius was forced to leave Kyiv and move to the hetman's capital, Chyhyryn, and eventually was recognized as Metropolitan only for those dioceses which had remained within the Commonwealth. In the territory controlled by Moscow, church life was headed by Bishop Lazar Baranovych of Chernihiv. This happened as a result of a new agreement with Yuri Khmelnytsky, in which it was already clearly stated that the Metropolitan of Kyiv submits to the Patriarchate of Moscow. Basically, Baranovich himself became the locum tenens of the Metropolitan of Kyiv by the direct interference of Prince Trubetskoy, the Russian viceroy in Kyiv, and also traveled to Moscow to approve his appointment. Over three decades, Baranovych became the locum tenens three times: in 1657, from 1659 to 1661, and from 1670 to 1685.

In 1661, the Moscow Church took the first attempt to place its own candidate for the see of Kyiv. The Nizhyn protopresbyter Methodius Fylymonovych was to be consecrated in Moscow as the Bishop of Mstislavl. His appointment was made by the locum tenens of the currently vacant Moscow see, Pitirim. The Patriarch of Constantinople reacted rigorously to these actions, and the local Ukrainian clergy refused to accept him as their archpastor.

The dual power in the Kyivan Metropolitanate was not eliminated even after the death of Metropolitan Dionysius Balaban in 1663. Although that year the local clergy elected Josyf Nelyubovych-Tukalskyi, the loyal colleague of Hetman Petro Doroshenko, who took a firm anti-Moscow stand, in his place, Constantinople recognized him as Metropolitan only in 1668. After his death in 1675, the new head of the Kyivan Metropolitanate was never elected: its right-bank (of the Dnipro river) side, with the support of the Polish authorities, was administered by the Przemyśl Bishop Antony Vynnytsky, and on the left bank the locum tenens was Archbishop Lazar Baranovych, who was sympathetic to Moscow.

In 1683 the newly elected Archimandrite of the Kyivan-Caves Monastery (Lavra), Barlaam (Varlaam) Yasinsky, contrary to tradition, received confirmation of his authority from the Moscow Patriarch. A year later, in 1684, a candidate for the Metropolitan throne was found: the former bishop of Lutsk and Ostroh Gideon Svyatopolk-Chetvertynsky, who satisfied both Moscow and the new Hetman Ivan Samoilovych. This fugitive from the territory under the control of the Polish Crown was a good symbol for opposing those united with Rome, such as the Kyivan Uniate Metropolitanate, and the pro-Catholic bishop of Lviv Joseph Shumlyansky, and he was also prepared to break with Constantinople. Officially, Gideon became Metropolitan in 1685. Very quickly, the local clergy understood that the Council which had taken place in Kyiv on July 8, 1685, had not only elected a new Metropolitan. Since the choice was confirmed by the Patriarch of Moscow Joachim, it became clear that there had also occurred a change of jurisdiction. The clergy of the Metropolitanate generally did not want to be subordinated to Moscow; however, their dissatisfaction and protests did not yield any practical result. The newly elected Metropolitan Gideon, for the first time in the history of the Kyivan see, departed for Moscow, where on November 8, 1685, he officially recognized the supremacy of the Moscow Patriarch. In 1688, the title of «Metropolitans of Kyiv, Halych and all Rus'» was changed to "Metropolitan of Kyiv, Halych and all of Little Russia» and from 1767 his title was further narrowed down to «Metropolitan of Kyiv and Halych»

With Constantinople, the case was settled in May 1686. The Tsar's diplomats, having obtained the consent of the Sultan's court for a bribe of 200 gold coins and 120 sable skins, procured

the consent of the Constantinople Patriarch Dionysius for the transfer of the Kyivan Metropolitanate to the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow. For this action, the Patriarch was soon condemned and removed from the throne, and subsequently, the legitimacy of this transfer was repeatedly questioned by his successors. A particularly striking example was the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church in Poland by Patriarch Gregory VII in 1924. His Charter on autocephaly contains ambiguous assertions regarding the jurisdiction of the Constantinopolitan throne over the Metropolitanate of Kyiv: *"It is written that the previous separation from our throne of the Kyivan Metropolitanate and its dependent Orthodox Churches of Lithuania and Poland and their accession to the Holy Church of Moscow was committed not in agreement with legalized canonical decrees, and did not comply with the agreement of the full ecclesiastical autonomy of the Kyiv Metropolitan, who holds the title of Exarch of the Ecumenical see."*

In the first decades after the re-subordination of the Kyivan Metropolitanate to the Moscow Patriarchate, its leaders were pupils of the local cultural and scholarly center - the Mohyla Collegium. Moreover, its graduates largely affected the development of culture and scholarship on the territory of the Moscow tsardom: a large number of alumni of the Kyivan theological school occupied high positions and episcopal chairs in Russia. However, from the beginning of the XIXth century, the Kyivan Metropolitanate was headed only by ethnic Russians. The Metropolitanate itself was reduced to an ordinary diocese of the Moscow Patriarchate, that is, it lost all signs of the autonomy that it had had within the Constantinople Patriarchate. In addition, not only church-administrative autonomy, but also cultural-theological identity was lost. The original architecture and other examples of Church art of the Kyivan Metropolitanate were ousted by the traditions of the Synodal Russian Church. The philosophical and theological Kyivan tradition, born of a synthesis of the best achievements of the theological thought of the Byzantine world and western Latin culture, was replaced by Russian theological discourse, which in the nineteenth century assumed an extremely anti-Western and anti-Catholic character.