

‘Traditional’ Churches In Independent Ukraine

In Search of Common Identity

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It is general knowledge that the year 1989 marked a significant change in the public life of Eastern European countries. Ukraine was no exception. After the celebrations of the millennium of Baptism of Kyivan Rus’ (1988) one can even speak of a resurrection (Keleher 1993; 1997, Gudziak 1997, p. 49–72) of political, and particularly religious life in Ukraine, which ultimately lead to the proclamation of its independence on 24 August 1991 and disintegration of Soviet Union.

When we compare statistics they speak for themselves. In 1985 there were 16 religious confessions registered in the Ukrainian SSR, whereas in 2011 the number had risen to 120. In 1985, on the other hand, 6.2 thousand religious communities were officially recorded in Ukraine, whereas in 2011 they were 34.5 thousand, tendency increasing (*Tserkva i suspil'stvo 2000–2001*, p. 207)¹. Objectively one has to admit that with such increase, there were tensions and conflict situations within these communities. This fact has been widely noted, especially among the Western mass media, frequently exaggerated and overestimated on all sides. Furthermore, there were and are tendencies to overemphasize these facts and politicize them.

Today, however, after more than twenty years, we dare to express the opinion that basically it was, and still is the search towards self identification, or rather identity, of each religious community. This issue is particularly present within the so called ‘traditional’ Churches of Ukraine of different jurisdictions, basically the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP), Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC –KP), Ukrainian Autocephalous Or-

1. The newest statistics which I here present are given according to the data published by the US State Department of national and religious affairs as of 1 January 2012.

thodox Church (UAOC), Ukrainian Greek–Catholic Church (UGCC).

There are sufficient reasons for such a state of affairs in the search of these Churches towards their self identity. Ukraine's tumultuous and difficult history connected with foreign occupation, persecutions and hardships, lack of an independent state, the absence of religious freedom and respect for basic human rights, the tragedies of the 20th century, such as the *Holodomor* and the two world wars, centralisation of the economic and political life, the *de facto* non–existence of communication and information on such major events as the Second Vatican Council, ecumenical movement, the creation of the Common Market and later European Union, created a new difficult and challenging situation.

The entire Soviet Union lived in a isolated world where only Soviet values, understanding, *Weltanschauung* were allowed and known. Furthermore, religion and its values were considered outdated, relics of the past, incongruous in what was perceived as a progressive, democratic, ideal Soviet society.

Such lack of self identity was particularly present within the Orthodox communities of Ukraine during which time each of the three denominations tried to search and find their roots in the quest towards their place in the new realities of independent Ukraine. Historical continuation was an important concern.

1. Ukrainian Orthodox Church — Moscow Patriarchate (UOC–MP)

For the sake of accuracy and correctness one should say that this Church does not like it when the adjunctive *Moscow Patriarchate* is supplied to its main title. It would prefer to be called just *Ukrainian Orthodox Church*. Nevertheless I feel compelled to add the *Moscow Patriarchate* description for the simple fact that today there are at least three orthodox Churches active in today's Ukraine: the one which depends on the Moscow Patriarchate, the Kyivan Patriarchate, created in 1992 and still not recognized by world orthodoxy, and the autocephalous Church, which has about 600,000 faithful.

This being the state of affairs, we cannot assign the exclusivity of an Orthodox Church of Ukraine to any one of them. Therefore one is compelled to add the adjective *Moscow Patriarchate* to the Church

we are now presenting.

It is precisely this adjunctive which characterizes this Church, namely its dependence on Moscow. It is the Church which until 1990 was the Ukrainian Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) headed by Metropolitan Filaret Denysenko, who after 1992 was denigrated and stripped by Moscow of all his titles and dignities. This Church was the heir of the ROC which co-liquidated the Greek-Catholic Church in 1946–1948 in Western and Carpatho-Ukraine together with Stalin's regime. This Church, in the eyes of the faithful, cooperated hand in hand with the former Soviet regime, the KGB, and happily took over all the Greek-Catholic churches of those regions with the full approval of the atheist communist regime of the Ukrainian SSR.

Today the Moscow Patriarchate, when confronted with this fact, claims that in the Stalinist years, they at least saved Christianity in those areas, and thus maintained the Christian faith amongst the faithful. Such a statement is a distortion of historical facts. History proves that the ROC was happy that finally the Catholic Church was prohibited in those areas and that the ROC took over whatever she could. It was only after Stalin's death in 1953, and under Khrushchev, that the ROC was curtailed in her intentions, and a high number of her church buildings were destroyed.

Suffice to read the *Acts of the Synod of L'viv (Diannia Soboru 1946)* or watch the documentary film on this pseudo-synod of 8–11 March 1946 to see with what exaltation did the ROC "accept the Greek-Catholic faithful in the womb of the ROC." I frequently mention this to my Russian orthodox colleagues when we discuss this matter, and when they repeat their accusations of the Catholic Church proselytizing in present Ukraine and in the former USSR. After reading these *Acts*, and especially watching the documentary film, of this pseudo-synod, one sees that the behavior of the representatives of the ROC on that occasion was proselytism *par excellence*.

The majority of bishops and clergy of the ROC did not enjoy moral authority among the people. They were looked upon as on those who collaborated "with the enemies of God."

History is *magistra vitae*, a teacher of life, and people of today, whose grandparents or parents were persecuted from 1946 until 1989, do not easily forget the injustices of the past. The ROC in the years

1946–1989 simply did not want to believe that the UGCC existed in the underground. In fact today’s historians state that the 43 years of the catacomb and illegal life of the UGCC in the USSR was the longest period of underground existence of the Church since the early ages of Christianity.

The changes that came with the Gorbachev era with its *glasnost* and *perestroika* was seen by these faithful that “justice won over injustice, and truth finally reigns again.” Suddenly, in 1989, it was a shame to be a member of the Russian Orthodox Church in Western. And after Gorbachev’s first historic audience with Pope John–Paul II on 1 December 1989, when it became a known fact that communities and faithful could register and get legalised as Greek–Catholics, the return to the “Church of their fathers” became a massive phenomenon throughout the following three years.

Beyond doubt, this was a shock both for the KGB and the ROC. Furthermore, Rev. Volodymyr Yarema gave revival to the UAOC in August 1989, thus dividing the unity of orthodoxy in Ukraine. Even today Greek–Catholics consider this rebirth as a provocation thought out by the KGB in order to break the monolith of the UGCC in Western Ukraine. Some priests of the ROC turned to the newly reborn UAOC, but the absolute majority of faithful and priests returned to the UGCC.

Events were proceeding with rapid speed. Archbishop Volodymyr Sterniuk, as the *locum tenens* of the UGCC, took over his residence in St. George’s Palace in L’viv. The cathedral itself was given back to the Greek–Catholics. Furthermore, Sterniuk and the civil authorities of L’viv officially invited the Head of the UGCC, Patriarch Myroslav–Ivan Cardinal Lubachivsky, to his See in L’viv, something that happened on 30 March 1991. And the faithful of the UAOC, although having their own bishop in the former hierarch of the ROC, Ivan Bodnarchuk, were witnessing the gradual home–coming of Mstyslav Skrypnyk from the USA, proclaimed patriarch in Kyiv in June 1990.

All this came as a massive surprise, I would say, shock to the ROC. Even today this Church cannot cope with these facts. What was the State Church a few months ago, suddenly became the Church of a tiny minority in Western Ukraine. Moreover, even those who stayed orthodox broke their allegiance to Moscow and wanted full autocephaly and independence, i.e. to have nothing to do with Moscow.

Further, even the Head of the UOC–MP now broke his loyalty to his former masters and demanded autocephaly to his entire flock and gave birth to the UOC–KP.

Yes, there were abuses or violent acts in those days, but not to the dramatic extent as it was presented, and even today is still repeated, to the completely uninformed, and sometimes desinterested, Western mass media.

Despite everything, the UGCC began to restore normal life, reconstruct its infrastructures, found its seminaries and the L'viv Theological Academy, which later was renamed as the Ukrainian Catholic University.

The UOC–MP had to react in an unprecedented manner, and it sacked and defamed Metropolitan Filaret, appointed a new protohierarch in the person of Metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan, and officially assumed a firm anti–catholic position.

The UOC–MP was caught by surprise. It was looked upon by many Ukrainians as a Church of former occupants, collaborators, a Church of foreigners, even if they were orthodox.

Obviously the situation was different in Eastern Ukraine, and it was there that this Church gathered its forces primarily within the large Russian minority or the completely russified areas of that part of Ukraine.

It was a time of long healing until everything calmed down. Today this Church is still the largest Christian denomination of Ukraine, but precisely in the last few years a clear split, although permanently denied, is present amongst its pro–Ukrainian and pro–Russian party. Whereas the latter group see their future as a fully integral part of the ROC, rejecting changes whatsoever, the former group is considering always more independence by stressing the fact that, after all, it is an *Ukrainian*, and not a *Russian* Church. This younger generation of the hierarchy and clergy of the UOC–MP is trying to follow this principle in a peaceful manner. The Russian party, on the other hand, especially in the most recent past, since Victor Yanukovych became president of Ukraine and clearly supports only the UOC–MP, is becoming always more aggressive to the extent of trying to overthrow the Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine, Volodymyr Sabodan.

The newly appointed Patriarch of Moscow Kiril Gundaiev is showing particular interest in Ukraine. He visits the country several times

a year. He preaches the *Russkij mir* — *the Russian world*, the fact that Ukraine is an integral part of the canonical territory of the ROC, and emphasizes the unity of the three Rus' — Russia, Belarus' and Ukraine. Documentaries are shown on TV on how Patriarch Kyril advises or coordinates his activities concerning Ukraine with presidents Medvediev or Putin.

We are living in interesting and challenging times when the Church, which wanted to present itself as the victim of Catholic and foreign aggression, is now once again becoming a new aggressor, claiming its rights which were hers until 1989.

2. Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC)

On 19th August 1989 the UAOC was reborn in L'viv thanks to Reverend Volodymyr Yarema (former Greek-Catholic, later priest of the ROC and later Patriarch Dymytriy of the UAOC). Mind you, we emphasize, that it all happened in L'viv, a traditionally non-orthodox location. Further, this reborn Church initially spreads exclusively in Western Ukraine, which before 1945 was predominantly, if not exclusively, Greek-Catholic.

This Church suddenly became strongly anti-Muscovite, but inevitably collided with the also reborn UGCC, which was leaving the underground after 43 years of illegality and persecutions and whose growth acquired much larger dimensions. Moreover, the Greek-Catholics, not without foundation, saw in this rebirth of this Church a provocation of the KGB in order to break the religious monolith of Western Ukraine. The KGB, in this case and time, was not even afraid of a division within Ukrainian orthodoxy and UAOC's anti-Russian stand. In Western Ukraine of 1989/91 it became trendy to be anti-Moscow and very Ukrainian. All the hierarchs of the ROC, which now became UOC-MP, were looked upon as former collaborators of the dying communist regime, the KGB and the entire Soviet infrastructures. This Church willingly preached its complete independence of all the main centers, be it Rome, Constantinople or Moscow. The magic expressions were "The Cosack Church", "independent Church in an independent Ukraine". What independence meant for a State, autocephaly was for an Eastern orthodox Church. Quite a pop-

ulist approach was easily applied when stating that the UOC–MP is directed from Moscow, Greek–Catholics are dependent on Rome, and the Roman Catholics are basically of Polish background and culture. Consequently, according to such logic, a true Ukrainian believer can only be of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church. Henceforth, very soon the prefix *anti* had to be attached. Therefore this Church of true and fully fledged Ukrainians had to be *anti-polish*, *anti-russian*, *anti-roman*, *anti-muscovite* etc. Constantinople in those days seemed far remote which would only accept such a view...

In order to have a historical background, continued references to the UAOC of 1918–33 were made, as to its second phase of legal existence in 1941–1944.

The newly elected Patriarch, Mstyslav Skrypnyk, coming back to Ukraine after almost half a century, clearly stood behind this Church. Thanks to his background, authority and age he was accepted with due respect also by the leading political figures of Ukraine in the 1990s. A certain *modus vivendi* was starting to be established between this Church and the president and government of the newly proclaimed Ukrainian state.

After the death of Patriarch Mstyslav Skrypnyk in 1993, Father Volodymyr Yarema was elected his successor, and became Patriarch Dymytriy. After his demise in 2000 no further patriarch was appointed or elected. Nevertheless, this Church is active in the Western regions of Ukraine with some presence in Kyiv, Kharkiv and other areas of Eastern Ukraine.

The lack of leading figures, particularly bishops and well formed priests, various divisions and internal strifes, the absence of the elderly patriarch from Ukraine and his death, weakened the influence of UAOC to the present day. Patriarch Dymytriy's last years in Kyiv were a sad epilogue of his tumultuous life. Nevertheless, the UAOC exists and has some valuable followers amongst its faithful.

This Church has, regretfully, never been recognized by world orthodoxy, and thus is still considered non-canonical.

3. Ukrainian Orthodox Church — Kyivan Patriarchate (UOC–KP)

After the proclamation of Ukraine's independence Metropolitan Filaret Denysenko, then protohierarch of UOC–MP, failing to become Patriarch of Moscow in 1990, adopted the orthodox ecclesiology of a free Church in a free State. With the support of the President of Ukraine, Leonid Kravchuk, already in November 1991, with the bishops of UOC–MP, he formally requested from the Moscow Patriarchate full recognition of its autocephaly. He should have made such a request primarily to Constantinople, not only because of canonical reasons, but because Moscow treated such a demand as the beginning of a schism. The following months were full of various vicissitudes that finished with the Kharkiv Sobor of May 1992, during which Metropolitan Filaret was succeeded by Metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan as Metropolitan of Kyiv and all Ukraine. The majority of Filaret's Synod of Bishops did not support him, and the minority that did gave birth to the UOC–KP and recognized Mstyslav Skrypnyk as their Patriarch. After Skrypnyk's death in 1993, Metropolitan Volodymyr Romaniuk (+1995) was elected next patriarch, although the policy maker remained Filaret. In 1995, despite great opposition from Moscow, Filaret was made patriarch and heads this Church to this day.

UOC–KP has acquired an important place within Ukraine. It is predominantly present in the Western and Central part of the country, although its presence in the Eastern regions is not to be underestimated, considering the fact that it is permanently harassed by the UOC–MP. Patriarch Filaret claims that it even has more followers than the latter.

One fact is beyond doubt. Even today, when President Victor Yanukovich clearly supports and exclusively holds up to the UOC–MP, this Church plays an important role in today's society of Ukraine. It should not be forgotten that it enjoyed the support of the previous presidents and governments, and therefore cannot be discarded by today's authorities simply as that. It clearly declares complete independence of the Church from any ecclesial center (Rome, Constantinople, Moscow), it acts as a fully fledged autocephalous Church, it emphasizes that it is *the* orthodox Church of Ukraine. Recently this Church has added to the ranks of its hierarchy personalities of some importance.

UOC–KP, however, still has significant challenges, which it cannot disregard. Besides its uncanonical status within world orthodoxy, there is a constant preoccupation as to who will head this Church once Patriarch Filaret dies. Does this Church have another charismatic personality who could succeed Filaret and continue his legacy with dignity? Or, is there a group of people within this Church that would take upon themselves such a task under the leadership of a less stronger man? What does (*once particular [pomisna] orthodox Church in Ukraine*), so frequently pronounced by Filaret and many politicians, really mean? What are, or will be, the ecumenical endeavors of this Church? Is it considering a future communion of Churches of the Kyivan Church under the leadership of one Patriarch of Kyiv–Halych and entire Rus’–Ukraine with other *Pomisni* Eastern Churches and particularly with the Bishop and Church of Rome?

One must say that Filaret in the recent years has been moving in this direction, but how high is his credibility, especially in view of the fact that many faithful of the previous generation cannot forget his, and a number of his senior hierarchs’, tight collaboration with the Soviet State and the Patriarchate of Moscow?

Is this Church a truly Kyivan Church, or rather a copy of the ROC which only prays in Ukrainian? We say this, because not just the external presentation, but even all the ritual ceremonies of this Church are identical to the Russian, synodal, rite with the only difference that it uses the modern Ukrainian language. Why has not this Church tried in the last twenty years to find at least some elements of the pristine Kyivan liturgical and canonical traditions of the metropolia of Kyiv prior to the 15th century?

Whereas the non–canonical status is still its main obstacle towards full recognition. The above mentioned queries should be challenged in the nearest future, which, according to our view, is quite feasible, if a clear vision and plan is set.

Two common tasks, however, should certainly be fulfilled by both, UAOC and UOC–KP, in order to acquire high moral authority in Ukraine. They should found centers (universities, academies, seminaries etc.) of higher spiritual and theological formation for priests and laity. This is a serious handicap of these Churches today. They cannot afford mediocre and incompetent people in their ranks of their clergy and leadership.

Further, both Churches — UAOC and UOC — hardly have monastic vocations or any monasteries, male or female, whatsoever. This is unthinkable in an orthodox Church. Precisely monks and nuns are the true catalysts of spiritual life in the East. Monks are predominantly the spiritual fathers and leaders of the faithful and people. Monasteries are the oasis and refuge of developing and growing spirituality and holiness. Higher education in the past was primarily fostered in the monasteries and their schools. Future bishops are elected, in some cases exclusively, from the ranks of monks. To a certain extent one may state that any authentic Church (Eastern or Western), is unimaginable without monks, nuns, monasteries and convents. Ukrainians were and are very fond of their monastics, and frequently one hears that when a Church has saintly monks, then it is not only strong, but indeed holy.

The absence of religious–monastic life and people is a very serious handicap within these Churches. The leaders of UAOC and UOC–KP must give highest priority in challenging this question if these two institutions are to exist, moreover, grow and develop, in Ukraine.

Once high education will become their priority and centers of higher spiritual and theological formations, including monasteries which practice daily monastic and ascetical life, with sound vocations, will be established, within a decade the society of Ukraine will see the difference and follow them wholeheartedly.

4. The Role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate

Beyond doubt the UAOC and UOC–KP relied and still rely greatly on the authority of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This is logical, because all orthodox Churches accept the fact that the See of Constantinople is the first, and its Patriarch is the *primus inter pares* among other patriarchs. Whereas there still are discussions within orthodox theologians (especially of the ROC) what a *protos* — *the first one* really means in orthodox ecclesiology, the fact that Constantinople is the *prima sedes* remains beyond doubt.

The challenge, which has been growing since the fall of Constantinople in 1453 and once Moscow became a patriarchal see in 1589, is that the number of faithful and external influence of Constantinople

has gone through a considerable decline, whereas the See of Moscow, notwithstanding the vacancy of its patriarchate in the years 1721–1918 and initial communist persecution after 1918, has grown in quality and quantity.

How many times do we hear from Russian orthodox representatives: We are the largest Church, we have the far greatest number of faithful among all orthodox Churches, therefore without the Russian consent no major issues can be endorsed by world orthodoxy.

My experience as member of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church is that the Russian representatives are masters, if not champions, of power politics, or play. They simply state: It's either our position and understanding, or the matter cannot be further discussed. Obviously, such ultimative declarations can hardly contribute towards a fruitful theological or ecumenical dialogue... In Belgrade, Ravenna, Paphos and even Vienna, where the orthodox and catholic members did everything they could to appease and please the orthodox, such remarks were loudly pronounced by our Moscow colleagues. Indeed it is a deep frustration when in a theological dialogue between catholics and orthodox one has to witness that more time is spent on finding a way out (which is a compromise or political, and in no way a theological, solution) among the quarrels and queries between the orthodox, than trying to find the proper and right theological and ecclesiological answers to the issues that have separated us in the last millennium...

Having said that, we emphasize that *de facto* the ROC denies that Constantinople is the *prima sedes* and that the Ecumenical Patriarch is the *protos* and *first among equals* within the orthodox patriarchs. Furthermore, the ROC, especially after the desintegration of the Soviet Union, continuously stresses its understanding of the canonical territory of the ROC, which coincides not just within the realm of the late czarist empire, but with the boundaries of the former USSR. Theologically this is nonsense, and the catholic side will never and cannot accept this principle, because it is ecclesologically incorrect. By the way, the catholic side has made this quite clear to the orthodox partners in different ways and occasions. For the sake of continuing the dialogue, however, the Catholic members refrain from declarations that could threaten or disrupt the dialogue, something the ROC

clearly and frequently practices.

Anyhow, the UAOC and UOC–KP strongly relied on Constantinople, but the result has been of continuous frustration because of the ambivalence, and we dare to state, because of lack of fortitude from Constantinople’s side. Without entering into too many details, Constantinople is playing into and caving in front of the power play of Moscow. Constantinople does not have the will and strength or prefers to avoid a strong stance towards Moscow, something that would only strengthen its position within world orthodoxy once at least twenty million Ukrainian orthodox faithful would be granted canonical status.

Other orthodox Churches prefer to stay neutral, and Rome tolerates the *status quo* for the sake of peace and continuation of dialogue. According to my observations, I dare to state that, despite public declarations, the three greater centers, Rome, Constantinople and Moscow — do not cherish too much love among themselves, but once the balance of power between the three centers starts shaking, they prefer to find a silent understanding among themselves without changing anything. An approach that can hardly be regarded as evangelical or even theological.

Precisely such politisation of the ecumenical and theological dialogue paralises the authentic re–approchement, reconciliation and the bringing back together of the orthodox and catholic Churches. Instead of trying to find solutions to the difficult questions, that still separate us, in the spirit of fulfilling Christ’s will “That all may be one” (*Jn 17,21*), the big centers play politics and thus kill the dialogue of love in its roots.

The Ecumenical Patriarch, in my view, should use its right as *protos*. It would be worthwhile reminding the ancient principle *utere jure tuo* (*use your own right*) and continue to insist that, as stated in orthodox Canon Law, only and exclusively Constantinople can grant autocephaly in accordance with other autocephalous Churches, and simply recognize autocephaly to Ukrainian orthodoxy.

Moscow, on the other hand, should bear in mind the fact that a very large number of Ukrainian orthodox faithful do not identify themselves with Russian orthodoxy and do not want to have anything to do with the Russian Orthodox Church and the Moscow Patriarchate. As of today they want to be seen in a canonical, fully autocephalous,

orthodox Church with a patriarch of Kyiv as its head. Once autocephaly would be granted to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, I am of the opinion that, in due time, the present poignant status of three Ukrainian orthodox Churches would gradually disappear, and there would truly be a strong united orthodox Church of Ukraine.

This, however, for Moscow, both politically and ecclesiastically, is completely unthinkable and intolerable, and Constantinople by its idleness, and Rome for reasons of opportunism, simply just comply with today's *status quo* and, by doing so, once again delay the issue *ad kalendas graecas...* Indeed, history is the teacher of life...

5. Ukrainian Greek–Catholic Church (UGCC)

Much has already been said about this Church, and it is not the intention of this paper to enter into its recent persecutions and history.

I dare to claim that within the last twenty years this Church, despite its many problems, has established itself as one of the highest moral authorities in present day Ukraine.

Patriarch Myroslav–Ivan Cardinal Lubachivsky (†2000) who returned to his See in 1991 was a man of profound prayer and humility, who accepted the leadership of a Church that was headed before him by two great personalities of the 20th century, such as Metropolitan Andrej Sheptytsky (†1944) and Patriarch Josyf Cardinal Slipyj (†1984). Yet, while the former two bore the witness in seeking the Ukrainian Christian identity, the Providence reserved to Lubachivsky such unique events as the celebration of the millennium of Christianity in Ukraine, the rebirth of the UGCC in 1989–91 and the proclamation of Ukraine's independence in 1991.

He had to begin from scratch. Rebirth of spiritual life among the faithful, re–evangelisation, renewal of all the infrastructures, levelling the differences between the clergy that came from the ROC, the former underground priests, and those that came from the diaspora.

Right from the beginning he set two main priorities in the external life of the UGCC, namely: Formation and Ecumenism.

Seminaries were reopen or founded, catechization became imperative. He put an extreme effort towards the return of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) to L'viv in 1993, first in the form of the

known L'viv Theological Academy (LTA) and finally as a fully fledged Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU).

The almost twenty years since UCU's return to Ukraine this only catholic university within the entire huge territory of the former Soviet Union is playing a role of paramount importance in the entire society of today's Ukraine. Despite its relatively small size and number of students (around 1300), this university is truly making a difference with its Christian foundations, integrity, complete suppression of corruption, so rampant in all other institutions of higher learning in Ukraine, and its broadmindedness.

It should not be for me to talk about this university, because I could be accused of being *pars in causa*, therefore lacking objectivity. Therefore I will not enter into UCU's merits. I will, however, say that should, God forbid, this university be ever closed by some major brutal force, the entire, not only Christian, society of Ukraine would feel its absence for a great number of years.

In fact this university is educating and forming not just UGCC's future clergy, but an entirely young generation of academics, business people, politicians, social workers etc. of tomorrow's Ukraine. I dare to anticipate that if ever Ukraine will have an elite university, such as Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Princeton, Heidelberg, Sorbonne, Göttingen, Munich, it will be the UCU, if it will continue, despite all difficulties and obstacles, on its present path.

Indeed the late Patriarch Josyf Slipyj was a true prophet when he founded this university, and his successor, Patriarch Myroslav-Ivan Cardinal Lubachivsky, immediately sensed the necessity of its rebirth in Ukraine.

In fact, already the two successors that came after Lubachivsky, Patriarch Lubomyr Cardinal Husar, and the newly elected Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk, were professors of UCU.

With highly educated clergy and laity one can approach the second top priority of the UGCC, ecumenism.

In fact, Ukraine stands geopolitically as a people, nation and Church between East and West, between Byzantine and Roman culture and civilisation. It was the Ukrainians who bore throughout history all the pains of the division of Churches. Ukraine's Church is on the crossroad between Orthodoxy and Catholicism, and starting with Metropolitan Sheptyts'ky, who was head of this Church in the first four decades of

the 20th century, ecumenism, or work for the unity and full communion of Churches, is the main task assigned to the UGCC by history. Sheptyts'ky's successors, Lubachivsky, Husar and Shevchuk, have practically no other choice than to continue in these endeavors. It is precisely through them that the renewal of Kyivan Christianity, as it was in the time of its baptism in 988, that this issue has become the main object of the ecumenical activity of the UGCC, in order to obtain full unity and communion of the Churches in Ukraine. For this reason the *Kyivan Study Group* was established in 1992 and started a most fruitful dialogue with the Church of Constantinople. Precisely fully fledged Kyivan Christianity, when the Church was one and undivided, "orthodox in faith and catholic in love," as Pope John–Paul II stated,² is according to my view, the common identity of all the sons and daughters of St. Volodymyr's baptism, be it today's orthodox or catholic faithful of Ukraine.

6. Common Identity of the Church of Kyiv

Having made it quite clear that in my view the search of common identity belongs to four denominations in Ukraine, UOC–MP, UAOC, UOC–KP and UGCC, I hereby state that, in my opinion, the foundation of this identity is the Church of Kyiv in the time of his baptism by St. Volodymyr in 988, when it was fully fledged orthodox and catholic, and the universal Church was one and undivided.

This search of identity has already been taking place among Ukrainians, be it catholic or orthodox, at least for one century, and I am convinced that this is the most important question and will remain such for many years to come. In the Greek–Catholic Church is became predominant with Andrej Sheptyts'ky, Josyf Slipyj, Myroslav–Ivan Lubachiv'sky, Lubomyr Husar, and now Sviatoslav Shevchuk. For the Orthodox, personalities such as Vasyl Lypkivs'kyj, Mstyslav Skryp-

2. "È utile sottolineare, miei cari Fratelli Ucraini, che il Cristianesimo fu accolto e si consolidò nella Rus' di Kiev, quando tutta la Chiesa di Cristo viveva ancora in piena unione ecclesiale. Era un cristianesimo ortodosso nella fede e, nello stesso tempo cattolico nella carità, poiché era in piena comunione con la Sede Apostolica di Pietro, e con tutta la Chiesa" — Omelia di Papa Giovanni Paolo II alla comunità ucraina in Buenos Aires (13 aprile 1987), quoted in: *Litterae Nuntiae Suae* (1986–1987), p. 128.

nyk, Ilarion Ohienko and now Filaret Denysenko, to some extent, go hand in hand with the Greek–Catholics of Ukraine.

Before going to Belgrade in September 2006 for the plenary session of the Joint International Commission for Theological Dialogue between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church, I handed over to the highest representatives of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity, Cardinal Walter Kasper, Bishop Brian Farrell and the late Mons. Eleuterio Fortino my *Pro–Memoria* with the title *The Place of the astern Churches in the Catholic Communion and their Role in the Ecumenical Efforts of the Church*, dated 19 September 2006.³

The main thoughts of this *Pro–Memoria* are herewith presented.

It is a fact that Eastern Churches consider themselves as a *Pomisna Tserkva*, and the adjective *pomisnyj* has no full correspondent in Western languages. The terms *local*, *particular* Church, or even *Teilkirche* in German, does not fully translate the term *pomisnyj* — *pomisnist'*.

Johannes M. Hoeck, OSB, in his commentary to Vatican II's decree *Orientalium Ecclesiarum* states that "... The most simple and correct way would be to speak of autonomous Churches,"⁴ but in 1964 (the decree's publication date) even the Eastern Fathers of the council were did not have the courage to use the term *autonomous*.

Upon publication of the *Codex Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium* (CCEO) in 1992 the catholic Church uses the term *Ecclesia sui juris*, a Church of its own right, which literally in Greek is read as *autonomous* Church.

In another work of mine (Dacko 2012) I try to make it understood that what we catholics define as *pomisna Tserkva* is identical to *autokefal'na Tserkva* (autocephalous Church) for the orthodox. The problem being that catholic ecclesiology is afraid of this expression.

There are three characteristics of a *pomisna* Church, which can also be called *autocephalous* Church.

3. I personally presented this paper to Cardinal Walter Kasper, Bishop Brian Farrell and Msgr. Eleuterio Fortino — President, Secretary and Under–Secretary of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity on 19 September 2006.

4. "... Am einfachsten — und richtigsten! — wäre es gewesen, von autonomen Kirchen zu sprechen." — Cfr. Hoeck (1966), p. 367.

- a) It should have the wisdom, maturity and courage *to be itself*, faithful to its own traditions (liturgical, dogmatic, theological, canonical and spiritual) which were always present in a given Church.
- b) Such a Church has to be open and feel the need to share its gifts with other Churches, as also to be prepared to accept gifts from others. This is precisely what *Communio — Koinonia* with other Churches means: the mutual exchange of gifts among Sister-Churches.
- c) It should acknowledge and accept other Churches as they are. This means, to fully accept the traditions, laws and customs of other Sister-Churches.

The UGCC, according to my view, is less concerned in what is its place in the catholic Church, but mostly wishes to see the Orthodox Churches in *communio* with the Church of Rome. Concretely this Sister-Churches should be and stay autocephalous Churches in the catholic *communio* (*koinonia*).

This is not just my personal opinion. Such was the relationship between *Pomisni* Churches in the first millennium based on the principles of conciliarity and synodality. Such ecclesiology coincides with the teaching of Prof. Joseph Ratzinger (presently Pope Benedict XVI), who stated that the Churches in their ecumenical endeavors should strive to return to the ecclesiology as it was in the first millennium, when the Churches was one and undivided.⁵ Further, we meet such thoughts and reflections in various documents of the UGCC, particularly since the times of Vatican II.

Suffice to mention the *Spiritual Testament* of Patriarch Josyf Slipyj (1984), *The Concept for the Ecumenical Position of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church* (14 October 2000) which was approved and accepted by the entire Bishops' Synod of the UGCC. This new ecclesiology of *Koinonia—Communio* of Sister-Churches and the Kyivan model of the desired unity is becoming always more the main goal of the ecumenical endeavors of the UGCC, and is being gradually, although slowly endorsed, by the three other orthodox Churches of Ukraine.

5. "... Rom muß vom Osten nicht mehr an Primatslehre fordern, als auch im ersten Jahrtausend formuliert und gelebt wurde". Cfr. Ratzinger J. (1982), p. 206.

Under N° 22 B of the *Concept* we read:

Enjoying the spiritual riches of unity with the Apostolic See, the UGCC is sorry to have lost eucharistic communion with the Church in Constantinople, the Mother–Church of the historical Kyivan Church. For the UGCC, the restoration of this unity, along with the preservation of unity with the Apostolic See in Rome, remains the desired prospect. This will renew the ancient tradition of the Kyivan Church, which was united both with Rome and Constantinople (*The Concept* 2000, p. 6).

In his message *One people of God in the land on the hills of Kyiv*, written by Patriarch Lubomyr Cardinal Husar on 13 April 2004 on the occasion of the Return of the Greek–Catholic See from L’viv to Kyiv read:

Therefore, to think about the unity of the Kyivan Church does not mean to renounce the treasure of communion with various Christian centers, but on the contrary — it means that the shared spiritual patrimony of the Kyivan Church can be enriched by the gains of that communion. Not only would be the denominational branches of the Kyivan Church be enriched by this, but her sisters, the particular churches of the East and West, would benefit as well. In addition, this would make possible the elimination of divisions, so detrimental to the Church, and allow for the embodiment of the contemporary ecclesial principle of “unity in diversity.”⁶

Similar thoughts Patriarch Husar also expresses in his letter to Metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan of April 26, 2008.⁷

It is worthwhile to draw our attention to the fact that as far back as 1967 Ivan Hrynioch wrote:

... Our Church in its governance was fully autonomous and independent and only as member of the Universal Church of Christ it maintained its unity in prayer be it with Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople, as with the Roman Apostolic See (Hrynioch 1967, p. 81).

... All the families of the Universal Family of Christ live their own self–fulfilling life. They receive their life from universality, and they themselves also give life to this universality (Hrynioch 1967, pp. 37–38).

6. Letter of His Beatitude Lubomyr Husar *One people of God in the land of the hills of Kyiv*. Cfr. *Blahovisnyk* (2004) N° 4. L’viv, p. 164.

7. Letter of His Beatitude Lubomyr to the Protohierarch of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Metropolitan Volodymyr. Cfr. *Blahovisnyk* (2008) N° 8. L’viv, pp. 116–119.

... The Ukrainian Church in the form of the Metropolia of Kyiv–Halych enjoyed all the rights of an autocephalous Church (including full rights of a *Pomisna* Church) in the Universal Church of Christ. Precisely it is from this historical fact that one understands — and not only understands that, according to Canon Law, the Sobor of Brest in 1596 was legitimate (Hrynioch 1967, pp. 39–40).

... The courageous concepts — be it on behalf of the orthodox or catholics of the one Kyivan metropolia, regardless whether they came from Metropolitan Mohyla or Metropolitan Ruts'kyj, — they derived precisely from the fact of the *pomisnist'* of the Ukrainian Church and its full status as a subject in relationship to other *pomisni* Churches. On this ground the thought was born in the 17th century, in accordance with the Apostolic See, to reinforce the factual and historic status of *pomisnist'* of the Ukrainian Church with the formal recognition of the canonical status of a patriarchal Church in favor of the Metropolia of Kyiv–Halych, the cradle of Christianity and Mother–Church of the European East (Hrynioch 1967, p. 40).

It was a most promising sign to see three high representatives of the three orthodox Churches of Ukraine at Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk's installation on 27 March 2011 in Kyiv. Furthermore, one can only encourage the encounters and visits made by Patriarch Sviatoslav to Metropolitan Volodymyr Sabodan and Patriarch Filaret during the last few months. The faithful of the four Churches of Kyivan tradition are following with hope and expectations further steps towards re–approachment and reconciliation between the catholic bishops, clergy and faithful between and Orthodox Churches in Ukraine.

And with this in mind one can only greet the initiative recently manifested by Patriarch Sviatoslav Shevchuk to recall into life the *Kyivan Study Group*, so active and fruitful in the years 1992–1996, in order to help and assist the 'traditional' Churches to find a common identity and future as one *pomisna* orthodox–catholic Church of Kyiv, with one patriarch of Kyiv–Halych, in tomorrow's Ukraine.

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