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Editorial

When the article by Geraldine Fagan and Aleksandr Shchipkov ‘Rome is not our father, but neither is Moscow our mother’ appeared in the Russian press it immediately provoked varied reactions. One critic complained that the authors were clearly biased towards the Moscow Patriarchate and out of sympathy with the Greek Catholics, the Roman Catholics and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Kiev Patriarchate (UOC–KP). Another, Kirill Frolov, took quite a different view. Frolov is a specialist on Ukraine and a member of the congregation of the Sretensky Monastery where the conservative Archimandrite Tikhon Shevkunov is abbot.

In his article, “‘General’ny plan” raschleneniya Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi realiziyetsya na Ukraine’ (‘A strategy to dismember the Russian Orthodox Church is being carried out in Ukraine’), which appeared on the monastery’s website, Frolov accuses Fagan and Shchipkov of writing in the interests of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC). He identifies the alleged ‘*idée fixe*’ of the authors in the following passage from their article:

In principle Moscow might give tacit approval to the legitimisation of the UAOC and cede the church to the jurisdiction of Constantinople. In return the Moscow Patriarchate might well ask for the removal of Patriarch Filaret (Denisenko) from his position as head of the UOC–KP and for the return of the St Vladimir and St Michael Cathedrals in Kiev ...

He comments: ‘Obviously this kind of barter would be the strategy of Constantinople, Kiev, the Vatican manoeuvring behind them and the planned “Kiev Commission”...’ He continues: ‘This proposal is quite simply a provocation, directed at people who are capable of engaging in the barter of such things as the purity of Orthodoxy, the unity of the Russian Orthodox Church and its honour, dignity and authority...’. He speaks of the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s alleged willingness to recognise the UOC–KP at the price of Filaret’s resignation, to preside over the uniting of the UOC–KP and the UAOC and to secure the election of Andrii Horak as patriarch. ‘Shchipkov and Fagan call this possible union a second “canonical church” in Ukraine. I cannot see what they think would be canonical about it.’ Why should the Moscow Patriarchate, he asks, enter into compromises of principle just for the sake of getting rid of Filaret? ‘How is Filaret worse than Horak, Kudryakov, Isichenko, Bagan [sic] or any other schismatic?’

Frolov laments the involvement in Ukrainian developments of players who do not understand the situation there, and particularly of ‘people who have failed to draw any conclusions from the sorry history of the Estonian compromises’. He sees the essence of what he describes as this ‘provocation’ as the creeping assertion of the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate over Ukraine, just as happened, he says, in Estonia. And, moreover, since there will no longer be a canonical Orthodox

Church in Ukraine, then the ultimate winner, he suggests, will be the Vatican. He points to sympathy for the 'Uniates' and willingness to cooperate with them within the hierarchy of the UAOC.

Frolov's concerns highlight one central question which confronts every observer of the current situation in Ukraine, including most of the contributors in this issue of RSS: how far are the motives of those involved in the shifting relationships amongst the major churches political or nationalist as opposed to doctrinal? Keston's director Lawrence Uzzell has commented recently: 'I think it is impossible to stress strongly enough the role of nationalism in the religious situation in Ukraine. All the people our correspondents met themselves ascribed the conflicts in Ukraine to radically different understandings of national identity and never to, for example, differences over dogma.'

In this context it is important to take account of the extent to which the different churches are ready to overlook factors which one might naturally assume would divide them, as well as to play down factors which one might naturally assume would unite them, in the interests of achieving their various agendas.

The articles by Mitrokhin and by Fagan and Shchipkov in this issue of *Religion, State & Society* bring the story up to 2000. There have been a number of developments since then which it would be useful to note, and which continue to illustrate the complexity of considerations which each player has to take into account.

On 14 June this year, for the first time, a popular Russian daily, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, published an interview with Liubomyr Husar, archbishop major of the Ukrainian Catholics. It confirms the impression one has that the UGCC is more interested in becoming part of a future united Ukrainian church than in asserting its own distinctive Catholic identity. Defending the pope's visit to Ukraine, Husar explains in the interview that the future of Christian unity does not mean the 'reunion' of all Orthodox under Rome, but the full realisation of 'true Orthodoxy'. The latter implies cultural integrity, which must preserve the Byzantine legacy of the areas once known as Kievan Rus'. Union with Rome should not do away with the traditions of Orthodoxy, but should exalt it, as the Greek Catholics do. 'If there were to be only one Church of Christ in Ukraine, founded by St Prince Vladimir, and in relation with the Roman pontiff, we would like to be part of that church.' 'We have always thought that union must be understood in the sense that the pope acts in the church as the Apostle Peter. He has the authority to unite all, not to command over all. His power is not of government but of unity.' Referring to the confrontations between the Moscow and Ecumenical Patriarchates, he writes: 'No one is able to make these two churches agree. However, the pope has the authority to restore peace between them.'

Any future united Ukrainian church would presumably have to be built on the basis of a union between the UAOC and the UOC-KP. There have been further moves this year towards such a union. A joint delegation of the two churches to Istanbul (12-14 June 2001) signed an agreement at the residence of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios. It has since been circulated in the national media. It declares that there are no theological differences between the two churches and envisages a joint commission meeting in Kiev to discuss the details of 'full unification', as a 'first step towards unification of all Orthodox believers in Ukraine'. The two churches have now recognised that there is already intercommunion between priests, and a similar relationship at episcopal level is under discussion. The commission will work under the aegis of a representative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.

The Ukrainian government clearly has a lively interest in these negotiations. On

10 July 2001 the chairman of the State Committee for Religious Affairs in Ukraine, Viktor Bondarenko, attended a meeting of representatives of the UOC–KP and the UAOC. Unlike representatives of the two churches, which see the future united Ukrainian Orthodox Church as ‘equal to other Orthodox Churches’, the State Committee has been more cautious in its pronouncements, declaring that ‘there is no organisational move into unification’, and that at this stage the discussion is about establishing ‘normal relations between the churches’. One possibility which evidently worries the secular authorities is that an eventual united church might invite a foreigner to lead it. It appears that, in its desire to retain control over the process of unification, the State Committee is pursuing a policy of forming an episcopate for the future church from the local bishops. Bondarenko noted that he had not participated in the discussion at the meeting on 10 July, but had ‘followed its progress, taking the view that unification brought with it the threat of new schisms and consequently, the destabilisation of society’.

Meanwhile, what is the involvement of the Moscow Patriarchate? Spokesmen for the UOC–KP and the UAOC have stated that it is not playing any role in the unification process. However, the Moscow Patriarchate did take part in a meeting in Zurich from 12 to 14 July and apparently successfully vetoed the presence there of Viktor Bondarenko. Representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate have apparently proposed that any future united church should have autonomous rather than autocephalous status, but this suggestion has apparently been turned down by representatives of the UOC–KP and the UAOC. According to Archimandrite Athenagoras (Peckstadt) of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, ‘The ideal solution for all the Orthodox Churches in Ukraine is the creation of a single, autocephalous Orthodox Church. This is what the ecumenical patriarch desires to see in the near future.’

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PHILIP WALTERS

Notes on Contributors

Janice Broun, an Oxford graduate, is a specialist writer on religion in communist and postcommunist societies. She has had several articles published on Bulgarian religious affairs since the early 1980s, and book reviews on a wide variety of aspects of religious life in Central and Eastern Europe. She is the author of *Conscience and Captivity: Religion in Eastern Europe* (1988) and of six contributions to *Censorship: a World Encyclopedia* (forthcoming).

Geraldine Fagan graduated in Russian and German from Oxford University in 1995. She is currently Moscow correspondent for the Keston News Service.

Sergei Hackel is an archpriest of the Russian Orthodox Church, editor of religious broadcasts at the Russian Service of the BBC, and formerly reader in Russian studies at the University of Sussex.

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Nikolai Mitrokhin is completing a dissertation at the Russian State Humanities University in Moscow on Russian nationalism from 1953 to 1985. He also works for the 'Memorial' human rights centre. He has written more than 40 books and articles on ethnic and religious topics in the USSR and the CIS. In 1998–99 he conducted a research project on the religious situation in Ukraine.

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Gerd Stricker is the head of research at the institute Glaube in der Zweiten Welt near Zurich and editor of the publication of the same name. He lectures and publishes prolifically on many aspects of church life in communist and postcommunist countries and on the history of denominations in those areas. His main fields of research are the history and contemporary situation of Orthodoxy and of Lutheranism in the Russian Empire, the USSR and the CIS.

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Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Wales, has a longstanding interest in Orthodox theology and spirituality. His most recent book in this field is *Sergii Bulgakov: towards a Russian Political Theology* (1998).

Hugh Wybrew is vicar of St Mary Magdalen, Oxford. As a student he spent a year at the Russian Orthodox Theological Institute of St Serge in Paris. Since then he has had contacts with the Orthodox Church in Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and the Middle East. He is a member of the International Commission for the Anglican-Orthodox Theological Dialogue.