

When Common Faith Divides

The Paradox of Orthodoxy in Ukraine and Russia

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In a 2014 speech on the Russian annexation of Crimea, Vladimir Putin underscored that the adoption of “Orthodoxy predetermined the overall basis of the culture, civilisation and human values that unite the peoples of Russia, Ukraine and Belarus.”¹ With regard to Ukrainian-Russian relations, Putin’s synopsis is correct (if severely misapplied in the remainder of his speech and through Russian political dogma). Despite Ukrainian Orthodox autocephaly, the war in the Donbas, the annexation of Crimea, and further Russian aggression against its fellow former Soviet republic, Russia and Ukraine are united by the common thread of Orthodoxy.

Putin, while perhaps for the wrong reasons, is right. Often mistaken as a tool for disunion between Moscow and Kyiv, the Eastern branch of the Christian tradition stands to provide a common unity. This unity through the tradition of faith is held not in the hands of Putin and Kirill or Zelensky and Bartholomew, but rather in those of the Orthodox laypeople who span the two countries. Common Orthodoxy (and perhaps a bit of its holy foolishness) possesses a powerful

¹ Vladimir Putin, “Address by President of the Russian Federation,” President of Russia, March 18, 2014, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603>.

utility as a tool for peace between the adversarial fraternity of Russia and Ukraine. In its way lies the nationalist perversion of Orthodoxy for national (and imperial) ends. In a world in which the Russian Orthodox Church has “suspended communion”² with the newly recognized Orthodox Church of Ukraine, unity between the two peoples has never been in greater peril. Such a schism, amidst reinvigorated kinetic strife, also provides unprecedented opportunities for the use of Orthodoxy for pacific ends.

One cannot understand the state and potential of Eastern Orthodoxy in light of current woes without a brief overview of the Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox traditions’ history. This chronology is in most respects a common one, centering on the Grand Prince of Kyivan Rus’ Volodymyr I’s conversion to Eastern Orthodoxy “in the tenth century.”³ At this point, a “metropolitan was sent from Constantinople[the seat of Orthodoxy] to manage church affairs.”⁴ This metropolitan would become known as the ‘Metropolitan of Kyiv’ and would rely firmly on the jurisdiction of Constantinople. In the twelfth century, the luster of Constantinople, and thus Kyiv, began to falter, leading the seat of the Rus’ kingdom to northern residence. The Metropolitan of Kyiv followed, retaining an

² James Marson, “Ukraine Gets a Church of Its Own-and Vladimir Putin Glowers,” *The Wall Street Journal* (Dow Jones & Company, August 23, 2019), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/ukraine-gets-a-church-of-its-ownand-vladimir-putin-glowers-11566576051>.

³ Thomas Bremer and Sophia Senyk, “Can History Solve the Conflict About Ukrainian Autocephaly?,” Public Orthodoxy (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, October 15, 2018), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2018/10/12/history-ukrainian-conflict/>.

⁴ Jane Burbank and Frederick Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 188.

allegiance to Constantinople and a Kyivan title until the union of Florence in the “mid-fifteenth century.”⁵ Metropolitans in Russian lands would now be affixed the title, “‘of Moscow’, [and] ceased asking Constantinople for confirmation.”⁶ This action behaved as a “medieval autocephal[y]”⁷ of sorts, separating the Russian Orthodox from the broader Orthodox community. The Metropolitan of Kyiv survived this reformation, albeit barely. After persisting under immense strain in northerly “Ukrainian-Belarusian lands,”⁸ “a metropolitan of Kyiv in communion with Constantinople was installed”⁹ in 1620. Relations between Kyivan and Muscovite Orthodoxy were codified in the late 1600s under the Treaty of Andrusovo. The treaty stipulated that the “Kyiv metropolitan would be nominated and consecrated by Moscow, but would commemorate the Ecumenical Patriarch”¹⁰ in Constantinople. Subsequently (although it is debated how immediately) Kyivan metropolitans failed to commemorate the Patriarch of Constantinople. How much of this was purposeful fealty to

⁵ Thomas Bremer and Sophia Senyk, “Can History Solve the Conflict About Ukrainian Autocephaly?,” Public Orthodoxy (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, October 15, 2018), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2018/10/12/history-ukrainian-conflict/>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jerry Pankhurst, “Ukraine's Autocephaly: In The Vortex of Global Change,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/ukraine-s-autocephaly-in-the-vortex-of-global-change>.

⁸ Thomas Bremer and Sophia Senyk, “Can History Solve the Conflict About Ukrainian Autocephaly?,” Public Orthodoxy (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, October 15, 2018), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2018/10/12/history-ukrainian-conflict/>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Moscow or simply mere disuse and antiquation of the treaty remains hotly debated. Nonetheless, much (until recent days) has remained the same since the Treaty of Andrusovo.

Though there have been failed attempts to do so, “history cannot prove who is right and who is wrong in the present conflict.”¹¹ What may be garnered from history, however, is a proper understanding of the fluid reality of Orthodoxy. In its finality, Orthodoxy in Russia and Ukraine is a faith born in the Levantine Middle East, bred of Constantinople (now Istanbul), adopted along the banks of the Dnieper in Ukraine, baptized in the waters of the Crimean peninsula, and practiced by millions across post-Soviet republics from Belarus to Latvia (and across the world). The Orthodox faith is pan-national in nature. It is not—as some would have it—linked to a singular national mythos or identity. In other words, it is not distinctly Russian or Ukrainian.

Despite such a reality, Orthodoxy has taken on a particularly nationalist flair. This phenomenon is not at all new. In fact, its nascence is found in the imperial days of Russia. The ‘medieval autocephaly’ that freed the Moscow Patriarchate from fealty to Constantinople also served to buttress Russian imperial hegemony. Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus were seen as unequivocally “*united* under a single Orthodox Church that clearly saw itself as a Russian Orthodox Church.”¹² In fact, the *unifying* power of Orthodoxy was seen as potent enough to find itself listed among the “guiding ideological principle[s] of the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Catherine Wanner, “Divided by Common Faith: From the Battlefield to the Altar,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/divided-by-common-faith-from-the-battlefield-to-the-altar>.

imperial regime, ‘Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.’”¹³ This sense of Orthodoxy pervading national identity was not limited to inherently ‘Russian’ lands. In then-Polish Ukraine, “Orthodox clerics and the leaders of the Cossacks [...] began to present local Orthodox believers – regardless of their social station – as members of a *unified* community that shared *common* interests.”¹⁴ These Orthodox zealots challenged their Catholic rulers for control of the Dnieper region, claiming a lineage from the region’s original Orthodox rulers, the Rus’. In what became known as the “Little Russian idea,”¹⁵ modern Russian nationalism was birthed. From this same phenomenon “the Ukrainian nationalist project”¹⁶ also emerged. Orthodoxy, and its birthplace in modern-day Ukraine are inextricably linked to the national identities of the Kyivan Rus’ who now comprise Russia, Ukraine, and large chunks of other Eurasian states.

While this phenomenon was muted under the Soviet movement’s “vigorous promotion of ‘militant atheism,’”¹⁷ “[t]he central feature of Orthodox Christianity’s adjustment to modernity [in post-Soviet times] has been its redeployment as

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 12.

¹⁵ Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 15.

¹⁶ Faith Hillis, *Children of Rus*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 16.

¹⁷ Catherine Wanner, “Divided by Common Faith: From the Battlefield to the Altar,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/divided-by-common-faith-from-the-battlefield-to-the-altar>.

an essential ingredient of the people's national identities."¹⁸ The nationalization of Orthodoxy has indeed become so prominent that it is now the "dominant form of the faith."¹⁹ This shift to hyper-nationalization is "reflected in the hyphenations used to designate Orthodox Christians,"²⁰ such as 'Russian' Orthodox, 'Romanian' Orthodox, 'Bulgarian' Orthodox, and now 'Ukrainian' Orthodox. Such a practice has transformed the significance "of church affiliation from religious into political-national."²¹ This overt church allegiance to state has quite literally placed bishops upon the geopolitical chessboard, alongside their often hapless parishioners. Orthodox churches throughout Ukraine and Russia have thus become highly politicized institutions.

This politicization was initially mild in Ukraine. However, this has rapidly changed. Now, "Orthodox churches in Ukraine are caught between Ukrainian national self-assertion and Russian efforts to protect their own transnational Russian diaspora and exert soft power into Ukraine."²² These Russian 'efforts' are concerted and reflect a nostalgia of sorts for the 'Little Russian idea.' Putin's Russkiy Mir or "Russian World"²³ is a form of nostalgia that translates to an overarching political agenda for a new Russian imperialism. This 'Mir' that

¹⁸ Victor Roudometof, "'A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall': The Nationalization of Orthodox Christianity in Ukraine and Russia," Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/a-hard-rain-s-a-gonna-fall-the-nationalization-of-orthodox-christianity-in-ukraine-and-russia>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Serhii Plokhyy, *The Lost Kingdom*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2017), 328.

transcends “the borders of the Russian state and ethnicity,”²⁴ centers on Russian Orthodoxy. Russkiy Mir entails that the Russian Orthodox Church become the “key promoter”²⁵ or “watchdog of all-Russian *unity*.”²⁶ As such, the Russian state relies “on the Orthodox Church as the main *unifying* force in the country and provides it with generous financial support.”²⁷ This supposedly unifying force issued by the Orthodox Church is not sequestered to the confines of the Russian Federation. In fact, its tentacles are found deep within the Ukrainian state.

This imposed ‘unity’ is exemplified by the struggle for autocephaly (canonical independence) in Ukraine. The Russian Orthodox Church, the principal foot soldier of Russkiy Mir, “regards Ukraine as its canonical territory and claims that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the only canonical Church in the country, belongs to it.”²⁸ These claims heavily rest upon the Treaty of Andrusovo and procedural norms that evolved out of its inception. In a world of nationalized Orthodox churches, the supranational Russian Orthodox Church “remains an anomaly by maintaining an imperial interpretation of its canonical

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Michael Khodarkovsky, “Putin's Dream of Godliness: Holy Russia,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, January 22, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/22/opinion/putin-russia-orthodox-church.html>.

²⁶ Serhii Plokhyy, *The Lost Kingdom*, (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2017), 330.

²⁷ Michael Khodarkovsky, “Putin's Dream of Godliness: Holy Russia,” *The New York Times* (The New York Times, January 22, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/01/22/opinion/putin-russia-orthodox-church.html>.

²⁸ Thomas Bremer and Sophia Senyk, “Can History Solve the Conflict About Ukrainian Autocephaly?,” Public Orthodoxy (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, October 15, 2018), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2018/10/12/history-ukrainian-conflict/>.

territory.”²⁹ However anomalous this interpretation is, it is highly important to the Russkiy Mir conception of Russian hegemony and fraternity with Ukraine. As such, “Ukrainian autocephaly is a Kalashnikov”³⁰ in the religious soft war between the two states. This is because, just as medieval autocephaly cemented empires, “modern autocephalies [...] work to deconstruct empires,”³¹ such as the Russkiy Mir. The Ukrainian autocephaly is “a symbolic blow to Russia’s hegemony.”³² Beyond this, it also necessitates “that the Russian state [...] rewrite its national origin myth, abandon its imperial political vision of the “Russian World,” anchored as it is in Orthodoxy, and lose a powerful form of soft power in the region and beyond.”³³ On January 5, 2019, this autocephalous dream became a reality. While a large cohort of Orthodox churches in Ukraine belong to the Moscow Patriarchate (Ukrainian Orthodox Church–Moscow Patriarchate), “parishes of the former Kyivan Patriarchate church [(Ukrainian Orthodox Church – Kiev Patriarchate)] and the Ukrainian Autocephalous

²⁹ Catherine Wanner, “Divided by Common Faith: From the Battlefield to the Altar,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/divided-by-common-faith-from-the-battlefield-to-the-altar>.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jerry Pankhurst, “Ukraine's Autocephaly: In The Vortex of Global Change,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/ukraine-s-autocephaly-in-the-vortex-of-global-change>.

³² Catherine Wanner, “Divided by Common Faith: From the Battlefield to the Altar,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/divided-by-common-faith-from-the-battlefield-to-the-altar>.

³³ Ibid.

Orthodox Church”³⁴ had petitioned for autocephaly from the Moscow Patriarchate as early as 1992. Their petition being denied, Ukrainian Orthodox were left “divided, and clergy and faithful who belonged to the two autocephalous structures in Ukraine found themselves excommunicated from the Church.”³⁵ This excommunication lasted for 26 years, until Bartholomew of Constantinople granted autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine in an action that “was unpopular among many; [but] also merciful to millions”³⁶ of the faithful who had been disenfranchised from Orthodoxy.

As expected, autocephaly has served to exacerbate the already strained conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Allegations of Western meddling in the Orthodoxy are rife, and friction between Ukrainian Orthodoxy and Russian Orthodoxy within Ukraine has reached a boiling point. In Ukraine, “the refusal of some clergy from the Moscow Patriarchate to perform burial services for volunteers who died in the East and for those baptized in one of the other Eastern Christian Churches [within Ukraine],”³⁷ illustrates the prevailing

³⁴ Momchil Metodiev, Kadri Liik, and Nicu Popescu, “Defender of the Faith? How Ukraine's Orthodox Split Threatens Russia,” ECFR (European Council on Foreign Relations, May 30, 2019), https://ecfr.eu/publication/defender_of_the_faith_how_ukraines_orthodox_split_threatens_russia/#a3.

³⁵ Nicholas Denysenko, “Pastoral or Provocative? Patriarch Bartholomew's Visit to Ukraine,” Public Orthodoxy (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, September 30, 2021), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2021/09/30/bartholomews-visit-to-ukraine/>.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Catherine Wanner, “Divided by Common Faith: From the Battlefield to the Altar,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018),

antipathy. Beyond religious strife, geopolitical qualms are at a breaking point, with Russian forces amassing at the Ukrainian border as recently as December 2021.³⁸ With conflict brewing along ethno-national lines, Russkiy Mir, though severely damaged through Ukrainian autocephaly, is alive and well in the Russian geopolitical psyche.

Any pursuit of peace between such vitriolic adversaries must involve common Orthodoxy (or the Orthodoxy of the common believer). This Orthodoxy is not limited by the confines of nationalist identity, but transcends statehood and politicization. The paradox of the matter is that, “Ukraine and Russia have become two countries separated by the same faith tradition.”³⁹ They have become “two peoples divided by a *common* religion.”⁴⁰ The oxymoronic nature of such a statement belays a simple aid in seeking amelioration for an incredibly complex problem – Russian-Ukrainian tensions. Statistics from the Pew Research Center reveal that 78% of Ukrainians and 71% of Russians self-identify as Orthodox.⁴¹ They are further

<https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/divided-by-common-faith-from-the-battlefield-to-the-altar>.

³⁸Samir Puri, “Why Is Russia Amassing Troops at Its Border With Ukraine?,” IISS (International Institute for Strategic Studies, December 3, 2021), <https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2021/12/why-is-russia-amassing-troops-at-its-border-with-ukraine>.

³⁹ Catherine Wanner, “Divided by Common Faith: From the Battlefield to the Altar,” Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs (Georgetown University, December 14, 2018), <https://berkeleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/divided-by-common-faith-from-the-battlefield-to-the-altar>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ David Masci, “Split Between Ukrainian, Russian Churches Shows Political Importance of Orthodox Christianity,” Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, January 14, 2019), <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/01/14/split-between-ukrainian-russian-churches-shows-political-importance-of-orthodox-christianity/>.

united in the nationalistic fervor that accompanies their faith, with 51% of Ukrainians saying “it is at least somewhat important for someone to be Orthodox to be truly Ukrainian”⁴² and 57% of Russians saying, “being Orthodox is important to being truly Russian.”⁴³ The latter statistics are particularly relevant considering falling numbers of committed parishioners across Ukraine and Russia. However, while “[c]hurch attendance might be nominal, [...] the historic understanding of an Orthodox identity as something inherited and inalienable to the self,” alongside its conflation with national and political identity is resurgent – dynamically so. Nationalism, and a religious denomination ensconced in national identity, is how two peoples may be divided by a nearly identical *common* religion. It is clear that any step to utilize Orthodoxy as a tool for peace must rid itself of nationalist undertones.

The Orthodox cleric, St. Seraphim of Sarov is known to have proposed an ‘Orthodox Model of Reconciliation,’ which tritely states, “‘Make peace within and thousands around you will be saved’.”⁴⁴ In other words, “achieving reconciliation between the warring factions inside one's own self will lead not only to reconciliation with one's neighbours but also, ultimately, to their redemption.”⁴⁵ “Therefore, coming to terms with oneself is the foundation for all peacemaking, out of which can be established reconciliation with others and the [o]ther par excellence.”⁴⁶ Put in the simple, yet profound terms of Mark

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Alina Birzache, “In Search of Cinematic Holy Foolishness as a Form of Orthodox Peacemaking,” *Studies in World Christianity* 14, no. 2 (2008): 154.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

3:25, “every [...] house divided against itself will not stand.”⁴⁷ Ironically, and perhaps in the best of ways, Orthodoxy itself may hold the formula for reconciliation, unity, and peace that pan-Ukrainian-Russian Orthodoxy is in grave need of. The Russian theologian Vladimir Zelensky writes of this model of reconciliation, saying that it “amounts to 'the skill and wisdom of existing together, the capacity to accept another person, another idea, another mode of cultural expression, another confession in its difference from one's own.’”⁴⁸ Nowhere is such a principle more applicable than in the common subscription to Orthodoxy across the geopolitical and ethno-religious divide of Russia and Ukraine. Orthodoxy and its core tenets may (if utilized correctly) “resolve conflict in a negative way [where] space is made for the parties to pursue their own ends, so long as it does not contravene an agreed set of limits.”⁴⁹ Of last theological import, “folly and reconciliation often work in tandem.”⁵⁰ As such, an Orthodox pursuit of reconciliation will not fit well within the confines of traditional political or national schemas.

The Russian-Ukrainian landscape is brimming with opportunities for Orthodox involvement in the struggle for peace. The chief obstacle afflicting the Orthodox Church itself is the rampant nationalization of both the Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox Churches. Such nationalism divides the common Orthodox church from within. While Russkiy Mir’s influence is often decried by observers, oft overlooked is the nationalization

⁴⁷ T. Nelson (Ed), *Holy Bible New King James Version*, (Scotland: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

⁴⁸ Alina Birzache, “In Search of Cinematic Holy Foolishness as a Form of Orthodox Peacemaking,” *Studies in World Christianity* 14, no. 2 (2008): 154.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. “We find ourselves now in a situation in which the Ukrainian nationalism is a ‘good’ nationalism, because it stands up to the ‘bad’ one,”⁵¹ that of Russia. However, such a position is contrary to the defense of the Orthodox Model of Reconciliation and is naught but a “situation of sickness.”⁵² After all, “there can be no ‘good’ nationalisms from the Christian and Church perspective.”⁵³ Nationalism itself is contrary to “the very nature of the (Orthodox) Church.”⁵⁴ Those who stoke nationalist sentiments within the church do so in blind contravention of historiological review, for “[f]eeding nationalism, especially in the ecclesial context, never ends well.”⁵⁵ In fact, there are those that argue from within Orthodoxy that “[u]sing church as a means of creating or strengthening national identities (although commonly practiced) is nothing less but a heresy.”⁵⁶ An Orthodox response to such a schism recognizes that the perversion of the church by nationalism “should never be accepted as normality.”⁵⁷ It is “something that should be healed,”⁵⁸ like the sickness that it is. In fact, it is quite possible that a true Orthodox response to such perversion requires the actions of those who behave as holy fools.

⁵¹ Davor Džalto, “Give Us This Day Our Daily Portion of Nationalism...,” Public Orthodoxy (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, October 23, 2018), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2018/10/23/daily-portion-of-nationalism/#more-4776>.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

A religion such as Orthodoxy contains “strong warrants for peacemaking.”⁵⁹ Further, “religion as a peace tool”⁶⁰ is an increasingly powerful implement in the mediation of conflict ridden societies, having “contributed to resolving or avoiding disputes [...] in almost every conflict region in the world.”⁶¹ Common Orthodox believers in Ukraine and Russia have the propensity to take up the mantle of holy fools. Whether a constant parishioner or practitioner of the faith from home, these common believers serve as the basis under which Orthodoxy survives and may continue to survive in spite of conflict. Their actions of holy foolishness are simple: the rejection of nationalism's grip on the religion they hold dear. They share a common faith. In fact, they even share a common heritage upon the banks of the Dnieper River. Beyond this, however, they are aspirant members of a faith that is non-national in its inception. Furthermore, their true faith is not grounded in the political institutions of Moscow or Kyiv, but in the revelations of faith that populate their holy book and teachings.

In the end, the greatest danger to Orthodoxy is not co-optation by their corresponding national rivals, but Orthodoxy's usurpation by nationalism. Such a phenomenon

⁵⁹ David R. Smock, “Religious Contributions to Peacemaking: When Religion Brings Peace, Not War,” USIP (United States Institute of Peace, October 23, 2017),

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2006/01/religious-contributions-peacemaking-when-religion-brings-peace-not-war>.

⁶⁰ Chadwick F. Alger, “Religion as a peace tool,” *Global Review of Ethnopolitics* 1, no. 4 (2002), 94-109.

⁶¹ David Saperstein, “Why Religion Is Important in Conflict Prevention,” WEF (World Economic Forum, September 24, 2013), <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2013/09/why-religion-is-important-in-conflict-prevention/>.

threatens to forestall any attempts at arbitration within the ever-worsening soft war between Russia and Ukraine.

“Imperial aspirations within the church, whether they come from Moscow, Constantinople, or somewhere else, [...] do not do any service to Christ’s body.”⁶² In lieu of nationalization, the acceptance and holy foolishness of the Orthodox faith serves to elucidate a truer path to peace. Such peace rests firmly in the hands of the common parishioner, who chooses to see her fellow yet foreign Orthodox parishioner as a sister in the faith, not an infidel.

⁶² Davor Džalto, “Give Us This Day Our Daily Portion of Nationalism...,” Public Orthodoxy (Orthodox Christian Studies Center of Fordham University, October 23, 2018), <https://publicorthodoxy.org/2018/10/23/daily-portion-of-nationalism/#more-4776>.

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