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SAINT ANDREW  
THE APOSTLE

Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in America

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ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE  
and UKRAINE AUTOCEPHALY

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Historical, Canonical, and Pastoral Perspectives





The Ecumenical Patriarchate  
and Ukraine Autocephaly:  
*Historical, Canonical, and Pastoral Perspectives*

Evangelos Sotiropoulos  
*Editor*

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ORDER OF SAINT ANDREW THE APOSTLE,  
ARCHONS OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE



The pious Ukrainian people have awaited this blessed day for seven entire centuries. And, behold, the fullness of time has come for them, too, just as so many Orthodox peoples beforehand, to enjoy the sacred gift of emancipation, independence and self-governance, becoming free from every external reliance and intervention, which have not always been nurturing and respectful of their own identity.

*Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Metropolitan Epiphanius of Kyiv and all Ukraine (January 5, 2019)*



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Patriarchal and Synodal Tomos for the Bestowal of the  
Ecclesiastical Status of Autocephaly to the Orthodox  
Church in Ukraine

Contributors





What has Korea to do with Ukraine?  
Russia's Tragic Assault on Korean Unity

FR. PERRY HAMALIS

Readers may legitimately wonder, why is “Korea” the focus of an essay in a volume examining issues related to Orthodoxy in Ukraine? What might the status of the Orthodox Church in Korea reveal about the relationship between the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Moscow Patriarchate, and the granting of autocephaly to the Church in Ukraine? In short, *what has Korea to do with Ukraine?* An analysis of recent events within the Church in Korea offers an unexpected but clear picture of two sharply different theological visions, one manifested by the ethos and actions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the other manifested by the ethos and actions of the Patriarchate of Moscow. These two contrasting visions confront each other not only on the Korean peninsula today, as has been described incisively in the August 2017 and April 2019 interviews given by His Eminence Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea, but across East Asia, the diaspora, and the Church worldwide.

We can begin with an undeniable and tragic fact: *The exemplary and exceptional unity of Eastern Orthodox Christians in the Republic of Korea is in the process of being destroyed today by the recent actions of the Moscow Patriarchate.* To grasp the seriousness and diabolical nature of the current situation, one can examine the

three main components of the above-stated claim: (1) the “exemplary” unity of the Church in Korea, (2) the “exceptional” character of Orthodox unity in Korea, and (3) the Moscow Patriarchate as the source of the division threatening Korean Orthodox unity.

### **The Exemplary and Exceptional Unity...**

First, the unity of Orthodox Christians in Korea has been *exemplary* because, for decades, it has instantiated the principle of “one city, one bishop, one Church.” This ecclesiological principle has grounded Orthodoxy since the early Church, and it is fully congruent with an exact interpretation of Orthodox canon law. Specifically, “One city, one bishop, one Church” expresses the fundamental claim and ancient practice of the Orthodox Church that *the jurisdictional boundaries of autocephalous churches and of bishops within those churches are based on geography, and nothing more than geography*. Stated differently, all Orthodox Christians in one geographical region should be under the spiritual care of one presiding hierarchy. Eastern Orthodox Christians in Korea have lived this reality, this true unity. Not only are all *Korean* natives who became Orthodox under the *omophorion* (the spiritual care and ecclesiastical jurisdiction) of the Metropolitan of Korea of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, *all Eastern Orthodox Christians living in Korea*—regardless of their ethnic background or country of birth—have lived in unity under one bishop. Thus, in Korea there has been no “jurisdictional overlap.” Instead, there has been a multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual *united* Orthodox Church, comprised of many parishes across the Korean peninsula, and led and cared for by a single local hierarchy.

Most significantly, this was not a unity in name only; nor was it a unity that annihilated cultural diversity. Remarkably, the

Orthodox faithful of Korea have been living as *one spiritual family* comprised of over 5,000 native Koreans, expatriates, and visitors from a wide range of countries including Russia, Ukraine, and other former Soviet states, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, and the U.S., many of whom emigrated to Korea in the 1990s after the collapse of communism in Russia and eastern Europe. For decades, the ethnically diverse faithful have understood themselves as being one ecclesiastic body. At the St. Nicholas Cathedral in Seoul, for example, Orthodox faithful of all cultural backgrounds share a common “*agape* meal” every Sunday and feast day after the Divine Liturgy; their children are all friends and attend catechism and summer camp together; and, most importantly, all of the sacraments they celebrate commemorate the one local bishop, who himself commemorates the Ecumenical Patriarch. At the same time, the distinct pastoral needs and cultural backgrounds of the multi-ethnic faithful have been respected and honored. The local language, Korean, is the dominant language of worship at all parishes; however, liturgies and other holy services in Slavonic are prayed every Sunday and on major feast days at additional parishes and chapels. In addition, the pastoral needs of non-Korean natives are met by clergy who speak Russian, Ukrainian, English, and Greek, and who all commemorate the same local bishop. Twice a year in Seoul, the Metropolis of Korea even hosts an “International Festival” where the food, music, and dance of the faithful’s native lands are celebrated and showcased for the local community. Non-Orthodox who attend the festivals are struck by “borderless” unity of Orthodox Christians, despite the political tensions between their native countries. The structure and spirit of the Church in Korea, therefore, embody and bear witness to the ecclesiological and canonical *ideal* of Orthodoxy, a communion that respects otherness.



### The Exemplary and *Exceptional* Unity...

Second, the exemplary unity of Orthodox Christians in Korea is *exceptional* because it is one of very few places in the diaspora<sup>1</sup> where one witnesses strict congruence with the Church's canonical order. The fact that congruence to Orthodoxy's ecclesiology has become a "rare exception" in the diaspora is a scandal of appalling proportions—a betrayal of the gospel and hypocrisy beyond description. The words of Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, written in 1964 about the canonical problem of the diaspora, still resonate with convicting force today:

"[F]or the first time in history division belongs to the very structure of the Church, for the first time *canonicity* seems strangely disconnected from its fundamental "content" and purpose—to assure, express, defend and fulfill the Church as Divinely given *Unity*, for the first time, in other terms, one seems to find normal a multiplicity of "jurisdictions." Truly we must wake up and be horrified by this situation. We must find in ourselves the courage to face it and to re-think it in the light of the genuine Orthodox doctrine and tradition, no matter what it will cost to our petty human likes and dislikes. ..."*For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God*"? (1 Peter 4:17)"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The term "diaspora" in this context refers to the geographical regions around the globe that fall outside the borders of all autocephalous Orthodox Churches. Traditionally, Canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon has been interpreted to mean that the entire diaspora falls within the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, until such time as the Ecumenical Patriarchate creates from them new autocephalous Churches. In this respect, "the Church of Constantinople continually decreases and decreases" in its jurisdictional scope, as has been stated by His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in a recent interview. See: <https://www.ecupatria.org/2019/03/22/interview-of-ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-by-z-rakocevic-for-the-serbian-newspaper-politika/>.

<sup>2</sup> Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, "Problems of Orthodoxy in America: The Canonical Problem," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 8 no. 2 (1964), 64.

Across North and South America, across Western Europe, across Australia, and across South-East Asia one looks for the Orthodox Church and one finds a divided witness, a multiplicity of jurisdictions in the same geographical region. However, *this has not been the case in Korea*. Korea has been a sign of hope, a rare glimpse into Orthodoxy's potential for witness and evangelism when we are united as one local family under one local bishop, honoring diverse cultural heritage but prioritizing our unity in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28). The Eastern Orthodox of Korea have heeded the prophetic words of Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov) of Essex:

"I do not know a Greek Christ, a Russian Christ, an English Christ, an Arab Christ...Christ, for me, is everything, the supra-cosmic Being. ...When we limit the person of Christ, when we bring Him down to the level of nationalities, we immediately lose everything and fall into darkness. Then the way is open for hatred between nations, for hostility between social groups."<sup>3</sup>

Despite living in the perpetual shadow of political division, the Orthodox faithful of Korea have lived in exemplary and exceptional unity in Christ...*until now*.

### **In the process of being destroyed by the recent actions of the Patriarchate of Moscow**

This God-pleasing unity was assaulted by the Russian Orthodox Church when, on December 28, 2018 and at subsequent meetings on February 27, 2019 and April 4, 2019, the Holy Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate established a new Metropolis of Singapore and South-East Asia, including within it a new Diocese

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<sup>3</sup> Archimandrite Sophrony (Sakharov), *Words of Life* (Essex: Stavropegic Monastery of St. John the Baptist, 1998), 20-21.



of Korea. Metropolitan Sergiy (Chashin) was named as the Moscow Patriarchate's new Metropolitan of Singapore and South-East Asia and Archbishop Theophan (Kim) was named as the presiding hierarch of the Diocese of Korea. In recent decades—well before both Moscow's boycott of the Holy and Great Council of Crete (2016) and the Ecumenical Patriarchate's recent granting of Autocephaly to the Church in Ukraine—there have been many threats and provocations by the Moscow Patriarchate toward the thriving Orthodox community of Korea. However, nothing as callous or as contrary to the ethos of Orthodoxy as this recent development.

The Moscow Patriarchate's appointment of a new Metropolitan and Exarch of Singapore and, under him, an Archbishop of Korea within the exact geographical jurisdiction of the existing Metropolis of Singapore and South Asia (Ecumenical Patriarchate) and the Metropolis of Korea (Ecumenical Patriarchate) are a direct violation of the canonical order of the Orthodox Church, and of the Decision of both the 4<sup>th</sup> Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference (**Chambésy, June 6-13, 2009**), which was signed by the representatives of all autocephalous Eastern Orthodox Churches (including Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk)<sup>4</sup> and the Statement of the Council of Crete on "The Orthodox Diaspora," signed by the 10 participating Autocephalous Churches. It is a violation of the canonical order of the Orthodox Church because it transgresses the "one city, one bishop, one Church" or "territoriality" principle of Orthodox ecclesiology. And it is a violation of the Decision of the 4<sup>th</sup> Pre-Conciliar Pan-Orthodox Conference and the statement of the Holy and Great Council of Crete on "The Orthodox Diaspora" because it

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<sup>4</sup> See the full Pre-Conciliar document on "The Orthodox Diaspora" and list of signatories at: <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/preconciliar-diaspora>

transgresses the agreed upon statement (#7): *"The Orthodox Churches are bound to avoid actions that could hinder the above process for a canonical resolution of the issue of the Diaspora, such as the conferment of hierarchal titles that already exist."*<sup>5</sup>

The timing of these acts by the Moscow Patriarchate is undeniably connected with the Unification Council held in Ukraine (December 15, 2018) and the subsequent granting of the *"Tomos of Autocephaly"* to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine on January 5, 2019. However, it also seems undeniable that the developments in Ukraine provided a pretext for the Moscow Patriarchate to engage in unrestricted expansionist practices across the diaspora that have been planned for many years. This motivation could not be more clearly seen than in the words spoken by Metropolitan Hilarion immediately following the Moscow Patriarchate's December 28<sup>th</sup> Synod meeting: *"We now have some 1,000 parishes in the diaspora and several dioceses, and, of course, we have not agreed, and especially in this situation [of Ukraine] we cannot agree that Constantinople has an exclusive right to ministry to the diaspora."* He then continued, claiming that the Moscow Patriarchate, *"will now act as if they [Constantinople] do not exist at all because our purpose is missionary, our task is to educate, we are creating these [new ecclesiastical] structures for ministerial care [of] our flock, there can be no such deterring factors here."*<sup>6</sup>

The events and words noted above express but a small fraction of the actions that have grown out of the Moscow Patriarchate, especially in recent decades. They embody a mindset that has no defense from an Orthodox canonical, ecclesiological, and ethical perspective. Taking just one example, in the above quote, Metropolitan Hilarion claims that the Moscow Patriarchate

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/diaspora>

<sup>6</sup> Quote is taken from the Interfax article dated 29 December 2018: <http://www.interfax-religion.com/print.php?act=news&id=14831>.



is creating new dioceses in South-East Asia “for ministerial care of our flock.” But what flock of the Moscow Patriarchate exists in the Republic of Korea—to whom will you minister? *There is only one flock there*—an exemplary and exceptional spiritual family united across all ethnic, racial, gender, linguistic, or class distinctions—and *it already has a shepherd*: Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea.

Instead of supporting the local faithful, the Moscow Patriarchate is dividing them. Instead of uniting them in Christ the Moscow Patriarchate is separating them again as ethnicities. Instead of offering to collaborate in evangelizing the non-Christians of Korea, the Moscow Patriarchate is proselytizing, stealing sheep *from the existing Orthodox Church itself*.

This is truly a horrifying scene, a tragedy and setback for Orthodox witness beyond words. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann—a true Orthodox from Russia—understood what is at stake. Archimandrite Sophrony—a true Orthodox from Russia—understood what is at stake. But have today’s Orthodox leaders in Moscow understood what is at stake? Not simply “jurisdictional territory” in Korea, in Ukraine, or in any other part of the diaspora, but the very ecclesiology, ethos and canonical structures that support Orthodoxy.

Will God be merciful? *“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”* (1 Peter 4:17)