

Christianity in Ukraine
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Todd M. Johnson and Gina A. Zurlo, eds.

Religious Freedom

The constitution provides for freedom of religion and worship, a right that “may be restricted by law only in the interests of protecting public order, the health and morality of the population, or protecting the rights and freedoms of other persons.” The constitution provides for the separation of church and state and stipulates that “no religion shall be recognized by the state as mandatory.” The law requires religious groups to register with the State Registration Service and with the Ministry of Culture. Registration is required for a religious group to receive status as a legal entity, without which, a religious group may not own property, conduct banking activities, or publish materials. Religious organizations are considered nonprofits for tax purposes.

The law allows religious groups to establish theological schools to train clergy and other religious workers. The law restricts the teaching of religion as part of the public school curriculum; religious organizations are prohibited from interference in the educational process in public schools. The law provides for anti-discrimination screening of draft legislation and government regulations on the basis of religion. The law allows alternative nonmilitary service for conscientious objectors and bans the creation of religious organizations in military institutions and military units. The law restricts the activities of foreign-based religious groups to working with their religious organizational sponsor. The law requires commanders of military units to allow their subordinates to participate in religious services. The law protects the confidentiality of confession heard by prison chaplains.

Religions

Atheism was formally promoted during the Soviet regime when religion was persecuted and driven underground. Although numbers of atheists and agnostics have decreased since 1991, over 12% of Ukrainians are still non-religious.

Islam has a long history in Ukraine that dates back to the 15th century. Most Muslims are Sunni (Hanafi school) and Crimean Tatars. Nearly every major city in Crimea had a significant Muslim population until mass deportation efforts by Joseph Stalin in 1944. Today, 12% of Crimea is Muslim. The population increased after independence in 1991 and there are at least 160 mosques throughout the country. The four main Islamic organization are the Clerical board of Ukraine’s Muslims, The Spiritual Center of the Muslim Communities, the Clerical Board of Crimea Muslims, and the Religious Administration of Muslims of Ukraine.

Christians

Legend attributes that the Apostle Andrew came up through the Black Sea and landed on the Crimean peninsula and preached in the city of Chersonesus, **on the outskirts of** present-day Sevastopol. He later sailed up the Dneiper river and preached to those who lived along its banks and predicted that one day a powerful holy city would be built there. Chersonesus is also the site where prince Vladimir’s baptism took place, inaugurating the official acceptance of Christianity to the region. In 988, he adopted Christianity as the religion of his territory and had the inhabitants of Kiev baptized. Byzantine Christianity was established and quickly permeated the culture. A church hierarchy was founded, headed by the metropolitan of Kiev, who was appointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople. Along with Christianity came new forms of architecture, art, music, and a written language (Church Slavonic). Vladimir’s son Yaroslav continued in his father’s footsteps and developed the first Slavic code of laws, established churches, translated Greek religious works into

Slavic, and built the Cathedral of Saint Sophia.

Orthodox

The Orthodox Church has a history of a thousand years starting from the first baptisms in Kiev. Over 50% of the population are members of 3 major rival bodies—the **Russian Ukrainian** Orthodox Church (**Moscow Patriarchate**) still claiming jurisdiction, and 2 nationalist bodies: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church claiming to be a patriarchate under Kiev, and the long-standing Ukrainian Autocephalous **Orthodox** Church. The Orthodox church was inaugurated upon the acceptance of Christianity by prince Vladimir, and this adherence brought the political relationship with the Byzantine empire. Such a relationship facilitated the marriage of Vladimir and the sister of the Basileus of Byzantium Constantinople. Vladimir's marriage and conversion were sincere and enthusiastic, as pagan idols and temples to Slav gods were destroyed and paganism outlawed. Taking the role of a shepherd, Vladimir saw to it that the people had genuine conversions as well by having priests come and teach the peoples and calling for the construction of churches throughout the region. His son and subsequent leaders followed his steps and during the 11th century a strong church emerged, bishops were appointed, and monastic communities were established.

In the 12th and 13th centuries a series of Mongol invasions disintegrated the Kievan state into a number of smaller principalities and the center of political activity shifted away from Kiev to the Northeast. Eventually, most of present day Ukraine fell under the rule of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which had lasting impact upon the Orthodox church. In 1299, the metropolitan of Kiev moved North and settled in Moscow. Claiming the title, 'Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus' caused great dispute amongst the Lithuanian rulers and the appointment for a separate Metropolitan to reside in Kiev was initiated. This conflict resulted in a split after 1448. This group headed by the Moscow Metropolitan declared its independence from Constantinople and a separate Russian Orthodox Church was **foundationalized** **founded** and brought to finality 150 years later in 1598 with the establishment of the patriarchate of Moscow.

There are divisions of the Orthodox Church at present. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) is headed by the Metropolitan of Kiev and all Ukraine. This group comprises the majority of Orthodox believers in Ukraine, but it tends to be seen as an 'instrument of Russian Imperialism' and has little support from state officials. Most church services still use Old Slavonic. Many members have left because of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, that began in 2014, and joined the Kiev Patriarchate. In 2014 alone, 30 parishes switched from Moscow to Kiev.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate) is headed by the Patriarch of Kiev and all Rus-Ukraine. This group came into being in 1991 when then metropolitan Filaret was expelled by the Moscow Patriarchate. He was also defrocked by the Bishops' council for cooperation with the Soviet State. After gaining much support from church officials who disagreed with the council's decision, a schism occurred separating the groups into the aforementioned units with both still claiming to be the rightful church. The church uses Ukrainian and common Slavonic in worship services and is still unrecognized by the Russian Orthodox Church and the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church has its roots in the Ukrainian Autocephalist Orthodox Church, which was formed out of the Ukraine Church movement in 1921, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church that was established in 1942 during the German occupation of Ukraine. It was banned during the Soviet era and reestablished in 1989 and uses Ukrainian as its liturgical language.

The divide in the Orthodox Church has little to do with theology and everything to do with history and national identity. Some believe that Vladimir Putin's efforts to undermine the Ukrainian state could help empower and unify the Ukrainian church.

Catholics

At the Council of Brest in 1596, the Ruthenian Church (Orthodox) officially united with the Roman Church and accepted the primacy of the Roman Pontiff as well as Catholic creedal and doctrinal stances. The church was allowed to retain its Byzantine heritage and its Church Slavonic liturgy and language. Full autonomy as a 'particular' church was guaranteed.

The partitions of Poland (1772–1795) allowed the Russian territory to advance the cause of Orthodoxy, leading to great restrictions upon Uniate (Catholic) territory. This period of persecution elicited an imperial decree in 1839 that called for complete elimination of the Catholic Church, forcing it underground while continuing to thrive in western regions that were part of the Austrian empire. An act of State in 1946 rejected the validity of Ukrainian Catholicism and was translated into a law that deprived Eastern Catholics of all civil rights with no spiritual or legal legitimacy. In spite of the massive persecution that continued after the Second World War, 'The Church of the Catacombs' as it came to be known, survived in this capacity for nearly 5 decades. Immediately after independence in 1991, the 3.5 million Ukrainian-rite Catholics brutally persecuted under Stalin seized many of their church buildings back and were reorganized by the Vatican. This perpetuated yet another period of hostile relations between Rome, Moscow, and Kiev. Today, the Catholic Church is the second-largest denomination in the country. Byzantine Catholicism—the larger rite—is concentrated in the western part of the country and Latin-rite Catholicism can be found in small numbers in the western and central regions.

Emigration

Millions of Catholic Ruthenians emigrated to the U.S. in the early 1900s, but in 1938 many of them left the Catholic Church and returned to Orthodoxy, either as the new Carpatho-Rusyn (Slavic for "Ruthenian") Orthodox Church under the Patriarch of Constantinople, or in other Orthodox jurisdictions. Millions of Ukrainians also emigrated to the U.S. and formed The Ukrainian Orthodox Church-USA, which in 1995 came under the Patriarch of Constantinople. Efforts are underway to bring the UOC-KP together with the UOC-USA, thus bringing the UOC-KP into canonical Orthodoxy.

Protestants

Evangelical Christianity has grown rapidly in Ukraine since 1991, dubbed the "Bible belt" of Eastern Europe. Missionaries are frequently sent from Ukraine and is thus a key center for training Evangelical leaders and producing Evangelical literature. While mainline groups such as Baptists, Presbyterians, and Lutherans are present, they are small, and Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are the most prominent Protestant traditions. **Some Pentecostals espouse non-Trinitarian ("modalism") theology, bringing into question whether they are actually Christian.** These churches have attracted members with personal invitations to worship services, large physical spaces to hold religious revivals, and pronounced evangelistic efforts among the poor and marginalized. There has also been a significant amount of financial support from the United States for church planting. The Second World Congress of Churches of Evangelical Christians was held in Lviv in October 2016 with 2,000 people in attendance. The first was held in 2013.

The largest Protestant group is Christians of Evangelical Faith, a Pentecostal group organized in 1926

by Katherine and Ivan Voronaev initially supported by the Assemblies of God USA. The couple established the first Pentecostal church in 1920 in Odessa. They were arrested by the Soviets in the 1930s and subjected to hard labor in a prison camp for several years. The denomination was revived in 1990.

Pentecostals/charismatics

One of the most famous—though controversial—independent charismatic groups is Nigerian pastor Sunday Adelaja’s Embassy of the Blessed Kingdom of God for all Nations. The church is often cited as a picture of global Christianity and South-North movement. In 2008, he was accused of stealing \$100 million from parishioners in a Ponzi scheme called King’s Capital. In 2016, Adelaja came under fire for having multiple sexual affairs with parishioners. Adelaja founded the church in 1994 and in just a few years it was the largest single congregation in Europe with over 15,000 members.

Christian life

Mission

Ukrainian Christians sent missionaries to surrounding countries beginning shortly after the introduction of Christianity to the region in the 10th century. This continued throughout the centuries but was interrupted by Communist rule in the 20th century. After the collapse of Communism, churches are again sending missionaries outside of the country. There is a substantial evangelical missionary movement of Ukrainians to Russia and other FSU countries.

Media

Media ministry is extremely important for Pentecostal churches in Ukraine. These churches run over 20 radio programs, 11 television programs, 34 newspapers, and 2 magazines. The Union of Christians of the Evangelical Faith has several press outlets.

Ecumenical relations

The Ukrainian Bible Society has branches in Kiev, Kherson, Kharkiv, and Lviv and brings together Orthodox, Greek Catholics, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Seventh-day Adventists, Lutherans, and Orthodox. Bible Day was celebrated for the first time in Ukraine in 2004.

Delegates from the World Council of Churches have made several visits to Ukraine since the start of conflict with Russia in 2014.

The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) held a seminar on peaceful relations between religious community in July 2017 to encourage inter-confessional dialogue. The seminar was part of larger efforts of the OSCE to monitor inter-denominational disputes across the continent.

Catholic and Orthodox leaders meet periodically despite the absence of a dedicated organization to relations between the two groups.

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