

The Whole Truth About the Ukrainian Church Issue, Mount Athos, 2020

Why this is significant:

- By granting the Ukrainian Church Autocephaly, the **Ecumenical Patriarchate (EP)** has established the fifteenth Orthodox independent Church.
- In response, the **Russian Church (ROC)** has refused to recognize the new Autocephalous Church of Ukraine and has terminated commemoration of and communion with all other Orthodox Churches which do recognize it, including numerous Greek Metropolises.
- The ROC is the largest church by population, and in failing to recognize the Church of Ukraine, it cuts off millions of members from the rest of the Orthodox world.

Charges by the ROC and subsequent responses from Mount Athos

1. ROC: The EP has intruded on ROC territory.

- a. Evidence dating to the 14th century proves that the Metropolis of Kyiv and the **Patriarchate of Moscow (PM)** belong under the canonical jurisdiction of the EP.
- b. The PM has often acted without permission from the EP: in 1945, when it annexed the Church of Ukraine; and in 2000, when it attempted to integrate Ukraine into its jurisdiction by relegating it to the status of self-governed Church.
- c. In this way, the ROC has already intruded upon the territory of the EP.
- d. When Ukraine became an independent state in 1991, it asked the PM for Autocephaly. The PM refused to give up its influence in Ukraine, and created an ecclesiastical schism.
- e. The EP now recognizes Ukraine's Autocephaly as a result of Moscow's failure to offer a solution to the schism, and in order to return millions of previously "schismatic people to canonicity."
- f. By ceasing communion with those that recognize the Ukrainian Church's independence, the ROC again threatens intrusion into all churches under the EP's jurisdiction.

2. ROC: The former Ukrainian Schismatics showed no repentance.

- a. The Ukrainian schism is a result of administrative disagreements with the ROC, not doctrinal ones.
- b. Moreover, the EP has restored Metropolitans Philaretos of Kyiv and Makarios, and they have dissolved the schismatic "Patriarchate of Kyiv" accordingly.

3. ROC: The EP does not hold canonical right to consider an appeal from other patriarchates.

- a. Not only does the EP have jurisdiction over Ukraine, but by the Fourth Ecumenical Council it has also been granted the privilege of hearing appeals from local churches and intervening decisively in their matters wherever necessary.

4. ROC: The recognition of former schismatics is invalid and they remain schismatics.

- a. There are numerous historical examples of the church's acceptance of former schismatics, e.g. in 1945 with the Church of Bulgaria, whose clergy were not made to be reordained once the schism was lifted.
- b. The ROC itself has recognized former schismatics, e.g. the ROCOR (Russian Church Outside Russia).

5. ROC: The EP wants to become first without equals, like a Pope of the East.

- a. The ROC asks that requests for Autocephaly be granted by consensus among all local churches through a Panorthodox Synod. It has met, unsuccessfully, with the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Amman for this purpose.
 - b. Yet granting autocephaly is included only in the EP's canonical powers, which were assigned by the Ecumenical Councils and have been affirmed by tradition.
- 6. ROC: Not all autocephalous churches recognize the former schismatics.**
- a. The politically and economically powerful ROC has threatened churches that recognize Ukraine's independence with expulsion from communion, withdrawal of economic support, and illegal intrusion into their territories by founding parishes without the blessing of local Archpriests.