

Traditional religion and political power. Examining the role of the Church in Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova. Edited by Adam Hug. Pp. 98 incl. 5 ills. London: The Foreign Policy Centre, 2015. £7.95 (paper). 978 1 905833 28 3 *JEH* (68) 2017; doi:10.1017/S0022046916001767

Although all four countries covered here, now independent, were formerly constituent republics of the Soviet Union, they are very different from each other, as this short book points out. Uniformly, they suffered religious persecution under the Soviet regime, but the chapters all bear abundant witness to the vitality of a religious revival.

The Foreign Policy Centre, which commissioned this book, is active not only in defending religious liberty in print, but gave a report on the Church in Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine and Moldova to a meeting at the British Houses of Parliament, chaired by Baroness Berridge, of the All Party Group on International Freedom of Religion and Belief, in October 2015, at which this publication was presented. All its sections provide information which is not available under one cover elsewhere and so this book is welcome.

The first ten pages, by the editor, Adam Hug, rather unnecessarily summarise what the individual authors say in the main part of the text. Two authors, Oleksandr Sagan and Myroslav Marynovych, write the ensuing section on Ukraine. These are required reading for anyone who wishes to disentangle the complicated relations between that section of the Orthodox Church which is subject to the Moscow Patriarchate and its rival, the Kyiv Patriarchate. The latter contains fewer churches, is fiercely nationalist and is not recognised as canonical by the other Orthodox Churches worldwide. The extent to which the Moscow Patriarchate actually controls its churches is contested, but this text sheds light on the controversy. There is a third body, the smaller Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and it is a pity that it receives only passing mention here. Filaret, head of the Kyiv Patriarchate, is over ninety years old and is a highly controversial figure, due to his previous association with the old Soviet regime, but the chance is missed of discussing the import of this here.

The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church, with its loyalty to Rome, but following the Eastern Rite, comes into its own in Marynovych's account of the events on Maidan Square in 2014, but there is no succinct account of its emergence from complete suppression in 1946 to its nurturing of Ukrainian nationalism in the underground, followed by its triumphant re-emergence during Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika*.

Protestants, too, are omitted from this account. Granted, they constitute only a small minority, but they are well organised, with a sharp social conscience, and played a major role in the Maidan events.

Despite the fact that 2015 saw the centenary of the Armenian genocide at the hands of the Turks, this anniversary elicited little information on Armenian religion today. Promoting the status of 'Holy Echmiadzin', the centre of the Armenian Apostolic Church, for propaganda purposes, while strictly controlling church life elsewhere, was a feature of the Soviet treatment of the Armenians. The emergence of the Church to full vigour is a defining feature of independent Armenia today. Stepan Danielyan objectively and clearly sets out the way in which the current regime is overly protective of the national Church and too restrictive of

the rights of minorities. Some claim, he states, that you have to be a practising member of this religion in order to be a 'full Armenian', which an atheist or a Protestant cannot be.

Neither Danielyan nor the second author, Yulia Antonyan, mentions Catholicos (Patriarch) Karekin I, who was elevated to the highest office in 1995, but died in 1999. An ecumenical and prophetic figure, who was partly educated at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford, could have guided his Church, had he lived longer, to play a more enlightened role in a society just emerging from bondage.

The two chapters on Georgia convey much up-to-date and valuable information about an Orthodox Church, independent of Moscow and far more ancient, with which the Anglican Church has historic ties, now largely neglected. Gorbachev's erstwhile foreign minister, later president of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, was a convert from Communism to Christianity and was baptised by Patriarch Ilia II in 1992, as described by Eka Chitanava. This author goes on to be critical of the Patriarch for his warmth towards President Putin, his praise of Stalin and his consequent apparent condoning of the Russian military incursion into Georgia in 2008.

Was it a wise editorial judgment to bring in a second author, Irakli Vacharadze, whose six pages are devoted entirely to the gay issue? Whether the reader is for or against the 'traditional values' upheld by the Georgian Patriarchate, this *ad hominem* polemic sits uncomfortably in the more measured context of Chitanava's article. Strangely, too, Vacharadze omits any mention of the (Baptist) Archbishop Malkhaz Songulashvili, whose stance would have supported his cause from a Protestant point of view.

Victor Munteanu vividly brings to life the strange world of Moldova, where the Romanian Orthodox faith and Soviet imperialism once stood in opposition. Now religion predominates to an astonishing degree. Government sources claim (dubiously) that 96 per cent of the population are Orthodox – and this omits Baptists, who have a small but lively presence (mentioned only by name in the book). The domination of a state Church comes in for criticism, not least in the sphere of education. In a recent well-publicised case, a teacher harassed a pupil for being an atheist: 'His school mates were instructed to affirm that he could not perform well in school, because of his lack of belief in God.' This is the ultimate *volte-face* from Soviet practice in education, but possibly just as harmful in its way. Logically the Moldovan Orthodox Church should come under the jurisdiction of its Romanian neighbour, but Moscow's domination is likely to continue.

Fr Daniel Payne's helpful concluding essay on *Russkiy Mir* (the 'Russian World') contains one astonishing mistake, the claim that Roman Catholicism is one of the 'traditional religions' safeguarded by Russian legislation. It is not.

This small book contains much new information, but it would have significantly benefited from better editing, a more user-friendly format and expansion to fill the many gaps.

KESTON INSTITUTE,
OXFORD

MICHAEL BOURDEAUX