

The Creation of the
Moscow Patriarchate:
A Prelude to Patriarchal Reforms in
the Kyivan Metropolitanate
Preceding the Union of Brest
(1595-1596)

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Abstract

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Some have suggested that the creation of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1589 drove the bishops of Ukraine and Belarus into communion with Rome in 1595-1596 (the Union of Brest). Apparently, there is no evidence for this. Ironically, it is more likely that after having experienced humiliation at the hands of the Muscovites in 1589, the Constantinopolitan Patriarch, Jeremiah II, alienated the Ruthenian bishops himself with a show of authority inspired by the respect accorded him within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth after his release from Muscovy.

The article dwells at length on the events surrounding the creation of the Moscow Patriarchate and demonstrates the political and uncanonical nature of its genesis.



Recent developments in Eastern Europe and the 400th anniversary of the Union of Brest have placed the latter at the centre of contemporary Slavic ecclesiastical historiography. From the moment of its signing, polemical attention to the Union has generated strident confessional apologies, numerous insightful analyses and, most importantly, fairly comprehensive document publications on the Union and its general background. Since there is little hope of discovering revelational source material on late sixteenth-century Ukrainian-Belarusan (Ruthenian) Church history, fresh interpretation of the Union can be expected only from new perspectives on already published documentation and on the context of the Union itself.¹ Revisiting the understanding of the Union of Brest includes focusing on developments in the neighbourhood.

One episode in East Slavic ecclesiastical history frequently linked with the unionist initiative of the Ruthenian bishops is the creation of the Moscow patriarchate in 1589 by the Constantinopolitan Patriarch, Jeremiah II Tranos. Many historians have argued that fear of the new patriarchate in its backyard drove the Ukrainian-Belarusan Church "Romewards." As I hope to demonstrate in a separate article this is not substantiated by the sources and is improbable for other contextual reasons. Rather it was Jeremiah's trip to and from Muscovy, including two visits to Ukrainian-Belarusan lands in 1588–89, and not his creation of the Moscow patriarchate, that helped push the hierarchy of the Kyivan Metropolitanate into breaking with Constantinople and recognizing papal authority.

Patriarch Jeremiah's two sojourns in Ruthenian lands were separated by an eleven-month stay in Muscovy during which he elevated Metropolitan Iov of Moscow to patriarchal dignity, thereby making Moscow the fifth Orthodox patriarchate. Jeremiah's significant reforms, promulgated in the Ruthenian lands in the summer of 1589, included the deposition of the Kyivan Metropolitan, appointment of a patriarchal exarch, and the confirming of stauropegial privileges for lay confraternities, thus removing the latter from the jurisdiction of the local bishop

¹The present article has emerged from a more comprehensive study of the Union of Brest. See chapter 11 of my forthcoming book, *Crisis and Reform: The Kievan Metropolitanate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Genesis of the Union of Brest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute).

and subordinating them directly to the patriarch of Constantinople. Yet this far-reaching activity was only a secondary outcome of his trip to Moscow. Like Greek ecclesiastics throughout the sixteenth century and like Patriarch Ioakeim of Antioch before him, Jeremiah came through Ukraine and Belarus on his way to Muscovy, where he hoped to collect generous financial support for his beleaguered patriarchate. Although during the trip the patriarch attended to a number of Ruthenian ecclesiastical problems, there is no indication that he had developed a plan of action for the Ruthenian Orthodox Church. Had he not travelled to Moscow it is doubtful that he would have addressed the ecclesiastical and cultural crisis in the Kyivan Metropolitanate in the manner in which he did. His stay in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, both coming and going, was brief when compared to the almost year-long sojourn in Muscovy. In light of the fact that Jeremiah spent much of his time in the Commonwealth as a guest of Jan Zamoyski, Grand Hetman and Chancellor of the Kingdom of Poland, it becomes even clearer that the affairs of the Kyivan Metropolitanate were secondary concerns in the patriarch's itinerary.

Through a close reading of the source material, I will attempt to characterize the experience of Patriarch Jeremiah and his entourage while in Muscovy and draw some conclusions regarding the effect of Jeremiah's Muscovite sojourn on his reforming activity in the Kyivan Metropolitanate. Viewing Jeremiah's stay in Muscovy as a prelude to the reforms he conducted in the Kyivan Metropolitanate is, in effect, an inversion of the patriarch's own priorities. However, since the source material pertaining to Jeremiah's activity in Ukraine and Belarus is quite modest, such an inversion offers new insight into late sixteenth-century Ruthenian-Greek ecclesiastical relations and the context of the Brest Union. Careful reading of the sources will bring to light many details of Muscovite political, ecclesiastical, and diplomatic life, tangential to the subject at hand, as well as insights into the Muscovite perspective on contemporaneous international affairs.²

² Relatively little attention has been devoted to the establishment of the Moscow Patriarchate in recent literature. Furthermore, much of the historiography of the event and the period is not entirely satisfying. In fact, the last major study of Jeremiah's sojourn in Muscovy is that by A. Ia. Špakov, a comprehen-

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When Jeremiah crossed the border from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth into Muscovy in the summer of 1588 he entered a world that was substantially different from the one he had just visited. One of the most important contrasts across the frontier concerned the relationship between the ecclesiastical and secular realms. A church-state distinction or separation had never developed in Muscovy as it had in the Europe of Western Christendom. At a time when religious questions were revolutionizing European societies and polities, throughout the sixteenth century Muscovite ecclesiastical developments were for the most part guided by the authority of the tsar and the court. The fifteenth- and sixteenth-century ascendancy of Moscow was

sive work that nevertheless is a mediocre, if industrious, example of late Imperial Russian Church historiography: *Государство и церковь в их взаимных отношениях в Московском государстве*, vol. 2, *Царствование Федора Ивановича. Учреждение патриаршества в России. Приложения*, parts I and II appended (Odessa, 1912). Shpakov surveys the earlier Russian historiography, pp. 257–58. For other treatments of Jeremiah's sojourn in Muscovy and his elevation of the Metropolitanate of Moscow to the status of a Patriarchate, see Макарий (Булгаков), *История русской церкви*, vol. 10, pp. 3–54; Eugene-Melchior de Vogüé, "De Byzance à Moscou. Les voyages d'un patriarche," *Revue des deux mondes*, vol. 32, March 1 (1879): 5–35, Russian translation, "От Византии до Москвы (Путешествие константинопольского патриарха Иеремея II-ого в Москву в 1588 г.)," *Труды Киевской духовной академии* (1880), no. 1, pp. 56–99; П. Николаевский, "Учреждение патриаршества в России," *Христианское чтение*, 1879, pt. 2, 3–40; 369–406; 552–81; 1880, pt.1, 128–58 (variant title used for last segment: "Сношения русских с Востоком об иерархической степени московского патриарха"); А.В. Карташев, *Очерки по истории Русской церкви*, vol. 2, pp. 10–47; and more recently Steven Runciman, "Patriarch Jeremias II and the Patriarchate of Moscow," *Aksun-Thyateira: A Festschrift for Archbishop Methodios of Thyateira and Great Britain*, ed. George D. Dragas (London: Thyateira House, 1985), pp. 235–40 (many factual errors); Gerhard Podskalsky, "Die Einstellung des Ökumenischen Patriarchen (Jeremias II) zur Erhebung des Moskauer Patriarchats (1589)," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 55 (1989): 421–37. The topic has been treated generally in numerous recent historical surveys or monographs on sixteenth-century Muscovite history. A number of relevant articles can be found in the volume produced as a result of one of the ongoing Italian-Russian seminars entitled "Da Roma alla Terza Roma" held in Rome, this one dedicated to the four-hundredth anniversary of the creation of the Moscow Patriarchate, see Ia. N. Shchapov, Pierangelo Catalano, et al., *IV Centenario dell'istituzione del patriarcato in Russia* (Rome, 1990). For additional information see Borys A. Gudziak, "The Sixteenth-Century Muscovite Church and Patriarch Jeremias II's Journey to Muscovy 1588–1589: Some Comments Concerning the Historiography and Sources," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 19 (1995): 200–25.