

# Towards Autocephaly: Challenges Faced by the Latvian Orthodox Church

**JURIS JEFUNI**, *European Christian Academy, Daugavpils University, Latvia* | ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9903-5429>

**ANITA STASULANE**, *Daugavpils University, Latvia* | ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9971-6257>

## ABSTRACT

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, publicly supported by Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, the issue of the Latvian Orthodox Church's subordination to the Russian Orthodox Church gained significant relevance. Although Orthodox believers in Latvia embarked on their journey towards autocephaly prior to World War II, they were ultimately unable to achieve this status completely for a variety of reasons. Drawing on historical sources, this article explains the Latvian Orthodox Church's pursuit of autocephaly before the World War II and how this pursuit affects the Latvian Orthodox Church's status today. The article sheds light on the rationale behind the amendments to the law adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Latvia, highlighting that the Latvian Orthodox Church is completely independent and free from the power of any church outside Latvia.

## KEYWORDS

Orthodoxy, canonical status, autocephaly, the Latvian Orthodox Church, the Russian Orthodox Church.

## Introduction

When Russia began its war against Ukraine (2022), with public endorsement from Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, the issue of the Latvian Orthodox Church's (hereinafter the LOC) subordination to the Moscow Patriarchate (hereinafter the MP) was brought to the forefront. To ensure the independence of the LOC the President of Latvia proposed amendments to the Law on the Latvian Orthodox Church,<sup>1</sup> stipulating that upon the Law's enactment, any influence and authority exerted by the Patriarch of Moscow over the LOC would be unequivocally abolished. Publicly, the leaders of the LOC were unwilling to engage in discussions regarding the draft law initiated by the President. Various sources suggest that certain members of the LOC clergy would willingly support the pursuit of independence from the MP (Delfi.lv 2022).

The adopted amendments (Section 3) declare that the Law unequivocally solidifies the autocephalous status of the Church. This drew significant attention in Russia, where they were met with criticism from both state-affiliated propagandists and the Russian Orthodox Church (hereinafter the ROC). The political ideology of the *Russkiy mir* (Russian world) should be analysed within the context of political science but from the perspective of history, it is crucial to understand the inherited challenges that the LOC must confront in its quest for autocephaly. Drawing on historical sources, this article explains the LOC's pursuit of autocephaly before the World War II and how this pursuit affects the LOC's status today.

The scholars periodically address the issue of autocephaly. This subject takes on greater importance when a new autocephaly is established within a country, requiring theological justification and understanding of the historical experience. In addition to comprehensive historical surveys of the phenomenon of autocephaly (Erickson 1991; Sanderson 2005; Erickson 2020; Kuraev 2020; Getcha 2023; Hovorun 2023; Louth 2023; Schmemmann 2020), scholars have explained the evolution of autocephaly in diverse regional contexts. The formation and functioning of autocephaly within the modern national state has been most extensively studied in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, with a focus on Bulgaria (Kalkandjieva 2023, Kalkandjieva 2024), Russia (Kalkandjieva 2018; Kuraev 2020; Pilipenko 2023), North Macedonia (Jović 2021, Radić and Kalkandjieva 2023), Serbia (Jović and Rade 2023), and Albania (Murzaku 2023). Meanwhile, the issue of autocephaly has rarely garnered the attention of scholars in the Baltic States (Paert 2020a; Rohtmets and Schvak 2023; Rohtmets and Teraudkalns 2024). As the exploration of the formation of the LOC autocephalous status is still in its nascent stages within academic literature (Kotov and Petrov 2019), this article seeks to contribute to filling this research gap.

## Historical Context: Orthodoxy in Latvia

Since the 13th century, Livonia, encompassing the present-day territories of Latvia and Estonia, was under the dominion of the Roman Catholic Church. In the 16th century, in parallel with the spread of Lutheranism in Livonia, powerful monarchies emerged in the neighbouring countries: Sweden, Poland-Lithuania, Russia, all of which sought to expand their territories. The strengthening of Orthodoxy in Latvia is intricately intertwined with the historical and political processes shaped by Russia's expansionist endeavours towards Northern Europe.<sup>2</sup>

In the 18th century, Latvia underwent a gradual process of incorporation into the Russian Empire. As the Orthodox Church was integrated into the state administration in Russia, radical transformations in the relationship between the state and the Church also unfolded in Latvia. Following the conquest of Riga and the central region of Latvia (1710), a formal agreement was reached between the German nobility and the Russian state authority. This agreement mandated state funding for the maintenance of the Lutheran Church and schools, while also ensuring the unrestricted propagation of Orthodoxy. This

<sup>1</sup> The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia states that the Church is separate from the State. To regulate the relationship between the state and the churches, laws on eight religious organisations were adopted, including the Law on the LOC (Likumi.lv).

<sup>2</sup> The complex issue of the presence of the Eastern Christianity in Latvia before its incorporation into the Russian Empire is not addressed in this article.

principle of legal parity persisted until the early 19th century, when the Russian Empire embarked on a course of the ethnic and religious unification of the state. In 1832, the principle of legal parity was abolished as the status of the Lutheran Church was downgraded (*Landeskirche*), while the Orthodox Church was granted an elevated status (*Staatkirche*). In the 1840s and later, more than 100,000 Latvian and Estonians peasant converted to Orthodoxy (Rimestad 2012a, 162).

In the late 19th century, Latvia underwent an unprecedentedly systematic campaign of Russification, accompanied by the imposition of Orthodoxy. As a consequence of the Russification policy, Latvia witnessed an influx of Russian officials, as all state institutions adopted the exclusive use of the Russian language (1882). Thus, the Orthodox Church "had grown together with the Russian government and the Tsar's power" (Runce and Avanesova 2014, 371). As a result of the Russian Revolution of 1905, with the adoption of the Manifesto on Freedom of Religion in the Russian Empire (1905) and the limitation of the Tsar's power, this process had effectively stopped.

When the Republic of Latvia was proclaimed (1918), the meeting of Orthodox parishes (1920) addressed the issue of relations with the MP. The newly established state sought to attain complete independence for the Orthodox Church in Latvia and aimed for it to be led by a bishop of Latvian nationality. In 1921, the Patriarch of Moscow granted a tomos<sup>3</sup> to the LOC.

Although the LOC was incorporated under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople as an autonomous metropolia (1936), the LOC reverted to the MP jurisdiction subsequent to the occupation of Latvia by the USSR (1940). After World War II, Orthodox believers faced religious persecution akin to that endured by members of other denominations.

Following the restoration of Latvia's independence (1991), the Patriarch of Moscow, referencing the tomos issued in 1921, reinstated the LOC self-governing, while explicitly affirming the continued subordination of the LOC to the ROC jurisdiction (1992). Today, Latvia is dominated by the Evangelical Lutheran Church (281 congregations) and the Roman Catholic Church (254 congregations). However, the LOC is one of the largest Christian denominations (127 congregations) followed by Baptists (90 congregations), the Pomorian Old-Orthodox Church (70 congregations), the Seventh-day Adventists (50 congregations), and Methodists (12 congregations) (Tieslietu ministrija 2024).

## Prerequisites for Changing Canonical Status

The concept of autocephaly<sup>4</sup> characterises not only the administrative practices<sup>5</sup> of the local Orthodox Church but also its status within the global Orthodox community and its relations with other local Orthodox churches. In the ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church, the autocephaly of local churches signifies the existence of multiple church centres, each with equal rights to participate in discussions (not only in the context of ecumenical council but also in consultations, dialogues, and other formats). Due to the autocephaly of local churches, in instances of differing opinions, the parties involved lack legal administrative mechanisms to impose one party's opinion on another party.

Today in Europe the boundaries of autocephalous churches mostly align with the borders of nation states. While historically autocephalous churches began to emerge as early as the first millennium of the Common Era, the concept of an autocephalous church situated within a sovereign nation state developed

<sup>3</sup> A document that certifies the status of each newly established Orthodox Church. A tomos is considered legitimate if: (1) it has been issued by a canonical autocephalous Orthodox Church that is listed in the Diptychs; (2) it has been recognised by the other Orthodox Churches. The lists of autocephalous Churches within Orthodoxy, known as Diptychs, are compiled by several Orthodox Churches based on their respective traditions. The most authoritative and widely accepted Diptychs are those compiled by the Orthodox Church of Constantinople.

<sup>4</sup> The Greek αυτοκεφαλία is derived from αὐτός – 'self' and κεφαλή – 'head', i.e. 'self-headed'. Throughout the history of the Church, the meaning of this term has changed, becoming progressively more defined. Consequently, autocephaly can be interpreted in diverse ways today. Reduced autocephaly is called autonomy, while further reduction leads to "self-administration".

<sup>5</sup> The appointment of the leader of the local Orthodox Church, his administrative and symbolic subordination, and the review of appeals within the Church's judicial system.

later.<sup>6</sup> This concept achieved widespread recognition, when the collapse of the Ottoman Empire resulted in the creation of new nation states in the Balkans, where autocephalous churches were either restored or newly established. Following the collapse of the Russian Empire, the concept of an autocephalous church within a sovereign nation state was also reinvigorated in the newly established Republic of Latvia. The key advocates of this concept were public figure Jānis Dāvis (1867–1959) alongside Archbishop Jānis Pommers (1876–1934).

The issue of the Church's canonical status regarding the establishment of autocephaly can be addressed in three ways: by adhering to canons, by following established precedents, or by acting for the benefit of the Church. In the case of the last two approaches, their application necessitates a justification for why formal adherence to canons is not feasible in the particular situation<sup>7</sup>. It is challenging to identify a more compelling justification than national security considerations, which are inherently objective, for example, in the context of war.

During World War I, the Riga Eparchy was de facto dissolved in the territory of Latvia. As the German army advanced, an evacuation included the eparchial administrative and educational structures, archives, financial resources, most liturgical items necessary for conducting services, as well as nearly the entire clergy and a significant percentage of the parishioners. At the end of 1917, Archbishop Yoann Smirnov (1844–1919) left his eparchy, and the canonical and physical presence of a hierarchy in the Riga Eparchy was not restored until the arrival of Archbishop Jānis Pommers (1921). From early 1918 until his assassination in 1919, Bishop Platon Kulbusch (1869–1919) of Reval<sup>8</sup> served as the temporary administrator of the Riga Eparchy. The status of a temporary administrator hindered his activities, as the German occupying power expelled Bishop Platon from Riga, citing the pretext that his canonical competention was located in Reval.

The ROC capacity to govern the remaining Orthodox communities beyond the frontline is questionable. Notably, Bishop Platon was taken aback by several orders from the ROC that did not align with the actual conditions in the German-occupied Latvia. One of the orders issued in 1918 pertained to the actions of the provincial people's commissars regarding the properties of the eparchial consistories (Latvian State Historical Archive (hereinafter LSHA) 7469–1–9, p. 29). The Riga consistory had been evacuated to Novgorod as early as 1915, a fact the ROC should have been aware of. Furthermore, referencing the people's commissars seemed rather peculiar given the context of the German occupation. Meanwhile, in a letter from the head of the property and economic division, Archbishop Anastasy Gribanovsky (1873–1965) of Chisinau, Bishop Platon was informed that, from that point onward, forms for "various types of church documents and reports"<sup>9</sup> would need to be obtained exclusively from the Church's Supreme Administration in Moscow (LSHA 7469–1–9, p. 34). In another document dated 1918 from the Church's Central Council, Bishop Platon was requested to provide "copies of the minutes from the most recent clerical and lay eparchial meeting" (LSHA 7469–1–9, p. 89). Bishop Platon replied that "authorisation from the occupying power was not granted; consequently, the meeting of the eparchy entrusted to me could not be convened this year" (LSHA 7469–1–9, p. 89). These examples unequivocally demonstrate the ROC's inability to administer the Latvian Orthodox Christian community during World War I. This circumstance served as an essential prerequisite for Orthodox believers in Latvia to support the pursuit of an autocephalous status.

Another prerequisite was that the Latvian Orthodox community lacked its own hierarchy. In the wake of Bishop Platon's assassination, the ROC Synod, on 25 February 1919, designated Gennady Tuberozov (1875–1923), the Vicar Bishop of the Pskov Eparchy, as the interim acting hierarchy of the Riga Eparchy.

<sup>6</sup> Theokletos Pharmakides (1784–1860), a Greek monk, celebrated for his vigorous involvement in the fight for independence is considered to be its founder (Pharmakides 1840, 14–17).

<sup>7</sup> Among the numerous texts of canons, one of the most significant sources within the legal tradition of the Orthodox Church that explicitly addresses these approaches is Canon 1 of the First Canonical Letter of Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea, to Amphilochius of Iconium (Azbuka.ru). Thus, both of the aforementioned approaches are inherently canonical.

<sup>8</sup> Reval – presently known as Tallinn, the capital of Estonia.

<sup>9</sup> Here and hereafter the authors' translations.

To date, no evidence has been uncovered concerning his arrival or presence in the territory of Latvia under Bolshevik control during that period. In light of the absence of administrative records pertaining to his activities in remotely administering the Orthodox congregations in Latvia, it can be concluded that this administration was nominal. At the time the peace treaty was signed between the Republic of Latvia and Soviet Russia (1920), Bishop Gennady had already been designated as the ruling hierarch of the Pskov Eparchy. Although the ROC nominated Metropolitan Serafim Chichagov (1856–1937) for the Riga Eparchy, his candidacy was rejected<sup>10</sup> by the LOC (Gavrilin 2018, 107–108).

Canonically, this extraordinary situation signified not only the collapse of Church administration and management but also presented an ecclesiological problem. Although there have been numerous instances throughout Church history where a hierarch has abandoned his flock, such actions unequivocally represent a violation of canons. The canons of the Orthodox Church prohibit clergy from abandoning their flock and revoke their jurisdictional rights over the forsaken flock and management of eparchies.<sup>11</sup> Orthodox believers in Latvia found themselves not only in an administrative crisis but also in an ecclesiological one, which the ROC was unable to resolve. As a result, a well-substantiated viewpoint emerged that, following the relocation of the institutions of the Riga Eparchy beyond the borders of Latvia, leaving the faithful without Church structure and hierarchy, the ROC jurisdiction was also eliminated within the territory of Latvia (Dāvis 1920). Thus, conditions were ripe for the establishment of the LOC as an independent church.

## The Establishment of the Latvian Orthodox Church

The establishment of the LOC occurred against a backdrop of complex socio-political conditions in the aftermath of World War I. This process unfolded during two meetings of delegates representing Orthodox congregations, convened from 25 to 27 February and from 25 to 26 August 1920. While fight against the Bolsheviks continued in eastern Latvia, the first meeting<sup>12</sup> was convened in the session hall of the People's Council<sup>13</sup> (Dāvis 1920, 4). The establishment of the LOC transpired in an atmosphere marked by a clash of opinions driven not only by the varied understanding of canonical law of the Orthodox Church among congregation representatives but also by ethnic affiliation. To avert the fragmentation of the Latvian Orthodox community, the LOC founders sought to identify a solution that would be acceptable to all stakeholders. However, this effort resulted in a series of ambiguities that ultimately transformed into obstacles on the path to the LOC's autocephaly.

First, ambiguity emerged regarding the status of the meeting. In the documents of the first meeting, it was positioned as the "Church Saeima"<sup>14</sup>, and in historiography it is sometimes referred to as a council (Gavrilin 2018, 106–107; Kotov and Petrov 2019, 345–346). Given that canonical law mandates the participation of several hierarchs in a council (Canon 5 of the First Ecumenical Council), a pertinent question emerges regarding the appropriateness of applying the term "local council" to the meeting convened for the LOC establishment.

It is noteworthy that the Great Moscow Council (1667) also extended the concept of "council" (соборъ) to eparchy meetings characterised by the participation of one local hierarch (Anonymous 1667, 21–22). This implies that the designation of the meeting as a Church Council is questionable in

<sup>10</sup> Without presenting any supporting evidence, Zigmunds Balevics has claimed that the Latvian government denied Chichagov entry into Latvia (Balevics 1987, 52).

<sup>11</sup> See Apostolic Canons 14–16; Canon 11 of the Sardica Council; Canon 82 of the Carthage Council; and Canon 16 of the Double Constantinople Council, which stipulate a six-month limit for a hierarch's absence without valid justification. It is also noteworthy to reference Canon 25 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, which stipulates a three-month timeframe for the appointment of a hierarch to a vacant eparchy (Azbuka.ru).

<sup>12</sup> In regard to the decision-making authority of the meeting, it is crucial to note that the 1917 Council of the ROC endorsed the principle of eparchy self-governance. This endorsement included the provision for operating autonomously, even in the absence of a hierarch (Paert 2020b, 65–69).

<sup>13</sup> The allocation of such a prestigious venue for the meeting (currently the building of the Latvian Parliament) underscores the Latvian state's respect for the Orthodox community and signifies considerable aspirations for the future.

<sup>14</sup> LSHA 7469–1–90, p.1. Etymologically, *saeima* in Latvian carries the meaning of 'meeting'; it corresponds to both the Greek *σύνδοξ* and the Latin *concilium* – 'meeting'.



the absence of a hierarch's participation. The convening of a canonically council (adhering to the criteria established by the First Ecumenical Council rather than those set forth by the Moscow Council) one of the essential elements of genuinely functioning autocephaly. In the canonical texts of the Orthodox Church, the concepts "council" and "synod" are not differentiated in Greek; both are referred to by the term *σύνδοδος*, which translates to "synod". In Latvian and Russian, the "synod" is understood to denote a governing body that is generally smaller in terms of representation and membership than a council, and is convened with greater frequency. However, the involvement of several hierarchs, or at least one hierarch, is crucial for its operation. This situation has prompted significant inquiries into the legitimacy of the activities conducted by the LOC Synod during periods when no hierarch was present at the Riga Eparchy.<sup>15</sup>

Second, the participants of the meeting were unable to achieve a consensus regarding the status they intended to confer upon the LOC to be established. While there was a unanimous understanding that Orthodoxy could not function as an eparchy of the ROC in independent Latvia, signifying the essential need for independence from the ROC, opinions diverged regarding which specific aspects of independence should be prioritised and the methods by which this independence could be effectively achieved.

Jānis Dāvis put forth a significant proposal advocating for the withdrawal of the LOC from the ROC jurisdiction. He recommended that the LOC subsequently align itself with the Patriarchate of Constantinople jurisdiction (Anonymous 1920a, 3). The majority of the delegates were unwilling to take such a radical step<sup>16</sup> and ultimately chose not to endorse this proposal. The Prime Minister and the Minister of the Interior were notified of the following: "I. The Latvian Orthodox Church is self-governing and independent in its internal affairs. II. Hierarchically, the Latvian Orthodox Church maintains spiritual connections (episcopal consecration, myrrh, and antimins) with its mother institution, the MP. III. Canonically, the Latvian Orthodox Church remains committed to the decisions of the Ecumenical Councils and to the regulations established by local Saeimas [Church Councils]."<sup>17</sup> Thus, the LOC sustained a limited dependency on the MP concerning episcopal consecration, which afforded the MP a measure of influence over the composition of leadership within the LOC. Theoretically, the ROC could refuse or delay the consecration of a candidate selected by the LOC. If the candidate fulfils the canonical requirements of the Orthodox Church, executing such a *démarche* would be challenging; nonetheless, there exists the potential to identify a formal justification for such an action. In contrast, the dependency on the acquisition of liturgical items (myrrh and antimins) is largely symbolic in nature.

<sup>15</sup> Prior to the arrival of Archbishop Jānis Pommers in Latvia and subsequent to his death.

<sup>16</sup> Even some Latvian priests regarded this initiative with apprehension: Jānis Bormanis (1858–1930) (Anonymous 1920b, 2) and Jānis Svemps (1872–1947) (Kotov and Petrov 2019, 346) raised concerns that the Orthodox community in Latvia might become divided into separate Latvian and Russian Churches. Jānis Dāvis was committed to achieving the full separation of Latvian parishes from their Russian counterparts, the creation of an independent structure, and the equitable redistribution of Church property, which included the transfer of the Riga Cathedral to the Latvian parish (LSHA 7469–1–90, p. 43–44). In the late 1920s and the early 1930s, a growing movement within the LOC's Russian community advocated for the division of the Church into two distinct entities along ethnic lines (Kalniņš 2007, 41–42). It should be noted that according to 1925 statistical data, there were 103838 Orthodox ethnic Russians and 53396 Orthodox ethnic Latvians in Latvia (Skujenieks 1925, 80).

<sup>17</sup> LSHA 7469–1–90, p. 1.

A couple of months later, Jānis Dāvis issued a call to "officially proclaim" the "independence, or autocephaly", of the LOC (Dāvis 1920).<sup>18</sup> The proposal for affiliation with the Patriarchate of Constantinople jurisdiction was not raised on this occasion. The stance of Jānis Dāvis and his supporters is frequently described as extravagant and amateurish, viewed particularly as a manifestation of the nationalism of the Latvian intellectuals coupled with the canonical legal illiteracy prevalent among laypeople. However, his stance on the LOC autocephaly deserves more thoughtful consideration. First, his ideas have a notable influence of Protestantism. According to Orthodox ecclesiology and canons, the Church hierarchy is defined by an unbroken apostolic succession. Thus, the mere desire of a local congregation is inadequate, contrasting with the practices observed in many Protestant denominations. Second, Jānis Dāvis' proposals were not individual in nature, as he represented the perspectives of many Orthodox Latvians. Third, the position of Jānis Dāvis and his associates was grounded in the concept of actual autocephaly: the structures and hierarchy of the ROC were no longer operational within the territory of Latvia. Moreover, in light of the political situation in Russia, its future capabilities remained highly questionable.<sup>19</sup> Fourth, the wording of the decision concerning the LOC establishment introduced additional ambiguities, particularly due to its reference to hierarchical subordination to the ROC.

Thus, the establishment of the LOC fell short of the expectations held by both its proponents, specifically Jānis Dāvis' group, and the state. The Department of Ecclesiastical Affairs did not recognise the meeting as possessing the authority to make decisions, citing formal deficiencies in the meeting application process and violations in the delegate election procedure. A new meeting of LOC representatives was mandated to be convened, contingent upon oversight of the procedures by the Ministry of the Interior.

The second meeting, chaired by the Minister of the Interior, re-elected the LOC Synod. The Ministry of the Interior recognised this body as a legitimate LOC structure. The decision of this meeting also did not reference the concept "autocephaly," instead asserting that the independence of the LOC would be implemented in accordance with canons of the Orthodox Church.<sup>20</sup> The LOC continuously (1920–1934) refrained from using the canonical legal term "autocephaly", opting instead for the secular term "independence". For instance, at the Church's Council in 1923, Archbishop Jānis Pommers articulated his belief that the Church must also be independent in a sovereign and independent state.<sup>21</sup> However, the terms "autocephaly" and "autonomy" were intentionally omitted from the LOC discourse.<sup>22</sup> By contrast, Latvian state officials (Gavrilin 2018, 109) and journalists used the canonical legal term "autocephaly".

Before Archbishop Jānis Pommers arrived in Latvia on 19 July 1921, Patriarch Tikhon had issued him a tomos – decision No 1026 from the ROC Synod and the Supreme Church Council, which affirmed that the LOC was granted independence "in all Church administrative, Church economic, school education matters and those of Church-state relations" (Mospat.ru). In contrast to the Orthodox Church in Estonia tomos, the LOC tomos does not contain the term "autonomy" or reference to the absence of LOC's autocephaly, it can be concluded that the LOC autocephaly was clearly and unequivocally

<sup>18</sup> Minutes No 1 of the meeting of the Ascension Congregation's Council held on 29 January 1920 suggest that an idea was formulated within the congregation, as outlined in paragraph 3 of the minutes: "Proclamation of the self-governance and independence of the Latvian Orthodox Church and its relations with the Orthodox churches of other countries" (LSHA 7469–1–80, p. 2). Considering the phrasing "relations with the churches of other countries", the LOC is understood in this context as an autocephalous church. Thus, Jānis Dāvis and his associates were concurrently exploring two solutions: the establishment of autocephaly or the affiliation with the Patriarchate of Constantinople jurisdiction.

<sup>19</sup> This was supported by subsequent events: following the assassination of Archbishop Jānis Pommers (1934), the MP did not address the issue of the vacant Riga Eparchy until April 1935, thereby violating Canon 25 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council (Azbuka.ru), which mandates a three-month timeframe for appointing a hierarch to a vacant eparchy.

<sup>20</sup> The state's endorsement of the meeting can be attributed to the decision made by Patriarch Tikhon and the ROC Synod in June 1920 concerning the independence of the Orthodox Church in Estonia, which simultaneously paved the way for the realisation of the LOC's independence (Gavrilin 2018, 106–107).

<sup>21</sup> For the text of the speech, see Rimestad 2012b, 281–289.

<sup>22</sup> In his 1927 correspondence with Lithuania's Metropolitan Yelefery, Archbishop Jānis Pommers pointed out that "neither I nor the subordinate bodies under my authority use enticing terms such as "autocephaly" and "autonomy"" (Quoted in: Balevics 1985, p. 60).

granted.<sup>23</sup> Since its inception in 1920, the LOC has functioned independently of the ROC in economic, administrative, educational, and civil affairs, a situation the ROC was unable to curtail due to its lack of the requisite instruments.<sup>24</sup> Thus, the tomos issued by Patriarch Tikhon represented an official recognition by the ROC of a reality that it could no longer influence.<sup>25</sup>

Jānis Pommers was appointed Archbishop of the Riga Eparchy based on the decisions made during the meetings of Latvian Orthodox community, thereby signifying that the LOC leader was duly elected in Latvia. However, the ROC retained the authority to withhold approval of this selection, thereby jeopardising the declaration of the LOC's administrative independence.<sup>26</sup> If the LOC were capable of not only electing its archbishop but also consecrating him within the hierarchical structure, it could counter any formal refusal of recognition by the ROC with decisive action – the independent consecration of its hierarchs, regardless of the ROC's position. Specifically, the potential for independent consecration could dissuade the ROC from attempting to reject the candidate chosen by the LOC. The stability of autocephaly depends on the local church's ability to restore its hierarchy, particularly the availability of a sufficient number of local hierarchs qualified to consecrate a new hierarchy, including the Church's leader.<sup>27</sup> However, the LOC had no possibility of independently consecrating hierarchs.

Considering the elements characterising autocephaly and the historical context, it is reasonable to assert the actual autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in Latvia (the LOC since 1920) during the period from the death of Bishop Platon Kulbusch (1919), the last hierarchy authorised by the ROC to function within the territory of Latvia and who had visited Latvia.<sup>28</sup> However, this actual autocephaly proved unsustainable, as the Church managed to secure only one hierarchy – Archbishop Jānis Pommers. The events following his death clearly demonstrated why the autocephaly was not sustainable: unable to restore its hierarchy, the LOC was compelled to fall under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople under clearly defined conditions of autonomy. Finally, the LOC's autocephaly was not officially recognised at the pan-Orthodox level.

<sup>23</sup> The actual autocephaly of the LOC has been recognised by P. Rohtmets un V. Tēraudkalns: “To answer to criticism that the LOC was the outpost of the ROC and therefore political ally of the USSR, the Orthodox community in 1920s and 1930s often stressed the fact that because of loose ties with the ROC the LOC was actually *de facto* independent” (2024, 4). They justified their opinion as follows: “Even though the LOC in 1920s was part of the ROC, regulations on the State of the Orthodox Church in October 1926 declared [§ 5] that the head of the LOC was ‘completely independent of any church authorities outside Latvia’ ” (Rohtmets and Tēraudkalns 2024, 3).

<sup>24</sup> In an effort to exert influence over the LOC, the MP could sever his ties with the LOC, a development that effectively took place in 1927 with the declaration of Metropolitan Sergy Stragorodsky (1867–1944).

<sup>25</sup> During the 1930s, efforts were undertaken to prove that the LOC tomos had been issued beyond the authority of its issuers, contending that such a significant issue should have been deliberated at the ROC Council. However, convening the Council was not feasible (LSHA 3235–1/22–688, p. 90). The challenge to the legitimacy of the LOC tomos lost significance after the issuance of Metropolitan Sergy Stragorodsky's declaration, as this declaration excluded the LOC from the jurisdiction of the MP.

<sup>26</sup> The prolonged delay of more than a year (since February 1920) concerning the removal of Archbishop Jānis Pommers from his position as head of the eparchy in Russia, coupled with attempts to replace him with another individual – hierarchy Serafim Chichagov, vividly illustrates ROC's efforts to threaten the LOC administrative independence. The ROC leadership exhibited a marked reluctance to see the Latvian Archbishop Jānis Pommers leading the LOC, likely due to concerns that he would advocate for Latvianisation of the LOC. However, the ROC was compelled to concede on this matter.

<sup>27</sup> The history of the Church of Alexandria illustrates that a local church unable to achieve the consecration of hierarchs can nonetheless formally preserve its autocephaly and even retain its status as a patriarchate. It is important to highlight that autocephaly of the Church of Alexandria was enshrined in the Acts of the Ecumenical Councils, rendering its autocephaly formal abolition almost impossible. Thus, a state of acephaly that emerges following the death of the sole hierarchy of an autocephalous church does not inherently indicate the cessation of that autocephaly. However, such a situation can be misused to eliminate autocephaly.

<sup>28</sup> On 29 July 1927, Metropolitan Sergy Stragorodsky of Nizhny Novgorod, who had controversially taken on the role of “acting deputy patriarch”, issued a declaration on behalf of the ROC regarding reconciliation with the Communist regime of the USSR. This was done with the consent of a few hierarchs who remained unarrested within the USSR. The declaration required that all hierarchs under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow submit a written affirmation of their loyalty to the USSR. From a canonical standpoint, this put an end to the matter regarding Archbishop Jānis Pommers and the LOC's affiliation with the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Moscow, as the Archbishop, being a citizen of Latvia, did not sign the declaration.



In the 1920s, obstacles to the LOC's path to autocephaly emerged due to disagreements among various groups within the Orthodox community. The Latvian state authority faced the task of selecting which group to support, giving priority to the Orthodox Latvian community, i.e. the Jānis Dāvis group. However, the state's attitude towards others, including Archbishop Jānis Pommers, was marked by considerable caution. The suspicion was based on the fact that he had served in Russia for over 20 years and had obtained the Riga Eparchy on the basis of a document signed by the Patriarch of Moscow. It took several years in the position of Church leader to dispel these suspicions.

The only LOC hierarchy, Archbishop Jānis Pommers, was assassinated (1934). Following his death, the LOC found itself in an acephalic state for the second time in less than 30 years. However, this situation contrasted with the earlier episode (1919–1921), as the Riga Eparchy was not subjected to a questionable canonical "evacuation". This time, it held the status of a "widowed [vacant] eparchy", which is explicitly outlined in the Church's canons. Canon 25 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council stipulates a three-month period for the appointment of a hierarch to a vacant eparchy (Azbuka.ru). It was not until April 1935 that the MP appointed Metropolitan Yelefery Bogoyavlensky (1868–1940) of Lithuania as the interim administrator of the Riga Eparchy. It was a delayed action. If the MP genuinely considered Archbishop Jānis Pommers as falling under its jurisdiction, Metropolitan Yelefery Bogoyavlensky of Lithuania would have been assigned to officiate at the funeral of Archbishop Jānis Pommers. It is noteworthy that Archbishop Jānis Pommers wrote to Metropolitan Sergy Stragorodsky in 1927: "We who have gone outside the USSR statehood (...) must in fact be considered as having gone outside the Russian Church as well" (Pommers and Kalniņš 1993, II, 117). Since this letter Metropolitan Yelefery Bogoyavlensky came to view him as a schismatic who had unilaterally severed ties with the MP jurisdiction. By failing to meet the three-month deadline mandated by the canons, the MP revealed its incapacity to tackle the challenges confronting the LOC, thereby making any potential return to the ineffective MP jurisdiction utterly pointless for the LOC.

The legal status of the LOC was precisely articulated within Latvian legislation: the Church remained under the governance of the officially recognised Synod,<sup>29</sup> which not only pursued solutions to avert acephaly but also actively sought official recognition of the LOC's autocephaly from other local churches, engaging with the Patriarchates of Serbia and Constantinople. However, no Church was prepared to officially acknowledge it, and the sole avenue for addressing the resulting acephaly was to place itself under the jurisdiction of another local church. With the inclusion of the LOC under the Patriarchate of Constantinople jurisdiction<sup>30</sup>, not only did the LOC's acephaly come to an end, but so did its unique status of effective autocephaly.

## The Contemporary Challenges Facing the LOC

In the pursuit of autocephaly, the LOC has to remove not only historically inherited obstacles but also more recent impediments. Although after the restoration of Latvia's independence, the ROC Synod and Patriarch Alexey II (1929–2008) declared their agreement (1992) with the tomos issued by Patriarch Tikhon in 1921 (Anonymous 2013, 327), the new tomos, issued in 1992, clearly stated that the LOC was under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, several ROC documents interpreted the status of the LOC as a form of "self-administration" or limited autonomy, to be exercised under the MP (Anonymous 2013, 315, 325, 327–328). At that time, the Latvian state refrained from objections, as Russia had embarked on a process of democratisation; however, the subsequent events in Russia led to concerns regarding the status of the LOC, driven by critical national security imperatives. In 2019, the Latvian Parliament amended the Law on the Latvian Orthodox Church, stipulating that: "Only

<sup>29</sup> Yet, just like before (1920–1921), it remained without a single hierarch, which led Metropolitan Yelefery Bogoyavlensky of Lithuania to question the canonical legitimacy of the Synod.

<sup>30</sup> The integration process commenced in 1935 and reached its conclusion with the consecration of Metropolitan Augustīns Pētersons as the Metropolitan of Riga and all Latvia, under the Patriarchate of Constantinople jurisdiction on 29 March 1936.

<sup>31</sup> The text of the 1992 tomos see in: Kalniņš 2025, 312. The fact that the text of the 1921 tomos had to be altered in the 1992 tomos suggests that, in 1992, the ROC leadership recognized that the original 1921 document provided grounds for autocephaly, something the ROC did not wish to permit again.

clergymen of the Church and citizens of Latvia whose permanent place of residence has been Latvia for not less than the last 10 years may be the Most Reverend, metropolitan bishops, archbishops, bishops and candidates for such offices" (Section 4, Paragraph 3). This step was taken to decisively preclude Russia's influence within the LOC hierarchy.<sup>32</sup>

In 2022, the MP established a special Office for Eparchies in Nearby Foreign Countries. In response, the Latvian government amended the Law on the LOC, consolidating its autocephalous status (Section 3, Paragraph 1). In explaining the amendments to the Law, the Adviser to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia underscored: "Given the powers granted to this Office, there is a high risk that the ROC leadership has unilaterally intended to eliminate the independence and self-governing of the LOC and, de facto, alter its canonical status. This pertains to the secular status of the Church within the Republic of Latvia, the determination of which is solely governed by Latvian laws and the Church's own statutes. The ROC leadership has failed to fulfil its commitments taken towards the Latvian state and the Church and has, in fact, undertaken deliberate actions aimed at downgrading the Church's status" (Drēģeris 2022). The amendments to the Law on the LOC fully consolidate the autocephalous status of the Church and establish that "the Church is led by the Primate who is independent from the power of any church outside Latvia" (Section 3, Paragraph 3). Thus, the state has rejected the prospect of autonomy under the jurisdiction of another patriarchate including the Patriarchate of Constantinople.<sup>33</sup> The proclamation of autocephaly by the state has occurred on numerous occasions throughout the history of Orthodoxy, making the action of the Latvian state not an exception, but rather part of the historical tradition of Orthodoxy.<sup>34</sup>

The President of Latvia explained that "the autocephalous status of our Orthodox Church has historically been de facto determined by the tomos issued by Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow and All Russia on 6 (19) July 1921 to Archbishop Jānis Pommers, and by the Cabinet Regulations of 8 October 1926 regarding the status of the Orthodox Church" (Kincis and Kozins 2022). Although the term "autocephaly" is not used in either of these documents, the 1926 Cabinet Regulations reference one of the key principles of autocephaly – "the Church is led by the Primate who is independent from the power of any church outside Latvia" (Alberings and Laimiņš 1926). This exact formulation is employed in the current Law (Section 3, Paragraph 3). In determining the autocephalous status of the LOC, the Latvian state has considered the de facto autocephaly of the LOC during the interwar period. Furthermore, since 2022, the state recognizes of the LOC's autocephaly.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> The amendments were made in response to events in Estonia, where Yevgeny Reshetnikov (born in 1957), a citizen of the Russian Federation, was elected as the head of the Orthodox Church in Estonia (2018), despite having no prior connection to Estonia.

<sup>33</sup> P. Rohtmetis and V. Teraudkalns have highlighted some critical reviews of this law. This includes criticism from secular jurists, the examination of which is beyond the scope of this article. They noted also the critical view that the law disregards the tomos issued by the Patriarchate of Constantinople to the LOC in 1936, which granted the LOC autonomy under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople rather than autocephaly (Rohtmetis and Teraudkalns 2024, 24). This opinion is canonical in nature and accurately reflects reality: the law adopts the concept of autocephaly, not autonomy, drawing on the 1921 tomos and Archbishop Jānis Pommers' autocephalous interpretation. It should be noted that this view was voiced mainly by a small Latvian Orthodox community that withdrew from the LOC and proclaimed itself the Latvian Orthodox Autonomous Church of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Although this community succeeded in obtaining official registration in Latvia in 2019, Ukrainian theologian and historian Serhii Shumylo noted that it "has never had any real relationship with the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople" (Shumylo n.d., 6. Quoted with permission from the author.).

<sup>34</sup> Throughout the centuries, a number of local Orthodox churches have been granted autocephaly, either by an order of state authority or at its initiative. This spans from the establishment of the Justiniana Prima patriarchat in the Byzantine Empire in the 6th century to the formation of several autocephalous Orthodox churches within the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in the Balkans in the 19th century. However, there have been accusations that the Latvian authorities "outdid the Middle Ages" with their actions, namely that the state has exceeded its powers by interfering in church affairs (Rohtmetis and Teraudkalns 2024, 23).

<sup>35</sup> The Statutes adopted by the LOC and approved by the state stipulate that "the LOC is an autocephalous Church" (LPB 2022, 3).

Subordination to the MP jurisdiction presents significant challenges, primarily from a political standpoint. The doctrine developed by the MP, which provides theological justification for the war initiated by Russia against Ukraine, is being imposed unconditionally on the entire ROC clergy, both within Russia and in its occupied territories (Kurayev 2023). On 20 October 2022, the LOC Council, by an overwhelming majority vote, adopted a decision in favour of autocephaly,<sup>36</sup> amending the LOC Statutes and submitting a request to the Patriarch of Moscow for the recognition of its autocephaly. This request was forwarded for consideration to the Council of the Hierarchs of the ROC. Changes have been made in the LOC liturgical practices: the LOC leadership has called for the removal of Patriarch Kirill's name from the services, reverting to the impersonal liturgical formula previously used by the LOC during the interwar period.<sup>37</sup> However, not all parishes and clergy are willing to embrace these changes. Other administrative and symbolic actions have also been taken in an autocephalous manner, i.e. without coordination or consultation with the MP. These actions prompted a strong response at the meeting of the ROC Synod held on 24 August 2023 (Patriarchia.ru 2023).<sup>38</sup> It was noted that the LOC's request for the recognition of autocephaly had not yet been approved by the MP, and the mention of the name of the Patriarch of Moscow in all services was mandatory. Particular objections were raised against the appointment of a Bishop of Daugavpils to the position of Archbishop and the creation of a new position of Vicar Bishop in Valmiera made by LOC independently. However, on 5–7 October 2023, a delegation from the LOC Synod, composed of high priests (rather than hierarchs), was received at the External Relations Division of the MP. As a result of the meeting, the MP conferred holy myrrh upon the LOC. By receiving it, on the one hand, the LOC demonstrated its symbolical subordination to the MP,<sup>39</sup> while on the other hand, it showed the MP's tacit approval of the LOC's action.

## Conclusion

At present, several characteristics of the actual autocephaly of the LOC can be identified. First, it is the hierarchical and administrative independence. In contrast to the interwar period, the LOC now has a sufficient number of hierarchs capable of independently consecrating new hierarchs. The LOC independently establishes vicariates, appoints and consecrates bishops, and decides on the promotion of hierarchs to higher ecclesiastical offices. Second, the presence of several hierarchs within the LOC serving in two permanent and ecclesiologically equal eparchies ensures the canonical legitimacy and functionality of its synod and councils, in full alignment with the ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church. Third, the gradual introduction of changes in liturgical practice (the commemoration of hierarchs) signifies a gradual restoration of the practice that was adopted within the LOC during the interwar period. Compared to the interwar period, the LOC has made significant progress in the fundamental aspects of autocephaly's functioning today.

However, the process of establishing autocephaly is not yet complete. The ROC-derived narratives remain influential among the Latvian Orthodox clergy and laity, even though these narratives do not belong to the heritage of the pan-Orthodox tradition. As a result of the USSR's demographic policies, the dominance of the ethnic Russians within the LOC has become entrenched. Consequently, efforts persist to shape the LOC as a cultural attribute of the Russian minority rather than as a full-fledged local church within a sovereign state. By contrast, both the interwar history of the LOC and experiences from other local churches within the pan-Orthodox community provide examples of churches that are

<sup>36</sup> The matter of autocephaly was taken up by the LOC Council without any preceding debate in wider Latvian Orthodox circles or in the public sphere, thereby placing the Latvian Orthodox community before a *fait accompli*. In effect, the Council deferred to the decision of the state authorities.

<sup>37</sup> The autocephaly of the Church is also manifested in its liturgical formulation, where prayers are offered for "the highly blessed Orthodox patriarchs". This formulation is present in the service texts published during the interwar period (LPB 1939, 4).

<sup>38</sup> The special Office of the MP for Eparchies in Nearby Foreign Countries has previously issued a statement condemning the LOC action (Anonymous 2023). The fact that the MP's public communication regarding the LOC matter occurred through this particular structure confirmed the Latvian state's concerns that Russia is attempting to eliminate the LOC's self-governing and independence by altering its canonical status.

<sup>39</sup> Within the Orthodox Church, receiving myrrh is not always a marker of subordination but may instead serve as an expression of friendship and ecclesiological unity.

inclusive toward all residents and maintain active relations with other Orthodox churches. At present the LOC lacks a clear sense of its own identity as a Latvian Orthodox community with its own distinct history, culture, and traditions. There is reason to believe that this awareness may develop alongside broader processes of integration and the further formation of a political nation in Latvian society. As these processes unfold, the dominant narratives within the Church are also likely to change, especially as new generations, born and raised in an independent state, enter church life. Latvian state policies in education, culture, and integration play a significant role in shaping this transformation.

The current LOC canonical status aligns with national security interests; however, its autocephaly has yet to be officially recognised by other autocephalous churches within the pan-Orthodox community.<sup>40</sup> Consequently, it is still formally considered to be under the MP jurisdiction. The LOC's request for recognition of its autocephaly has not yet been considered by the ROC Local Council. Given the ongoing Russian war against Ukraine, the likelihood of convening the Council in the near future is remote, as the participation of Ukrainian representatives is mandatory for this Council's proceedings. In view of these circumstances, the matter of the LOC's autocephaly could be resolved without the MP's mediation, specifically through a direct appeal to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. It is evident that such an action would provoke tension in the relations between the LOC and the MP. Therefore, a wait-and-see approach has been adopted, particularly given that the lack of recognition of the LOC's autocephalous status does not impede its functioning. However, the official recognition of its autocephaly would fortify the LOC's standing within the communion of other autocephalous churches and enable its full participation on equal terms in pan-Orthodox deliberations.

## References

- Alberings, Arturs, and Eduards Laimiņš. 1926. *Noteikumi par pareizticībās baznīcas stāvokli*. <http://tzpi.lu.lv/files/2018/06/Pareizticigie-1926.pdf>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- Anonymous. 1667. *Deiania Moskovskogo Sobora o raznykh tserkovnykh izpravleniakh v 1667 godu*. <https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/books/original/19159/1667.pdf>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- Anonymous. 1920a. 'Latvijas pareizticīgo congress'. *Arājs* 1: 1–4.
- Anonymous. 1920b. 'K otdeleniu pravoslavnoi tserkvi v Latvii'. *Segodnia* 22: 1–4.
- Anonymous. 2013. *Sobranie dokumentov Russkoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi: Normativnye dokumenty*. Vol. I. Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Moskovskoi Patriarkhii.
- Anonymous. 2023. *Zaiavlenie Upravlenia Moskovskoi Patriarkhii po delam eparkhii blizhnego zarubezh'ia o polozenii del v Latviiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi*. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6049444.html>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- AZBUKA.RU. *Tserkovnoe pravo*. <https://azbyka.ru/pravo/>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- Balevics, Zigmunds. 1987. *Pareizticīgo Baznīca Latvijā*. Rīga: Avots.
- Dāvis, Jānis. 1920. 'Latvijas pareizticīgās baznīcas autokefālija'. *Baltijas Vēstnesis* 118: 1–4.
- DELFI.LV. 2022. *Latvijas pareizticīgā baznīca nav vienots veselums, atzīst reliģijpētnieks*. <https://www.delfi.lv/193/politics/54278202/latvijas-pareizticiga-baznica-nav-vienots-veselums-atzist-relijipetnieks>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- Drēģeris, Mārtiņš. 2022. 'Būt karā jeb puscelā uz jaunu Latvijas Pareizticīgās baznīcas statusu'. *Jurista Vārds* 37: 2151. <https://m.juristavards.lv/doc/281908-but-kara-jeb-puscela-uz-jaunu-latvijas-pareizticigas-baznicas-statusu/>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- Erickson, John H. 1991. 'The Autocephalous Church'. In *The Challenge of Our Past: Studies in Orthodox Canon Law and Church History* edited by John Erikson, 91–114. Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary.

<sup>40</sup> Many autocephalous Orthodox Churches exist worldwide: the four Patriarchates of the early Church (Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem), and a number of local churches of newer origin - such as in Russia, Serbia, Romania, etc.



- Erickson, John H. 2020. 'Autocephaly and Autonomy'. In *The Time Has Come: Debates over the Autocephaly of the OCA Reflected in St Vladimir's Quarterly* edited by Ionut-Alexandru Tudorie, 343–362. Yonkers, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Gavrilin, Alexander. 2018. 'O kanonicheskom statuse Pravoslavnoy Tserkvi v Estonii i Latvii v nachale 1920-kh godov'. *Pravoslavie v Baltii* 16/17: 101–112.
- Getcha, Job. 2023. 'Autocephaly in the Orthodox Church: Past and Present'. In *Autocephaly. Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* edited by Edward G. Farrugia and Željko Paša, 997–1010. Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute.
- Hovorun, Cyril. 2023. 'Evolutionary Tree of Autocephaly'. In *Autocephaly. Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* edited by Edward G. Farrugia and Željko Paša, 1051–1062. Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute.
- Jović, Rastko, and Rade Kisić. 2023. 'The Serbian Orthodox Church: Conveying Unity and Solidarity in the Church'. In *Autocephaly. Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* edited by Edward G. Farrugia and Željko Paša, 367–398. Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute.
- Jović, Rastko. 2021. 'The Fluid Labyrinths of Autocephaly: The Macedonian Orthodox Church'. In *National and Ecumenical Orthodoxy* edited by Dimitrios Keramidas and Nikos Kouremenos, 99–124. Thessaloniki: CEMES Publications.
- Kalkandjieva, Daniela. 2018. 'Russian Ecclesiastical Geopolitics between the Two World Wars'. In *CAS Working Paper Series* 10 (9): 3–50. Sofia: Centre for Advanced Study Sofia.
- Kalkandjieva, Daniela. 2023. 'The Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Ecclesiology and Politics in the Building of Bulgarian Autocephalies'. In *Autocephaly. Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* edited by Edward G. Farrugia and Željko Paša, 343–366. Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale.
- Kalkandjieva, Daniela. 2024. 'The Political Theology of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church Between Ecclesiology, Nationalism and Modernity (1870–1922)'. In *Orthodoxy in the Agora: Orthodox Christian Political Theologies Across History* edited by Mihai-D. Grigore and Vasilios N. Makrides, 131–150. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.13109/9783666302565.131>.
- Kalniņš, Jānis. 2007. *Latvijas Pareizticīgā Baznīca: Vēstures komentārs*. Rīga: San Estera.
- Kalniņš, Jānis. 2025. *Svētais Rīgas Jānis*. Rīga: Eikon.
- Kincis, Jānis, and Ilja Kozins. 2022. *Prezidents piedāvā saraut Latvijas Pareizticīgās baznīcas saites ar Maskavu*. <https://www.lsm.lv/raksts/zinas/latvija/prezidents-piedava-saraut-latvijas-pareizticigas-baznicas-saites-ar-maskavu.a472288/>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- Kotov, Aleksandr Eduardovich, and Ivan Vasilievich Petrov. 2019. 'U istokov Latviiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi: ot "russkoi very" k avtokefalistskim tendentsiam'. *Nauchnyi dialog* 11: 338–353. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.24224/2227-1295-2019-11-338-353>.
- Kuraev, Andrei. 2020. *Vizantiia protiv SSSR: Voina fantomnykh imperii za tserkov' Ukraini*. Moskva: Prospekt.
- Kuraev, Andrei. 2023. *Pochemu takie polovinchatye mery?* <https://diak-kuraev.livejournal.com/2023/05/15/>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- LIKUMI.LV. *Law on the Latvian Orthodox Church*. <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/184626>. (Date of retrieval 22 November, 2024).
- Louth, Andrew. 2023. 'From Patristic "Autocephalous" to Modern Orthodox "Autocephaly." Some Critical Reflections'. In *Autocephaly. Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* edited by Edward G. Farrugia and Željko Paša, 985–996. Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute.
- LPB. 1939. *Pareizticīgās Baznīcas Dievkalpojumi*. Rīga: LPB Sinodes izdevums.
- LPB. 2022. *Latvijas Pareizticīgās Baznīcas Statūti*. Rīga: Latvijas Pareizticīgās Baznīcas Sinode.
- MOSPAT.RU. *Polozhenie Latviiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvi pri arkhiepiskope Ioanne (Pommere)*. <https://mospat.ru/ru/authors-analytics/90888/>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- Murzaku, Ines Angeli. 2023. 'The Albanian Orthodox church: from schism to Holy Chrism: the arduous path to autocephaly'. In *Autocephaly. Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* edited by Edward G. Farrugia and Željko Paša, 491–520. Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute.



- Paert, Irina. 2020a. 'A family affair? Post-imperial Estonian Orthodoxy and its relationship with the Russian Mother Church, 1917–1923'. *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 62 (3–4): 315–340. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00085006.2020.1824609>.
- Paert, Irina. 2020b. 'Vosstanovlenie Revel'skogo vikariatstva v 1917 godu i vybory episkopa kak proiavlennye "tserkovnoi revoliutsii" v Rzhzhskoi eparkhii'. *Pravoslavie v Baltii* 9 (18): 59–71.
- PATRIARCHIA.RU. 2023. Zhurnal No 51. [Magazine No 51]. <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/6051881.html>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).
- Pharmakides, Theokletos. 1840. *Apologia*. Athens: Angelou Angelidou.
- Pilipenko, Evgeny. 2023. 'Autocephaly in the Thought and Practice of Russian Orthodoxy'. *Autocephaly. Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* edited by Edward G. Farrugia and Željko Paša, 1085–1098. Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute.
- Pommers, Jānis, and Jānis Kalniņš. 1993. *Svētrunas, raksti un uzstāšanās*. Rīga: Labvēsts.
- Radić, Radmila, and Daniela Kalkandjieva. 2023. 'The Macedonian Orthodox Church – Archbishopric of Ohrid. An Autocephaly in Progress'. In *Autocephaly. Coming of Age in Communion. Historical, Canonical, Liturgical, and Theological Studies* edited by Edward G. Farrugia and Željko Paša, 633–661. Rome: Pontifical Oriental Institute.
- Rimestad, Sebastian. 2012a. 'Latvieši un pareizticība'. In *Reliģiozitāte Latvijā: vēsture un mūsdienu situācija*: 161–176. Riga: University of Latvia.
- Rimestad, Sebastian. 2012b. *The Challenges of Modernity to the Orthodox Church in Estonia and Latvia (1917–1940)*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-3-653-02050-2>.
- Rohtmets, Priit, and Toomas Schvak. 2023. 'The establishment of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church: history and interpretations'. *Usuteaduslik Ajakiri* 84 (1): 1–35. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.23675/ua.v84i01.23942>.
- Rohtmets, Priit, and Valdis Teraudkalns. 2024. 'The Estonian and Latvian Orthodox Churches of the Moscow Patriarchate before and after the Russian war in Ukraine'. *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 44 (1): 1–34. doi.: <https://doi.org/10.55221/2693-2229.2486>.
- Runce, Inese, and Jelena Avanesova. 2014. 'The Latvian Orthodox Church'. In *Eastern Christianity and Politics in the Twenty-First Century* edited by Lucian N. Leustean, 370–386. London, New York: Routledge.
- Sanderson, Charles Wegener. 2005. *Autocephaly as a Function of Institutional Stability and Organizational Change in the Eastern Orthodox Church*. PhD Diss. University of Maryland.
- Schmemmann, Alexander. 2020. 'A Meaningful Storm: Some Reflections on Autocephaly, Tradition, and Ecclesiology'. In *The Time Has Come: Debates over the Autocephaly of the OCA Reflected in St Vladimir's Quarterly* edited by Ionut-Alexandru Tudorie, 149–178. Yonkers, New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press.
- Shumylo, Serhii. n.d. *Information Note about a Non-canonical Group in Latvia, Falsely Presenting Itself as the So-called Latvian Orthodox Autonomous Church of the Patriarchate of Constantinople*. Unpublished manuscript.
- Skujenieks, Margers. 1925. *Deuxieme recensement de la population en Lettonie*. Rīga: Valsts statistiskā pārvalde.
- Tieslietu Ministrija. 2024. *Ziņojums par Tieslietu ministrijā iesniegtajiem reliģisko organizāciju pārskatiem par darbību 2023.gadā*. <https://www.tm.gov.lv/lv/media/22878/download?attachment>. (Date of retrieval 22 November 2024).