The national identity and Orthodox Church: The case of contemporary Ukraine

Dmytro Shevchuk,[1] Kateryna Shevchuk[2] & Kateryna Khudoba[3]

Abstract
This article analyzes Orthodox influence on developing national identity in modern Ukraine. The authors state that the factor of national specificity of Christianity is evident if we consider nations, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. In addition, Christianity influences the development of national cultures and has acquired the national characteristics of a particular community. Also, the war in Ukraine, which was started by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022, has significantly impacted socio-cultural processes in Ukraine, the functioning of national identity, and the religious situation, especially regarding the Orthodox churches. Authors pay attention to the reference to the topic of national identity in the documents and sermons of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine to show how the Orthodox hierarchies treat these issues. In addition, they study the ideologies that the Russian Orthodox Church creates and tries to impose through the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church churches of the Moscow Patriarchate as a dominant cultural, religious, and political discourse.

Keywords: Ukraine, national identity, Christianity, Orthodox Church, political religion

Introduction

It is crucial to study national identity in today's globalized world. National identity in modern conditions is one of the fundamental ways of human existence, as it relates to motivations in the construction and functioning of the state-political structure of societies, which forms the basis of the national state. In addition, modernity exacerbates the identity problem due to the collision of the universal and the particular, which requires researchers to find new conceptual means of analysis and understanding.

Researchers of the relationship between Christianity and national identity may encounter a fundamental difficulty that concerns the universal character of Christian truths and principles of faith. The ubiquitous nature of Christianity follows not only from its specifics but also from the general essence of the religion. Religious communities (especially those that seek to create the Church as a community that unites believers) appeal to all elements of a given population, crossing ethnic boundaries. They often preach to the whole world and never appeal to any class, even when, in practice, the religion is assigned to one category or is spread chiefly among one class. Already at the early stages of the development of Christianity, this was repeatedly emphasized. For example, the apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians: "So in Christ Jesus, you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither enslaved person nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:26-28, NIV). However, on the other hand, if we turn to the historical or political aspects of Christianity, we will notice that the factor of national specificity of Christianity is present. In addition, Christianity influences the development of national cultures and has acquired the national characteristics of a particular community.

National identity is a conscious belonging to a national community based on a stable emotional connection that arises from a formed system of ideas about traditions, culture, language, and politics, as well as the adoption of group norms and values. Primarily, researchers

---

[1] The National University of Ostroh Academy (Ukraine); dmytro.shevchuk@oa.edu.ua; ORCID: 0000-0001-5609-2600.
[2] Rivne State University of Humanities (Ukraine); ksshev@ukr.net; ORCID: 0000-0003-3275-8599.
[3] The National University of Ostroh Academy (Ukraine); kateryna.khudoba@oa.edu.ua; ORCID: 0000-0003-1337-9542.

perceive national identity as a modern construct. However, there are discussions about to what extent national identity incorporates pre-modern traditional forms of collective identity (including religious) and to what extent it denies them. Of course, these debates have no end, as rational arguments are possible for both positions. To outline the problem considered in this article, we think it appropriate to refer to the conception of Anthony Smith. In the book National Identity, he states that there are two models of national identity: a civic model of the national identity (he also calls it "Western") and an ethnic model of the national identity ("non-Western"). Smith notes that the ethnic model of national identity is characteristic of Eastern European nations. The essence of this model is that a nation can trace its roots to some conditional common ancestor, and its members differ from the rest of humanity in their kinship. In the ethnic model, the people, even when they have not been mobilized for political action, are still the object of nationalist hopes (Smith, 1991). In the post-communist years in Ukraine, we can observe a specific hybrid form of identity that combines these two models. But during the last few years, we observe the intensive development of a civil society that is oriented towards forming a democratic political culture and civic model of Ukrainian national identity. Therefore, the concept of a nation is more related to a political community than an ethnic one. On the other hand, national elements play an essential role in (self)identification, which is especially clearly visible in the conditions of Russian military aggression in Ukraine. Religious identity is vital in the combining of elements of other types of collective identity in the forming of national identity.

The formation of national identities is often associated with secular processes in modern societies. National identities replaced other types of collective identity, including religious identity, which was one of the main aspects of traditional human identification. In current conditions, identity takes on very different forms (Shevchuk & Matusevych, 2017). A person's search for his identity as a member of a specific community is carried out not only in rational ways but also through reference to the sacred (after all, very often, national symbols in the imagination of people acquire a religious meaning). As Mykola Kozlovets writes, "a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of identity allows us to assert that it has a sacred essence and, thus, differs from other social phenomena in several exceptional, unique characteristics. The sacred acts as an integral element of the formation of identity because it affects the deep and secret layers of consciousness" (Kozlovets, 2009, p. 89). Determining the sacred essence of identity allows us to assert that religion plays an essential role in the formation of national identity as well. Therefore, to understand the processes of national identity formation in modern Ukraine, we intend to turn to the role of Orthodoxy, which is the dominant Christian denomination in the country. Jaroslaw Buciora also notes the need to study the relationship between national identity and religion in Eastern European countries and the Balkans: "National identity in Eastern European countries or the Balkans has to be studied with special attention to the relationship of the church and national identity. In those regions, the old alliance between religion and politics, church and state, is reemerging with unpredictable consequences" (Buciora, 2001, p. 328).

In 2022, Ukraine became one of the centers of attention of the whole world. The reason for this is very tragic – the open aggression and war that the Russian Federation has unleashed against Ukraine. The war in Ukraine has significantly impacted socio-cultural processes in Ukraine, the functioning of national identity, and the religious situation, especially regarding the Orthodox churches. With this in mind, we will pay attention to the reference to the topic of national identity in the documents and sermons of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine to show how the Orthodox hierarchies treat these issues. In addition, to understand the processes related to national identity in modern Ukraine and the role of the Orthodox Church (its various denominations) in this process, it is necessary to turn to those ideologies that the Russian Orthodox Church creates and tries to impose through the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox

Church churches of the Moscow Patriarchate as a dominant cultural, religious and political discourse.

We must also remember that when we talk about the connection between the church, religion, and national identity, we are not only dealing with political or cultural processes. An important role is played by the moral dimension of the processes we are talking about. In Ukraine, this was acutely manifested during the war which the Russian Federation unleashed.

Orthodox Church on the religious "map" of Ukraine

Ukrainian lands adopted Christianity of the Eastern rite in 988 during the time of Kievan Rus. From this moment, we can talk about the period of Kyiv Christianity, which laid the foundations of the Ukrainian national tradition of Christianity and the spiritual development of the Ukrainian people. However, in 1686, the Ukrainian Church was absorbed by the Moscow Patriarchate in violation of canonical rules. As a result, Ukrainian Orthodoxy is losing its independence under the pressure of Moscow. Ukrainian church institutions were destroyed, traditions were destroyed, and Orthodoxy in Ukrainian lands were unified and Russified. With the independence of Ukraine in 1991, a new stage in the development of Orthodoxy in Ukraine began, as there was a return to the sources of Kyiv Christianity, and the foundations were laid for the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church. Today, there are two main Orthodox churches in Ukraine: The Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The last wave of investigation of cultural values within the World Values Survey (2020) demonstrates that religion plays an essential role for Ukrainians. If we talk about the importance of God in the lives of people in Ukraine, as of 2020, for more than half of the respondents (56.3%), God was essential to one degree or another (answers 7–10 on a 10-point scale, where "10" = very important). At the same time, about a third of the respondents chose the extreme score of 10 points, which means that God is significant in their lives. Researchers who worked on this project noted that the frequency of attending religious services has increased (compared with the results of the previous wave in 2011) – from 81.4% to 83.3%. At the same time, the share of those who attended religious services at least once a month or more often was 24.1% in 2011 and increased to 33.8% in 2020. According to the results for 2020, Ukraine is closest to Lithuania (30.0% attend at least once a month, and 83.4% attend less often) and Croatia (33.7% attend at least once per month, and those who visit at least sometimes are 78.3%). The report on the results of the survey also notes that in terms of the share of those who identify themselves as believers, Ukraine is in the middle of the list of European countries (59.3%), between Bulgaria (61.8%) and Austria (57.9%), while because the highest value of this indicator is in Poland (83.0%), and the lowest in Sweden (26.7%) (Shurenkova, Pavlova & Dmytruk, 2020).

Data on the religious situation in Ukraine can be supplemented by a social study of the peculiarities of religious and church-religious self-determination of Ukrainian citizens: trends of 2000–2021, which was conducted by the Ukrainian think-tank Razumkov Center (Osoblyvosti, 2021). Confessional self-determination of citizens of Ukraine shows that 60% of respondents identify themselves with Orthodoxy.

The results of this study demonstrate the tendency that the respondents' declaration of belonging to a particular religious organization or church is not always connected with the identification of oneself as a believer and may be determined, in particular, by socio-cultural or ethnic identity. In particular, it is also noted that the attribution of oneself to Orthodoxy or Christianity by a part of citizens can be connected with socio-cultural and ethnic identity, as confirmed by the answers of respondents – ethnic Ukrainians to the question "Is it necessary to consider oneself a Ukrainian (Ukrainian) belonging to a certain religion or church?" Fourteen percent of ethnic Ukrainians positively answer this question (from 5% in the South to 26% in

the West). When answering the question "In such a case, to which church or religion should a person belong to be considered a Ukrainian (Ukrainian)?", they most often name the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (36% of those who consider it necessary to consider themselves Ukrainian, belong to a particular religion or church), to any Orthodox church (24%) or any Christian church (19%). Somewhat less often is membership in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, the Kyiv Patriarchate (12%), the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (9%), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) (7%), and membership in any religion (7%) (Osoblyvosti, 2021, p. 6).

The development of Orthodoxy in Ukraine reached a new stage with the granting of Tomos to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church by the Ecumenical Patriarch and the formation of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine. This event greatly inspired the expression of the national character of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. As you know, being a Christian denomination, Orthodoxy is universal, but it has a national character in the form of expression. In particular, as Oleksandr Sahan writes, the Orthodox churches of different nations have their language of services, special rites characteristic of their national culture, and a peculiar performance of generally accepted Christian traditions. Since the 1980s, Orthodoxy in Ukraine has been marked by the active nationalization of its ritual forms, which was most evident in the ritual and cult sphere. This can be seen as a particular feature of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Sahan, 2001, p. 123).

The document's full title is *Patriarchal and Synodal Tomos on the granting of an autocephalous church system to the Orthodox Church in Ukraine*. The Tomos gives the Kyiv Metropolitanate (comprising all Orthodox bishops, priests, and the faithful on the territory of Ukraine who agree to this) autocephalous status and makes it the 15th canonical autocephalous church — the Orthodox Church in Ukraine — which subsequently became a full-fledged and self-governing administrative part of a single Ecumenical Orthodox Church without the mediation of other local churches. According to the analytical report of The National Institute for Strategic Studies, the granting of Tomos has several vital meanings: 1) the autocephaly of Ukrainian Orthodoxy has become an organic addition to the political independence of Ukraine and a factor in strengthening national security in its humanitarian dimension; 2) in the current complex socio-political and geopolitical realities, the newly established autocephalous church is an integral component of Ukrainian public diplomacy, one of the tasks of which is to counter anti-Ukrainian propaganda, which is replicated by the Russian Federation on the international arena; 3) the creation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine turned out to be a catalyst for specific processes in Ecumenical Orthodoxy, for example, it brought to the surface deep contradictions that had accumulated over many decades in the relations between the Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow. 4) reformatting of the Orthodox landscape of Ukraine and intensification of interfaith dialogue; 5) the development of relations between Greek and Slavic Orthodoxy begins; 6) the church will play the role of an important marker of national unity and social mobilization (Tomos, 2019).

Granting the Tomos to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine legitimized the centuries-old efforts of the Ukrainian people aimed at the foundation of their own Local Orthodox Church, which reproduces the national features of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, formed over many centuries.

Orthodox Church in Ukraine and Ukrainian national identity

When we talk about Orthodoxy in Ukraine and seek to outline its connection with the question of national identity, some clarifications related to terminology should be made. In particular, as Oleksandr Sagan writes, "The term 'Ukrainian Orthodoxy' does not completely coincide with the concept of 'Orthodoxy in Ukraine'. The first assumes the presence of church-wide and ritual differences from other Orthodox Churches. […] The concept of 'Orthodoxy in Ukraine' includes the history, creed, and current state of all existing Churches, communities, or religious

movements in Ukraine that identify themselves as Orthodox" (Sahan, 2016, p. 26). Some of the Orthodox churches or communities deliberately distance themselves from Ukrainian culture. Therefore, they not only do not contribute to the formation of national identity but also sometimes hinder these processes. To this should also be added the historical aspect related to the extent to which Orthodoxy influenced the formation of the Ukrainian nation. For example, Viktor Elenskii draws attention to the fact that at the beginning of the 20th century, the Orthodox tradition did not notably influence the processes of national identity formation in Ukraine.

On the other hand, if we turn to the period when Ukraine gained Independence in the early 1990s, then Orthodoxy became one of the critical factors in the consolidation of Ukrainians intending to form their nation with an independent state. Viktor Elenskii writes:

> Orthodox Christianity—and, indeed, religion in general – have not played an outstanding role in the formation of the modern Ukrainian nation. For the founding fathers of Ukrainian nationalism in the early twentieth century, both Orthodox Christianity, which cemented a 'pan-Russian' identity, and Catholicism, which separated the Galician Rusyns from their brethren in Left-Bank Ukraine, were stumbling blocks rather than material for creating the Ukrainian nation. By the end of the century, the situation had changed fundamentally. The elites of post-Soviet Ukraine have tried to find a transverse axis of nation-building, some sort of universal connection capable of welding a collection of local identities into a common Ukrainian identity and uniting people who have different codes of historical memory, speak different languages, and have different conceptions of their country's future (Elenskii, 2014, p. 28).

The newly established Orthodox Church of Ukraine begins a new stage in the influence of the Church on the formation of Ukrainian national identity. These processes are based on the Orthodox tradition and also develop religious practices that are inextricably linked to the history of the Ukrainian people and the formation of Ukrainian national identity. This Church sets as its task the effective and efficient development of Ukrainian Orthodoxy at the ecclesiological, institutional, and organizational levels. The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) claims to become Ukraine's most prominent Orthodox denomination. As Metropolitan Epifany, the head of the OCU, noted in his report:

> The Orthodox Church of Ukraine was and remained the largest religious association in our country, primarily in terms of the level of self-identification of our fellow citizens with it and public trust. Considering the data from various sociological surveys, we can say that approximately 75% of Ukrainian residents define themselves as Orthodox believers. Prior to the great Russian invasion. most of them recognize their affiliation to the OCU. The tragic events of the war significantly affected the self-awareness of the Ukrainian people; many opened their eyes to what the ideology of the 'russkij mir' really is, which was imposed from Russia for years to justify aggressive plans (Epifany, 2022a).

According to the survey, 55% of the faithful of the OCU believe that the Church should be nationally oriented (Osoblyvosti, 2021, p. 23). At the same time, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine repeatedly proves its close connection with the Ukrainian people in its documents and rhetoric (sermons, interviews, speeches). This connection is demonstrated especially during the full-scale war that the Russian Federation launched in Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

The support of the Ukrainian people from the Orthodox Church of Ukraine was especially evident during the war that Russia started against Ukraine in 2022. In his addresses, Metropolitan Epifany constantly speaks about the need to unite the Ukrainian nation against the

aggressor. We often come across references to the events of national history, which are essential in the context of the formation of the Ukrainian nation. For example, in his sermon at the prayer service for Ukraine on August 24, 2022, Metropolitan Epifany said:

> For centuries, our people suffered in captivity. During this time, hundreds of thousands of courageous fighters for the freedom and Independence of Ukraine died on the battlefields or were murdered in prisons by the enemy. Millions were exterminated during the Holodomor genocide and repression. So, our Independence was chosen at a high price, the price of blood and martyrdom. It was chosen so the Ukrainian people, together with other free peoples of Europe, could build their happy future so that we can praise God in our native Ukrainian language. To nurture and multiply our ancient Ukrainian culture, enriching it and passing it on to new generations. So that we know our true history, honor our real heroes (Epifany, 2022b).

In his sermons and speeches before the faithful, Metropolitan Epifany addresses the key figures who make up the pantheon of Ukrainian national heroes. For example, on the day of commemoration of the famous Ukrainian poet and intellectual Ivan Franko (May 28, 2021), Metropolitan Epifany noted that it is difficult to imagine the modern Ukrainian nation, as well as the independent Ukrainian state, without those people who in different periods of history led the movement for Independence, enlightenment, culture. In his opinion, such figures as Ivan Franko paved the way for the Ukrainian people and their sovereignty and Independence. Metropolitan Epifany also noted: "It took us [the Ukrainian people] more than a hundred years of trials, Soviet torture, and painful lessons from [Russia's] iron "fraternal embrace" to finally feel like Ukrainians. Unfortunately, even now, some people continue to divide us geographically and inflame internal disputes between Ukrainians in the west and east, destroying national unity in the face of a common enemy. Today, we have an independent state, which Ukrainians were probably unprepared for during Frank's time. It is important to be ready now because we risk losing too much" (Den' pamjati Franka, 2021). The hierarchs of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine often speak with words of support for the Ukrainian people in times of resistance to Russian aggression and the thawing of their Independence. For example, in April 2022, Metropolitan Epifany appealed to the Ukrainian people to overcome their fear in the fight against the Russian aggressor:

> I do not doubt that Ukraine, by the grace of God, will achieve peace. But will fear to help us in this? No, you cannot win with fear. We are entering the eighth year of the war these April days. We did not initiate or provoke a war that we did not want. We have never encroached on someone else's property, sought to enslave others, or encroached on someone else's territory. A war in which we defend the land given to us by God, our people, and our values. And the aggressor neighbor knows very well that during all this time, Ukrainians showed such strength of spirit and unity that few expected from us. We were not destroyed by shelling or broken by the lies of the aggressor. So once again, in a panic, the Russian authorities are spreading the 'virus of fear', which it has been growing and cultivating among its subjects for centuries, threatening to destroy them, rattling weapons, increasing psychological pressure (Ukrinform, 2022).

In the context of the formation of the national identity of the population of Ukraine and the creation of the Ukrainian nation based on civil society rather than ethnicity, it should be noted that the OCU is becoming an essential element of public space that promotes civic values and virtues. In this particular aspect, the nation is not understood exclusively in the ethnic sense. The civic concept of the nation is gaining increasing importance. This means Orthodoxy in Ukraine is reforming and striving to become an element of civil society. As stated in the document *10 theses for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine*, which was created by active hierarchs

of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the faithful: "The Orthodox Church of Ukraine as a community of citizens of Ukraine who have Christian values and beliefs, as well as the right and calling to proclaim them, has to play an active role in social processes and discussions at all levels, while standing firmly based on Christ's Gospel, love and humanity, strengthening peace and dialogue in society. The priority should be the relationship between the Church and civil society, not the Church and the state. Regarding the state, the Church must restore the ancient service of the Advocate and Mediator in the dialogue between the state and society to support all citizens and protect them from violence and repression. A truly Ukrainian ideal example of such a position is the position of the Church on the Maidan" (RISU, 2019).

The Church must not create intolerance and a sense of the need for national isolation. Such a danger is present because of the historical development of Orthodoxy and the natural formation of ties between the Church and the nation. For example, Cyril Hovorun writes:

> The Orthodox churches soon realized this shift of political authority and aligned themselves with its new bearers — the nations. It resulted in [the] adoption of nationalism as a form of self-identification of the churches. As in the times of Byzantium, the churches relied on the emperor, so in modern times they began relying on the nations. This alignment constituted a form of symphony and fostered nationalism within these churches. Nationalism became the main identity for many Orthodox churches, leading them to isolation and intolerance (Hovorun, 2015, pp. 5–6).

The Orthodox Church of Ukraine has prerequisites to avoid this isolationism and intolerance because of the reformation tendencies. In addition, Ukraine demonstrates an exception in forming a civil society with the involvement of the Church. Cyril Hovorun notes that the Ukrainian Maidan was actively supported by the churches, which joined the formation of civil society. Therefore, the Church creates its public theology, which helps society to overcome the symptoms and causes of socio-political "diseases". Public theology, which the OCU should develop, can help not only the development of the Orthodox tradition itself but also solve several problems facing Ukraine: the formation of civil society, education of responsible citizens, resistance to terrorism and separatism, overcoming the division of Ukrainian Orthodoxy (Hovorun, 2017). In this way, it can contribute to developing national identity in its civic dimension, creating prerequisites for dialogue and interaction of diverse cultural identities that make up the Ukrainian multicultural society.

Political religion of Orthodox in Russia toward the Ukrainian nation

In Russian Orthodoxy, such a phenomenon as a political religion, which is toxic to religious faith and causes the politicization of the Church, has formed and prevailed. Political religion breeds anti-Semitism, nationalism, fundamentalism, and culture wars. According to Cyril Hovorun, political Orthodoxy can be defined as "unorthodox orthodoxy". It can be explained as follows: true Christian Orthodoxy is possible only with a balance between faith, ethics, and identity. Therefore, when identity replaces faith and ethics, Orthodoxy becomes unorthodox. It is how abnormal political orthodoxies, or political religions, appear. Another definition we find in the book claims that political Orthodoxy is an ideology dressed in theological robes. The author understands ideology as secularized theology. He notes much commonality between ideology and theology: both put ideas above the visible world, quickly mobilize the masses, have the effectiveness of a myth, and offer a holistic worldview. At the same time, there is a fundamental difference: theological ideas lead a person to the divine, and ideology limits a person to this world (Hovorun, 2018). The transformation into a political religion also harms Russian Orthodoxy, as it departs from the fundamental principles of the Christian life. Behind the ideology, the meaning of the Gospel truths is lost, and the Church becomes an instrument of hybrid war. Secular power, which has formed an effective political system of

authoritarianism in modern Russia, manipulates religious feelings to establish political influence and limit the freedoms of citizens. Added to this is what Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko) called the "ideology of ethnophiletism": "Tempted by the ideology of ethnophiletism, Russian Orthodoxy, unfortunately, in our eyes ceases to be 'only Christianity' and begins to be perceived by society as a synonym of Russian of a national religion – a religion that, instead of proclaiming a way of life in unity, becomes an instrument of psychological and cultural separation" (Oleksandr [Drabynko], 2018, p. 13).

It is difficult for the Russian religious consciousness to accept the fact of the different status of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. The Russian Orthodox Church has formed several myths about Orthodoxy in the territories of the Eastern Slavs, which fit into the general picture of "Russian history", which centers on the idea of the direct succession of the traditions of Kyivan Rus. When the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate was formed in the early 1990s, it caused a violent reaction from the Russian Orthodox Church. As Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko) writes, "The idea of the Kyiv Patriarchate shocked Russian self-awareness. In response, there was an accusation of "impersonation" – historical and canonical. Taking advantage of the fact that the Kyiv Patriarchate was founded by self-proclamation, in a situation of canonical isolation from world Orthodoxy, the Russian consciousness branded Ukrainian claims to Kyiv's heritage as a historical, cultural, and ecclesiastical impostor" (Oleksandr [Drabynko], 2018, p. 33).

The political religion of Russian Orthodoxy significantly assimilates and broadcasts the ideological narratives of the Russian world (*russkij mir*). Within these narratives and those formed on their basis, the ideologist denies the possibility of Ukrainian national identity and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. *Russkij mir* is a concept with the help of which Russia tries to construct the geopolitical space of its domination. Belonging to this space is determined, in particular, by the prevalence of the Russian language. It is noted that *russkij mir* consists of polyethnic layers, which are socially heterogeneous and geographically segmented, but at the same time show ideological homogeneity due to the connection with Russia and its culture. Although it declares ethnic diversity, such a concept simultaneously denies ethnic elements the formation of their national identity and self-determination through the construction of national states. In other words, the conception of *russkij mir* is the concept of the revival of the Russian Empire.

To some extent, they are trying to replace the Soviet identity with the identity of "*russkij mir*", thus restoring Russia's influence on the post-Soviet countries. This concept postulates the idea of "super-ethnicity of the Russian people", which involves projecting Russian identity to representatives of different nationalities. In this concept, the Ukrainian national idea is rejected as a "distortion" since there are no manifestations of multi-nationality or multi-ethnicity. Russian Orthodoxy actively promotes the conception of *russkij mir* and contributes to this rejection of Ukrainian national identity. In particular, *russkij mir* is defined as monoconfessional, and its religious component is the Russian tradition of Orthodoxy.

Russian Orthodoxy denies the right of Ukrainians to pray in the Ukrainian language. By introducing the "Church Slavic" language, a russification of the ancient Slavic language, into the practice of worship the Russification of the faithful of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is carried out. The issue of language in Ukraine has a significant impact on processes related to national identity. Denys Kiryukhin writes:

> Today in Ukraine, the question of Ukrainian/Russian language is not only and not so much a question related to the sphere of culture or the sphere of rights, but a question of politics, a question of the limits of the political community. It is a language that has been historically established to serve as the principal marker of Ukrainian national identity. The language in the case of Ukraine is one of those obvious and self-explanatory agents that allow, within the scope of identity politics, to draw the line

between 'us' and 'them' – in our case, this first means distinguishing between 'the Ukrainians' and 'the Russians' (Kiryukhin, 2015).

Therefore, the institutional confirmation of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine through the receipt of the Tomos is also the defense of the right to the non-contradiction of the canon of using the Ukrainian language for services and prayer.

Not only the denial of the tradition of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, but also the possibility of Ukrainian national identity on the part of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate occurs through the development and propaganda of the concept of "canonical territory". The idea of "canonical territory" complements the conception of *russkij mir*. In their writings, the ideologies of *russkij mir* state this connection and the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in establishing and spreading these ideas: "[...] Even in the early 1990s, against the background of the collapse of the Soviet Union, which became historical Russia's colossal territorial losses and almost called into question the further existence of Russian statehood within the borders of *russkij mir*. For this purpose, the term 'canonical territory' was introduced, which until then was unknown to church law" (Eufimij (Moiseev), 2009). Constructing the concept of "canonical territory", the Russian Orthodox Church seeks to maintain its influence on the territory of the former Soviet Union. In particular, defining the concept of "canonical territory", the representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate envisage the "monopoly" of Russian Orthodoxy regarding the presence in post-Soviet countries, in particular, Ukraine: "The borders of churches in many cases coincide with the borders of states, but the change of state borders does not necessarily lead to fragmentation churches So, for example, after the collapse of the USSR, the Moscow Patriarchate preserved its territorial integrity, although several schismatic structures arose on its canonical territory (in particular, in Ukraine)" (Ilarion, 2005). The concept of canonical territory aims to prevent the establishment of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's autocephaly and establish the position that Ukrainian Orthodoxy is an integral part of Russian Orthodoxy. In the same context, the pseudo-historical "unity" of the Ukrainian and Russian peoples is proclaimed. For example, after supporting the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Moscow Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev) noted: "First of all, we must pray for the spiritual unity of the heritage of the holy Prince Volodymyr. To pray for our one nation, which today lives in different countries, but which came out of a single baptismal font in Kyiv, which is united by a common faith and a common historical destiny" (Yakovleva, 2022). It should be noted that the spread of the ideologue of the "unified people" is exactly what inspires Russian aggression against Ukraine, being embedded in "historical myths".

The political religion developed by Russian Orthodoxy and broadcast to Ukraine poses a challenge to Ukrainian national identity. It not only seeks to form an ideological discourse aimed at preventing the establishment of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church but, in the spirit of the ideology dominant in Russia, denies the possibility of the formation and establishment of Ukrainian national identity. Moreover, in the conditions of an authoritarian state, Russian Orthodoxy has turned into a tool for supporting the government, including motivating military aggression against Ukraine.

Orthodoxy and moral dimension of the war in Ukraine

The question of the moral dimension of the Russian aggression in Ukraine, which has turned into a full–scale war, is highly topical and very acute. This issue has several aspects related to responsibility for war crimes committed by the Russian army in Ukraine (numerous pieces of evidence of such crimes have already been collected by international organizations and public activists), the moral aspect of opposing the aggressor and supporting Ukraine, the own moral choice of all those who war struck. Orthodoxy was faced with the need to develop its own position regarding the moral evaluation of the war unleashed by the Russian Federation.

Society's expectations primarily cause this need. According to studies, Ukrainians note that they see the mission of the Church in the moral improvement of society and the spread of moral principles and values (Osoblyvosti, 2021). In our opinion, we can single out two main aspects of the moral dimension of the war that affected the Orthodox Churches in Ukraine and Russia. The first concerns the institutional level and is related to the Churches' reaction to the events in Ukraine. The second concerns the personal dimension and the observance and implementation of the principles of Christian ethics and the Christian's moral duty.

The first is the aspect of moral responsibility for the motivation to participate in war and kill people. In his sermons, Metropolitan Epifany of the OCU has repeatedly noted that those who started and are waging an aggressive war against Ukraine violate God's law and human law and bear moral and legal responsibility, as they are actually murderers and criminals. From the point of view of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, the Moscow Patriarchate also suffered moral discredit due to its statements and reaction to the events in Ukraine. This was especially acute after the discovery of war crimes committed by the Russian military in Bucha, Borodyanka, and Irpin.

Moral responsibility rests not only on the direct perpetrators of war crimes but also on those who inspire them. In particular, this concerns the ideologues of the "Russian world", the concept of which is ethnophyletic and racist in its essence, as well as the hierarchs and priests who bless the attack on Ukraine. The Orthodox Church of Ukraine makes significant efforts to condemn the concept of the Russian measure and the actions of the Russian hierarchs. For example, in the Letter of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine to the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (July 27, 2022), a request was made: to condemn the doctrine of the "Russian peace" and recognize it as heretical; classify the actions of Patriarch Kirill on the canonical territory of the Patriarchate of Alexandria as schismatic; to deprive Kirill Gundyaev of the right to occupy the Moscow Patriarchate. In this letter, the moral condemnation of the actions of the Moscow Patriarch is clearly formulated:

> In the current situation, it is crucial that the Catholic Church properly reacts to the challenges emanating from the paganized Russian Orthodoxy. As the Gospel testifies, 'every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit' (Mt. 7:18). Acting according to this principle bequeathed by our Savior, the Church must unanimously recognize that the tree that bears today the 'fruits of war' is poisonous, that is, condemn the doctrine of the *russkij mir* as heretical (Lyst, 2022).

On the other hand, the Russian Orthodox Church does not feel moral responsibility. On the contrary, we see the encouragement of the faithful to participate in the war. In the sermons of Russian hierarchs, the concept of "holy war" and a distorted understanding of the Christian's moral duty can be observed, and participation in the war and death in it as a "sacred sacrifice".

For example, Patriarch Kirill said the following in his sermon:

> We know that today many people are dying on the fields of internecine strife. The Church prays that this war ends as quickly as possible and that as few brothers as possible kill each other in this fratricidal war. And at the same time, the Church realizes that if someone, driven by a sense of duty, fulfills an oath out of necessity, remains faithful to his calling and dies while performing his military task, he is undoubtedly committing an act equivalent to a sacrifice. He sacrifices himself for others. And therefore, we believe that this sacrifice washes away all the sins a person has committed (Kirill, 2022).

Repeatedly, in the speeches of Russian priests, we can observe the intimidation of the faithful with "moral horrors" in the West, which, without a doubt, has a manipulative nature and is

spread by Russian ideologues. These cases show that Russian Orthodoxy is going through a period of profound moral crisis, turning it even more into a political religion and destroying the unity of the Church and its moral authority in society.

The second aspect concerns the personal dimension of adherence to the principles of Christian ethics and an ethical attitude toward the enemy. Christianity is based on the commandment, "Love your neighbor as yourself". The system of Christian ethics is built on this commandment. Of course, there is no love for the enemy. War generates radical resistance to the enemy. However, as far as captured and wounded soldiers are concerned, we see that Ukraine adheres to international conventions and agreements while the Russian Federation deliberately ignores them. In addition, at the level of individuals, there are examples of moral treatment of another (even if it is an enemy) when helping the wounded or captured. These examples testify to the desire of the Ukrainian military to follow the principles of a Christian's moral duty and the principles of Christian ethics.

As for the personal dimension, the observance and implementation of the principles of Christian ethics and the moral obligation of a Christian, Paramedic Yulia Paevska, nicknamed Tyra, can be a striking example. A woman who rescued the wounded during the 2014 Maidan and, after the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation, continued to save people in Mariupol, where the Russians captured her.

Footage from Yulia Paevska's flash drive went around the world. One of the videos clearly shows how a Ukrainian female paramedic helps seriously wounded Russian soldiers and asks: "Why did you come here?" The paramedic herself explains that when a Russian comes to her with serious injuries, she does not fight with the wounded because, first of all, she must save his life. After all, this is the most significant value, even if it is your enemy who tried to kill you more than once.

Only following one's own Christian moral values is the reference point to which people who are in the hottest spots of war and who are fighting bravely and honestly with the enemy and with themselves are compared. When on your operating table is a man who destroyed your country and your fellow citizens, you have two options: either become the same cold-blooded bystander and watch your enemy die; or do everything in your power to save the wounded and entrust the rest to the Lord.

Christian values are the base and are imprinted in the memory from childhood with the mother's song, guiding a person throughout life. When the spectrum shifts and material goods begin to dominate moral values, then, as a result, we see the Russian army, who torture, rape, and kill civilians of Ukraine.

Conclusion

The development of the Ukrainian tradition of Orthodoxy is a historical regularity that is based on a tradition that has been formed over many centuries. It makes it possible to respond to the challenges facing it and the Ukrainian nation in modern conditions. Metropolitan Oleksandr (Drabynko) rightly points out: "Ukraine is too bad an option for absorption. And the point is not that, having unleashed a large-scale war, Russia will find itself completely isolated from the world community. More importantly, as a result of the hybrid war unleashed by Russia, the Ukrainian people have united and are ready today to defend their freedom with weapons in their hands" (Oleksandr [Drabynko], 2018, p. 30). These words were written in 2018 before the full-scale war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. In 2022, these words were confirmed, as the Ukrainian people united in the fight against the aggressor. Nation-building processes have significantly intensified, and the Ukrainian Orthodox tradition plays a crucial consolidating role in these processes, mainly through spiritual support. We demonstrated this role in the formation of Ukrainian national identity by the example of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, but other Orthodox denominations also testify to this. For example, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic

Church, which in its religious practice is also based on the traditions of Kyiv Orthodoxy. Among the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, the "voices" that condemn Russian aggression and point out the need to distance themselves from the ideology produced and broadcast by Russian Orthodoxy are getting louder. The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate opposes the attempts of the Russian Orthodox Church to reduce its autonomy. However, it demonstrates its significant dependence on Russia in terms of culture.

The launched full-scale war of the Russian Federation aims to destroy the Ukrainian national identity. However, it caused the reverse process. To a large extent, the ambivalences that previously characterized Ukrainian society are being overcome. Ukrainian national identity, on the contrary, has strengthened. It is increasingly acquiring a civic dimension. The Ukrainian Orthodox tradition becomes an integral part of this tradition while not limiting itself to cultural monologists and establishing the dominance of its value attitudes and beliefs, but rather by establishing dialogue and supporting civil society.

References
BUCIORA, J. (2001): Ecclesiology and national identity in Orthodox Christianity. In: *Exchange*, 30(4), pp. 328–343.
DEN' PAMJATI FRANKA [*Franko's Memorial Day*] (2021): [online] [Retrieved October 1, 2022] Available at: https://uapc.te.ua/den-pamyati-ivana-franka/
ELENSKII, V. (2014): Ukrainian Orthodoxy and the Ukrainian Project. In: *Russian Politics & Law*, 52(4), pp. 7–33.
EPIFANY, Metropolitan (2022a): *Dopovid' Predstojatela na rozshyrenomu zasidanni Arkhijerejs'koho Soboru* [*The Primate's report at the extended meeting of the Council of Bishops*]. [online] [Retrieved September 20, 2022] Available at: https://www.pomisna. info/uk/document-post/dopovid-predstoyatelya-na-rozshyrenomu-zasidanni-arhiyerejskogo-soboru-24-travnya-2022-r/
EPIFANY, Metropolitan (2022b): *Slovo Mytropolyta Epifanija na molebni za Ukrajinu* [*The word of Metropolitan Epifany at the prayer service for Ukraine*]. [online] [Retrieved September 28, 2022] Available at: https://www.pomisna.info/uk/sermon-post/slovo-mytropolyta-epifaniya-na-mizhkonfesijnomu-zahodi-molytva-za-ukrayinu/
EUFIMIJ (Moiseev) (2009): *Russkaja Cerkov' kak osnova Russkogo mira, Russkij mir kak osnova Vselenskoj Cerkvi* [*The Russian Church as the foundation of the Russian world, the Russian world as the foundation of the Universal Church*]. [online] [Retrieved September 25, 2022] Available at: https://bogoslov.ru/article/501891
HOVORUN, C. (2015): Churches in the Ukrainian public square. In: *Toronto Journal of Theology*, 31(1), pp. 3–14.
HOVORUN, C. (2017): *Ukrajins'ka publichna teologija* [*Ukrainian public theology*]. Kyiv: Duh i Litera.
HOVORUN, C. (2018): *Political Orthodoxies*: *The Unorthodoxies of the Church coerced*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.
ILARION, episkop (2005): *Princip "kanonicheskoj tieritorii" v pravoslavnoj tradicii* [*The principle of "canonical territory" in the Orthodox tradition*]. [online] [Retrieved October 10, 2022] Available at: https://church-and-time.ru/churchtime/churchtime31.pdf#page=44
KIRILL, Patriarch (2022): *Iz propoviedi v Niedieliu 15-ju po Piatidiesiatnice posle Liturgii v Aleksandro-Nevskom skitu, 25 sientiabria 2022 goda* [*From the sermon on the 15th Sunday after Pentecost after the Liturgy at the Alexander Nevsky Skete, September 25, 2022*]. [online] [Retrieved September 28, 2022] Available at: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid= 655838029241149&set=a.233022208189402

KIRYUKHIN, D. (2015): *Roots and features of modern Ukrainian national identity and nationalism.* [online] [Retrieved October 25, 2022] Available at: https://www.e-ir.info/2015/03/19/roots-and-features-of-modern-ukrainian-national-identity-and-nationalism/

KOZLOVETS, M. (2009): *Fenomen natsional'noji identychnosti*: *vyklyky globalizatsii* [*The phenomenon of national identity*: *Challenges of globalization*]. Zhytomyr: Vyd-vo ZHDU im. I. Franka.

LYST (2022): *Shchodo prytyahnennya Rosijs'koho patriarkha Kyryla do kanonichnoji vidpovidal'nosti i pozbavlennia joho Patriarshoho prestolu* [*Letter regarding bringing Russian Patriarch Kirill to canonical responsibility and depriving him of the Patriarchal throne*]. [online] [Retrieved October 15, 2022] Available at: https://www.pomisna.info/uk/vsi-novyny/lyst-shhodo-prytyagnennya-rosijskogo-patriarha-kyryla-do-kanonichnoyi-vidpovidalnosti-i-pozbavlennya-jogo-patriarshogo-prestolu/

OLEKSANDR [DRABYNKO] (2018): *Ukrajins'ka Cerkva: shlyakh do autokefalii* [*Ukrainian Church*: *The way to autocephaly*]. Kyiv: Duh i Litera.

OSOBLYVOSTI RELIGIJNOHO I CERKOVNO-RELIGIJNOHO SAMOVYZNACHENNIA HROMADYAN UKRAJINY: TENDENCIJI 2020–2021 RR. (2021): [*Features of religious and ecclesiastical self-determination of citizens of Ukraine: trends 2020–2021*]. Kyiv: Centr Razumkova.

RISU (2019): *10 tez dla PCU: viryany opublikuvaly propozyciji do planu dij novoji pomisnoji Cerkvy* [*10 theses for the OCU*: *Believers published proposals for the action plan of the new local Church*]. [online] [Retrieved October 16, 2022] Available at: https://risu.ua/10-tez-dlya-pcu-viryani-opublikuvali-propoziciji-do-planu-diy-novoji-pomisnoji-cerkvi_n96159

SAHAN, O. (2001): *Natsional'ni projavy pravoslavja*: *ukrajinskyj aspekt* [*The national manifestations of Orthodoxy*: *Ukrainian aspect*]. Kyiv: Svit Znan'.

SAHAN, O. (2016): *Jedyna Pomisna Pravoslavna Cerkva v Ukrajini*: *suspil'nyj zapyt ta nobkhidnist' konstytujuvannja* [*The only local Orthodox Church in Ukraine*: *Public demand and the need for constitution*]. Kyiv: Svit Znan'.

SHEVCHUK, D. & MATUSEVYCH, T. (2017): Discursive identity and problem of social identification. In: *Analele Universităţii din Craiova. Seria*: *Filosofie*, 39(1), pp. 194–201.

SHURENKOVA, A., PAVLOVA, D. & DMYTRUK, D. etc. (2020): *Ukraine in World Values Survey 2020*: *Resume of the Analytical Report*. Kyiv: NGO Ukrainian Centre for European Policy.

SMITH, A. (1991): *National identity*. London: Penguin Books.

TOMOS PRO AVTOKEFALIJU URAJINS'KOHO PRRAVOSLAVJA: ZNACHENNIA I VYKLYKY [*Tomos on autocephaly of Ukrainian Orthodoxy*: *Significance and challenges*]. (2019): [online] [Retrieved October 11, 2022] Available at: https://niss.gov.ua/doslidzhennya/gumanitarniy-rozvitok/tomos-pro-avtokefaliyu-ukrainskogo-pravoslavya-znachennya-i

UKRINFORM (2022): *Epafaniy zaklykav ukrajinciv ne piddavatysya rosijs'komu "virusu strakhu"* [*Epifany urged Ukrainians not to succumb to the Russian "virus of fear"*]. [online] [Retrieved October 9, 2022] Available at: https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-society/3229340-epifanij-zaklikav-ukrainciv-ne-piddavatisa-rosijskomu-virusu-strahu.html

YAKOVLEVA, E. (2022): *Patriarh Kirill prizval molitsya za edinyj narod russkih i ukraincov* [*Patriarch Kirill urged to pray for the united people of Russians and Ukrainians*]. [online] [Retrieved September 21, 2022] Available at: https://rg.ru/2022/03/20/patriarh-kirill-prizval-molitsia-za-edinyj-narod-russkih-i-ukraincev.html