



EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

Conference Proceedings



III International Science Conference
«The most difficult problems of youth
and ways to solve them»

January 20-22, 2025
Krakow, Poland

THE MOST DIFFICULT PROBLEMS OF YOUTH AND WAYS TO SOLVE THEM

Abstracts of III International Scientific and Practical Conference

Krakow, Poland
(January 20-22, 2025)

UDC 01.1

ISBN – 9-789-40377-571-5

The III International scientific and practical conference «The most difficult problems of youth and ways to solve them», January 20-22, 2025, Krakow, Poland. 289 p.

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The recommended citation for this publication is: Honcharov A.V., Honcharov M.V., Proskurina I.V. Some approaches to the essence of the concept of social protection. Abstracts of III International Scientific and Practical Conference. Krakow, Poland. Pp. 88-90.

URL: <https://eu-conf.com/en/events/the-most-difficult-problems-of-youth-and-ways-to-solve-them/>

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ECCLESIASTICAL AND THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY UKRAINIAN CATHOLICISM IN 11TH-12TH CENTURIES

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Early Ukrainian Christianity (11th-12th centuries) was founded on the one true faith of Christ, which taught the correct ("orthodox") way to believe in Christ and rightly glorify Him, in contrast to various false heretical teachings of the time. It also possessed a universal – Catholic – character by recognizing the successor of Saint Peter the Apostle, the Pope of Rome, as the head of the Church alongside the Byzantine Church. Even after the Great Schism of the Universal Church in 1054, the Kyiv Church's loyalty to the apostolic leadership of Christ's Church remained a defining feature of Ukrainian Christianity.

Today, the Ukrainian Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite (UCC-BR) represents Ukrainian Catholicism as the successor of the Kyiv Church and an Eastern Catholic particular church. It is historically known as the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC). Ukrainian Catholicism, both in its early history and today, is distinguished by the preservation of Eastern Christian traditions and an unbroken unity with the Universal Catholic Church, while also fostering national ecclesiastical traditions.

This reflects its universality, inherent to the entire Catholic Church.

The issue of the dual unity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite (UCC-BR) has deep historical roots, confirmed by the thousand-year history of the Kyiv Church and Ukrainian Christianity as a whole. A vivid testament to this unity is the Kyiv Church's response to the 1054 schism of Christ's Church into the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, along with the early history of Ukrainian Catholicism, beginning with the Baptism of Kyivan Rus in 988.

This issue holds particular relevance today due to the modern interdenominational situation in Ukraine and the insufficient, often biased, research on this topic in Ukrainian theological and historical studies. Consequently, it requires a more in-depth examination. Investigating the theological and historical roots of early Ukrainian Catholicism is essential to gaining a deeper understanding of the local identity of the UCC-BR within the context of its Catholicity.

The adoption of Christianity in Ukraine brought about significant state-church and spiritual-cultural transformations in Ukrainian life. Given the complexity of Ukraine's ecclesiastical history following the aforementioned schism and its frequent unilateral

or biased portrayal in church historiography, this issue demands a thorough and objective study to accurately reflect the formation of the identity of the Ukrainian Church and, specifically, the Ukrainian Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite.

The study of the identity of the Ukrainian Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite (UCC-BR) in its full historical scope serves not only as a scientific foundation for understanding its Catholicity but also as a means for its continued self-refinement and assessment in light of contemporary challenges. Kyivan Rus was the first state in the Slavic East of Europe where Christianity became an integral component of the nation's cultural and state development.

In this process, Byzantium played a crucial role, as Kyivan Rus adopted Christianity according to the Byzantine rite. The baptism of Kyivan Rus at the end of the 10th century, conducted in this rite, was in unity with the Latin rite at the time, thereby carrying a universal character of worldwide significance. Ukraine and its Church, the Kyiv Church, have diligently preserved and continue to uphold this tradition precisely because of its universal nature.

The issue of the formation of Ukrainian Christianity, particularly Ukrainian Catholicism, has gained significant relevance in contemporary theological, religious, and historical scholarship. An objective presentation of this development contributes not only to a truthful portrayal of the ecclesiastical, theological, and liturgical identity of the UCC-BR but also to a broader understanding of the Ukrainian church-building, state-building, and cultural processes.

Given the specificity of this research subject, its goal is to identify and analyze the ecclesiastical-organizational and theological-cultural origins of Ukrainian Catholicism, using the UCC-BR as an example in the context of the Church's development of its identity as a local, self-governing church – an organic component of the Universal Church.

During and after the time of its Christianization, Ukraine rivaled Byzantium in power and strength, while surpassing it in territorial size. The Kyiv Church, supported by the Grand Princes of Kyiv, consistently defended its administrative independence from the Byzantine Patriarchate while maintaining loyalty to the Apostolic See in Rome both before and after the Great Schism of 1054:

"Our ancestors strove for a thousand years to maintain a connection with the Apostolic Roman See, and in the years 1595 and 1596 secured unity with the Roman Catholic Church under certain conditions solemnly promised by the Roman pontiffs. For four centuries, this unity was affirmed by a great number of martyrs among Ukrainians, and our days are likewise gloriously recorded in the annals of the Church for the defense of Holy Unity by our brothers" (Patriarch Joseph, 1992).

The conciliarity and universality of Christ's Catholic Church remained unchanged until 1054, a year considered by historians as marking the schism of the Church into two branches due to an illegitimate breach of unity. This division was provoked by the personal ambitions of then-Patriarch of Constantinople, Cerularius, who, disregarding the conciliar nature of Christ's Church, refused to recognize the primacy of the Pope, granted by Jesus Christ Himself to the successors of Saint Peter the Apostle (Mt. 16:18).

As a result, the Church of Christ was divided by human, non-Christian actions into two parts—Eastern and Western, or Byzantine and Roman. The events in Constantinople in July 1054 essentially laid the foundation for what became known as "Catholicism" and "Orthodoxy."

During the first millennium of Christianity, the focus was on spreading and establishing the Gospel truth about Christ, His teachings, and their true meaning. From the beginning of the second millennium to the present day, the emphasis has shifted to the correct interpretation of the Gospel teaching regarding Christ's institution—the Church. (Stanley, 2018)

The historical events of 1054 and their subsequent development were closely related to the Kyiv-Ukrainian Church and Ukrainian Christianity as a whole. Papal envoys returning from Constantinople to Rome passed through Kyiv, where they were received with great honors. They left a copy of the authentic excommunication bull with Prince Iziaslav Yaroslavich—the most reliable version obtained by the Byzantine Emperor from Rus'. From this copy, the emperor learned of Cerularius' falsification of the diplomatic document and took action against the patriarch (Chubaty, 1965, p. 338).

In the autumn of 1054, when Patriarch Michael Cerularius convened a synod in Constantinople to excommunicate the Roman legates, all the metropolitans of the Byzantine Patriarchate participated—except for Metropolitan Hilarion of Kyiv. This absence demonstrated that the Ukrainian Church had no part in Cerularius' actions and continued its ties with the Roman See. Thus, Kyiv did not formally or practically take steps toward the schism of Christ's Church in 1054. The extent of Ukraine's distance from a break with Rome can be seen in Metropolitan Hilarion's work *On Law and Grace*, where no mention is made of any possibility or danger of church separation.

Thus, the Byzantine events of 1054 held no significance in Kyiv and did not disrupt the Ukrainian Church's neutrality. It was only nearly a century later, after the long reign of the Monomakh dynasty and despite the consistent resistance of Ukrainian Christians, that Byzantium managed to sway the Ukrainian Church to its side. The policies of Yuri Dolgorukiy and Andrey Bogolyubsky significantly shifted this stance (Romanko, 2019).

However, neither then nor later did the Ukrainian Church engage in anti-Roman propaganda or polemics. The reign of the descendants of Grand Prince of Kyiv Yaroslav the Wise demonstrated the Ukrainian Church's loyalty to Christ's Church. The reigns of Grand Prince Iziaslav and his son Yaropolk marked the height of the Universal Church's presence in Ukraine. Historians regard Iziaslav as the ruler most connected with the Catholic Church (Chubaty, 1965, p. 339).

Twenty years after the Church schism, Grand Prince Iziaslav fled to Poland and later to Germany. From there, he appealed to both heads of the Christian commonwealth (*Communitas Christiana*)—Pope Gregory VII and Emperor Henry IV—sending envoys led by his son Yaropolk to Rome to request the Pope's protection for the entire Ukrainian land. Through the assistance and mediation of Rome, Iziaslav was able to reclaim the grand princely throne in 1077. (Romanko, 2019)

It is crucial to note that these relations with Rome and appeals to the Pope did not damage the prince's reputation among his subjects. Even more significant was the full

support of the spiritual leader of the Ukrainian Kyiv Church—the Pechersk Monastery—for the prince's actions. Additionally, it is worth recalling that Prince Yaropolk was canonized as a saint by the Ukrainian Church after his death.

Another notable example of the relations between Kyiv and Rome is seen in the successor of Iziaslav, his wife, and his mother, Gertrude.

All of them often knelt in prayer before the image of St. Peter with special reverence. Prince Iziaslav's favorable disposition toward Rome is also evident in his declaration of himself as a vassal of the Holy See. It is likely that he received a royal crown from Pope Gregory VII.

After Iziaslav's death, the positive church relations between Kyiv and Rome did not cease. Vsevolod's daughter, Eupraxia-Praksaeda Adelaide, who was unhappily married to King Henry IV, sought protection from the Pope and received permission for a unilateral divorce. This did not prevent her from returning to Kyiv, joining a monastery, and being buried in the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra. (Kyyak, 2003)

Thus, the Kyiv Church, as the church of a powerful state, did not wish to become a vassal of Byzantine patriarchs. In 1051, Prince Yaroslav the Wise, against the will of the Byzantine emperor and patriarch, appointed Ukrainian (Ruthenian) Hilarion as Kyiv's metropolitan at a council of Kyiv Church bishops (1051–1054). Hilarion was the first ideologist of Kyiv's stance against Byzantine Christianity.

The worldview foundation of this Ukrainian theological doctrine was the belief that God's mercy is the determining factor without which no personal, national, or global salvation is possible. Based on this, the primary principle of Kyiv Christianity, as formulated by Metropolitan Hilarion, was the Christian-social principle, which declared the responsibility of individuals and nations to productively use God's mercy and build God's Kingdom on Earth. This principle, Eastern in origin, was realized on Catholic and universal foundations by Kyiv Christianity (Stadnyk, et al., 2024).

Thus, Metropolitan Hilarion derived from his religious program the primary consequence of the duty of every person to work for the common good of their nation. The second consequence was the principle of the Kyiv Church's self-sufficiency and autonomy in its relations with the Constantinople Patriarch. The third conclusion drawn by the Metropolitan emphasized the equal responsibility of both church and state for spreading Christianity within the state and for integrating the truths of the Gospel into the spiritual life of its citizens as foundational norms.

These conclusions by the metropolitan are a vivid testimony to the Catholic nature of the Christian worldview he espoused, as well as that of the entire Kyiv Church, and confirm why we find similar principles in the modern social doctrine of the Catholic Church (John Paul II, 1993, p. 454).

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