

**ORTHODOXY IN UKRAINE:
MODERN INSTITUTIONAL AND EDUCATIONAL ISSUES**

Sagan O. N., Bondarenko V. D., Yanauer M. M.

INTRODUCTION

Orthodoxy in Ukraine is undergoing a deep crisis, the resolution speed of which will determine whether the number of adherents of individual Orthodox churches and the denomination as a whole will be preserved or diminished. However, there is currently no unified understanding among church clerics or experts regarding the causes of this crisis and the ways to resolve it. This situation creates a space for the manipulation of facts or the politicization of events, which, for instance, may have purely economic implications and should be resolved legally (such as the ownership of church property). It is evident that this crisis also impacts educational processes: both internal church education and secular education related to the topic. Issues within educational processes can serve as a vivid illustration of the overall crisis, and focusing on the analysis of these processes may reveal possible solutions that will be relevant in other aspects of societal organization as well. Furthermore, the crisis exacerbates existing tensions and complicates efforts to build cohesive church-state relations.

Studying the nature of this crisis is especially important in the context of the full-scale invasion. Orthodoxy in Ukraine holds significant importance in the broader socio-religious landscape, being the oldest and most widespread denomination in the country, yet the most vulnerable under Russia's hybrid warfare. The vulnerabilities faced by Ukrainian Orthodoxy are varied and significant, particularly under the stress of hybrid warfare. These include: longstanding ties with Russian Orthodoxy, politically manipulated to heighten tensions; legal and territorial issues, exacerbated by the conflict, affecting church properties and communities; and the broader societal impact, where religious identity is wielded to exert influence and create division, fostering internal strife and external manipulation. Therefore, understanding these dynamics is crucial not only for the stability of Ukrainian society but also for the broader European security context. Addressing these vulnerabilities through informed policy could pave the way for a more resilient and unified Orthodox community in Ukraine.

1. The overall picture of Ukrainian Orthodoxy and why it is in crisis

The concept of “Orthodoxy in Ukraine” is quite diverse in its interpretation and is represented by various components. Specifically:

– The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (UOC-MP). In Ukraine, the legal entity name of this religious organization is just the Ukrainian Orthodox Church without mentioning the Moscow Patriarchate. Following the full-scale invasion, the UOC declared its “complete autonomy and independence” at the Council held on May 27, 2022, in Feofaniia, Kyiv. However, this church does not have the status of autonomous or autocephalous, and therefore, according to Orthodox canons, has a higher jurisdictional affiliation through which the whole church is in unity with global Orthodoxy. For example, even some participants of the Feofaniia Council have pointed out that the separation from the Moscow Patriarchate remains incomplete.¹ A special government commission reached a similar conclusion, emphasizing the current status of the UOC as a “part of the Russian Orthodox Church.”² The requirement to indicate the leadership center for churches which leading structures are located in the country that is declared as “aggressor country” is also contained in Ukrainian law. Thus, the most accurate way to refer to this church structure is as the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate or the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine.

– The Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). It was established on December 15, 2018, by the unification of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP), the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church and the relatively small part of the UOC-MP.³

– Old Believers and Priestless Old Believers (Bespopovtsy). In particular, the Ancient Orthodox Church of Ukraine⁴ and various “priestless ones” denominations.

– The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia which is the part of the church that has not united with the Moscow Patriarchate.

¹ УПЦ: Чи є майбутнє без діалогу? Листопад 2, 2023. URL: lb.ua/blog/seraphim_pankratov/582390_upts_chi_ie_maybutnie_bez_dialogu.html

² Висновок релігієзнавчої експертизи Статуту про управління Української Православної Церкви на наявність церковно-канонічного зв'язку з Московським патріархатом. Січень 27, 2023. URL: dessa.gov.ua/vysnovok-relihiieznavchoi-ekspertyzy-statutu-pro-upravlinnia-ukrainskoi-pravoslavnoi-tserkvy

³ Об'єднавчий собор Української церкви: як все відбувалося. Грудень 16, 2018. URL: bbc.com/ukrainian/features-46583417.

⁴ Древлеправославна Церква України відновила свою історичну назву та юридично оформила вихід з підпорядкування москві. URL: dessa.gov.ua/ancient-orthodox-church-of-ukraine-2-november-2022/

– Independent Orthodox communities, such as the Ukrainian Apostolic Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church Renewed, the True Orthodox Church in Ukraine, and so on.

It should be noted that some of the churches remained “orthodox” only by name or origin, as at some point they lost connection with the Orthodox religious tradition and practice.

The idea of an expanded stauropegion of the Patriarchate of Constantinople is also being popularized, which, if realized, could quickly create a powerful enough religious organization. There have been also, so far unfinished, attempts to develop the structures of the Romanian Orthodox Church (Bessarabian Metropolis) in Ukraine.

The most authoritative and numerous of these churches are the OCU and the UOC-MP. Throughout the whole period of existence of these churches, the relationship between them have been competitive, as they operate within the same territory but are founded on different ideological and canonical principles.

The first, the OCU, is a self-sufficient autocephalous local church that has traditionally received a Tomos of autocephaly. This Tomos has been recognized by all diptychical Orthodox churches, except for the Moscow Patriarchate, which alone severed relations with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Currently, the process of establishing Eucharistic communion (concelebration and co-communion) between the diptychical churches and the OCU is ongoing. Four churches have established such connections, and some others are engaging in concelebration at the level of individual hierarchs. The OCU maintains a stance on the distinctiveness of Ukrainians and Russians in terms of culture, mentality, attitudes toward faith, and church traditions. This distinction is underscored by the fact that Ukrainians received the Tomos, as one nation cannot be granted two Tomoses of autocephaly.

The status of the UOC-MP is more complicated. The church’s higher hierarchy seeks to prove its disassociation from the Moscow Patriarchate. Nevertheless, in both expert circles⁵ and the broader Orthodox world,⁶ this institution is perceived as a component of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Patriarchal Calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church for 2024 includes photographs of all Ukrainian bishops of the UOC-MP as of November 2023.

⁵ Висновок релігієзнавчої експертизи Статуту про управління Української Православної Церкви на наявність церковно-канонічного зв’язку з Московським патріархатом. Січень 27, 2023. URL: dessa.gov.ua/vysnovok-relihii-znavchoi-ekspertyzy-statutu-pro-upravlinnia-ukrainskoi-pravoslavnoi-tserkvy

⁶ Patriarch Bartholomew: the new autocephalous Church of Ukraine is the only canonical Orthodox Church on the territory of the Ukrainian (October 30, 2020). URL: risu.ua/en/patriarch-bartholomew-the-new-autocephalous-church-of-ukraine-is-the-only-canonical-orthodox-church-on-the-territory-of-the-ukrainian_n113056

There has been no protest from the UOC-MP hierarchy regarding their inclusion in the Moscow Patriarchate's calendar. This church was established and continues to develop based on the principles of Russian Orthodoxy, which posits that Ukrainians and Russians are one people with a shared history and culture. These ideas form the basis of the "Russian world" ideology, which is described by many prominent theologians as a contemporary heresy⁷.

Different approaches to understanding the role of the Orthodox Church in Ukrainian society and varying orientations of social service characterize and define the current level of inter-Orthodox confrontation in Ukraine, ultimately shaping the future of Orthodoxy in the region.

One of the topics for manipulation is statistical data on these churches. In Ukraine, the size of a particular church was determined for a time by the number of charters it had registered. Based on this metric, the UOC-MP long tried to impose the view on Ukrainian society that it was the largest church in Ukraine, thereby justifying special preferences.

At the beginning of 2021, there were approximately 12,000 parishes in the UOC-MP compared to approximately 7,000 in the OCU⁸. However, by early 2022, official statistics from the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic and Religious Affairs recorded 8,498 parishes for the UOC-MP versus 6,185 for the OCU⁹. The discrepancy was due to the lack of data from seven regions dominated by the UOC-MP following the start of the full-scale war. Nevertheless, the trend of decreasing numbers of UOC-MP parishes continued through 2022-2024. From the time the Tomos was granted until March 2022, approximately 600 parishes left the UOC-MP and joined the OCU, with over 1,100 more transitioning between March 2022 and July 2024. The latest data provided by the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic and Religious Affairs (January 2024) includes almost 11000 parishes in the UOC-MP compared to approximately 8000 in the OCU¹⁰. It's worth noting that the number of registered charters of the UOC-MP does not fully correspond to the data of transitions because old UOC-MP charters remain

⁷ A Declaration on the "Russian World" (Russkii mir) Teaching (March 13, 2022). URL: www.acadimia.org/en/news-announcements/press/963-a-declaration-on-the-russian-world-russkii-mir-teaching

⁸ Звіт про мережу релігійних організацій станом на 1 січня 2021 року. URL: dessa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Form1-2021-public3.xls

⁹ Звіт про мережу релігійних організацій станом на 1 січня 2022 року <https://dessa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Zvit-pro-merezhu-relihiynykh-orhanizatsiy-Form1-2022.xlsx>

¹⁰ Звіт про мережу релігійних організацій станом на 1 січня 2024 року URL: docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vcq1ulAaH8jEOY6HcJyq0GTmDo3SEW6F/edit?usp=s_haring&ouid=101236368954132592304&rtfpof=true&sd=true

valid even if a new OCU community has been registered. Since a religious community can be liquidated only by the decision of its members or in the case of a court decision, even inactive communities add to the overall statistics, which leads to a numerical advantage in favor of the UOC-MP. However, it is clear that the gradual process of numerical growth of the OCU is taking place.

The UOC-MP suffered not only from the conversion of its communities to the OCU. With the invasion of new Ukrainian territories by the Russian Federation, the Ukrainian dioceses were forced to be subordinated directly to Moscow. In the territories occupied by Russian troops, parishes are being re-registered as Russian structures in accordance with Russian law. As of the end of 2023, 8 dioceses of the UOC-MP were already directly subordinate to the Moscow Patriarch: Donetsk and Mariupol; Horlivka and Sloviansk; Rovenky and Sverdlovsk; Luhansk and Alchevsk; Berdiansk and Prymorsk; Simferopol and Crimea; Dzhankoy and Rozdolnensk; Feodosia and Kerch. In total, there are about 1,500 parishes in these dioceses which are still a part of the official data from the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic and Religious Affairs.

Given these factors, it can be assumed that the OCU is significantly close to the UOC-MP in terms of the number of religious communities, if we do not take into account the communities operating in the occupied territories and those that remain only on paper. Of course, the only accurate way to obtain correct the data is to quantify the number of actual active communities. However, the above data allow us to safely conclude that the UOC-MP no longer has a significant quantitative dominance in the church sphere. Moreover, gradual process of a quantitative dominance of the OCU may begin very soon, especially if the pace of parishes transitions remains the same.

What is the UOC-MP today? What is its legal and canonical status? These questions are subject to manipulation and various interpretations. Even in official explanations by representatives of the UOC-MP, the range of such interpretations is extremely wide. In particular, one can hear that the UOC-MP has been actually “autocephalous” since the letter recognition of Patriarch Alexy II or that the UOC-MP has finally “completely severed relations with the Russian Orthodox Church” or even received “technical autocephaly” at its Council on May 27, 2022.¹¹ But even some participants in the aforementioned Council of the UOC-MP a year later began to declare the need for a new “correct” Council and full severance

¹¹ Митрополит УПЦ (МП) перекоує, що вони «незалежна» Церква, що отримала «Томос» у 1990 році URL: df.news/2023/05/20/mytropolyt-upts-mp-perekonuie-shcho-vony-nezalezhna-tserkva-shcho-otrymala-tomos-u-1990-rotsi/

from Moscow¹². This confirms the hypothesis that the Council of the UOC-MP in May 2022 was an attempt to manipulate public opinion and, in fact, a direct fraud on its followers.

The current status of the UOC-MP is clearly characterized in the religious expertise conducted by the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic and Religious Affairs in January 2023. This report explains not only the church's canonical subordination but also why the UOC-MP's governing structures do not react to anti-Ukrainian and partially unorthodox sermons by Patriarch Kirill or the open usurpation of UOC-MP dioceses by the Moscow Patriarchate. The answer is simple: the UOC-MP is a structural unit of the Russian Orthodox Church. This also explains why the UOC-MP leadership does not officially condemn the collaboration of its clergy with the Russian occupation authorities, including those imprisoned by Ukrainian courts for criminal offenses.

Thus, the current situation places a particular responsibility on the Ukrainian state as a subject for resolving internal Orthodox conflicts. The state should initiate a negotiation process between the OCU and the UOC-MP, which becomes existentially significant given the Tomos granted to the OCU and the lack of any status for the UOC-MP other than being an "association of dioceses of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine".

The indecisiveness of state authorities in resolving inter-Orthodox conflicts is primarily due to the fear of losing electoral support. The significant influence of both Orthodox churches on the electoral process compels authorities not to decisively resolve inter-Orthodox conflicts in favor of strengthening autocephaly in Ukraine but rather to simulate activity in this area. This simulation, unfortunately, even affects the enforcement of existing legislation, which the UOC-MP successfully exploits, in particular – an obligation to indicate the affiliation with the Russian Church in charter documents.

A striking example of such indecision is the situation surrounding the release and return of the so-called Lower Lavra in Kyiv (part of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra state reserve) to state ownership. This large complex was handed over to the UOC-MP monastery. The issue is further complicated because this example sets a precedent for the entire country, showing how the question of depriving property from the Russian-affiliated church can drag on indefinitely. It is also clear that the authorities are not prepared to use force even by court order, fearing primarily reputational losses reminiscent of the 1995 events at Sofia Square during the funeral of UOC-KP Patriarch Volodymyr Romaniuk.

¹² Звернення Духовенства та вірян УПЦ до Священного Синоду та Єпископату УПЦ. URL: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODZTPkYuFD0

As one potential solution, the theologian Archimandrite Cyril Hovorun proposed the coexistence of two monastic communities (UOC-MP and OCU) on the Lavra territory. He believes this “would not only solve the Lavra issue but also open up opportunities for the Orthodox churches in Ukraine to find a model of coexistence. The Lavra is large and has natural conditions for the coexistence of two communities. Additionally, one could consider a third community of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on the Lavra territory since it was founded under the jurisdiction of Constantinople and existed under the Ecumenical Patriarchate for most of its history”¹³.

However, given the practical absence of dialogue between the churches and the open hostility of the UOC-MP towards the OCU (such as the synodal non-recognition of its episcopate and sacraments)¹⁴, it is unlikely that the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra can be used as a model for positive and constructive cooperation between the UOC-MP and the OCU. Consequently, this idea has not gained support within either church or among state authorities.

Instead, the idea of seeking refuge for the UOC-MP clergy with the Ecumenical Patriarch is gaining traction. Cyril Hovorun is actively promoting the creation of an “expanded stauropegeion of the Patriarchate of Constantinople” in Ukraine, which would accept all UOC-MP clergy willing to leave the Moscow Patriarchate but not ready to join the OCU, given their years of opposition and fear of their parishioners’ opinions. This refuge in the stauropegeion is seen as a temporary form of transition from the UOC-MP to the OCU.

In such circumstances, the state, through relevant authorities, could establish control to prevent the manifestation of the “Russian world” in the activities, sermons, and church literature of the newly created “stauropegeion” communities (if established) and in those institutions that do not leave the UOC-MP. However, it is evident that state authorities cannot take sides with any of the churches, as this would provoke resistance from the parishioners and clergy of the opposing side, who might feel unjustly offended, given that most of them are still law-abiding citizens of Ukraine.

It is also clear that the UOC-MP is not a monolithic institution, and the interests of parishioners do not always align with those of priests, especially bishops. The centripetal attraction in the church largely depends on the

¹³ Кирило Говорун. Лавра для всіх: Співіснування громад – це ключ до розв’язання конфлікту. Духовний фронт України. 07.07.2023. URL: df.news/2023/07/07/lavra-dlia-vsikh-spivisnuvannia-hromad-tse-kliuch-do-rozv-iazannia-konfliktu/

¹⁴ Постанова Собору Української Православної Церкви від 27 травня 2022 року. URL: news.church.ua/2022/05/27/postanova-soboru-ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-vid27-travnja-2022-roku/#2023-09-06 [retrieved on 06.01.2024].

strength of the state itself. Therefore, when discussing the unity of Orthodox believers in Ukraine today, we primarily refer to the success of our Armed Forces in the war against the aggressor. Our victories on the battlefield define not only the borders of our state but also the boundaries of its Orthodox Church. Today, uncertainties regarding the unification of Orthodox believers in Ukraine are dictated by the complexities on the front lines, giving hope to some separatist clergy and UOC-MP parishioners to preserve and revive structures affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church in Ukraine. In particular, the position of the UOC-MP, where the issue of autocephaly might be resolved only after the war,¹⁵ looks like an attempt to maintain ties with Moscow in the event of Ukraine's defeat on the battlefield.

The strategic direction of Ukrainian Orthodoxy development, as defined by the Tomos, can and will be strengthened in an evolutionary way. Although the transition of parishes from the UOC-MP to the OCU is not massive, it is ongoing, with certain regional variations. The war-related events, highlighting the anti-Ukrainian stance of the Moscow Patriarchate and its leadership, have significantly accelerated these transitions, impacting the worldview of not only ordinary parishioners but also the clergy and bishops¹⁶.

As known, the leadership of both churches (OCU and UOC-MP) has specific conditions for the unification process. The UOC formulated its claims to the OCU at the Feofaniia Council in 2022, while the OCU initially favored negotiations without preconditions. However, the OCU later specified its position, notably expressing unwillingness to accept adherents of the "Russian world." The scope of the parties' claims is not equal and can be resolved through negotiations. Nevertheless, such negotiations are unlikely given the aggressive reluctance of the UOC-MP leaders to compromise. In this situation, mediation by state institutions would be very appropriate and could play a decisive role.

The most recent historical example of finding paths to Orthodox unity that can be used by Orthodox believers in Ukraine is the events related to the restoration of unity between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR). Recall that the part of the

¹⁵ Чому Онуфрій на Соборі у Феофанії не оголосив автокефалію і вже не зможе цього зробити [Why Onufriy did not declare autocephaly at the Council in Feofaniya and will not be able to do so anymore] (April 4, 2023), in: df.news/2023/04/24/chomu-onufriy-na-sobori-u-feofanii-ne-oholosyv-avtokefaliuu-i-vzhe-ne-zmozhe-tsoho-zrobyty [retrieved on 06.01.2024].

¹⁶ Архієпископ УПЦ МП у зверненні до глави РПЦ заявив, що у собор в Одесі прилетіла ракета, яку той «благословив» [Archbishop of the UOC-MP in an address to the head of the Russian Orthodox Church said that a rocket flew into the cathedral in Odesa, which he "blessed"] (July 23, 2023), in: nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/preobrazhenskiy-sobor-pislya-raketnogo-udaru-v-odesi-upc-mp-zvernulasya-do-patriarha-kirila-50341084.html [retrieved on 06.01.2024].

Russian Orthodox Church that ended up abroad following the October Coup of 1917 was very hostile towards the Russian Orthodox Church, especially its leadership structures. However, in 2007, under immense pressure from the Russian authorities, mutual claims and even anathemas exchanged between the churches were removed through joint concelebration. The institutions were united while preserving the maximum autonomy of ROCOR in the initial stage. Later, within a few years, natural processes of mutual integration of the churches began.

In Ukraine, a similar unification is also possible, provided the UOC-MP agrees to join the OCU as a separate metropolis or vicariate (depending on the number of adherents at the time). Such unification can result from inter-church negotiations against the backdrop of strengthening the Ukrainian state. It is also obvious that the possibility of granting autocephaly to the UOC by the Moscow Patriarchate is most unbelievable. After all, this destroys the historical, political, and ideological concept of the origin of the Russian state and its “primacy” over Ukraine. Therefore, the UOC-MP itself must take more decisive steps toward gaining true church independence from Moscow.

2. Issues of the religious education in the context of Ukrainian Orthodoxy crisis

When discussing the settlement of inter-Orthodox relations in Ukraine, researchers often overlook an important factor influencing these relations: spiritual education and enlightenment, as well as courses related to religious topics in secular educational institutions.

Both the UOC-MP and the OCU have sufficiently developed systems for training clergy, including theological academies, seminaries, regent schools, theological courses, and Sunday schools.

The OCU currently operates seven higher theological education institutions, including five theological academies (Kyiv, Lviv, Volyn, Uzhhorod, and Ivano-Frankivsk). Additionally, the theological department of the Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy is affiliated with the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology at Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, and there is the Ivano-Frankivsk Theological Institute named after St. Theodosius Manyavsky. Three theological seminaries (Rivne, Dnipropetrovsk, and Lviv) provide secondary theological education. As of January 1, 2021, there were also 1,755 Sunday schools under the church, though this number has significantly decreased due to the war¹⁷.

¹⁷ Звіт про мережу релігійних організацій станом на 1 січня 2021 року. URL: dessa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Form1-2021-public3.xls

The Kyiv-based Open Orthodox University of Holy Sophia, Divine Wisdom, has a special status in the educational system of OCU. In fact, it is a lecture hall that specializes in conducting educational events on religious and social issues. However, this institution has become an informal center for generating reformist ideas, primarily in the educational and enlightenment sphere. For example, one of the forms of mutually respectful dialogue between OCU and UOC-MP was the “Interchurch Dialogue in St. Sophia of Kyiv” held at the end of February 2023, where both priests of the UOC-MP and the OCU participated.

The UOC-MP trains its clergy at the Kyiv Theological Academy and Seminary, Luhansk Theological University (before the occupation), and the Department of Theology at the Classical Private University (Zaporizhzhia). Secondary religious education is provided by theological seminaries located in Volyn, Odesa, Poltava, Pochayiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Simferopol (the last one is currently under the control of the Russian Orthodox Church). In addition, there are also six theological schools for the training of cantors and regents. As of the beginning of 2021, there were also 4,085 Sunday schools in the Church (as of the end of 2023, their number has significantly decreased, the same as within the OCU).

New societal developments have forced the hierarchy of Orthodox churches to make efforts to change the quality and prestige of education in Orthodox religious schools since the early twenty-first century. This was driven by a significant decrease in the number of people seeking religious education and a decline in the number of those willing to be ordained after graduation, as even the children of clergy found more attractive alternative opportunities for gaining income outside the church.

One of the areas of work for churches to increase the prestige of theological education was to have the state recognize theology as an academic specialty and to have diplomas from theological educational institutions recognized. This work yielded the first results in 2010. As a result of the joint efforts of members of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (UCCRO), state officials of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, and other institutions (civic organizations, religious studies communities, etc.), theology was included in the list of specialties for which students could be trained in higher education institutions at the specialist’s (changed to a bachelor’s level after Ukraine joined the Bologna Process) and master’s levels¹⁸ However, these changes

¹⁸ Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України, № 787 від 27.08.2010 «Про затвердження переліку спеціальностей, за якими здійснюється підготовка фахівців у вищих навчальних закладах за освітньо-кваліфікаційними рівнями спеціаліста і магістра». URL: zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/787-2010-%D0%BF#Text

had to be enshrined in the relevant laws, which took almost four years to prepare and adopt the amendments. In 2014, religious educational institutions were allowed for accreditation and state-recognized licensing, enabling students to obtain state-issued diplomas.

Another innovation in 2015 was the creation of a commission by the Ministry of Education and Science to recognize diplomas and academic titles previously obtained in religious schools. However, there was flawed logic in the creation of such a commission. The commission allowed the issuance of diplomas of state higher education to people who had not studied in licensed educational programs because they graduated from their educational institutions many years before they received a license. The same applied to diplomas and academic titles granted by the commission for research works, for which it was often impossible to determine whether the same text was defended at the time of graduation. Additionally, the research works were not checked for plagiarism at the time of defense, and their defense took place without the appropriate procedures that all other (secular) research works underwent. Essentially, certain individuals who did not study at state-licensed institutions, wrote works reviewed internally by a religious educational institution, and defended them in a closed mode received diplomas of higher education, as well as PhDs from the state.

The logic of this strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science, under which the commission operated, was to raise the status of the teaching staff of religious schools in a revolutionary way as soon as possible. However, the almost ten years that have passed since the commission began its work show that this strategy has not had any effect. Orthodox theological thought has not received any innovative works, and new candidates and doctors of sciences have not impacted the quality of religious education.

Moreover, the licensing of religious schools, combined with the lack of reforms in churches that would give prospects to successful theologians or encourage creative work, even negatively impacted the number of graduates who were ordained and went to work in parishes. Having a bachelor's or master's degree from a state-approved educational institution provided graduates with additional opportunities to get a more prestigious and better-paid job outside the church.

This strategy of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has also significantly slowed down the evolutionary development of theological faculties or specializations in secular educational institutions. We can note the factual minimization of theology development in secular higher education institutions in Ukraine. The reason for this was the loss of interest by the churches in developing theological departments or divisions beyond their control since they quickly acquired their own staff, which

allowed them to obtain state educational licenses. Additionally, there was a lack of interest from the students themselves, especially those who grew up and were formed outside the church environment, who were not attracted by the benefits and virtually free education in church institutions. Consequently, the new specialty did not give secular students an understanding of its relevance and possible advantages in practice, particularly its competitiveness in the labor market.

Those departments that were formed in the secular universities after 1990s as departments of religious studies (church history, church philosophy etc.) were popular among students interested in religious education. However, those departments could not objectively develop Ukrainian orthodox (or any other) theology. A certain exception was the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology at the Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, which was opened in 1994. But this opening was a practical consequence of the university's cooperation with the UOC-KP. Therefore, the research program was actually doubling the course of the general theological institution of the OUC-KP and later the OCU – Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy. Later this was even reflected in the status of this faculty, which is now the Theological Department of the Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy at the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology of the University of Chernivtsi. Initially, a significant attracting factor for applicants was the possibility of obtaining two diplomas: a university diploma (bachelor's or master's degree) and a seminary diploma (theological education). Today, this factor does not provide a sufficient number of applicants due to its non-actuality, since it's more practical for students to go straight to seminary. In the future this trend may lead even to the liquidation of this faculty.

Another outcome of the UOC-KP's activity was the introduction of programs for teachers of Christian ethics at the National University of Ostroh Academy. However, attracting new students is becoming increasingly difficult at the current stage, indicating a tendency toward the liquidation of the specialty.

The prospects for Ukrainian theology in the context of obtaining academic degrees are brighter. After the state recognition of the academic specialty in Theology in 2015 the Department of Cultural Studies of the National Pedagogical Dragomanov University (now the Department of Theology and Religious Studies of Dragomanov Ukrainian State University) began teaching theological courses in addition to religious studies and actively promoted the PhD and MD dissertations in the academic specialty in Theology (there are already dozens of such dissertations). At the same time, despite certain successes, the Ukrainian experience proves that the mere opening of theology departments in various universities does not bear

any notable results in the scientific field. Professor Yuriy Chornomorets rightly notes that Ukrainian theologians who studied or even taught in the newly created departments and universities “were unable to write a significant number of scientific studies that would allow us to say that Ukrainian theology has reached the world level”¹⁹.

At the current stage of development, the Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy of the OCU and its theological department at the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology of the University of Chernivtsi have received state licensing and provide state-issued diplomas to students. That is, their education is recognized by the state at the bachelor’s and master’s levels. Masters have the opportunity to complete postgraduate studies at higher education institutions and receive state-issued PhD diplomas.

However, obtaining state licenses still did not resolve the issue of the quality of religious education in the OCU regarding those courses that cannot be regulated by the state. Moreover, the ease of recognizing past work has even pushed back the evolutionary development of religious education that began in the days of the UOC-KP. A certain qualitative impetus may be caused by providing opportunities for students of the OCU’s theological schools to study at the theological faculties abroad. First of all, in those countries where there are support programs for students from post-Soviet countries (for example, Greece). But there are some problems here as well. Failure in providing decent prospects for employment of graduates of foreign universities in Ukrainian religious schools may result in students not returning to Ukraine or working outside the church after returning to the country.

While the same problems are also relevant for the system of religious education of the UOC-MP, we shouldn’t ignore another trend that is connected specifically with that religious organization – politicization of the curriculum and teaching staff. This politicization often has a hidden character, just like the use of books published in Russia, and thus promoting Russian narratives and understanding of historical processes, Moscow’s view of the history of Orthodoxy in Ukraine, in particular the Kyiv Metropolis, etc. For example, the annexation of the Kyiv Metropolis by the Moscow Patriarchate is presented as “reunification”, and the concept of the “Dnipro’s baptismal font of the three nations” vividly emphasizes similar narratives related to the ideology of the “Russian world”²⁰. Therefore, a thorough program of depoliticization of the

¹⁹ CHORNOMORETS, Yuriy: Перспективи розвитку духовної освіти в Україні [Prospects for the development of religious education in Ukraine], in: *Philosophy of Education*, 26(2), 2020. [In Ukrainian]. DOI: 10.31874/2309-1606-2020-26-2-1

²⁰ HOVORUN, Cyril: *Political Orthodoxies: The Unorthodoxies of the Church Coerced*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018, 65. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18523/kmhj189112.2019-6.235-238>

religious education within the UOC-MP will be needed for all their educational institutions, especially those that are currently located on the occupied territories and even withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the Kyiv Metropolis of the UOC-MP and are directly managed by the Moscow Patriarch. After the liberation of the Ukrainian territories, a whole range of measures will have to be taken, which are often relevant even for those religious educational institutions of the UOC-MP, that operate in the territories controlled by the Ukrainian authorities.

In particular:

- analysis of the curricula in all religious educational institutions and Sunday schools for their compliance with Ukrainian standards of the educational process (interpretation of the history of Ukraine, the history of the Kyiv Metropolis and the history of the development of religious organizations in general, etc);
- examining literature that is being prepared for publication and distributed by educational institutions through bookstores, libraries, recommended by teachers, etc;
- analysis of articles and information in periodicals and Internet resources of educational institutions;
- analysis of sermons, messages and appeals of teachers, especially in connection with religious holidays and political events.

Once again, it is worth noting that such initiatives should not be authoritarian in nature and should be carried out exclusively within the framework of the law. Obviously, such initiatives can and will be perceived by enemy propagandists as restrictions on freedom of worldview and religion. However, in this matter, it is worth referring to Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: the manifestation of religion shall not justify propaganda for war or advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. It is as a counter to the violence of the “Russian World” that such initiatives should be put into effect. After all, a democratic approach to state building does not mean permissiveness, but mutual respect and responsibility.

It will also be important to ensure the right of students of religious educational institutions to the Ukrainian language of education, including Ukrainian-language services. Given the fact that some students or teachers may not know Ukrainian well enough (especially those from Crimea, Donbas), this transition should have an adaptive component. For this purpose, it will be necessary to introduce an internship program for teachers of Orthodox educational institutions in other higher education institutions, as well as a student exchange program for religious educational institutions.

Among the general educational problems relevant not only to the Orthodox educational process, but there is also a long-overdue need for a comprehensive understanding of the prospects for the development of theology and religious education in Ukraine as such. This concerns not only the list of theological courses and their content in higher and secondary theological educational institutions but also the way and who will teach courses with the conditional name “Christian Ethics” (in fact, there is some variety of such courses in Ukraine) in general education schools or who and with what content will conduct general education subjects in private and confessional schools, etc. No less complicated is the question of the quality and content of curricula in Sunday schools for young parishioners.

Given the fact that religious education in Ukraine is still in its infancy (although it has been for a long time), there is still an opportunity to form the foundation of modern Ukrainian theology and religious education. The ideological struggle between “open Orthodoxy” and orthodox fundamentalism has been going on for more than a century (since the ascetic activity of Patriarch Meletios IV Metaxakis of Constantinople). At the moment, it can be stated that the OCU is now more favorable to the model of “open Orthodoxy”,²¹ which has won over in the Greek, American and some local churches on the European continent. However, it is too early to make a final conclusion on this issue. After all, a significant number of clergy and parishioners of the UOC-MP, who are strong supporters of fundamentalist (at the level of ceremonialism) ideas, are expected to join the OCU at some point. Therefore, the OCU will face a rather long period of internal ideological struggle over the essence of the doctrine, as well as the forms and content of religious education and enlightenment.

The model of “open religion” (“open Protestantism”, “open or European Islam”, etc.) has considerable potential today, as it best meets the needs of the current democratic world community. It is about the formation of a multi-ideological and multi-ethnic Orthodoxy in a particular Local Orthodox Church, which does not lose its national specificity. It is also important that leading national theologians be involved in global theological discussions on equal terms, which will eventually allow them to make their own contribution to Orthodox ecclesiology. These ideas in Ukraine are promoted by the Open Orthodox University of Holy Sophia, Divine Wisdom which has become the organizational center of many interesting initiatives to implement the principles of “open religion”. It is significant that the headmaster of this university is Heorhii Kovalenko, who began his church

²¹ VYSOTSKY, Tamara: Sources of open Orthodoxy as an ideological basis for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, in *Multiversum. Philosophical almanac*, No. 5–6 (2019), 128–138. [in Ukrainian] DOI: 10.35423/2078-8142.2019.5-6.10.

career in the UOC-MP. This fact emphasizes that it is in an inclusive association that Ukrainian theology and religious education can have a success, while aggressive alienation can potentially lead to the loss of many talented teachers and students.

The successful development of a national theological school requires a long-term program of grant support for both individual theological projects and, on a permanent basis, training for clergy, the opportunity for theologians to participate in advanced training programs, conferences, intellectual debates, etc. A separate program of translations of Greek, American, German, and Romanian theologians would require significant funds, without which it is impossible to imagine the entry of Ukrainian theologians into the global intellectual space. But even if financial and organizational efforts are made on a regular basis, the formation of a national theological community almost always takes place in an evolutionary way, within one or two generations.

As already noted, today Ukraine has actually lost the chance to form a non-denominational community of theologians who would have a certain freedom in their thinking, not bound by church discipline or the dogmatic-canonical corpus of a particular religious movement. Philosophy of religion has not become mainstream either in the philosophy departments of religious schools or in the few departments in secular institutions of higher education that still teach religious and theological disciplines. Modern Ukrainian religious education currently specializes more in what is called “practical religious studies”, analyzing the cause-and-effect relationships in the processes currently taking place in the field of interchurch and church-state relations.

Therefore, the development of Ukrainian religious education must begin literally from the very start. The introduction of the subject “History of Religions of the World” in secondary schools has significant potential for social understanding, promoting basic ideas of freedom of conscience and countering Ukrainophobic ideologues of the “Russian world”, which have been successfully propagated in the religious field. The promotion of state-issued courses “Religious Studies” in higher education institutions of all forms of ownership, including religious ones, is also a notable initiative. The introduction of such courses will provide objective knowledge about different religions, especially about Orthodoxy (as the most widespread religion) in Ukraine in general and about the current political role of Orthodox churches in the development of our state. Such courses will prevent young people from forming principles and beliefs that contradict the current understanding of freedom of conscience, as reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international documents ratified by Ukraine. Therefore, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine should consider promoting these disciplines to schools and higher education institutions.

The fact that Orthodoxy in Ukraine has not formed research communities that would allow theologians of the OCU or the UOC-MP to adequately conduct a public dialogue is certainly a major omission that has led to a particularly painful crisis in times of war. The activities of such communities could have ensured the further development of theological education in Ukraine, strengthen the legitimacy of theology as a scientific discipline, and even offer a key to the possible unification of churches. However, even in such a conclusion, one can find a positive aspect, since the absence of any foundation makes it possible to build the one that will be most needed. In particular, the state should promote the development of religious education in the context of “open Orthodoxy”, since, in our opinion, this concept will be most useful for Ukrainian society.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize the analysis of problematic issues of institutional development and the educational process in the largest Orthodox churches in Ukraine, we would like to make several fundamental points:

– The settlement of the inter-Orthodox confrontation in Ukraine cannot be resolved in the short term. Therefore, the solution to this problem requires changing the quality and attractiveness of theological education and solving the most pressing problems of the educational process. In particular, we are talking about getting rid of Moscow’s narratives in the educational process and its depoliticization.

– The primary task of state bodies in the area of church-state relations should be to take measures to depoliticize the communities and institutions of the UOC-MP and those religious institutions that have their governing centers in the aggressor country. The educational aspect is no exception. Therefore, those clerics and church leaders who have contributed to the spread of the “Russian world” ideology in Ukraine, who have cooperated or are cooperating with Russian occupation structures, etc. should be held accountable under the current legislation in Ukraine.

– The Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which already has the recognized status of autocephalous, should play the role of an interested unifying force in the Orthodox environment of the country. In particular, by considering and implementing even the smallest initiatives in the UOC-MP, relying on the support of the Ukrainian state and other Orthodox churches, especially the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

– The largest Orthodox churches in Ukraine (the OCU and the UOC-MP) have sufficient resources to train new clergy. However, the growing demands of students on the organization of the educational process (material base) and the overall decline in the number of applicants in Ukraine (caused

by a whole range of problems) lead to a critical decrease in the total number of students in religious schools. Given that not all (less than half) of the graduates agree to be ordained and become parish clergy, on the one hand, it is no longer feasible to maintain some educational institutions and it is worth considering their merger (this process is already underway). Therefore, in the next five to ten years, Orthodox dioceses, regardless of their jurisdiction and how the issue of inter-Orthodox confrontation is resolved, will have significant problems with providing priests for their communities.

– In our opinion, the most promising strategy in resolving orthodox crisis is the “open Orthodoxy”, which has already proven effective in many local Orthodox churches. After the Tomos of autocephaly was granted to the Orthodox in Ukraine, the UOC-MP objectively embarked on the path of marginalization, which will only intensify due to the very nature of Orthodoxy. However, the process of transition of the UOC-MP believers to the OCU is not automatic. It takes quite a bit of effort to complete this process successfully. The development of religious education is one of the elements that can help with this, maybe even the most promising one.

SUMMARY

Orthodoxy in Ukraine is currently undergoing a deep crisis and the speed of overcoming it will determine the preservation or decrease in the number of supporters both for particular Orthodox communities and for the denomination as a whole. This situation creates a certain space for manipulating facts or politicizing events that, for example, could be purely business-related and should have been resolved in the legal sphere. Obviously, this crisis has also an impact on educational processes, both inner church and secular, which are related to the topic. Problematic issues of educational processes can serve as a vivid illustration of the crisis` picture and focusing on the analysis of educational processes will allow us to find possible ways out that will be relevant for wider application as well.

References

1. УПЦ: Чи є майбутнє без діалогу? Листопад 2, 2023. URL: lb.ua/blog/seraphim_pankratov/582390_upts_chi_ie_maybutnie_bez_dialogu.html
2. Висновок релігієзнавчої експертизи Статуту про управління Української Православної Церкви на наявність церковно-канонічного зв'язку з Московським патріархатом. Січень 27, 2023. URL: dessa.gov.ua/vysnovok-relihiieznavchoi-ekspertyzy-statutu-pro-upravlinnia-ukrainskoi-pravoslavnoi-tserkvy
3. Об'єднавчий собор Української церкви: як все відбувалося. Грудень 16, 2018. URL: bbc.com/ukrainian/features-46583417.

4. Древлеправославна Церква України відновила свою історичну назву та юридично оформила вихід з підпорядкування москві. URL: dessa.gov.ua/ancient-orthodox-church-of-ukraine-2-november-2022/

5. Patriarch Bartholomew: the new autocephalous Church of Ukraine is the only canonical Orthodox Church on the territory of the Ukrainian (October 30, 2020). URL: risu.ua/en/patriarch-bartholomew-the-new-autocephalous-church-of-ukraine-is-the-only-canonical-orthodox-church-on-the-territory-of-the-ukrainian_n113056

6. A Declaration on the “Russian World” (Russkii mir) Teaching (March 13, 2022). URL: www.acadimia.org/en/news-announcements/press/963-a-declaration-on-the-russian-world-russkii-mir-teaching

7. Звіт про мережу релігійних організацій станом на 1 січня 2021 року. URL: dessa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Form1-2021-public3.xls

8. Звіт про мережу релігійних організацій станом на 1 січня 2022 року <https://dessa.gov.ua/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Zvit-pro-merezhu-relihiynykh-orhanizatsiy-Form1-2022.xlsx>

9. Звіт про мережу релігійних організацій станом на 1 січня 2024 року URL: docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1vcq1ulAaH8jEOY6HcJyq0GTmDo3SEW6F/edit?usp=sharing&oid=101236368954132592304&rtopf=true&sd=true

10. Митрополит УПЦ (МП) переконує, що вони «незалежна» Церква, що отримала «Томос» у 1990 році URL: df.news/2023/05/20/mytropolyt-upts-mp-perekonuie-shcho-vony-nezalezhna-tserkva-shcho-otrymala-tomos-u-1990-rotsi/

11. Звернення Духовенства та вірян УПЦ до Священного Синоду та Єпископату УПЦ. URL: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ODZTPkYuD0

12. Кирило Говорун. Лавра для всіх: Співіснування громад – це ключ до розв’язання конфлікту. – Духовний фронт України. 07.07.2023. URL: df.news/2023/07/07/lavra-dlia-vsikh-spivisnuvannia-hromad-tse-kliuch-do-rozv-iazannia-konfliktu/

13. Постанова Собору Української Православної Церкви від 27 травня 2022 року. URL: news.church.ua/2022/05/27/postanova-soboru-ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-vid27-travnja-2022-roku/#2023-09-06 [retrieved on 06.01.2024].

14. Чому Онуфрій на Соборі у Феофанії не оголосив автокефалію і вже не зможе цього зробити [Why Onufriy did not declare autocephaly at the Council in Feofaniya and will not be able to do so anymore] (April 4, 2023), in: df.news/2023/04/24/chomu-onufrij-na-sobori-u-feofanii-ne-oholosyv-avtokefaliu-i-vzhe-ne-zmozhe-tsoho-zrobyty [retrieved on 06.01.2024].

15. Архієпископ УПЦ МП у зверненні до глави РПЦ заявив, що у собор в Одесі прилетіла ракета, яку той «благословив» [Archbishop of the UOC-MP in an address to the head of the Russian Orthodox Church said

that a rocket flew into the cathedral in Odesa, which he “blessed”] (July 23, 2023), in: nv.ua/ukr/ukraine/events/preobrazhenskiy-sobor-pislya-raketnogo-udaru-v-odesi-upc-mp-zvernulasya-do-patriarha-kirila-50341084.html [retrieved on 06.01.2024].

16. Постанова Кабінету Міністрів України, № 787 від 27.08.2010 «Про затвердження переліку спеціальностей, за якими здійснюється підготовка фахівців у вищих навчальних закладах за освітньо-кваліфікаційними рівнями спеціаліста і магістра». URL: zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/787-2010-%D0%BF#Text

17. CHORNOMORETS, Yuriy: Перспективи розвитку духовної освіти в Україні [Prospects for the development of religious education in Ukraine], in: *Philosophy of Education*, 26(2), 2020. [In Ukrainian]. DOI: 10.31874/2309-1606-2020-26-2-1

18. HOVORUN, Cyril: *Political Orthodoxies: The Unorthodoxies of the Church Coerced*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2018, 65. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18523/kmhj189112.2019-6.235-238>

19. VYSOTSKY, Tamara: Sources of open Orthodoxy as an ideological basis for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, in *Multiversum. Philosophical almanac*, No. 5-6 (2019), 128–138. [in Ukrainian] DOI: 10.35423/2078-8142.2019.5-6.10

Information about the authors:

Sagan Oleksandr Nazarovych,

Doctor of Science in Philosophy, Professor,
Head of the Department of Religious Studies
Hryhorii Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy
of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine
4, Triokhsviatyetska str., Kyiv, 02000, Ukraine

Bondarenko Victor Dmytrovych,

Doctor of Science in Philosophy, Professor,
Head of the Department of Theology and Religious Studies
Mykhailo Dragomanov Ukrainian State University
Oleksandr Konyskt str., 8/14, Kyiv, 01054, Ukraine

Yanauer Mechyslav Myroslavovych,

PhD student, Junior Researcher
Mykhailo Drahomanov Ukrainian State University
Oleksandr Konyskt str., 8/14, Kyiv, 01054, Ukraine