

Traditional Faiths in Ukraine and Missionary Activity

by Anatoly Kolodniy

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Religious tradition, traditional religion, traditional church: these concepts engage not only denominational theologians in Ukraine, but also activists in the democratic movement who strive to capitalize on certain traditional religious entities as spiritual foundations for the process of national rebirth.

Let us begin by defining the phenomenon of tradition itself. Tradition serves as one form of socio-cultural transmission, which lends to the preservation of culture and its reproduction and development. The functional nature of tradition is evident in its socializing of new generations. Tradition guarantees the stabilization of social relations and cohesion.

The following properties characterize tradition: formation of a collective character; a high level of constancy; and a codification of the life experience of human groups. Tradition consolidates the peoples of a nation. Tradition reproduces the thoughts of the past in the actual experience of the present.

Understanding the role of tradition in religious organizations and movements is complex. Some approach the concept of religious tradition from a chronological perspective. This approach views as traditional those groups who have been around a long time. A strict chronological approach would recognize the tradition of paganism, for example. Correspondingly, numerous Christian denominations would necessarily qualify as 'secondary' traditions.

However, no one has fixed the number of years or centuries a denomination needs to exist to call itself 'traditional.' The Baptist movement in Ukraine dates from 1854. That is almost eight centuries less than Orthodoxy, yet it too is a traditional denomination of Ukraine. Ukraine has experienced over a thousand years of Islam, yet it would not be considered a 'traditional' religion of our people. The fact that

every religious system is a historical event militates against attempting to understand traditions merely as a reflection of chronology or geography.

Each religious system has sequential stages: a period of youth, when it emerged and grew; a period when extant denominations opposed it; a period of establishment; and a period of development where it blossoms on territories it did not originate. Such was the case with Christianity. Since the day of its birth it experienced persecution from Jewish synagogues and from the authorities of the Roman Empire. To a certain extent, Orthodoxy was fortunate in Ukraine-Rus in that it was Rus' princes who supported its establishment in the tenth through the twelfth centuries. Because Christianity did not provide Ukraine's ancestors with an understanding of contemporary life, the surrounding natural environment, and agriculture, they continued to comprehend these phenomena through pagan traditions. Christianity and ancient beliefs together coalesced in the consciousness of Ukraine. Ancestral cults were preserved, as were belief in house-gnomes, forest-gnomes, and water-gnomes. The cult of traditional deities was only reluctantly supplanted by Christian patron saints that functioned similarly. This history shaped the traits of Ukrainian religiosity: openness, syncretism, and tolerance. The religion of the masses can be termed as "popular Christianity."

All this encourages us to understand religious tradition from other than a chronological approach. Religious tradition evolves as a manifestation of the religious elements within an integrated system of a people's culture. These elements are organically inter-twined with the group's spirituality. They express the given spirituality by comparison with that of other peoples. Inasmuch as national culture is dynamic, its religious element should also be expected to be in a state of flux and changing paradigms. In the Ukrainian heritage, traditional faiths are those whose systems of rituals and creeds are a unique product of national culture. Such is the Ukrainian Christian rite, which took shape during the first seven centuries of Christianity's growth in Ukraine. It is the common heritage of both Ukrainian Orthodoxy and Ukrainian Catholicism (a.k.a. Greek Catholicism, or the Uniate rite).

This helps us to understand why, during the period of nation-building, the Ukrainian state and national-democratic movements have, to an extent, defended the

confessional space of traditional Ukrainian churches from foreign missionaries. This reveals the desire for the rebirth of an entire national culture with each of its components intact. Only by adopting a perspective that includes the integrated context of religion's history on Ukrainian soil can one comprehend the current religious situation in Ukraine, interdenominational relations, and attitudes towards missionary activity.

A Complex Denominational History

The denominational history of Ukraine is complex. This complexity is determined by Ukraine's location on the border between East and West, at the locus of contact between two world religions—Christianity and Islam—and between two major Christian Churches: Orthodoxy and Catholicism.

The religious map of Ukraine has never been mono-confessional. Even in ancient Ukraine-Rus, there were local gods who were revered by separate tribes in addition to the gods whom the whole eastern Slavic world worshipped. By installing Christianity as the State religion in 988, Prince Volodimir further complicated the map of religious life. He had hoped that this act should overcome a plurality of denominations. For the duration of about three centuries, the lower levels of the population (villages especially) remained pagan. But the upper tiers of society rapidly Christianized. In time, Ukrainians conducted their own unification of the religious world by combining paganism and Christianity into a hybrid belief system. This syncretic form of Christianized paganism describes the religion of most Ukrainians practically to this day. Ukrainians rarely recognize this when they claim to belong to traditional historical Christian denominations.

Constant partitioning and seizing of territory by hostile neighbor states (Russia, Poland, and Turkey) and active missionary activity by the Catholic Church and Protestant movements from Europe introduced new changes in the religious configuration of Ukraine. Poles brought Catholicism to Ukraine (mostly to the western regions of Galicia, Volin, and Podilia), and German colonists brought various forms of Protestantism, particularly the Lutheran, Baptist, and Seventh-day Adventist creeds, to the southern regions.

Judaism came from Western Europe when the Jews migrated to Ukraine. The Hassidic denomination emerged in Ukraine, where to this day, many Hassidic shrines attract pilgrims. Islamic congregations appeared on Ukrainian lands from the days of the Tartar conquests. However, Islam found almost no followers among the core of the ethnos. Those in Ukraine of this faith are usually emigrants from traditionally Islamic countries.

Crimea has long had a striped religious makeup. Ancient Greeks introduced Christianity to the region, and the Tartars added Islam in the 13th century. Native Crimeans and the Karaims had their own autonomous sect there.

The Greek-Catholic Church is the most influential of Ukraine's national churches. Its creation in 1596 is often framed as a consequence of strictly external forces, namely, the efforts of the Polish authorities and the Jesuits to Catholicize and Policize Ukrainians. However, it was the objective, internal factors that caused the union of Catholicism and Orthodoxy to produce the Uniate Church. Among these factors were (1) the precarious state of the Orthodox Church in the 16th century, and (2) the formation of national churches as an aspect of the cultural-historical process of the Renaissance and Reformation Age. In time, the development of Greek-Catholicism as the national religion of Ukraine became their guarantee of national self-preservation. On the one hand, Greek-Catholicism, blocked the Poles from Latinizing Ukrainian Christianity, and on the other hand, it prevented the complete Russification of Ukrainians in the palm of Moscow's Orthodoxy.

Protestantism could have played a significant role in identifying Ukraine's national heritage, but the Ukrainian movement of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did not take a reformist course, as it was intent on creating a national church. It feared breaking with church tradition and the opinion that Orthodoxy was the only possible national institution. Protestant movements that appeared at this time in Ukraine, particularly the Socinians, Anti-Trinitarians, and Reformists, quickly lost influence. The Adventist, Baptist, and other movements of late Protestantism, disseminated in Ukraine in the nineteenth century, did not become national religious options for several reasons: (1) the denominational religious rituals, which most express ethnic traits, were overly simplified; (2) their ideologues over-emphasized the

supranational character of Christianity and subordinated national living to the religious; and (3) their missionary activities were designed to join representatives of various ethnic groups to the faith. Surely for these reasons, not a single Protestant denomination acted as an agent of ethnic creation or integration in Ukraine. Moreover, the liquidation of Ukrainian Orthodoxy's original, national attributes by the Moscow Patriarchate after its takeover of the Kyivan metropolitan in 1686, created fertile soil for the unfolding of the Christian sectarian movement. The multiplicity of sects facilitated the national disintegration and spiritual disorganization of Ukrainians. The Orthodox faith was deprived of its nation-building characteristics, and Ukraine was deprived of its own national church organizations.

The tolerance of Orthodox Ukrainians towards other religions enabled driven, persecuted believers of various faiths to find refuge from neighboring countries, (e.g., Russia), in Ukrainian lands. Thus we encounter various strands of Old Believers (Orthodoxy's reactionaries), *dukhobory*, and *molokansy*. The 1920s and 1930s produced its own peculiar boom of denominational differentiation in Ukraine as well as in the entire Soviet Union to which it belonged for 70 years. During this period, the Johnites, Fedorivites, True Orthodoxy, Apocalyptics, JehovahIlyinities, *pidhorntsy*, and other groups were offshoots of Orthodoxy. In the first half of this century, a range of *keno*-systematic sects appear in Ukraine, including the following: *inokentivtsy* (in the Odessa region), *leontivtsy* (Volyn), *malovantsy* (Kyiv), *mitrofanivtsy* (Kirovohrad), and *myrashkivtsy* (Polisia). Particular to their faith is the belief in 'the living God,' whose name is pronounced in the name of the denomination.

Because the Ukrainian people did not have their own political state since the thirteenth century, (a fundamental trait of national consolidation), and its ethnic territory was continually partitioned among neighboring colonizing states, no single faith became the national religion. Orthodoxy and Greek-Catholicism competed to be the sole religious expression of the country, and they both yearn to subordinate all believers in Ukraine. But this leads only to inter-denominational conflicts that have not ceased to this day.

Since the time of Ukraine's state independence (1991), its denominational situation has become even more complicated. Traditional Ukrainian churches, such as

the Greek-Catholic and Autocephalous Orthodox (which later became the Kyiv Patriarchate), experienced a revival in their social and religious lives. The national rebirth movement spawned movements with a pagan basis, such as Native Faith, Native Ukrainian National Faith, Great Fire, and others. They all jockey their claims to represent the 'well-spring of Ukrainian religious spirituality.' In this context, the Orthodox Church's Moscow Patriarchate, to which the majority of Ukraine's parishes belong and which has a three-century history on its territory, is viewed by national-democratic forces as a foreign imposition. It is suspected of intending to restore the former Russian empire and of indifference to Ukraine's national interests. Roman Catholicism's growing inroads into Ukraine, through which has gushed a torrent of Polish priests and monks, has also drawn public criticism. It is typical that this negativity is voiced not only by the Orthodox, but also by the Greek-Catholics. The latter are dissatisfied by the Vatican's chronic disregard of Ukraine's national needs, going so far as to coordinate its missionary work in Ukraine with the Moscow Patriarchy.

No State Church

The historical sketch above leads us to the following conclusions:

- 1) Though the Moscow Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church has a lengthy history of operations on Ukrainian soil, it is not a Ukrainian national church. It serves as an agent of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) to organize its missionary activity in Ukraine. Attempts to establish and fortify its existence in Ukraine constitute an effort to return Ukraine to the Russian empire. This is what so provokes the displeasure of national democratic forces. This was precisely the cause of the schism in Orthodoxy in Ukraine. One must distinguish between traditional Ukrainian churches and traditional churches in Ukraine, which describes exactly the Moscow Patriarchate.
- 2) The Kyivan Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church, like the Autocephalous Orthodox Church, has its own seven-century tradition. This history spans from the days of the baptism of Rus-Ukraine by Volodimir to 1686, when the Muscovite Church subjugated the Kyivan metropolitan. Attempts to revive the Autocephalous Church in the 1930s and 1940s failed. Therefore, the rebirth of Ukrainian Orthodox churches

today, precisely for reasons of self-establishment, strive to restrict various forms of missionary activity, from both the Moscow Church and the Apostolic capital.

3) Using a name with reference to the native ethnos operating on Ukrainian territory, or having a relatively long history in Ukraine does not a national church make. If a church ignores the national language in its activity, is subject to a foreign headquarters which disregards Ukrainian national interests, or even works against Ukrainian sovereignty, it cannot be a Ukrainian national church. This is so even if a major portion of its parishioners belongs to the Ukrainian ethnos. Furthermore, a national church has its operational center within the borders of its own jurisdiction.

4) This definition of traditional national religious organizations leaves only the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Orthodox Autocephalous, the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic, and the pagan groups. In our day, however, certain Protestant churches, including the Church of Evangelical Christian-Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and Christians of Evangelical Faith, have demonstrated, to some extent, a national orientation.

The existence of new religious movements in Ukraine is a complex problem. But even here there are definite shifts. The Community of Krishna Consciousness has begun to conduct their religious services in the Ukrainian language, to use Ukrainian melodies, and to translate their sacred books into Ukrainian. Moreover, theologians of the Community of Krishna Consciousness seek the roots of their tradition deep in Ukraine's history, back in the times of its Tripiltsi culture. Undertaking various charitable programs like "Food for the Sake of Life," the Community strives to help the young Ukrainian state to resolve its difficult social problems.

Recently, certain churches have sought the status of 'state church,' proclaiming themselves to be the sole national religious institution. However, the concept of national church is not synonymous with the concept of a state church. The first is a component in the spiritual-cultural cultivation of a nation, while the second is an element of the sociopolitical process. For this, it is not obligatory to have an entire history in the context of autonomous-national development or to be one's own system of creeds and rituals. While there may be multiple national churches or movements in one country, there is usually only one state church institution in a country at any given time.

As a result of its complex history and religious pluralism, Ukraine cannot and does not have a state church. To a certain extent, one can justify and understand the claim of the Kyivan Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. It truly is a national church with a long tradition. Lengthy colonial dependence upon the Russian Church has minimized its ability to conduct missionary activity and to defend itself in opposition to other religious movements. Thus, a certain level of state support for the establishment of this church would seem an entirely normal phenomenon. At the same time, silent support from various levels of several state institutions for the Orthodox Church's Moscow Patriarchate clearly contradicts the country's process of gaining sovereignty and evokes the dissatisfaction of the national-democratic forces.

In his time, the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan Andrey Sheptitsky observed that the division of Ukrainians along denominational lines "will lead the nation to total ruin, if the representatives of the Ukrainian churches do not find a way to unite."¹ However, this condemnation of multi-denominationalism is somewhat extreme. By itself, the religious factor in Ukraine was never a force for ethnic creation or integration. It did play a significant role as an agent of national revival, however. Its priority was always an allegiance to the national idea. Because Ukraine is multi-denominational, national unity can be achieved only by commitment to the principles of tolerance in inter-denominational relations and pluralism in one's views of religion and the world. Christian denominations that wish to aid national rebirth should not aspire to monopolize influence in the spiritual life of Ukrainians. Rather, for national reasons, they should put off the present differences among them. Only convergence upon the level of the national idea as the first priority guarantees that denominational differences will be viewed as something transitional or secondary to the social and religious processes at work.

Crisis Within Historical Orthodoxy

Historical Orthodoxy is experiencing an acute crisis in Ukraine today. This crisis is expressed not merely by Orthodoxy's division into four hostile churches but also by (1) its considerable loss of influence in the spiritual life of the individual and

¹ Sheptitsky, Metropolitan Andrey. *How to Build Our Native House?* Lublin, 1980, p. 24.

of the Ukrainian ethnos generally, (2) an absence of a deep and abiding faith among most Orthodox members, despite the increase of external and ritualistic demonstrations of religiosity, and (3) an absence of moral imperatives in the everyday life and religion of the Orthodox believer.

There have been a number of contributors to this crisis:

(1) The rigid conservatism of Orthodoxy itself as a Christian denomination. A certain fixation with the performance of bare ritual alienates the educated believer who wishes to know religion and not just see it symbolized in a worship service.

(2) Orthodoxy's lengthy existence as the state church under tsarist Russia, when all people were forced to attend the churches, followed by severe restrictions imposed by Soviet power which confined a priest to activity only within church walls. This engendered indifference among the clergy toward missionary work. This conditioning has led to the missionary helplessness of the Orthodox Church relative to other Christian church's missions and to its consequent reliance on the state for protection of its so-called 'canonical space.'

3) The Orthodox Church always lived at the expense of the sacrifices that its believers could make. Today's financial crisis and the increasing impoverishment of the population have depleted the income to church coffers. Orthodox Churches do not have proper funds for training its ministry, publishing literature, periodicals, or access to mass media, or for organizing missionary endeavors.

4) Historical Orthodoxy does not have a tradition of humanitarian work or the value for paying individual attention to its believers. In the modern environment of societal fragmentation, each person seeks outside comfort, life-sustaining advice, and material assistance on his/her own. A definite indifference by the traditional churches to the needs and interests of the individual repels people and drives them to other denominations, often to those that have been introduced by foreign missionaries.

Based on the principles of "One Lord, one faith," (Ephesians 4:5) and "One flock and one shepherd," (John 10:16), Orthodox ideologues in Ukraine today stress their role as 'the true path to salvation.' They contend that their denomination is not merely one of many faiths but assert its exclusivity, as though history itself has prepared and approved its exceptional status. Orthodoxy, they note, is "a church made

unique by its own truth.” When considered merely as one of many faiths, its universal power and glory is not so convincing. Therefore, Orthodox theorists attempt not so much to contradict other denominations as to discover in them manifestations of Orthodoxy’s own universal spirit as a means to ‘Orthodoxize’ them. In their opinions, this basis of thought and action can reverse sectarian individuation from Orthodoxy and obstruct in a novel way the missionary activity of outside movements.

In the opinion of these Orthodox theoreticians, the presence of any ‘seeds of Orthodoxy’ assures the convergence of the non-Orthodox Christian churches towards ‘true Christianity.’ In various ways, they propose only their ‘reeducation into Orthodoxy.’ They do not raise the issue of organizationally appending or absorbing these non-Orthodox religious institutions into some global Orthodox association. This is because universal Orthodoxy is a confederation of independent church structures and not a church empire with a single head, such as Catholicism, for example.

One True Church in Orthodox Publications

Orthodox publications in Ukraine particularly emphasize the refutation of those arguments asserted by various denominations in order to ground the legitimacy of their existence in the constellation of Christian groups. In God’s plan, they underscore, one Church was built, not several. (“I will build my Church”—Matthew 16:18.) Thus there can be only one true Christian faith, and not one hundred or even one thousand of them. According to Orthodox ideologues, this one church, founded by Jesus Christ and full of God’s truth, is the Orthodox Church. Other churches, because they emerged after this divine act of creation, are human products and thus not ‘churches’ at all.² In a series of brochures, “The Church and churches,” the Moscow Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church sets forth this very position, that this single church is Orthodoxy. They conclude, then, that the rest of the Christian movements—Catholic, Baptist, Adventist, Mormon, Jehovah’s Witness, and others—have no right to call themselves ‘churches.’ These publications refer to them as “churches” in quotes.

The Orthodox go so far as to reserve for themselves not only the right to the title of ‘church’ but also to the status of ‘religion.’ Proclaiming other faiths

² Archbishop Theodosios, *Orthodoxy and Protestantism*, Zhitomir, Ukraine, 1995, p 4.

pseudo-religious, they ascribe to them immorality, neglect of individual interests, and outright criminal behavior. They accuse missionaries of “zombification of their ‘sacrifices,’” of using mental pressure, manipulation of consciousness under the guise of performing rites, concealment of the true content of their denomination’s creed, and other horrible things.

It is well known that Orthodox believers traditionally express their devotion and religiosity through observing rituals. The ideologues of Orthodoxy seek to avert its followers from competing teachings, missions, and neo-religious influences by promoting the unsophisticated fixation that these groups lack “a liturgy in the true sense of the word,” “the saving power of the rites,” “the recognition of Orthodox cathedrals,” etc. In addition, they persistently pursue the point that a church service must be performed exclusively in church buildings because only there does it have divine presence—not in clubs, halls, or otherwise equipped rooms. The words of Jesus Christ, “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” is interpreted as those who do not have the opportunity to exchange a simple meeting of the faithful for the fullness of the Church (Matthew 18:20). This quote says nothing about such a gathering of believers outside the church building qualifying as a church.

The Orthodox Church publicly claims “a respectful attitude towards representatives” of all religions, even pagans, as long as they live conscientiously and peacefully. Yet the hierarchy’s councils or its spokespeople define ‘missionary activity’ as a means of destroying the people’s morals and national traditions, and as a threat to the spiritual health of citizens and to the country’s very existence. The head of the Kyivan Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, (UOC-KP), Filaret, believes that missionary activity will lead even to changes in the spiritual gene pool in Ukraine. Relying on this, he argues that it is essential that the state ban missionary activity. “The soul of our people is Orthodoxy,” he emphasizes. “If this soul ceases to exist, so too will Ukraine.”³

³Patriarch Filaret, Address at the Conference of the UOC-KP, October 20-21, 1995. *The Orthodox Bulletin*, 1995, No. 11-12, p. 20.

In their appeals to Parliament and the President, the leadership of various Orthodox churches raises the issue of sealing off access to radio, television, stadiums, palaces of culture, and clubs for foreign missionaries. Their current access to these media is criticized as the “sale for dollars” of the nation’s sanctity and a depreciation of national spiritual treasures. Orthodox churches suspect the charitable work and humanitarian aid undertaken by various missions as a means to “trap souls.” We note, however, that the Orthodox Churches are not rushing to undertake this work themselves. Instead, they cherish the hope that neophytes will convert to Orthodoxy simply by acknowledging this faith to be *the traditional one*.

Guided by the principle that ‘truth’ is inexorable and imperturbable, and thus does not tolerate compromises, Orthodox authors regard missionary activity as ‘false witness,’ which excludes the possibility of tolerance towards it. They refute arguments that missionaries are engaged in the ‘holy work’ of sharing the Gospel among the people by judging that “only the true Church has the exclusive right to interpret Biblical texts inasmuch as only the Church has a command of Bible language.”

Orthodox publications represent foreign religious missions as transferring Western native competitive struggles of various Christian faiths onto Ukrainian soil. They claim that missionaries and preachers bear not the true word of God, but their personal interpretation of it. That which Billy Graham professes differs from that which Mark Finley or John Carter asserts. Missionary interpretations of the Bible are accused of a subtext promoting the ‘American Dream’ and the spirit of selfish gain and business, which is far from the ancient Eastern tradition and which is historically and spiritually invalid.

Orthodox publications argue for a definite distancing from missionary influences, and warn the reader to “beware, lest others deceive you.” Jesus said there would be “many of these” (Matthew 24:4). They point to Biblical passages such as “be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines” (Hebrews 13:9) and “be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

Orthodox theorists attribute the success of foreign Christian missions to a range of factors: (1) an explosion of the sins of humanity given Ukraine’s new social

conditions, and “where there is sin, there is fertile soil for the devil;” (2) a spiritual hunger among people in times of materialism that makes them ready to swallow “life-giving juice and deadly poison” together in the form of churches that are bad and cannot bring salvation; (3) the fundamental Christian illiteracy of believers which makes them susceptible to false witness and even erroneous interpretations of ‘Holy Scripture’ by missionaries; (4) a popular ignorance of the real meaning of spirituality which allows them to adopt a religion that is “pleasant on the outside, but venomous at the core;” (5) a casual attitude towards holy teaching, which, through pride and self-assurance, manifest themselves by a disregard for traditional faith. Instead, individuals yearn to become wise by reasoning out their own understanding of the creeds of various faiths.

Theorists conclude that is it better to be completely without faith then to “subscribe to false reasoning which can deprive one not only of a future life in eternity but also current earthly life.” Additionally, they advise that, before choosing a faith, one must certainly counsel with an educated Orthodox priest to learn about the purpose of the religion of the holy fathers.

Recent efforts by the state, and even some priests and laity to create more favorable conditions for missionary activity, have provoked severe criticism for “opening its borders to them.” “If people go to the false prophets,” warns Archbishop Ihor Issichenko of the Autocephalous Church, “then that indicates that we did not teach them in time, did not quench their spiritual thirst, and did not give them the chance to meet the Living God in the holy Temple.” The Moscow Patriarchate takes a somewhat different swipe at followers of new religions. Typically, it is a forceful blow announcing new religions as incompatible with Christianity. A decision that is binding upon members of its Ukrainian Orthodox branch, the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church declared “individuals who accept the teachings of these sects and movements or, moreover, facilitate their propagation, have already excommunicated themselves from the Orthodox Church.” Guided by this Council’s statement “On the Attitude of the ROC towards Intra-Christian Cooperation in Search of Unity,” the leadership of the UOC declared the proselytizing activity of foreign

missionaries to be among believers a form of corruption “of the very idea of ecumenical cooperation and complementary testimony.”

The Orthodox youth movement displays greater aggressiveness towards neo-religious movements. This aggression has more of a religious-political flavor than a religious-missionary one. Young Orthodox leaders attack the state because its laws do not halt the ‘unrighteous activity of sects.’ They take offense that neo-religious preachers receive facilities such as palaces of culture and clubs to conduct events and public sermons, and that their literature gets disseminated, and that these preachers receive invitations to lecture in schools, etc.

To counteract missionary activity, Orthodox priests and hierarchs assert in their sermons that “the devil himself” is incarnated in the person of a missionary, in a form “adapted to humanity’s contemporary condition and level of spiritual and intellectual development.” Coming to humanity in the image of an ‘angel of light,’ extraterrestrial teacher, and mentor, the missionary imparts ‘wisdom’ that in the end leads “a person to commune with Satan.” Patriarch Filaret compares the belief of a person of any faith other than Orthodoxy to atheism. “The devil continues to tempt people to separate them from God and from genuine spiritual life,” he claims. “Recently it has become unfashionable to contradict God. Therefore, other creeds—false, though externally respectable—have inter-twined themselves with true faith in God.”⁴

Historical Orthodoxy no longer relies on its own resilience to counteract the spread throughout the country of other denominations. It strives to secure, above all, the support of the state. However, the leadership structure of various Orthodox churches, in their appeals to the state, typically ask for protection as though it is not for their own benefit. They submit that the spread of other faiths mortally threatens the nation’s spiritual heritage, a heritage molded by centuries and dominated by Orthodox tradition. Alluding to alleged external indicators, Orthodox ideologues often vociferously assert the absolute and exclusive role of their faith for the spiritual development of the Ukrainian people. They underscore that Orthodoxy has stood the

⁴Filaret, Patriarch, *Whence Cometh Temptation*, The Orthodox Bulletin, 1996, No. 9-10, p. 16.

test of time and that it will lead to nothing unpleasant or unpredictable. The untested and unknown faiths could lead to just such an undesirable result.

The Revisionist History of Ukrainian Orthodoxy

However, this argument does not take into account the revisionist history of Ukrainian Orthodoxy itself. During its autonomous existence within the framework of the Constantinople Patriarchate (988-1686), it truly matured as a component of national culture. Its specific traits included sophistication, evangelism, openness, manners, democracy, and government by council. On the strength of its achievements, it became its own Ukrainian Christian rite. It differed qualitatively from the Byzantine and Russian rites in its praise of humanity, its elevation of earth to heaven, and its high level of aesthetics.

But with the incorporation of the Kyiv archdiocese into the Moscow Patriarchy in 1686, the latter exerted tremendous effort to liquidate all that made Orthodoxy in Ukraine a truly national achievement. In time, Orthodoxy in Ukraine degenerated into an agent of national dissipation and a means of colonization. The use of Church-Slavonic language, (with Russian accent), for church services facilitated the displacement of Ukrainian as a common language. It fostered the attitude that Ukrainian was not a valuable or viable language, and unsuited for educated spheres.

Moreover, the Moscow church sought to deprive Ukrainians from their own Christian tradition. It appropriated this tradition—including the Apostle Andrew's mission to Ukraine and the baptism of Ukraine-Rus by Prince Volodimir—as merely a component of the greater history of Great Russia and regarded Ukraine as its territorial frontier.

Fulfilling its assignment by the Stalinist regime to oppress national Orthodox churches (especially in Ukraine and Estonia), and become faithfully subservient to totalitarianism for six decades, the Moscow Patriarchate today strives to be the dominant spiritual force in the independent states which emerged from the ruins of the Soviet Union. In our time, this church is the single Union-wide organization, which, acting legally in these countries, concentrates all its efforts on the regeneration

of the former USSR in modified form. This purpose drives its missionary activity, which is often hardly religious, in Ukraine.

Therefore, when the UOC-MP so widespread in Ukraine seeks to defend itself against foreign missionary activity with its urgent declarations about ‘protecting tradition,’ what really is at issue is the defense of tradition formed by Russian Orthodoxy. Thus, this tradition is as much an import as the various foreign missions that seek to convert Ukrainians today.

For this reason, when considering the issue of Ukraine’s own religious tradition, one should, above all, take into account the following: traditional national churches in Ukraine are those which have become inalienable components of the culture. Having deep historical roots, these churches, in their worldviews and moral institutions and ritual practices, have become enmeshed in the culture of their believers. This is why protection of their cultural fields of influence from any missionary inroads forms an aspect of national rebirth. Ukrainian Orthodoxy, in contrast to Russian, was open and tolerant towards various positive elements in the activity of other faiths. Examples include its attitude towards the spread of various Protestant movements in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the unimpeded settlement of refugees of other faiths from Russia or Poland, especially Old Believers, *Molokany*, and Anti-Trinitarians. When an occasional hierarchy of Ukrainian Orthodoxy declares his aversion to foreign missions, this is more the result of training by Moscow than of the Ukrainian mentality.

Dealing With Today’s Realities

Orthodox churches in Ukraine must deal with today’s realities. They must learn to live in conditions of freedom and not expect that their tradition or state support will rescue them. Their church buildings are open for visits by their members. The fact that they do not attract neophytes and that their church services are frequently sparsely attended by parishioners should concern Orthodox churches and cause them to ask why.

Today, members and potential followers of Orthodoxy are educated individuals. They are no longer drawn by the pomp of ritual or literal interpretations

of Biblical texts. In church, they want to learn about religion and not merely watch the performance of dead rituals. It seems that the church has little to say to the current generation. It stands on its orthodoxy and lives in the past.

The revitalization of religious consciousness and modern religious revival do not connote a return to the traditional Christianity of Ukrainian Orthodoxy. We observe that the rift between traditional Christianity and the contemporary religious movement has not narrowed during our present national revival. On the contrary, this gap continues to widen. Contemporary religious thought is not leaning towards any one Christian church, but instead seeks to create (and perhaps on the basis of Christianity) a new religion. This new religion does not lose its specific religious traits and, at the same time, strives to harmonize with the worldview that proceeds from the entire content of contemporary culture.

An individual in our time achieves faith in the divine nature of her own being which is a created soul that is a part of God. Thus she sees salvation in her own hands, in the divine and spiritual properties of her own self. For this kind of believer, Jesus Christ stands less as a 'Savior' or a mediator with God but foremost as a moral paragon on the path to becoming one with Him. We observe that traditional Christian churches of Ukraine are unprepared to teach such believers. Foreign religious missionaries have capitalized on this unreadiness.

Active Missionary Work of Greek-Catholic and Roman-Catholic Churches

If Ukraine's orthodox churches are practically excluded from missionary activity, then both the Greek-Catholic and Roman-Catholic Churches are actively conducting it. Greek-Catholics have squeezed out the Orthodox from three Galician oblasts (Lviv, Ternopil, and Ivano-Frankivsk) by taking over their churches. These buildings belonged to them until the so-called Lviv Church Council in 1946 that forcibly incorporated the Greek-Catholic Church into the Moscow Patriarchate. Evidence of Greek-Catholic growth includes an increase in the number of congregations from 2,643 in 1991 to 3,175 in 1997 and a construction program that consists of almost a thousand new churches and chapels. They are renovating those

church buildings that were utilized for other than religious purposes during the Soviet period.

Simultaneously, Greek-Catholicism claims status not as a regional but as a nation-wide church and insists on spiritually ministering to its followers throughout Ukraine. It seeks to open parishes in eastern oblasts, especially in the areas densely populated by emigrants from Galicia. The church does not consider this as 'proselytizing in the East.' "We would not intrude there if our people were not there," claims Lyubomir Huzar, current de facto head of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC).⁵ The church leadership created and heavily supports the Kyiv-Vishhorodsky exarchate that organizationally unites the eastern Greek-Catholic parishes. To realize the idea of transferring its center to Kyiv, the church has begun construction of a patriarchal cathedral. Members of the monastic order of St. Basil's are conducting catechisms in the cities of eastern Ukraine.

⁵ Huzar, Lyubomir Bishop, "We Cannot Live Divided," *The Parish Newspaper*, 1996, No. 12.

In actively pursuing its 'Eastern policy,' the Church's leadership couches this work in certain cautious terms to disarm the Orthodox. Typical assurances include: "We do not wish to capitalize on Orthodoxy's temporary weakness." "It would be wrong to create a division from the Catholics." "There are Catholics, there are Greek-Catholics, and there are Orthodox. It should not be so. Christians should not live divided."

While the nationally oriented Orthodox churches accept the mobilization of Greek-Catholicism with some degree of calm, the UOC-MP emphatically expresses its dissatisfaction. On the one hand, it continues its policy of non-recognition of Greek-Catholicism as an independent Christian faith. On the other hand, it perceives its successes as signs of Catholicism's general expansion eastward onto Orthodoxy's self-proclaimed canonical territory.

Though performing active missionary work in various regions of the country, Greek Catholics manifest their disapproval that, as they write, "Ukraine has become a kind of 'wide-open field' for numerous false, homegrown prophets and preachers from different Western sects and foreign religions. The essence of the latter is unacceptable to the spirit of the Ukrainian people."⁶ The Greek-Catholic church believes that the proselytizing of foreign missions will lead to the ruin of religious and cultural life for the still unconsolidated Ukrainian nation. It considers itself, together with the Orthodox churches (but not the state, as the latter wants), as responsible for investing maximum effort towards securing spiritual protection for all citizens of the country. It thinks this alliance should conduct an educational campaign among the public about the harm and immorality of the teachings and influences of certain sects. With a view to executing such a program, the Church arranged for the preparation of a thousand such catechism teachers.

⁶*The Parish Newspaper*, 1995, No. 46.

The activity of Polish Catholic priest-missionaries and monks that spread the Latin rite on Ukrainian soil elicits particular alarm in Greek-Catholic lay organizations (whose alarm is silently shared by the official church institutions). They exhort the Polish Roman-Catholic hierarchy to “minister among the Ukrainian population in the Eastern Byzantine-Ukrainian rite” and to subordinate their missionaries “to the jurisdiction of the hierarchy of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church.”⁷

In fact, Ukraine in the last decade has indeed become a field of active missionary activity for Roman-Catholics, who are usually expatriates from Poland. They see the goal of their mission to “evangelize and plant the Church among those nations or groups where it has yet to put down roots.” To avoid accusations of proselytizing, Roman-Catholics ‘ground’ their right to expand the network of Catholic institutions in Ukraine in the assertion that it has not regained its pre-Soviet status, in terms of the number of monasteries and churches, for example. This flatly ignores the country’s new realities, such as its insignificant quantity of Roman-Catholic followers and the revitalization process of its traditional national churches. The result is that Catholic monasteries settle citizens of other countries in Ukraine and foreign priests perform liturgies in half-empty churches. All this provokes open condemnation from Greek-Catholic lay and ecclesiastical functionaries.

⁷“We Strive to Establish a Unified Ukrainian Church”, *Proclamation of the Laity of the UGCC: For a Free Ukraine*, 25 May 1995.

Having become the dominant faith in the Galician region of Ukraine, Greek-Catholicism has also erected a protective barricade against the penetration of various foreign religious missions. The theoretical basis for this barricade is the evaluation of Greek-Catholicism as national tradition, to which alone the Ukrainian ethnos owes its survival and potential for self-preservation. "A great struggle is underway, sects multiply rapidly and stir up trouble among the people, and the people treat lightly their traditional religion, their faith, for which our forefathers suffered so much." These words of Bishop Sophran the Wise reflect Greek-Catholicism's attitude towards missionary activity. It is typical that the bishop transfers the blame for the spread of this so-called "religious cacophony and anarchy" onto the faithful themselves. They are blamed because they do not practice their faith and do not go bravely among the people to give "an example of righteous living" and to rebut the "false witness of the missionaries."⁸ The Greek-Catholic Church explains the youth's devotion to other faiths as a result of the clergy's incapacity to satisfy the inquiries of the young generation, to match its level of education, or to share its understanding of 'how to be a Christian.'

Roman Catholic Mission Policy

The Apostolic capital⁹ organizes its missionary policy regarding Ukraine according to the Decree's article concerning this activity as adopted by the Second Vatican Council. Pertinent is the statement that "God desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth," that "the entire human family join into one people of God and come together in the one body of Christ." Given that two billion people allegedly have not as yet heard the Gospel news, the Catholic Church views the 'preaching of the Gospel' as the principal means to realize God's appointed purpose.¹⁰

In the Decree "On Missionary Activity of the Church," the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church lays out the theological grounds for its missionary

⁸*Goal*, 1997, No. 11.

⁹This unusual designation appears to refer to either the Roman see or to the policies of the Vatican's Secretary of State - Editor's comment.

¹⁰Decree on Missionary Activity of the Church: Second Vatican Council: Constitutions, Decrees, and Declarations; Brussels, 1992.

dissemination in Ukraine. First, God wishes to invite each person to participate in His life and salvation, gathering His dispersed children into one. Second, the Apostles themselves exhorted the faithful of Christ's Church to persist in their task, so that "the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified" (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

Considering the diversity of the subjects of its influence, Roman-Catholics delineate three forms of missionary activity (1) work among pagans, which envelops all non-Christians, (2) work among their own believers, and (3) work among other Christians in order to renew their unity. In contrast to traditional churches, the Roman-Catholic Church does not suffer from a shortage of priests and material resources. The Church calls for peaceful receptivity towards its missionary activity "based on a common consciousness of faith in Jesus Christ" and its search for complementary efforts and cooperation in the social, technical, and cultural spheres. This simply masks the Roman-Catholic Church's desire to establish itself on Ukrainian soil.

Other evidence for this concealed desire is the Vatican's mission program, entitled *Pontifica Commissione per la Russia* ("Pro Russia" for short) for the New Independent States. That this program treats the independent state of Ukraine as a part of the Russian empire deserves attention. Thus the Vatican hopes to 'harmonize' its activity in Ukraine with the Church of the Moscow Patriarchy.

The publication of a document in June 1992, entitled "General Principles and Practical Norms for Coordination of the Action of the Catholic Church in Russia and other Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States," testifies to a definite understanding between the Moscow Patriarchy and the Roman leadership concerning their respective spheres of influence and 'missionary action' in Ukraine. Well-educated Polish missionaries of the Latin rite, disguised as 'protectors,' arrive today in Ukraine with the objective of organizing various schools and groups auxiliary to the churches. Ukrainian children are carted off to summer camps in Poland, where they experience a significant influence of catechism.

The Second Vatican Council's decree on missionary activity exudes magnanimity and good intentions. However, the Catholic Church is not observing all of its provisions on the territory of Ukraine. Noting the local Christian churches'

deficit of priests and resources, the document acknowledges that the Catholic Church should provide them with assistance that would serve their development and ripening Christian life. In fact, we see not assistance but exploitation of these difficulties, aimed at rooting Catholicism in Ukraine. The document also puts forth the necessity of adapting missionary work to the customs of the people and the variable circumstances of their lives. Here also the Catholic Church blatantly operates outside the course of Ukrainian national tradition. As a group of well-known activists in culture and science noted in an open letter to the president of Ukraine,¹¹ the Roman Catholic Church pursues a course of Policization with its missionary activity, motivated by the Ukraino-phobic position of Polish chauvinists. The Church further fails to carry out the Decree's provision for dialogue with non-Christian religions and cultures. Moreover, Catholics do not even have any contacts with Protestant denominations.

The Vatican authors of the macro-policy fail to see developing problems and situations in Ukraine. In seeking to resolve—with the Moscow patriarch—the problems of Ukrainian religious life, the Apostolic capital disregards the presence of nationally oriented Orthodox churches in Ukraine and does not communicate with them. The joint condemnation of Ukrainian 'nationalism' by the Moscow patriarch and the Vatican shows the Vatican's blind spot to the obvious and undeniable imperialism of the Russian Church. The latter, alluding to its declared partnership with the Roman-Catholic Church, petitions Pope John Paul II through its Bishop Augustine in Lviv to "abolish the Unions of Brest and Uzhorod, which stand as an artificial wall between us."¹²

Only the imperial church of Russia, which perceives Ukraine to be an appendage of the Russian state, could display similar impudence regarding one of the traditional Ukrainian churches—the Greek-Catholic.

The Catholic Church officially declares its recognition of truth and holiness in other religions and its lack of hostility towards them. In contrast to the Orthodox and Greek Catholics, it does not hope for state restrictions on the missionary activity of

¹¹ "Will Ukraine maintain its spiritual current in the Christian sea?"

¹²(Patriarchate, 1997, No. 3, p. 17.

new religious movements. Such restrictions would place weights on its own plans to expand and evangelize. Sensing its missionary strength and possessing the proper material resources for it, the Church does not fear contact with other Christians and cooperates with them in the work of “spreading the Gospel news.” Along with this, it cherishes the hope that ecumenical cooperation will, in time, transform into a unification of denominations on the basis of Catholicism and will catalyze the “return to the original, undivided church.”

We note, however, that Catholic publications in Ukraine sound warnings to its faithful regarding the missionaries of other faiths, which “are not written in the law, including God’s laws.” They recall the warning of Jesus Christ about false prophets, “which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Matthew 7:15).

Ukrainian Protestant Attitudes to Missions

In contrast to the Orthodox, the Greek-Catholic and Roman-Catholic churches generally receive positive marks and support for the activities of their foreign missions from Ukraine’s traditional Protestant churches, namely the Evangelical Christian-Baptists, Seventh-day Adventists, and Christians of Evangelical Faith. In his addresses at scholarly conferences, one leader of Ukrainian Adventism, M. Zhykalyuk, advances the notion that missionary activity is “the right to one’s own point of view.” Any restrictions imposed by legislation to protect Orthodoxy would demonstrate that Ukraine is not a state governed by laws. The leader of the Ukrainian Church of Christians of Evangelic Faith (Pentecostals), M. Melnyk, calls for the state to revamp its negative view regarding religious missions, and, at the same time, he extends a proposition to all Christian faiths to create a single program of missionary activity to evangelize Ukraine.

With a certain level of support from their foreign headquarters [sic], Ukraine’s traditional Protestant churches have rolled out widespread evangelical activity. It takes familiar forms: propagation of the Word of God through oral preaching, customized printed (materials published and paid for by these churches), radio and television throughout Ukraine, and charitable work, such as visiting those who live alone or who are in pain or in prison, etc.

Orthodoxy and Catholicism, on one hand, and Protestantism, on the other, have different attitudes towards proselytizing. The latter finds it perfectly legal, but the former attach an ostensibly negative connotation to this concept. The former strives in every way to restrict the proselytizing by 'outsiders.' Yet they themselves quietly eye Protestants as a target of their own proselytizing.

Conclusions

We have elucidated the nature of the attitudes towards religious missionary activity of both Ukrainian traditional churches and the churches traditional for Ukraine. This discussion leads to the following conclusions:

(1) By itself, the religious factor in Ukraine has never been decisive in the processes of ethnic creation and ethnic development or of national renaissance. The national idea always took priority. This convergence on the primacy of the national idea causes us to view denominational differences as incapable of playing a crucial or retarding role in the society's development or the nation's revival. Thus the state should control the religious process only to the extent delineated in the pertinent international and Ukrainian legal documents. In this way every individual is guaranteed denominational independence. This freedom includes not only the right to obtain the necessary information about a given faith and the right to accept it as the creed of one's own choosing and worldview, but also the right to spread one's faith irrespective of political borders.

(2) The traditional absence of creedal fanaticism among Ukrainians guarantees their tolerant and, to a certain extent, curious attitude towards new religious movements. Hostility towards new religions and the desire to place one's own denomination under the aegis of the state is perpetrated foremost by those circles of Church leadership who wish to justify their own missionary inertia or to gain political capital among those political forces which stand for national independence.

(3) Considering that traditional national churches (a) were officially forbidden by the state during the years of totalitarian rule, (b) lack material resources that in turn hampers the operation and organization of religious life in full measure, and (c) must now compete with Western missionary centers, the state should be a catalyst for their

activity. This facilitation can include tax breaks, assistance with the construction and repair of church buildings, aid in their publishing programs, and access to mass media.

(4) National tradition is not merely the repetition of that which has happened before but also progress on the basis of the past. It is appropriate not only to revive tradition but also to continue it in order to maintain its contemporary nature and applicability to life. Ukrainian traditional churches will preserve their viability on the condition that they include in their functional context that which is positive from the evangelical processes carried out by foreign religious missionary activity. The church should view its faithful not merely as the object of its influence during the liturgy, but also as the subject of its denomination's focus, that is, the church is comprised of the laity as well as the clergy.

(5) The fact that foreign missions bring the Word of God to Ukraine at a time when it lacks its own such opportunities by its traditional faiths and churches deserves mention. Those missionaries who arrive in Ukraine do not always take into account the thousand-year Christian tradition on Ukrainian lands. Sharing words of morality and goodness with the public, they sometimes fail to consider the national concerns of Ukrainians.

(6) The activity of Christian missionaries of various faiths need not focus on the creation of their own organizational structures in Ukraine. This activity would have greater impact if entered into the context of the evangelical efforts of traditional faiths and aided them in catechism work, and preparation of cadres of missionaries. This would facilitate the spiritual consolidation of our society, and contribute to the establishment of Ukraine as a sovereign state.

(7) In organizing missionary activity in Ukraine, foreign religious centers would be well advised to keep in mind the national, family, and common traditions of Ukrainians and to catalyze the process of national state-building. In this process, the language used by missionaries is crucial. A missionary who evangelizes in Russian allies himself with those Ukraino-phobic forces which retard in every possible way the process of Ukraine's national state-building and renaissance.