Eastern Christian Churches Between State and Society: An Overview of the Religious Landscape in Ukraine (1989–2014)

Eastern Christian Churches Between State and Society: An Overview of the Religious Landscape in Ukraine (1989–2014)[1]

Natalia Shlikhta

National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy,
Department of History

Abstract

The decline of the communist regime in the late 1980s stimulated decentralizing processes within the Russian Orthodox Church; a final result being the emergence of Eastern Christian Churches in independent Ukraine: the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Throughout the next two and a half decades the Ukrainian religious landscape has been simultaneously characterized by sharp conflicts and a search for ways of peaceful coexistence between various confessions; ecumenical initiatives, and asserting one's "canonicity" against the "schismatic" others; attempts by some Churches to act as civil agencies and national institutions; attempts by the state under President Yanukovych to revive a "state" Church following the Russian model; moves towards a Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church and also towards "*Russkii mir*" (The Russian World). Crucial issues are — the Churches' search for their place in the post-Soviet Ukrainian realm and their choices of models for coexistence with Ukrainian officialdom and society. In its approach the article provides a general profile of each Church, examines state policies towards religion and the Church in independent Ukraine, and describes a turning point, that being the Revolution of Dignity's deep influence on the Churches' perceptions of themselves and their place in Ukrainian life.

Key Words: Church, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, Ukrainian society, state-church relations.

Introduction

Observers use the term "the most pluralistic religious market in Eastern Europe" to describe the religious landscape in independent Ukraine (with 55 religious denominations legally

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functioning there).[2] "(Religious) pluralism together with high competition is the characteristic feature of the Ukrainian religious landscape and a key for the understanding of (social, cultural) processes there," states Viktor Yelensky.[3] In accordance with an April 2014 sociological survey:

- 76% of Ukrainians consider themselves "believers" (compared to 57.8% in 2000; 71.4% in 2010);
- 7.9% hesitate between "belief and non-belief" (respectively: 22.5% and 11.5%).[4]

Confessional affiliation amongst those who "believe":
- 70.2% — "Orthodox" (66%; 68.1%);
- 7.8% — "Greek Catholic" (7.6%; 7.6%);
- 1% — "Roman Catholic" (0.5%; 0.4%);
- 1% — "Protestant" (2%; 1.9%);
- 6.3% — "simply Christian" (6.9%; 7.2%);
- 0.1% — "Jewish" (0.3%; 0.1%);
- 0.2% — "Muslim" (0.7%; 0.9%);
- 0.2% — "Buddhist" (0.1%; 0.1%);
- 12.5% — do not identify themselves with any confession (15.3%; 13.2%).[5]

Orthodox believers identify themselves with one or another Church or do not display any clear confessional identification, as shown by sociological surveys:
- 17.4% claim their belonging to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (9.2%; 23.6%);
- 22.4% — to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate (12.1%; 15.1%);
- 0.7% — to the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (1.3%; 0.9%);
- 28.1% — are "simply Orthodox" (38.1%; 25.9%);
- 1.4% — "do not know" (4.6%; 1.6%).[6]

Eastern Christian Churches (all the Orthodox Churches and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church), to which roughly 80% of believers in Ukraine claim their belonging, are widely considered *traditional national* Churches of the Ukrainian people.

The origins of such a heterogeneous religious landscape can be traced as far back as to the millennium celebrations of Kyivan Christianity in 1988. These pompous celebrations marked the last "honeymoon" in relations between the declining Soviet regime and the Russian Orthodox Church, considered by many to be the "state" Church in the USSR. Simultaneously,

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2   Zenon V. Wasyliw, "Orthodox Churches in Ukraine," in *Eastern Christianity in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Lucian N. Leustean (London: Routledge, 2014), 320 (statistics provided for 2012).

3   Viktor Yelensky, "Ukrainskoe pravoslavie i ukrainskii proekt [Ukrainian Orthodoxy and the Ukrainian Project]," *Pro et Contra* 17.3–4 (2013): 28.

4   *Ukraina — 2014: suspilno-politychnyi konflikt i Tserkva* [*Ukraine-2014: The Social and Political Conflict and Church*], Tsentr Razumkova (Kyiv, 2014), 18.

5   *Ukraina — 2014*, 19.

6   *Ukraina — 2014*, 20.

the event marked the end of the Russian Orthodox Church's hegemony on the Soviet landscape. Gorbachev's glasnost and his rapprochement with the West, including the Vatican, gave a powerful impetus to decentralizing processes always latently present within this Church.

After 40 years of either "catacomb" existence or as a "Church within a Church" (within the official Orthodox Church),[7] Ukrainian Greek Catholics finally gained legal recognition on the same day that Gorbachev met John Paul II on December 1, 1989. The "Initiative Committee for the Revival of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church" was established in early 1989 in Kyiv by representatives of the Ukrainian intelligentsia and a group of Orthodox clergy, and chose to pray for Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios instead of the Patriarch of Moscow. The Local Council of the reestablished Church elected Metropolitan Mstyslav (Skrypnyk), then the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the USA, as its own head in June 1990. The Moscow center answered this autocephalous challenge by granting autonomous status to the Ukrainian Exarchate — from now on the "Ukrainian Orthodox Church" — on October 28, 1990.

The proclamation of the Act of Sovereignty of Ukraine on July 16, 1990, and (as many critics stress) personal defeat in elections to become the Patriarch of Moscow were the key factors changing the course of Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko), the longtime loyal head of the Ukrainian Exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church. "Ukraine gained more independence. I thought then that there was a need for the Church to bring its independence into line with the state's independence. And immediately after the election of the new Patriarch, I raised the issue of the independence of the Ukrainian Church in its self-government," Patriarch Filaret recalled in a 1996 interview.[8] The declaration of the Independence of Ukraine on August 24, 1991 confirmed the Patriarch's, and part of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church's hierarchy's understanding that "there should be an independent autocephalous Church in an independent state," which understandably gained no support in Moscow.[9]

The final break came in 1992 when 18 bishops of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church met in Kharkiv on May 27th and elected Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan), then of Rostov and Novocherkassk, as the new head of the Church. Metropolitan Filaret was dismissed by this "Council," whose decision was supported by the Archbishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in June of the same year. (Metropolitan Filaret was finally excommunicated by the Russian Orthodox Church in 1997.) Metropolitan Filaret did not recognize these decisions; and together with a group of clergy and hierarchy supporting him, and also with a part of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, convened the "All Ukrainian Orthodox Council" on June 25th, proclaiming the merger of the two Churches into the "Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate."[10] Patriarch Mstylsav — regardless of his own disapproval of the Council's

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7 For more details on the "Church within the Church" see: Natalia Shlikhta, *Tserkva tykh, khto vyzhyv. Radianska Ukraina, seredyna 1940-kh — pochatok 1970-kh rr.* [*The Church of Those who Survived. Soviet Ukraine in the Mid-1940s — Early 1970s*] (Kharkiv: Akta, 2011), 251–382.

8 Margarita Hewko and Sara Sievers, "The Oral History of Independent Ukraine 1988–1991," accessed May 1, 2015, http://oralhistory.org.ua/interview-ua/466/.

9 Hewko and Sievers, "The Oral History."

10 For more details see: Archbishop Ihor (Isichenko), *Istoria Khrystovoi Tserkvy v Ukraini* [*A History of Christ's Church in Ukraine*], 4th ed. (Kharkiv: Akta, 2008), 596–97.

decisions — was elected the head of the new Church and Metropolitan Filaret the deputy head. After the death of Patriarch Mstyslav in 1993 the Churches divided once again. Patriarch Filaret assumed full control within the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate in 1995 after the death of his predecessor, Patriarch Volodymyr (Romaniuk).

This was the dramatic beginning of the story of Eastern Christian Churches in independent Ukraine. The next two decades were no less dramatic and marked with:

1) numerous conflicts between various confessions, mainly over church property, being especially acute in the first half of the 1990s;

2) important steps undertaken by the Churches to come closer to each other; to engage in an inter-confessional dialogue; and to foster the idea of a Local Ukrainian Church;

3) the Churches' eagerness to play the role of influential civil agencies and national institutions (mainly in the case of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate); and

4) changing state policies, ranging from legal protection of religious freedom and pluralism (as under President Viktor Yushchenko) to attempts to revive the model of a "state" Church with others being legally discriminated and administratively persecuted (as under President Viktor Yanukovych).

The events of late 2013 — early 2014 put the Church into the very heart of Ukrainian political and social life. During the Revolution of Dignity the Churches played an important role as civil agencies presenting and defending the interests of society vis-à-vis the Yanukovych regime. The Russian aggression, which started with the occupation of Crimea in March 2014, raised anew the issue of the Churches' civil stance and, for the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, of the choice between loyalty to the state and to the "Mother-Church," between interests of the Ukrainian flock and the ideology of "*Russkii mir.*" Thus 2014 became a landmark for each of the Eastern Christian Churches defining its place and role in Ukrainian life for years to come.

The focus of the present article is on the first two decades of the Churches' existence in independent Ukraine. Raising the crucial issue of the Churches' search for their place in the post-Soviet Ukrainian realm, I firstly depict a general profile with emphasis on decisive characteristics of each Church and inter-confessional relations up to 2014. I further examine in more detail official policies towards the Church and events of the Revolution of Dignity that both define the Churches' positions and choices of models for coexistence with the Ukrainian state and society.

Profiles of the Eastern Christian Churches

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate is institutionally the largest Church in Ukraine. Statistics below are from January 1, 2010:

- 11790 communities (which represents 67.4% of all Orthodox communities or 34.9% of all religious communities in Ukraine);
- 9518 priests (which represents 71% of all Orthodox clergy);
- 20 theological schools (45.5% of all Orthodox theological schools);

- 179 monasteries and convents (75.5% of all Orthodox monasteries and convents);
- 4626 monks and nuns (96.5% of all Orthodox monks and nuns).[11]

Heads: Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan) (1992–2014); Metropolitan Onufrii (Berezovskyi) of Kyiv and All Ukraine (since August 17, 2014).

The Church made headlines in 2014 because of revolutionary events and the Russian aggression and also because Metropolitan Volodymyr, its head for many years, died on July 5th. The Archbishops Council elected Metropolitan Onufrii (Berezovskyi) of Chernivtsi and Bukovyna as his successor on August 13th. These events generated public discussions and fostered further research providing rich analytical material with a focus on the issues outlined below.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Church

The organizational might of the Church can be explained by its much stressed "canonical status" (the two other Ukrainian Orthodox Churches are not recognized by the fellowship of autocephalous Churches in the world) and by the "wise policies" of Metropolitan Volodymyr.[12] Simultaneously, the Church is characterized as weak and even "in a state of internal crisis" because of: the existence of various centers of influence with contradictory political loyalties and socio-cultural identities; adherence by many of the hierarchy to the fully discredited model of a "state" Church; the inability and unwillingness of the Church to act as a civil agency; traditionalism, conservatism, and slow Ukrainization (vividly contrasted to rapid modernizing tendencies within other Churches); and dependence on the Moscow center. Yurii Chornomorets has captured the essence of the problem:

> The Ukrainian Orthodox Church is losing its credibility today because of two main reasons. First, it is not Ukrainian enough, while society demands further Ukrainization. Second, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church hardly corresponds to the ideal of a Church. It distances itself from people's needs. It attempts to act as a Bureau of ritual services instead of being a true Christian community.[13]

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11   *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini: problemy vzaiemovidnosyn. Informatsiino-analitychni materialy do Kruhloho stolu na temu: "Derzhavno-konfesiini vidnosyny v Ukraini, yikh osoblyvosti i tendentsii rozvytku" 8 liutoho 2011 r.* [*Religion and the State in Ukraine: Issues in their Relations. Analytical Materials for the Roundtable "State-Confessional Relations in Ukraine, their Peculiarities and Perspectives for Development"*], February 8, 2011 (Kyiv, 2011), 11.

12   Viktor Yelensky, "Ukrainskoie pravoslavie," 33–34; also Viktor Yelensky, "Pered kozhnymy vyboramy vlada pochynaie hru z Tserkvoiu [Prior to Every Elections the State begins its Gamesmanship with the Church]," *Risu.org.ua*, interview conducted on February 14, 2012, accessed November 13, 2015, http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/expert_thought/interview/46825/; Yurii Chornomorets, "Mytropolyt Volodymyr: trahediia i triumph ukraintsia [Metropolitan Volodymyr: The Triumph and Tragedy of a Ukrainian]," *Risu.org.ua*, November 23, 2010, accessed March 1, 2016, http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/expert_thought/open_theme/39150/.

13   Yurii Chornomorets, "Mytropolyt Onufrii: choho chekaty [Metropolitan Onufrii: What Lies in Await]," *Den*, August 15, 2014.

Metropolitan Volodymyr (Sabodan)

The majority of observers agree that the Metropolitan's policy over two decades has been directed towards making the Church a) truly Ukrainian and b) truly autonomous. Kateryna Shchotkina is, for instance, convinced that "The Ukrainian Orthodox Church [...] has gained credibility no longer as the "Moscow Church" but as "our own" Church for Ukrainians. Under the leadership of Metropolitan Volodymyr it became Ukrainian — not only in its name but in its essence."[14] Some criticize him because of the slow tempo of his reforms and an inability to completely break with the Moscow center and invest into the realization of the idea of a Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Others consider his "non-revolutionary" approach to be the only one possible under present conditions both because of the Moscow stance and Orthodox believers' inertia and conservatism. "Metropolitan Volodymyr has constantly existed under the threat of dismissal. This forced him to be very cautious (*dmukhaty na kholodne*). He has always been a Ukrainian inasmuch as allowed by circumstances and even more," as explained by Yurii Chornomorets.[15] The majority agree that for decades he remained the core of the Church, holding it as a unified institution regardless of strong decentralizing tendencies. Metropolitan Volodymyr himself used to stress *unity* with the Russian Orthodox Church rather than administrative *subordination* of his Church to the latter.[16]

Institutional weakness of the Church that for decades balanced in between:

1) a relative majority supporting Metropolitan Volodymyr's policies and stressing the Church's autonomous and canonical status;
2) a pro-Ukrainian minority adhering to the idea of a Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church; and
3) a pro-Russian minority adhering to the idea of "*Russkii mir*" and direct dependence on Moscow.

In late 2011 — early 2012, a pro-Russian lobby (led by Metropolitans Illarion (Shukalo) of Donetsk and Mariupol, Agafangel (Savvin) of Odesa and Izmail, and Pavel (Lebid) of Vyshhorod and Chornobyl) made an attempt to assume full control within the Church under the pretext of the Metropolitan's grave illness. The Metropolitan surprised even many of his supporters as he did not punish those plotting a coup, regardless of an earlier condemnation of "political Orthodoxy" by the 2007 Archbishops' Council.

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14   Kateryna Shchotkina, "Chego ne budet posle Mitropolita Vladimira [What won't Be after
      Metropolitan Volodymyr]," *Risu.org.ua*, November 11, 2010, accessed May 14, 2016, http://risu.org.ua/
      ua/index/expert_thought/authors_columns/kshchotkina_column/39142/.

15   Chornomorets, "Mytropolyt Volodymyr."

16   See, for instance: Metropolitan Volodymyr, "V otnoshenii avtokefalii dolzhna vestis mudraia
      i vzveshennaia politika [Contemplating Autocephaly Requires Wise and Measured Policies]," *Non-
      official Site of the Mgarsky Monastery*, accessed May 14, 2016, http://www.mgarsky-monastery.org/
      main/79.

The election of a new head of the Church can similarly be seen within this struggle between various centers of influence within the Church and more generally between contradictory loyalties of its hierarchy and clergy.[17]

Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate

The Church is composed of (statistics are from January 1, 2010):
- 4281 communities (which represents 24.5% of all Orthodox communities or 12.7% of all religious communities in Ukraine);
- 3041 priests (which represents 22.7% of all Orthodox clergy);
- 16 theological schools (36.4% of all Orthodox theological schools);
- 45 monasteries and convents (19% of all Orthodox monasteries and convents);
- 137 monks and nuns (2.9% of all Orthodox monks and nuns).[18]

Heads: (nominal head) Patriarch Mstyslav (Skrypnyk) (1992–1993); Patriarch Volodymyr (Romaniuk) (1993–1995); Patriarch Filaret (Denysenko) of Kyiv and All Ukraine-Rus (since 1995).

The Church has a weaker institutional structure, compared to the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, but simultaneously demonstrates a higher tempo of the growth of its institutional network (number of communities, monasteries and convents) and number of clergy. Throughout the 2000s the number of believers claiming their belonging to the Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate has generally prevailed over those belonging to the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, as shown by the majority of sociological surveys (with an understandable exception of a 2010 survey):

2000
Kyiv Patriarchate — 12% vs. Moscow Patriarchate — 9% (of all interviewed)
2005
14% vs. 11%
2010
15% vs. 24%
2013
18% vs. 20% (of all interviewed)
26% vs. 28% (of those calling themselves "Orthodox")
2014
22% vs. 17% (of all interviewed)
32% vs. 25% (of those calling themselves "Orthodox").[19]

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17   See, for instance: Ivan Kapsamun, "Pastva hotova do zmin. A Tserkva? [The Flock is Ready for Change. Is the Church?]," *Den*, August 14, 2014, 2; Yurii Chornomorets, "Za lashtunkamy Soboru [Backstage of the Council]," *Den*, August 19, 2014, 10; Yuliana Lavrysh, "UPTs pered vyborom [The Ukrainian Orthodox Church Making its Choice]," *Den*, August 6, 2014, 9.

18   *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini*, 12.

19   *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini*, 35; *Ukraina — 2014*, 15; "Relihiinist ukraintsiv: riven, kharakter, stavlennia do okremykh aspektiv tserkovno-relihiinoi sytuatsii i derzhavno-konfesiinykh vidnosyn [The

To resolve this apparent paradox one should take into account that many people continue to attend churches of the Moscow Patriarchate (because this church is "your own" neighboring church and because it is "canonical") while considering themselves adherents of the Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate because of national reasons. Interpreting the latter, Andrii Yurash also points to Ukrainians' adherence to the idea of a Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church closely linked in their perception to the Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate as "its visible structure."[20] For many years these two allegiances were seen as compatible. The 2004 Orange Revolution became the first powerful challenge to many, while events of the Revolution of Dignity have forced those "in between" to make a final choice of their exclusive loyalty. Many moves of the parishes of the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Kyiv Patriarchate after February 2014 are to be examined within this context.[21]

The personality of the head of the Church is of importance here as well. Unlike Metropolitan Volodymyr, who is mostly positively commented on by both observers and representatives of other Churches, Patriarch Filaret generates most contradictory remarks. His evolution from a "Soviet bishop," fully integrated into the Soviet establishment,[22] and the most active "fighter against the Unia" into a "religious leader of the (Ukrainian) nation"[23] and a respected promoter of the modern Ukrainian idea and a new model of relations between Church — state — society has been praised by some and condemned as "pure opportunism" by others. Even his steps towards the realization of the idea of a Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church receive contradictory estimates. On the one hand, Patriarch Filaret has always been one of its chief promoters. The latest step was an initiative by the Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate on February 22, 2014 calling the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Church to unite into a Local Ukrainian Church that will "play a powerful peacemaking and unifying mission in Ukrainian society."[24] On the other hand, as observed, he supports the idea insofar as he sees himself as the head of the Local Church. Thus the ultimate failure of 2008, when the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church were closest to merging under the Ecumenical Patriarch and thereby gaining recognition by the fellowship of autocephalous Churches in the world is explained by his refusal to sacrifice his own ambitions in favor of the common good.[25]

Religiosity of Ukrainians: Its Level, Character, and Attitudes Towards Certain Issues in the Religious Situation and State-Church Relations]," *Natsionalna bezpeka i oborona* 1 (2013): 26.

20   L. O. Filipovych and O. V. Horkusha, eds., *Maidan i Tserkva. Khronika podii ta ekspertna otsinka* [*Maidan and the Church: A Chronicle of Events and Expert Assessment*] (Kyiv: Sammit-knyha, 2014), 614.

21   For more details see: Kateryna Shchotkina, "Relihiine zhyttia — 2015: dreif parafii ta polityzatsiia Tserkvy [Religious life in 2015: The Drift of Parishes and the Politization of the Church]," *Delovaia stolitsa*, December 30, 2014, accessed June 25, 2015, http://www.dsnews.ua/society/religiyne-zhittya-2015-dreyf-parafiy-ta-politizatsiya-tserkvi-30122014161600.

22   For more details see Shlikhta, *Tserkva tykh, khto vyzhyv*, esp. 203–04, 384–88.

23   See Yurii Chornomorets, "Vazhkyi vybir Patriarkha [The Patriarch's Difficult Choice]," *Den*, July 25, 2014.

24   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 602–03.

25   Yelensky, "Ukrainskoie pravoslavie," 37; Kateryna Shchotkina, "UAPTs: poza meinstrimom [The Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church: Outside of the Mainstream]," *Risu.org.ua*, last

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Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church

The Church is composed of (statistics are from January 1, 2010):
- 1197 communities (which represents 6.8% of all Orthodox communities or 3.5% of all religious communities in Ukraine);
- 688 priests (which represents 5.1% of all Orthodox clergy);
- 7 theological schools (16% of all Orthodox theological schools);
- 9 monasteries (3.8% of all Orthodox monasteries and convents);
- 10 monks (0.2% of all Orthodox monks).[26]

Heads: Patriarch Mstyslav (Skrypnyk) (1990–1993), Patriarch Dymytrii (Yarema) (1993–2000), Metropolitan Mefodii (Kudriakov) of Kyiv and All Ukraine (2000–2015).[27]

Commenting on the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church, Kateryna Shchotkina uses the metaphor of "outside the mainstream."[28] There are few major reasons for such a characteristic. In contrast to the other Orthodox Churches, the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church does not demonstrate a steady positive dynamic in terms of its infrastructure. Also, in contrast to these Churches, it has no charismatic leader. Moreover, since 2006 the Church has in fact been divided into two: the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church under Metropolitan Mefodii (Kudriakov), and the "Kharkiv-Poltava Diocese of the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church" led by Archbishop Ihor (Isichenko), which recognizes the Ecumenical Patriarch as its head. Andrii Yurash describes this Church as "a confederation of dioceses without a center and without a powerful social or political impact (in Ukraine)."[29]

In terms of geography, each Orthodox Church has its base region where the majority of its followers live. These are eastern, southern, and central Ukraine for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, and central and western Ukraine for the Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate. However, only the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church can be described as a "regional Church": 70% of its communities are based in western Ukraine while they are either not represented or only marginally represented in the majority of eastern and southern oblasts and few central oblasts.[30]

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modified August 2, 2011, accessed May 1, 2015, http://risu.org.ua/ua/index/expert_thought/authors_columns/kshchotkina_column/43596/.

26 *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini*, 13.

27 Metropolitan Mefodii (Kudriakov) died on February 24, 2015 and was succeeded by Metropolitan Makarii (Maletych) as the Church's new head.

28 Shchotkina, "UAPTs: poza meinstrimom."

29 Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 612.

30 *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini*, 14.

Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church[31]

The Church is composed of (statistics are from January 1, 2010):
- 3599 communities (which represent 10.7% of all religious communities in Ukraine);
- 2347 priests;
- 15 theological schools;
- 105 monasteries and convents;
- 1248 monks and nuns.[32]

Heads: Cardinal Myroslav Ivan Liubachivsky (1984–2000), Cardinal Liubomyr Huzar (2001–2011), Metropolitan Sviatoslav Shevchuk of Kyiv, Major Archbishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (since 2011).

The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church has demonstrated a steady growth over the twenty-five years of its existence after legalization. An important development has been a geographical expansion of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church: its jurisdiction presently coincides with Ukrainian national territory, not excluding the Crimea. This is partially a result of conscious policies of leaders of the Church, aimed at transforming the "Church of Galicians" into a Ukrainian *national* Church. A step most symbolically telling in this regard was the transfer of the seat of the Head of the Church from Lviv to Kyiv in 2005. Metropolitan Sviatoslav Shevchuk has seemed to make the transformation of the Church into a *truly* Ukrainian national Church the major priority in his policies.

An important development over the last decade has been the quest to acquire a Patriarchal office for the Church. In 2002 the Patriarchal Council of the Church, bringing together its representatives from Ukraine and the diaspora, declared: "We have reached a common understanding and a single desire for our Church to acquire a Patriarchal office."[33] This initiative did not find support in Rome then, not the least because this could complicate Rome's dialogue with the Moscow Patriarchate, which remains the unquestionable priority for the Vatican.[34]

Observers see the earliest signs of a possible change in the Vatican position in the support of Pope Benedict XVI of a decision by the Synod of the Greek Catholic Church of November 2011 to create three new metropolias. This development was interpreted by Archbishop Shevchuk in terms of a continuity/reestablishment of the structure of the ancient Kyivan Church.[35] As

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31   I examine the Church's position after 1989 in more detail in my article: Natalia Shlikhta, "The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church," in Lucian N. Leustean, ed., *Eastern Christianity in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2014), 641–44.

32   *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini*, 15.

33   Liubomyr Huzar, "Pro utverdzhennia patriarshoho ustroiu UHKTs. Pastyrske poslannia (Lviv, 06.09.04) [On the Patriarhal Office of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Pastoral Message (Lviv, September 6, 2004)]," accessed April 7, 2015, http://www.ugcc.org.ua/218.0.html.

34   For more detail see: Kateryna Shchotkina, "Moskva, Vatykan i neperedbachuvana pohoda v Ukraini [Moscow, the Vatican, and the Unpredictable Situation in Ukraine]," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, March 5, 2004.

35   Bohdan Chervak, "UHKTs: vid mytropolii do patriarkhatu (07.12.11) [The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church: From Metropolis to Patriarchate (December 7, 2011)]," accessed May 23, 2015, http://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2011/12/7/6814454/.

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such it was seen as a step not only towards a Patriarchate for Ukrainian Greek Catholics but also towards the unity of a Ukrainian National Church.

Positioning itself as representative of the Ukrainian people and society throughout 2000s, the Church has raised before Ukrainian authorities issues of civil rights, the defense of Ukrainian culture and language, of freedom of conscience and religious freedom, of equal rights for all confessions and religious organizations in Ukraine, etc.

Inter-Confessional Relations

Tolerance towards the "religious other" is a characteristic feature of the Ukrainian religious landscape. Sharp conflicts between confessions (mainly over church property) characterized the early years of Ukrainian independence. Roughly since the second half of the 1990s a qualitatively different model of relations between various Churches has emerged — a "dialogical" one. The reason and necessity for this is recognized by all the Churches. In the words of Archbishop Yevstratii (Zoria) of the Kyiv Patriarchate, "Ukraine differs substantially from Russia because of the absence of a 'state' Church here. Furthermore, it is not possible to establish a state Church because there is no dominant confession (in Ukraine)."[36] While the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in its appeal of February 24, 2014 used the metaphor of "unity in diversity" to describe the confessional situation in Ukraine ("Our big Ukrainian family should be united in its diversity. In a free state, everyone has the right to freely express one's own religious views").[37]

Several inter-confessional structures and ecumenical initiatives function on a regular basis. Amongst the most influential are *Vseukrainska rada Tserkov i relihiinykh orhanizatsii* (The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations) functioning since 1996 and composed of 19 confessions, including all Eastern Christian Churches; *Narada predstavnykiv khrystyianskykh tserkov Ukrainy* (Council of the Representatives of Christian Churches in Ukraine) functioning since 2003 and composed of 9 Christian Churches; and "Religion and State in Ukraine: Issues in Their Relations," a roundtable of Christian Churches meeting regularly since 1996.[38]

Under President Yanukovych's "new religious policy" the role of inter-confessional structures and initiatives was downplayed and consistent attempts were made to turn a "dialogical" model of relations between the Churches into a "monological" and "conflicting" one once again. These initiatives were not as successful as the regime aspired to, not the least because of passive resistance by the leadership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, demonstrating no willingness and no readiness to become a "state" Church following the Russian model. The most "pluralistic religious market in Eastern Europe did not succumb to Yanukovych," as summarized by Viktor Yelensky.[39] Probably the most telling indication of the Churches' inclination towards dialogue (regardless of the regime's policies)

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36   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 571.

37   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 618.

38   For more details see: *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini*, 55.

39   Yelensky, "Ukrainskoe pravoslavie," 39.

were some steps towards each other made by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, symbolically powerfully signaled by personal meetings of the heads of the two churches, the first one taking place at the Kyiv Cave Lavra on August 23, 2011.

State Policies Towards the Church

To approach the issue of state policies towards the Church (and the Churches) one should take the following into account:

1) Article 35, "On the freedom of worship and religious organizations," of the Ukrainian Constitution clearly emphasizes the separation of the Church and state, while the 1991 Law "On the freedom of conscience and religious organizations" is considered by observers to be the most liberal on the post-Soviet landscape;[40] and

2) the Church is respected by believers and non-believers alike as a moral and cultural authority and national institution. In 2000 47.3% of respondents considered the Church to play a positive role in Ukrainian society and in 2014—52.5%; while the level of trust in the Church rose from 63,1% in 2000 to 65,6% in 2014.[41]

    Sociological surveys over decades demonstrate that Ukrainian society:

    · is religiously tolerant;

    · has a mostly negative attitude towards the model of a "state" Church
    (2000—52.1% negative; 2010—45.7%; 2014—51%);[42] and

    · mostly supports the separation of Church and state, and
    partnerships between the two (overall 63.4% in 2014).[43]

When planning state policy and personal attitudes towards religion and the Church, politicians cannot but take the above into account. Thus since the late 1990s, religious organizations have been invited to participate in official ceremonies and national celebrations. Participation of representatives of all confessions in the inaugural ceremony of the new President (initiated in 1999 by Leonid Kuchma and written into protocol by Presidential Decree in 2002) serves as a symbolically important recognition by the state of the role of religion and the Churches and of religious pluralism and tolerance as a Ukrainian characteristic feature. It is not surprising that when elected in 2010 Viktor Yanukovych changed the protocol: only representatives of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate and the Patriarch of Moscow himself were invited to the ceremony and this remained characteristic of all national celebrations under his Presidency.[44] State leaders and politicians are eager to

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40   See, for instance, the report by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of October 5, 2005 "Honoring of Obligations and Commitments of Ukraine" (paragraph VI.F), accessed May 1, 2016, http://old.minjust.gov.ua/6782.

41   *Ukraina — 2014*, 21–22.

42   *Ukraina — 2014*, 24.

43   *Ukraina — 2014*, 24.

44   *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini*, 60.

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publicly demonstrate their respect for the Church along with their personal religiosity when taking part in religious ceremonies and celebrations.

State-church relations in independent Ukraine can be roughly divided into two periods: one existing before Yanukovych, the other after his "new religious policy," with the Revolution of Dignity arguably laying the basis for a qualitatively new period in relations between state, Church, and society. Each Ukrainian president had his own view of religious policy and his own priorities in relations with the Churches. I would single out 1991–2010 as one period because:

1) all Ukrainian presidents before Yanukovych more or less adhered to the principles of religious freedom and tolerance, the separation of state and Church, and of state non-interference in internal church affairs, as laid down by the 1991 Law and Article 35 of the Ukrainian Constitution; and

2) each president promoted the idea of a national Church in a national state. Kateryna Shchotkina sees a pure pragmatism behind the interests of state ruling elites: "A self-governing (autocephalous would be even better) Church will always suit the interests of Ukrainian ruling elites whatever they declare when coming to power. It is much easier to negotiate with your own head of the Church than with the head of the Church in a neighboring state who serves the political interests of the neighboring state."[45]

At the early stages of Ukrainian independence, President Leonid Kravchuk supported autocephalous movements within the Russian Orthodox Church, seeing the latter a serious threat to Ukrainian statehood.[46] Regardless of his much stressed "pragmatic approach" and unwillingness to engage in "ideological discussions," President Leonid Kuchma supported the idea of a Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church; he made respective appeals to Russian Presidents Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin and Patriarch Alexei (Ridiger) of Moscow and All Rus and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.[47] President Viktor Yushchenko made the establishment of a Local Ukrainian Orthodox Church one of the chief priorities of his internal policy. He saw the merger of Orthodox Churches as an important prerequisite for resolving social conflicts and discords between various regions in Ukraine.[48]

State policy changed radically in 2010 when Viktor Yanukovych was elected the President of Ukraine. His "new religious policy" consisted of the intention to establish a "state" Church based on the Russian model; a refusal to respect the principle of religious freedom and state partnerships with all religious organizations; a disregard for the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations and other inter-confessional initiatives with a simultaneous demonstration of friendly relations with the Patriarch of Moscow. A necessary legal basis for these changes was provided with an introduction of "amendments" to the Law of 1991. The new edition of the Law was adopted in 2012 and received strong negative reaction

45   Kateryna Shchotkina, "Sobor nashvydkoruch [A Council Prepared in Haste]," *Dzerkalo tyzhnia*, July 15, 2011.

46   Yelensky, "Ukrainskoie pravoslavie," 32, 38.

47   Yelensky, "Ukrainskoie pravoslavie," 38; Viktor Yelensky, "Relihiia 'nuliovykh': pidsumky desiatylittia [Religion of the '2000s': A Decade's Summation]," *Risu.org.ua*, accessed March 1, 2015, http://risu.org.ua/article_print.php?id=40964&name=analytic&_lang=ua&.

48   Yelensky, "Ukrainskoie pravoslavie," 39; Wasyliw, "Orthodox Churches in Ukraine," 320.

from the Churches, inter-confessional structures, society, and the intellectual elite because it considerably complicated the registration of religious organizations, strengthened control over them (including by the public prosecutor), and also considerably complicated relations between religious organizations in Ukraine and abroad.[49]

In addition, numerous administrative and economic (for instance, raising gas and electricity rates for churches and prayer houses) instruments supported these policy changes, one of the expected results of which was to force all Orthodox believers to "return" to the "only canonical" Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Amongst the major reasons for the failure of this policy, visible already in 2011–2012, observers name the resistance of Orthodox communities, unwilling to "revert to the canonical Church"; further consolidation of discriminated Churches in their defense of their own interests and society's aspirations; and, no less importantly, unwillingness of the leadership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate under Metropolitan Volodymyr to play the role drafted for it by the regime.[50]

The "Church of the Maidan" During the Revolution of Dignity

The events of November 2013 — February 2014 began as a protest in the central square of Kyiv against the government's decision to stop the move of Ukraine toward Europe, led to the forced resignation of President Yanukovych, and were followed by the Russian aggression and the war in the East of the country. These events, known as the Maidan/Euromaidan or the Revolution of Dignity, reflect the birth of civil society in Ukraine and raise the fundamental issues of society — state relations as well as the Churches' relations with the two. The major challenge for the Churches is pointed out by Cyril Hovorun: "Faced with an emergence of civil society, the churches could no longer assume that they could find their place in society by dealing only with government officials."[51] Even though some observers disagree with the above statement because "the Church in Ukraine has for long focused more on society and not on the state" (Yurii Chornomorets),[52] they would agree with the following quote, particularly in relation to the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate: "When society emancipates itself from the state — as is happening in Ukraine — the Church risks being isolated."[53]

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49   For more details, see: Yurii Reshetnikov, "Analiz zakonodavchykh initsiatyv u sferi svobody sovisti ta derzhavno-konfesiinykh vidnosynVerkhvnoi Rady Ukrainy VI sklykannia [An Analysis of Legislative Initiatives in the Sphere of the Freedom of Conscience and State-Confessional Relations of the VI Convocation of the Verkovna Rada of Ukraine]," in *Relihiia i vlada v Ukraini: problemy vzaiemovidnosyn. Informatsiino-analitychni materialy do Kruhloho stolu na temu: "Derzhavno-konfesiini vidnosyny v Ukraini stanom na 2013 rik: rukh do partnerstva derzhavy i Tserkvy chy do kryzy vzaiemyn?" 22 kvitnia 2013 r.*, April 22, 2013 (Kyiv, 2013), 16–22.

50   Yelensky, "Ukrainskoie pravoslavie," 39–40.

51   Cyril Hovorun, "The Church in the Bloodlands," *First Things*, accessed October 6, 2015, http://www.firstthings.com/article/2014/10/the-church-in-the-bloodlands.

52   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 55; see also *Maidan i Tserkva*, 91.

53   Cyril Hovorun, "The Church in the Bloodlands."

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The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate has faced such a perspective ever since it announced neutrality in the conflict between society and the Yanukovych regime. To justify such a position, its speakers referred to the decisions of the Archbishops' Council of 2007 that condemned "political Orthodoxy." As explained by the Church's official speaker Fr. Georgy Kovalenko, "This means that the Church calls not to use religious rhetoric and symbols in the political struggle and to refrain from political discussions and political struggle within the Church."[54] The official position of the Church received no support from many of its clergy: some priests came to stand with the Maidan while others severely criticized it. One would realize how deep the split within the Church was when comparing just two pronouncements. The first is from a sermon by Fr. Andrii Tkachev on January 25th; the second is from a letter of Fr. Viktor Martynenko to Patriarch Kirill (Gundyaev). "I pray for God to send them disease [...] and fear at home for them (*protesters*) to eat each other just as a reptile eats another reptile (*gad zhriot gada*)."[55] "Your Holiness, you are a wise man and I do not think you can believe that satanic lie from the Russian media. Can you not see what's happening here?.. We pray for you at each liturgy as our Master and Father. I can see now that you are just a master for us."[56]

Other Churches, primarily the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate, supported the Maidan from its very beginning and became key actors. A turning point transforming the Church into a true moral authority for the people and an integral part of the protest were events of the night of November 30th. Student protesters were beaten by riot police and found shelter in St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate. The violence against the students was condemned by the majority of religious organizations in Ukraine.

Leaders and clergy of the Churches stood with protesters even when the Maidan was violently attacked, as on the nights of February 18–19, and 21–22. They stood and prayed between the barricades on Hrushevskyi Street protecting demonstrators, attempting to stop further bloodshed, even though their presence at times (as in the case of the Moscow Patriarchate priests' on January 21st) was caused by various motives and generated most controversial estimates.[57] Ecumenical religious services were continually conducted both from the stage of the Maidan and in the "prayer tent" there. Numerous confessions partaking in Holy Communion, and baptisms of *maidanivtsi,* and daily sermons were all features of everyday Maidan life for over three months. Priests of various confessions became Maidan "non-heroic heroes" because they stood with protesters and carried out their daily priestly obligations of praying, confessing, celebrating the liturgy, and helping those in need.[58]

In addition, the Churches, under the auspices of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, acted as mediators between the Maidan and the regime. In all its documents the Council defended the right of people for peaceful protest (at the beginning of the Revolution), called on the regime to stop using force against protestors, and both sides to engage

54   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 494.

55   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 550.

56   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 602.

57   For more details see *Maidan i Tserkva*, 415–18, 495–96, 570.

58   For portraits of such pastors see *Maidan i Tserkva*, 622–24.

in a dialogue and search for a peaceful solution to the crisis at its later stages. In February 2014 even the Church of the Moscow Patriarchate was compelled to issue the following statement, "Under no conditions can the authorities shoot peaceful civilians" (Fr. Georgy Kovalenko in an interview of February 27th).[59]

The Revolution of Dignity arguably marked the end of the post-Soviet epoch in contemporary Ukrainian history and the birth of modern Ukrainian civil society. Observers also argue that the Revolution gave birth to a new Church, an integral element of Ukrainian civil society. They coined the term "Church of the Maidan" to stress its ecumenical, multi-denominational character and a qualitatively new model of relations between the Church, society, and the state, emerging from the Maidan.[60] When analyzing pronouncements by the leaders and representatives of the Churches during and immediately after the Maidan, one most frequently finds the following messages: "the Church is with the people," "the Church plays a spiritual and moral and not a political role," "a priest should be with his flock as their true pastor," and "the Church is a part of Ukrainian civil society." Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk summarized the above: "The Church is an inseparable part of civil society. It serves no state, no politics; people are those who it serves as a mother and a teacher."[61]

The situation described on these pages can be understood through José Casanova's concept of public religions that only when accepting itself as "one voice amongst many in the public sphere" and mobilizing "nonpartisan universalist discourses in the public sphere in support of marginalized sections of the population and human rights issues" can the Church find its place in the "modern world."[62]

Epilogue: The Churches' Answers to the Russian Aggression

The Russian aggression started almost immediately after the overthrow of Viktor Yanukovych and the formation of the interim government. The answer of all the Churches was immediate and unified. Already on March 2nd the All-Union Council of Churches and Religious Organizations issued a statement calling on the Russian government to respect Ukrainian sovereignty and integrity, and on the international community to support the independence of Ukraine within its present borders. The statement ended with a telling phrase, "All the Churches and religious organizations are with the Ukrainian people."[63] Metropolitan Onufrii (Berezovskyi), then Locum Tenens of the Kyiv Diocese, on the same day appealed to President Putin not to send troops to Ukraine and to respect its territorial integrity. He also asked Patriarch Kirill (Gundiaev) to exert his influence on the President to prevent the "fratricidal war."[64] In their official statements

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59   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 635.

60   *Maidan i Tserkva*, 12.

61   Quoted in *Maidan i Tserkva*, 322.

62   José Casanova, *Religion in the Modern World* (Chicago; London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994), 284.

63   Quoted in *Ukraina — 2014*, 10.

64   *Ukraina — 2014*, 3.

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issued then all the Churches stood for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and condemned the Russian aggression and any kind of violence.

The situation was much more complicated, however, below the level of official pronouncements, mainly for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate. Priests of all the Churches supported Ukrainian soldiers as army chaplains. Money and humanitarian aid for the army and those living in the East were collected in all churches all over Ukraine. The Churches used their channels to disseminate truthful information on the war in Ukraine. For instance, Patriarch Filaret's letter of August 24th to the Ecumenical Patriarch was to refute a letter of Patriarch Kirill, which depicted the situation in the East of Ukraine as a civil and religious war of "Uniates and schismatics against the only canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate."[65]

With regard to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, on the one hand, the Church officially supports all the above initiatives. Only a few of its pro-Russian hierarchs dared to openly support the Russian aggression and the occupation of Crimea. On the other hand, the Church was predictably more divided than ever, as a larger part of its flock are inhabitants of Eastern Ukraine. Some of its priests in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts openly supported separatist movements and the Russian troops; "*Russkii mir,*" the ideology justifying the Russian aggression toward Ukraine, was shared by many in Eastern Ukraine.

The external challenge may (though not necessarily) become stimulating and force the Churches to clearly define their vision of their own place and role in Ukrainian life, make final choices in their loyalties, and deepen inter-confessional dialogue on various levels and issues. In this situation both the state and society raise their usual (sometimes contradictory) expectations for the Churches' missions and it will only be possible for the Churches to answer them when accepting the new post-Maidan reality.

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65   "Lyst Patriarkha Kyivskoho Filareta do Vselenskoho Patriarkha Varfolomiia [Letter of Patriarch Filaret of Kyiv to Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew]," *Holos pravoslavia*, September, 2014, 4.

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Natalia Shlikhta is Associate Professor and the Head of the Department of History at the National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy. Her major research interests are the ecclesiastical history of the twentieth century and everyday Soviet history. She is a participant of numerous international projects in the field of her interest. Her major recent publications include the monograph *Tserkva tykh, khto vyzhyv. Radianska Ukraina, seredyna 1940-kh — pochatok 1970-kh rr.* [*The Church of Those Who Survived. Soviet Ukraine, Mid-1940s — Early 1970s*] (Kharkiv: Akta, 2011) and the textbook *Istoriia radianskoho suspilstva: Kurs lektsii* [*A History of Soviet Society: Lectures*] (Kharkiv: Akta, 2015).