The Identity Migration of Religious Actors during the War in Ukraine (since 2014)

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From the beginning of the independent history of Ukraine, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, Ukrainian society experienced a religious renaissance, which also began to define identity. Identities did not always remain purely religious but could also have a cultural and traditional character, such as the self-definition of a Ukrainian as a Christian, mainly Orthodox, despite the country's multireligious and multicultural map. The formation and clash of religious identities in Ukrainian society closely relate to the political context of a dramatic period of history, which started in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The revival of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC) and the split in Ukrainian Orthodoxy into the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (in canonical unity with the Moscow Patriarchate, UOC-MP), the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Kyiv Patriarchate (UOC-KP) in 1992, and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC, before 2018) determined the dynamics of the formation of religious identity in Ukraine for many years as the dominant religious groups.

Having reached a certain level of stability by the end of the 1990s, this process sharply escalated in connection with the Russian occupation of Crimea and the armed conflict and Russian aggression in Eastern and Southern Ukraine since 2014. The key event in this period was the unification of two Orthodox churches – the UOC-KP and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church (UAOC) – at the Unification Council of 2018 into the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) and its receipt of autocephaly from the Ecumenical Patriarchate in January 2019.[1] The 'church issue' became rapidly politicised against the background of the rise of patriotic sentiment in Ukrainian society.

The full-scale Russian invasion on 24 February 2022 further exacerbated the problem of the transformation of religious identities. Currently, dramatic changes

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1   For a brief history of the creation of the OCU, see their official website: Pravoslavna Tserkva Ukrainy (Orthodox Church of Ukraine), "Pravoslavna Tserkva Ukrainy: shliakh kriz viky" ("Orthodox Church of Ukraine: The Path through the Centuries"), https://www.pomisna.info/uk/tserkva/istoriya/ [accessed: 14.04.2024].

are taking place among the believers and the clergy of the UOC-MP, which, seemingly, is experiencing the most serious crisis of its entire existence.[2] Questions about the connection between religious identity and political positions also arose before representatives of Protestant denominations, closely associated with their Russian coreligionists. In our study, we focus precisely on these transformations of religious identity occurring under the conditions of the Russo–Ukrainian War. We chose the crisis of the UOC-MP and the questions of the Protestant denominations as the two case studies of this article since both the believers of the UOC-MP and the Protestants are religious groups that have close ties with Russian believers and are also spread over all regions of Ukraine, both those under the control of the Ukrainian government and those that are occupied.

As a theoretical approach, we use the model proposed by Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott, who define 'collective identity' as a social category that varies along two dimensions: 'content' and 'contestation'. Content describes the meaning of a collective identity. The content of social identities may take the form of four, non-mutually exclusive types:

- Constitutive norms refer to the formal and informal rules that define group membership
- Social purposes refer to the goals that the members of a group share
- Relational comparisons refer to defining an identity group by what it is not, that is, the way it views other identity groups, especially when such views about others are a defining part of the first group's identity
- Cognitive models refer to the worldviews or understandings of political and material conditions and interests that a particular identity shapes

Contestation, meanwhile, refers to the degree of agreement within a group over the content of the shared identity.[3]

This article is based on an analysis of audio and video materials available on the internet and social media (as open-access content), press articles, media messages, and anonymous in-depth interviews with senior UOC-MP and OCU clergy. Data gathered during field research on the religious situation in Ukraine conducted from 2021 to 2023 complement these sources.

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2   Denys Brylov and Tetiana Kalenychenko, "Ukrainian Religious Actors and Organizations after Russia's Invasion: The Struggle for Peace", *Berkley Center*, 27 September 2022, https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/events/ukrainian-religious-actors-and-organizations-after-russia-s-invasion [accessed: 31.07.2024].

3   Rawi Abdelal, Yoshiko M. Herrera, Alastair Iain Johnston, and Rose McDermott, "Identity as a Variable", *Perspectives on Politics* 4/4, 2006, 695–711, here 696.

The Religious Situation in Ukraine on the Eve of the Russo–Ukrainian War

Historically, Ukraine has been a polyconfessional country, in which, already in the era of Kyivan Rus (10th–13th centuries), powerful religious traditions such as pagan beliefs, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam coexisted. Today, more than 100 faith communities are represented in Ukraine, which includes 37,049 religious organisations, 93 religious centres, and 301 religious administrations.[4]

According to official statistics, Ukraine is home to the third largest Orthodox population in the world, following Russia and Greece. Orthodoxy in Ukraine, however, is not a monolith. Perhaps the most important religious dynamic at play across the country is the fragmentation of the Orthodox Church into two (or more) competing factions: the UOC-MP and the OCU. A 2023 study reported that 61 percent of Ukrainian respondents identified as Orthodox, with six percent aligning with the UOC-MP and 42 percent with the OCU. At the same time, it is important to note that a sharp decline in the number of those who profess to be faithful to the UOC-MP occurred after the start of Russia's full-scale war (from 13 percent in 2021 to six percent in 2023).[5]

The level of religiosity among Ukrainians has an expressively regional character. According to the sociological data of the Razumkov Centre, a Kyiv-based think tank, in 2018, these regional specificities still played an important role: up to 91 percent of residents of western regions and up to 59 percent of residents of southern regions considered themselves believers.

The connection between religious and national identities differs regarding the region and denomination of a person. Survey data from the Razumkov Centre show that since 2000, 54 percent of Western Ukraine inhabitants were sure that religion should be nationally oriented (21 percent of respondents opposed it), while merely 12 percent of respondents from Eastern Ukraine supported this idea (61 percent opposed it). A majority of UGCC believers also support this idea (66 percent), while OCU members are less unified (48 percent agree), and UOC members mainly oppose it (with only 26 percent supporting). Between 2000 and 2020, the group of supporters of national-religious identity did not grow significantly, while the number

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4   See the report by the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience on the network of religious organisations as of 1 January 2021 on their website: Derzhavna sluzhba Ukrainy z etnopolityky ta svobody sovisti (DESS) (State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience), *Zvit pro merezhu relihiinykh orhanizatsii stanom na 1 sichnia 2021 roku* (*Report on the Network of Religious Organisations as of 1 January 2021*), report, 2022, https://dess.gov.ua/religion/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

5   Razumkov Centre, *Ukrainske suspilstvo, derzhava i tserkva pid chas viiny. Tserkovno-relihiina hesytuatsiia v Ukraini-2023* (*Ukrainian Society, the State, and the Church in Wartime: The Situation of the Church and Religion in Ukraine in 2023*), report, 2023, 6.

of those who opposed the idea decreased (from 53 percent in 2000 to 39 percent in 2020).[6]

After the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, the issue of the national character of the Church led to increased division between Ukrainian Orthodox believers. Currently, the majority of OCU faithful (70 percent) believe that the Church should be nationally oriented, while a relative majority of the UOC-MP (48 percent) opposes the national orientation of the Church. Regional preferences have also changed: in the western and central regions, supporters of the national orientation of the Church make up more than half of respondents (72 percent and 57 percent, respectively); in the eastern regions, supporters are a relative majority (48 percent); and in the southern regions, a relative majority (41.5 percent) are opponents of the national orientation of the Church.[7]

At the same time, other survey data revealed that religious identity per se is much less important to Ukrainian citizens than civic or regional identity. When answering the question "Which social community do you identify yourself with in the first place?", 68 percent of respondents answered "with citizens of Ukraine", 16 percent answered "with residents of my city ([or] village)", 8 percent answered "with residents of my region", 3 percent answered "with people of the same faith as me", and only 1 percent answered "with people of the same Church to which I belong". Compared to people belonging to other churches and denominations, the faithful of the UOC-MP are most likely to identify themselves with people of the same faith as them (6 percent). For comparison, the share of such faithful among the OCU and the UGCC believers is 2 percent.[8]

In May 2017, the Pew Research Center published new data on the religious landscape of Central and Eastern Europe, including Ukraine. The survey shows that 51 percent of Ukrainians believe that being Orthodox means also being a true national representative of your country.[9] Ukrainians define their religious identity through national, cultural, and family traditions (46 percent), peculiar properties of faith (12 percent), both aforementioned elements (12 percent), and other factors (seven percent). Meanwhile, 12 percent explain being Catholic or Orthodox due to a primarily national-cultural factor. Another strong position is religious exclusivism. Generally,

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6   Razumkov Centre, *Osoblyvosti relihiynoho i tserkovno-relihiynoho samovyznachennya hromadyan Ukrayiny: tendentsiyi 2000–2020 rr.* (*Specifics of the Religious and Church Self-Determination of the Citizens of Ukraine: Trends 2000–2020*), report, 2020, 7.

7   Razumkov Centre, *Ukrainske suspilstvo*, 7.

8   Razumkov Centre, *Osoblyvosti relihiynoho i tserkovno-relihiynoho samovyznachennia hromadyan Ukrainy: tendentsiyi 2000–2021 rr.* (*Specifics of the Religious and Church Self-Determination of the Citizens of Ukraine: Trends 2000–2021*], report, 2021, 6 [authors' trans.].

9   Pew Research Center, *Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe*, report, 2017, http://www.pewforum.org/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

this is declining, but 33 percent of respondents believe that only their faith paves the way to heaven. Lastly, more religious people are prone to be proud of their nationality; 48 percent of Ukrainians who are very proud of their nationality say that religion is important.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Crisis

Today, the UOC-MP has found itself in perhaps the most serious crisis in its entire existence. Since 2014, the UOC-MP has been viewed by some Ukrainians as an agent of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and Russia more broadly. A vivid manifestation of this was a renewal of the transfers of individual religious communities from one jurisdiction to another (in this case from the UOC-MP to the OCU). As Viktor Yelensky, head of the State Service of Ukraine for Ethnic Policy and Freedom of Conscience (DESS), said during a speech at the national TV marathon, "After receiving the *tomos*, more than 1,600 communities joined the Orthodox Church of Ukraine. This year [2023], 400 communities have joined. As of 24 February 2022, 1,000 communities have joined the Orthodox Church of Ukraine".[10] These transfers would sometimes take radical forms, resulting in the forceful seizures of church buildings. According to the UOC-MP Chancellor, Metropolitan Anthony (Pakanych), the number of raider seizures of UOC-MP parishes increased significantly in 2022. While in 2021, only seven such cases were recorded, in 2022 there were 129 cases. According to him, local governments made 74 decisions to ban the activities of religious organisations associated with the UOC-MP.[11]

Pressure from the independent OCU from the outside only exacerbated this internal crisis, with OCU leader Metropolitan Epiphany actively urging UOC-MP priests to move to the OCU. Cases of the forcible transfer of parishes have become more frequent, primarily in the western regions of Ukraine, sometimes accompanied by the abduction of UOC-MP priests.[12] On the other hand, there were repeated

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10   TSN, "Novyny za 26 hrudnia 2023 roku | Novyny Ukrainy" ("News for 26 December 2023 | News from Ukraine"), YouTube video, 11:55:00, here 5:58:45–5:59:15, 26 December 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WG24A9K4RA [accessed: 31.07.2024] [authors' trans.].

11   Ukrainska Pravoslavna Tserkva (Ukrainian Orthodox Church), *Zvit Keruiuchoho spravamy Ukrainskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy za 2022 rik* (*Report of the Chancellor of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church for 2022*), report, 2022, https://news.church.ua/2022/12/24/zvit-keruyuchogo-spravami-ukrajinskoji-pravoslavnoji-cerkvi-za-2022-rik/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

12   Ukrainska Pravoslavna Tserkva (Ukrainian Orthodox Church), "Pid dulom avtomativ vidibraly khram, vykraly monakhiv" ("A Church Was Taken at Gunpoint, Monks Were Kidnapped], 2022, https://news.church.ua/2022/03/10/pid-dulom-avtomativ-vidibrali-xram-vikrali-monaxiv-na-verxovini-rozpravlyayutsya-z-viruyuchimi-ivano-frankivskoji-jeparxiji-upc/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

cases of anti-Ukrainian propaganda, collaboration with the Russian military, and signs of treason on the part of some ministers of the UOC-MP. However, not all of them receive a continuation in the legal field in the form of criminal proceedings or, even more so, court cases. By his Decree No. 898/2022 from 28 December 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy suspended the citizenship of a number of priests of the UOC-MP, with Ukrainian media sharing the list of 13 clergymen.[13] According to official data, in 2022, more than 40 counterintelligence and security measures were conducted in the church environment of the UOC-MP, and 61 criminal proceedings were instituted against 61 clergymen. In total, the courts have already issued seven verdicts against individual clerics. Two of them were used in exchange for Ukrainian prisoners of war. Sanctions were introduced against 17 officials of the UOC-MP, and almost 250 clerics of the ROC were banned from entering Ukraine. Also, 19 clergymen of the UOC-MP and two just initiated[14] who were citizens of Russia had their Ukrainian citizenship terminated.[15]

The Russian full-scale invasion gave the UOC-MP leadership and believers a choice: are they part of the ROC (in the canonical sense) or a Ukrainian and pro-Ukrainian church on an independent basis? As such, the head of the UOC-MP, Metropolitan Onuphryy (Berezovsky), was forced to take a clear position on the war and made an early appeal to believers in which he acknowledged Russian aggression and called for unity to protect the sovereignty and integrity of Ukraine.

Moreover, the decree of 27 May 2022 of the Unified Council, the highest UOC-MP leading structure, directly "considered issues of Church life that arose as a result of the military aggression of the Russian Federation in Ukraine".[16] In its decisions, the Council condemned the war as a violation of the commandment "thou shalt not kill" and also expressed their disagreement with the position of the Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus regarding the war in Ukraine.

However, at the beginning of the invasion, Metropolitan Onuphryy was not ready for a direct conflict with the ROC and its leader Patriarch Kirill, as our re-

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13   Sonia Koshkina, "Prezydent Ukrainy pryzupynyv hromadianstvo 13 sviashchennykiv UPTs-MP, – dzherela" ("President of Ukraine Suspends Citizenship of 13 Priests of the UOC-MP – Sources], *Livyi Bereg* (*Left Bank*), 28 December 2023, https://lb.ua/society/2023/01/07/541773_prezident_ukraini_prizupiniv.html [accessed: 31.07.2024].

14   Initiated means to go through the procedure of becoming a priest.

15   Security Service of Ukraine, "SBU povidomyla pro pidozru mytropolytu UPTs(MP) Pavlu (video)" ("The SSU Serves Notice of Suspicion to Metropolitan Pavlo of the UOC(MP) (video)"), 2023, https://ssu.gov.ua/novyny/sbu-povidomyla-pro-pidozru-mytropolytu-upts-mp-pavlu-video [accessed: 31.07.2024].

16   Ukrainska Pravoslavna Tserkva (Ukrainian Orthodox Church), "Resolutions of the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of May 27, 2022", 28 May 2022, https://news.church.ua/2022/05/28/resolutions-council-ukrainian-orthodox-church-may-27-2022/?lang=en [accessed: 31.07.2024].

spondents mentioned. This has led to a serious crisis within the UOC-MP, with clergy reacting in three different ways: 1) some withdrew from the UOC-MP and transitioned to the OCU; 2) some maintained a pro-Moscow position, including direct support for Russia; and 3) some refused to commemorate Patriarch Kirill and called for the leadership of the UOC-MP to break the canonical connection with the ROC.

Some UOC-MP priests, shocked by the hard-line and pro-invasion position of the ROC and the deaths of some clergymen at the hands of the Russian military, seemed inclined to join the independent OCU. For example, Priest and Rector of the Holy Resurrection New Athos Monastery in Lviv, Father Job (Olshansky), who transferred with his community to the OCU in March 2022, stated, "Our delay makes us Russian collaborators. I want you and me to be just Orthodox Christians who praise God, love their state and pray for it [...] to pray for the Ukrainian Army, for the Ukrainian state and Ukrainian authorities".[17]

The main reason for this group's transition to the OCU was their unwillingness to associate themselves with the ROC, the 'murderer church', and become 'Russian collaborators', as they are called in discussions on social media. That is, here, civic identity prevailed. At the same time, unlike the communities that transferred before the start of the war, and especially in the western regions, where religious identity was largely determined by regional and ethnic characteristics, following the start of the Russo–Ukrainian War, local UOC-MP priests had a different understanding of the relationship between religious and national identity. For example, priest Andrii Ponomarenko from the village of Aleksandrovka in the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, who joined the OCU in April 2022, stated:

> People often talk about the national idea; what it should be. The people of Ukraine are showing this idea today – personal initiative and self-organisation, decentralisation, and local responsibility add to this transparency, and we will get both a national idea and an example of a canonical Church.[18]

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17   Dukhovna velych Lvova (The Ducal Majesty of Lviv), "Ihumen monastyrya UPTS (MP) u Lvovi pereyshov z hromadoyu do PTsU" ("Abbot of the UOC (MP) Monastery in Lviv Joins the OCU with Community"), 20 March 2022, https://velychlviv.com/igumen-monastyrya-upts-mp-u-lvovi-perejshov-z-gromadoyu-do-ptsu/ [accessed: 31.07.2024] [authors' trans.].

18   Taras Antoshevskyy, "'Potribna nova arkhitektura tserkovnoho zhyttya', — o. Andriy Ponomarenko pro sviy vykhid z UPTs-MP ta poshuk tserkovnoyi yednosti" ("'We Need a New Architecture of Church Life', Fr. Andriy Ponomarenko on His Withdrawal from the UOC-MP and the Search for Church Unity"), *Relihiyno-informatsiyna sluzhba Ukrayiny* (*Religious Information Service of Ukraine*), 03 May 2022, https://risu.ua/potribna-nova-arhit ektura-cerkovnogo-zhyttya--o-andrij-ponomarenko-pro-svij-vihid-z-upc-mp-ta-poshuk-cer kovnoyi-yednosti_n128894 [accessed: 31.07.2024] [authors' trans.].

But in the context of the total number of communities in the UOC-MP at present, this is a very small group. From February to September 2022, less than 600 parishes transferred from the UOC-MP to the OCU, and just over a thousand since the receiving of the *tomos*. Of the communities that moved from the UOC-MP to the OCU since the beginning of the Russian invasion, those in the Khmelnytskyy, Kyiv, and Volyn Oblasts are in the lead.

The second group, which includes some of the high-ranking priests of the UOC-MP (primarily those based in Kyiv), retains a pro-Moscow orientation but has not publicly declared this. This group also includes the priests of the UOC-MP who are convicted of collaboration. Not only those from the patriotic segments of Ukrainian society but also some from within the UOC-MP itself reacted negatively to the behaviour of these priests.

At the same time, an important part of the religious identity of this category of priests (and believers) is the idea that Ukrainians and Russians are fraternal peoples connected by a common origin and faith. Antoshevsky argues: "The last drop was information about the participation of the UOC-MP clerics (priests and monks) in the pseudo-referendums on 'joining Russia' in the temporarily occupied territories and their calls for the 'unification of the brotherly people in a single country'".[19] In public spaces and on social media, as well as in expert opinions, this group is called a supporter of the concept of the 'Russian world'.[20] However, this concept is not a message of the church of the ROC, despite accusations by Ukrainian priests and activists against Patriarch Kirill of his adherence to this 'heretical teaching'. Rather, this concept was born in intellectual circles in the Russian Federation in the 1990s and was influenced by Petr Schedrovitskyy and Efim Ostrovskyy.[21]

The third group, which includes a significant number of priests, is not ready to move to the independent OCU but also does not want to remain part of the ROC. This last group is made up of those who have advocated for the convening of the Holy Council of Bishops of the UOC-MP to withdraw from their canonical subordination to the ROC.

According to Father Nikolai Danylevych, the Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Relations Department of the UOC-MP, who voiced the official position of the church,

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19   Ibid.

20   *Portal Polsko-Ukrainski* (*Polish–Ukrainian Portal*), "UPTs MP – ostannii marker 'ruskoho mira' v Ukraini" – ukrainskyi relihiieznavets Andrii Yurash" ("The UOC-MP is the Last Marker of the 'Russian World' in Ukraine – Ukrainian Religious Scholar Andriy Yurash], 2023, http://www.polukr.net/uk/blog/2023/05/upcmp-ostannyj-marker-ruskovo-mira/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

21   Denys Brylov and Tetiana Kalenychenko, "Religion and Nationalism in Post-Soviet Space: Between State, Society and Nation", in: Jayeel Cornelio, François Gauthier, Tuomas Martikainen, and Linda Woodhead (eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Religion in Global Society*, New York: Routledge, 2021, 399–409, here 401.

the statements and actions of Patriarch Kirill and his assessment of the Russo–Ukrainian War, the attack on Ukraine, and the open invasion of Ukraine are, to put it mildly, strange, or rather, absolutely inadequate. And his statements aroused fierce opposition. Misunderstanding, rejection, and resistance. Many priests and even bishops stopped commemorating Patriarch Kirill.[22]

On March 1, the clergy of the Sumy Diocese, supported by their bishop, Metropolitan Evlogii, refused to commemorate Kirill. Within a short time – just a few days – the number of dioceses that refused to commemorate Patriarch Kirill exceeded 15 (out of more than 50 dioceses in the UOC-MP). Even in those dioceses where there were neither collective appeals nor corresponding decisions by local bishops, some priests stopped commemorating the Patriarch individually.[23] The position of the parishioners of the UOC-MP largely explains this behaviour. As a sociological survey conducted by Sociological Group "Rating" on 8–9 March 2022 shows, 52 percent of the parishioners of the UOC-MP supported "the idea of breaking ties with the Russian Orthodox Church" (and only 13 percent refused).[24]

Among the members of this group is Priest Andrii Pinchuk from the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast, who sent an open letter to the court of the Pentarchy (the five heads of the oldest Orthodox Churches) with a request to condemn Patriarch Kirill (to whom the UOC-MP is formally subordinate) for propagandising the 'Russian World' doctrine for years, which became the ideological basis for Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine. His appeal collected more than 400 signatures of UOC-MP priests from all over Ukraine.[25]

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22 Krym.Realii (Crimea.Realities), "V Ukraine 15 yeparkhiy UPTs Moskovskogo patriarkhata perestali pominat patriarkha RPTS Kirilla – Danilevich" ("In Ukraine, 15 Dioceses of the UOC-MP Have Stopped Memorialising Patriarch Kirill – Danilevych"), 2022, https://ru.krymr.com/a/news-ukraina-15-eparhiy-upc-mp/31754601.html [accessed: 31.07.2024] [authors' trans.].

23 Andrii Fert, "'Nasha pastva ne zhelaet bolshe slyshat imya patriarkha Kirilla'" ("Our Flock Does Not Want to Hear the Name of Patriarch Kirill Anymore"), *OpenDemocracy*, 11 March 2022, https://www.opendemocracy.net/ru/ukraina-tserkov-voina-protest-protiv-patriarcha-fert-/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

24 Sotsiolohichna hrupa "Reitynh" (Sociological Group "Rating") "Otsinka sytuatsii v Ukraini (8–9 bereznia 2022)" ("Evaluating situation in Ukraine (8–9 March 2022)"), 10 March 2022, https://ratinggroup.ua/research/ukraine/ocenka_situacii_v_ukraine_8-9_marta_2022.html [accessed: 31.07.2024] [authors' trans.].

25 Tetiana Kalenychenko and Denys Brylov, "'Whoever saves one life saves the world entire': Ukrainian religious denominations during the war", *Bulletin de l'Observatoire international du religieux* (*Bulletin of the International Observatory on Religion*), 37, 2022, https://obsreligion.cnrs.fr/bulletin/whoever-saves-one-life-saves-the-world-entire-ukrainian-religious-denominations-during-the-war-english-version/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

In mid-May of 2022, the Holy Synod of the UOC-MP decided to hold a meeting of bishops, clergy, monks, and laity on 27 May to discuss the challenges faced by the UOC-MP. At the meeting itself, the head of the UOC-MP, Metropolitan Onuphryy, referring to the reaction of believers, proposed to consider the issue of the autocephaly of the UOC-MP. Because only the Council of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church can decide on changing the status of the church, on May 27, Metropolitan Onuphryy initiated and successively held a meeting of the Holy Synod of the UOC-MP, the Council of Bishops of the UOC-MP, and the Council of the UOC-MP with the participation of laity, monastic members, and clergy. As a result, 95 percent of the participants of the Council of the UOC-MP voted to change the status of the Church.[26]

In its final document, the Council of the UOC-MP condemned the war in the first paragraphs, appealed to the authorities of Ukraine and Russia to continue searching for ways to stop the bloodshed, expressed disagreement with the position of Patriarch Kirill of Moscow regarding the war in Ukraine, and approved additions and amendments to the Statute on the Management of the UOC-MP, "which testify to the full independence and autonomy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church".[27]

Despite the enormous pressure exerted by Ukrainian society, the parishioners of the UOC-MP, and the authorities of Ukraine, the leadership of the UOC-MP was not ready to violate the canonical rules (as it understands them) in favour of a patriotic pro-state position. Moreover, as one of the high-ranking priests of the UOC-MP noted, the motives of Metropolitan Onuphryy, who became the driving force behind the holding of the Council of the UOC-MP and the move to separate from the ROC, were not sociopolitical factors but religious: "For the Primate, the main thing was not that Russia attacked Ukraine. The Church thinks in centuries. Borders may change, [but] Orthodoxy remains. The main thing was that Vladyka [Onuphryy] decided that Kirill had deviated from Christian values".[28]

For a significant part of the parishioners and clergy of the UOC-MP, religious identity turned out to be more important than regional-ethnic or even national identity – even for those who are not supporters of the idea of the 'Russian World'. The results of in-depth interviews done with completely pro-Ukrainian parishioners and priests of the UOC-MP in the Volyn Oblast in Western Ukraine in the first months of the Russian invasion (when Ukrainian society actively discussed the possibility of a legislative ban on the activities of the UOC-MP) back up this view on identity. In these interviews, the interviewees expressed that in the event of a ban on the

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26   #Dialog.TUT (#Dialogue.HERE), "Kak prokhodil Sobor UPTs i kakiye prinyaty resheniya" ("How the Council of the UOC Took Place and What Decisions Were Made"), 27 May 2022, https://www.dialogtut.org/kak-prohodil-sobor-upcz-i-kakie-prinyaty-resheniya/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

27   Ukrainska Pravoslavna Tserkva, "Resolutions of the Council".

28   Interview with the authors, Kyiv, Ukraine, August 2022.

UOC-MP, parishioners and priests of the UOC-MP could go to the Orthodox Auto-cephalous Church of Poland (which operated on the territory of Volhyn until 1944). At the same time, they did not even consider the possibility of moving to the OCU due to canonical (essentially religious) reasons.

In their rationale for the non-canonicity of the OCU as a newly created au-tocephalous church, supporters of the UOC-MP largely reproduce (often without indicating the source) the explanation of the Biblical and Theological Commission of the ROC "[o]n the invalidity of the consecrations of Ukrainian schismatics and the non-canonicity of the 'Orthodox Church of Ukraine'".[29] This document emphasises, first of all, "the unilateral actions of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in Ukraine, culminating in the signing in January 2019 of the so-called *tomos* of autocephaly against the will of the episcopate, clergy, monastics, and laity of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church".[30] The main problem, according to the document, is that the Synod of the Patriarchate of Constantinople accepted into Eucharistic communion persons "without legal ordination" without the consent of the ROC. In this case, this means that a significant part of the consecrations of the episcopate of the OCU was received from Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko) of Kyiv and All Ukraine, who was excommunicated (anathematised) by the ROC in 1997. The Biblical and Theological Commission of the ROC insists that only the ROC itself can cancel the anathema-tisation of Metropolitan Filaret since they are the ones who anathematised him[31]. Meanwhile, the Patriarchate of Constantinople argues that, as the 'mother church' of the UOC-MP (and through it, the ROC), they can lift the anathema of the churches descended from them and that this was not taken into account.

Thus, we can say that for a significant part of the laity and clergy of the UOC-MP, religious identity is no less significant than national identity, and sometimes, it is even more significant. Following the model of Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott the most important concept here is 'canonicity'. In the context of re-lational comparisons, it is placed in opposition to the 'non-canonicity' of the OCU. Metropolitan Klyment has commented on the impossibility of the UOC-MP joining the OCU in response to the Russian invasion and, rather, its necessity to stay in the ROC: "The option to go to the OCU is unrealistic. We will lose the most important

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29   Tatyana Chaika, "ROC publishes theological clarification on non-canonicity of OCU", *Union of Orthodox Journalists*, 09 October 2019, https://spzh.news/en/news/65558-rpc-opublikov ala-bogoslovskoje-razyasnenije-o-nekanonichnosti-pcu [accessed: 31.07.2024].

30   Ibid.

31   Metr. Antony, "Znyaty anafemu z Filareta mozhe til'ky RPTS" ("Only the ROC can lift anathema from Filaret"), https://ukranews.com/ua/news/586240-znyaty-anafemu-z-filare ta-mozhe-tilky-rpc-mytropolit-antoniy [accessed 31.07.2024].

thing – the canonical truth of our church. And this is exactly what our congregation is looking for and what it finds in our church".[32]

Metropolitan Anthony, often considered the main lobbyist for the interests of the ROC within the UOC-MP, spoke even more sharply in his address to believers on the 1035th anniversary of the baptism of Russia by Prince Volodymyr. He declared:

> Our disagreement with "OCU" is mainly on the canonical plane. First of all, there is a question regarding the legality of the ordinations of the "clergy" of this organisation, which does not allow us to have any common prayer or Eucharistic communication both with it and with those churches that, despite church rules, have decided to recognise its "sacraments" as allegedly legal. And no dialogue with this structure will change this essence: the apostolic succession cannot be filled with anything except repentance and canonical ordination. And if the Ukrainian Orthodox Church started such communication, it would actually cease to exist as a canonical church.[33]

To understand the identity of believers, an important indicator is the relationship between a declared identity and the recognition of oneself as a member of a certain parish. One can call oneself a believer of a particular denomination without practicing one's religious beliefs. According to Sergei Bortnik, this is a common problem in Ukraine: with a stated total of 67.8 percent of people who call themselves 'believers', only 20.9 percent call themselves members of a certain parish. While a weak connection to a parish is expected from those identifying as "just Orthodox" (5 percent are parish members) and "just Christians" (7.1 percent are parish members), it is a significant problem for the leading denominations. The same source shows that "In the UOC-MP this figure is slightly higher: 36.1 percent are those who identify as members of a parish as opposed to 58.2 percent who do not consider themselves members of a specific parish. In the OCU, the numbers are only 25.8 percent of those who identify as members of a parish as opposed to 70.9 percent who are not."[34] This

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32   Sviatoslav Khomenko, Vitalii Chervonenko, and Anastasiia Lotarieva, "'Byttia vyznachaie svidomist'. Chy pozbavylasia UPTs vid Moskovskoho patriarkhatu" ("'Being Defines Consciousness': Did the Ukrainian Orthodox Church Get Rid of the Moscow Patriarchate?"), *BBC Ukraine*, 30 May 2022, https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-61625756 [accessed: 31.07.2024] [authors' trans.].

33   Metropolitan Antony (Pakanych), "Bozhe, zberezhy Tserkvu Tvoiu v istyni i yednosti!" ("God, Save Your Church in Truth and Unity!"), *Pravoslavnaia Zhyzn* (*Orthodox Life*), 28 July 2023, https://pravlife.org/uk/content/mytr-antoniy-pakanych-bozhe-zberezhy-cerkvu-tvoyu-v-istyni-i-yednosti [accessed: 31.07.2024] [authors' trans.].

34   Sergei Bortnyk, "Overestimated declared identity of the OCU faithful and unexpected tolerance of the UOC(MP) faithful: analysis of the Razumkov Center's data", *CF "Academic initiative"*, 2022, https://www.academic-initiative.org.ua/en/2022/02/16/analysis_of_razumkov/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

means that only a quarter of the declared members of the OCU have the opportunity to or regularly attend the church services of their denomination.

Other data also testify in favour of greater involvement of parishioners of the UOC-MP in church life when compared to the OCU. Specifically, they are much more likely to attend church services: 18.9 percent of UOC-MP parishioners attend "once a week", as opposed to 10.1 percent of OCU parishioners, and 6.5 percent of UOC-MP parishioners attend "more often than once a week", as opposed to 3.4 percent of those of the OCU. Similarly, when asked the question "Have you attended church service last Sunday?" 38.5 percent of UOC-MP parishioners answered "yes" as compared to 25.1 percent from the OCU.[35]

When considering the OCU, instead of religious identity, it is more appropriate to talk about the phenomenon of 'civil religion'. On this matter, we agree with Reverend Cyril Hovorun, who states that in order to understand social and political processes in contemporary states that associate themselves with the Eastern Christian tradition (in particular Ukraine), the concept of 'civil religion' is a useful hermeneutic key. In his view, we can observe the collision of two types of civil religion in Ukraine: the Russian imperial version that is propagated as the 'Russian world' (represented partly by the UOC-MP) and a Balkan-style nationalistic one, in which a set of beliefs, symbols, and rituals constitute a quasi-religion (a superficial and not religiously based movement) of the nation (represented by the UOC-KP and later the OCU).[36] A good illustration of this "quasi-religion of the nation" is the meme "atheist of the Kyiv Patriarchate", which was coined by President Petro Poroshenko's advisor Yuri Biryukov and spread widely among the intelligentsia that positions itself as patriotic.[37] At the same time, there is no need to talk about any transformation of the identity of the followers of the OCU after the start of the Russian invasion in February 2022, since from the very beginning their identity had a more pronounced national character. Moreover, the OCU could become a special civil-religious centre of attraction (a basis for cultural identity but not real or regular religious practice) for those pro-Ukrainian citizens who are not active in their beliefs and religious affiliations. At the same time, this could be detrimental for the OCU as a religious institution – the 'Church of Christ' – that aims for confessional affiliation.

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35   Razumkov Centre, *Osoblyvosti relihiynoho i tserkovno-relihiynoho samovyznachennia hromadyan Ukrainy: tendentsiyi 2000–2021*, 50 [authors' trans.].

36   Reverend Cyril (Hovorun), "Pravoslavnaya grazhdanskaya religiya" ("Orthodox Civil Religion"), *Relihiia v Ukraini* (*Religion in Ukraine*), 18 May 2015, https://www.religion.in.ua/main/bogoslovya/29171-pravoslavnaya-grazhdanskaya-religiya.html [accessed: 31.07.2024].

37   Denys Brylov, Tetiana Kalenychenko, and Andrii Kryshtal, *The Religious Factor in Conflict: Research on the Peacebuilding Potential of Religious Communities in Ukraine*, PAX, report, 2021, 25–26.

Division in the Ukrainian and Russian Protestant Worlds

Protestantism began to spread in Ukraine following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Congregations of every major Protestant tradition exist in contemporary Ukraine, though their numbers are still comparatively small. A 2021 study by the Razumkov Centre noted that 1.5 percent of the population identifies as Protestant.[38] However, state religious statistics show that the number of Protestant religious communities is about 30 percent of all Christian communities in Ukraine (in total, there are 10,774 Protestant communities, 5,280 Catholic communities, and 19,860 Orthodox communities).[39] However, we can challenge the state statistics for several reasons and suggest that they did not investigate the activities of existing parishes.

Catherine Wanner, who has for many years researched Protestants in post-Soviet countries, claims that Ukrainian Protestants are less oriented towards national identity than Orthodox followers because they do not belong to a 'traditional' church. "The Orthodox Church", she writes, "including Uniate 'relatives' in her midst [meaning the UGCC], considers Orthodoxy an attribute of Ukrainian nationality, that is, a Ukrainian, by definition, is Orthodox".[40] Evangelicals, on the contrary, are less inclined to think ethno-nationally. In interviews she conducted in Ukraine in 2000–2002, she notes that when faced with open questions, most Evangelicals preferred the categories 'Christian' or 'believers' to nationality (or other competing categories).[41] In the post-Soviet space, Ukraine is the country where the evangelical movement has achieved the greatest success. For example, in Ukraine, there are more than twice as many evangelical missionaries as in Russia, but the population is three times smaller.[42]

The full-scale invasion deepened earlier misunderstandings among Ukrainian and Russian Protestants[43] once they were facing issues of life and death on one side

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38   Razumkov Centre, *Osoblyvosti relihiynoho i tserkovno-relihiynoho samovyznachennia hromayian Ukrainy: tendentsiyi 2000–2021*, 39.

39   DESS, *Zvit pro merezhu relihiinykh*.

40   Ibid.

41   Catherine Wanner, "Explaining the Appeal of Evangelicalism in Ukraine", in: Dominique Arel and Blair A. Ruble (eds.), *Rebounding Identities: The Politics of Identity in Russia and Ukraine*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006, 243–272, here 243.

42   Dominique Arel, "Introduction: Theorizing the Politics of Cultural Identities in Russia and Ukraine", in: Dominique Arel and Blair A. Ruble (eds.), *Rebounding Identities: The Politics of Identity in Russia and Ukraine*, Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006, 1–30, here 22.

43   Tetiana Mukhomorova, "When a Brother Doesn't Hear His Brother: Post-Maidan Problems in Relations between Ukrainian and Russian Protestants", *Religious Information Service of Ukraine*, 25 March 2014, https://risu.ua/en/when-a-brother-doesn-t-hear-his-brother-post-maidan-problems-in-relations-between-ukrainian-and-russian-protestants_n68021 [accessed: 31.07.2024].

and limitations from the state on the other. Unlike Ukrainian evangelicals,[44] Russian pastors either remained quiet in public, spoke in support of Putin, or remained neutral with "we are for peace" calls, personally urging Ukrainian pastors to remain silent about suffering and death on their side. One of the respondents from among Protestant theologians says, "I received numerous messages where I was asked not to write, to remain silent, which can be summed up very simply: please, if you die, do it silently".[45] At the official level, as early as 25 February[46] statements and appeals from the Russian Union of Christian Churches of the Evangelical Faith called for peace in "this fratricidal war, where the reasons are not important" and later responded with the same general phrases to concerns about partial mobilisation in Russia.[47] At the level of action, they were the first to enter Mariupol after the Russian military and declared that they were building their church there,[48] regardless of the destroyed churches and the statements of Ukrainian pastors from Mariupol.

Given the earlier worldview differences and the new divisions, Russian and Ukrainian Protestants will be unable to resume not only cooperation but even communication in the near future, which will affect their understanding of the relationship between power and religious organisations. However, we should pay special attention to the relationships between Protestants in Ukraine, who faced both theological and logistical crises and challenges. Some of the pastors will remain as refugees abroad, and the main seminaries are jointly thinking about what the focus of the training of future ministers should be. A recent attempt was a gathering

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44   Rada Yevanhelskykh Protestantskykh Tserkov Ukrainy (Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches of Ukraine), "Spilna zaiava SIeA, YeleA ta RIePTsU z pryvodu richnytsi rosiiskoho vtorhnennia" ("Joint Statement of the CEA, the EEA, and the REPCU on the Anniversary of the Russian Invasion"), 2023, https://repcu.org/2023/02/27/1615/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

45   Interview with the authors, April 2022.

46   Rossiyskiy obyedinennyy Soyuz khristian very evangelskoy (pyatidesyatnikov) (ROSKhVE) (Russian United Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals)), "Zayavleniye episkopa Sergeya Ryakhovskogo (ot imeni Dukhovnogo soveta ROSKhVE) po situatsii na Ukraine" ("Statement by Bishop Sergey Ryakhovsky (on Behalf of the Spiritual Council of the ROSKhVE) on the Situation in Ukraine"), 2022, https://www.cef.ru/documents/docitem/article/1640677 [accessed: 31.07.2024].

47   Rossiyskiy obyedinennyy Soyuz khristian very evangelskoy (pyatidesyatnikov) (ROSKhVE) (Russian United Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals)), "Zayavleniye Dukhovnogo soveta ROSKhVE v svyazi s obyavleniyem chastichnoy mobilizatsii" ("Statement of the Spiritual Council of the ROSKhVE in Connection with the Announcement of Partial Mobilisation"), 2022, https://www.cef.ru/documents/docitem/article/1674593 [accessed: 31.07.2024].

48   Rossiyskiy obyedinennyy Soyuz khristian very evangelskoy (pyatidesyatnikov) (ROSKhVE) (Russian United Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals)), "Rossiyskiye missionery sozdali tserkov v Mariupole" ("Russian Missionaries Set Up a Church in Mariupol"), 2022, https://www.cef.ru/infoblock/news/read/article/1669783 [accessed: 31.07.2024].

of pastors to discuss "Theology after Bucha",[49] where they began to look for answers to these questions. The process of the transformation of their identity remains unequivocal; within this, the civil rather than the national component comes to the fore.

Conclusions

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 led to significant changes in public consciousness and major transformations in the identity of Ukrainians, as well as in the religious field. This especially affected supporters of the UOC-MP, which for many years was part of the ROC. The personal position of the head of the ROC, Patriarch Kirill, who justifies the invasion and appeals to the imagined community of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples within the framework of the nationalist concept of the 'Russian World', alienated many priests and laity of the UOC-MP from the ROC. At the same time, the more pronounced religious identity of the parishioners of the UOC-MP and public pressure on the church led to dramatic processes that brought the UOC-MP closer to a situation of internal schism. As our study shows, for a significant part of the laity and clergy of the UOC-MP, religious identity is no less significant than national, and sometimes even more so. Applying the methodological approach of Abdelal, Herrera, Johnston, and McDermott, we see that the relational type of identity is key among believers in the UOC-MP. The believers of the UOC-MP define their identity through the definition of what it is not: namely, it is not non-canonical, which they consider their opponents in the OCU (and earlier the UOC-KP and the UAOC) to be. Crises in the UOC-MP in 2022 and 2023 showed that even for the most pro-Ukrainian priests and laity, it is extremely difficult to overcome the perception of the OCU as a 'non-canonical' and 'graceless' structure and, accordingly, the invalidity of church sacraments in this church.

At the same time, interestingly enough, the clergy of the UOC-MP found a way out of the impossibility of maintaining close relations with the ROC, pressure from Ukrainian society and the authorities, and the request of their own flock to preserve 'canonicity' in their appeal to early 'pre-Nicaea'[50] Christianity, when bishops enjoyed wide autonomy in decision-making. Thus, point 7 of the Decree of the Council of the UOC-MP of 27 May 2022 says:

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49   Eastern European Institute of Theology, "Ofitsiine komiunike, pryiniate uchasnykamy konsultatsii 'Bohoslovska osvita pislia Buchi'" ("Official Communique Adopted by the Participants of the Consultation 'Theological Education after Bucha'"), 15–19 August 2022, https://eeit-edu.info/theological-education-after-bucha/ [accessed: 31.07.2024].

50   The period of Christianity during its first centuries, before the Nicene Council of 325.

> During the period of conflict, when means of communication between the eparchies and the ecclesiastical centre are complicated or become absent, the Council considered it expedient to grant eparchial bishops the right to decide on certain issues of eparchial life that is usually within the competence of the Holy Synod or the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Subsequently, when the possibility arises and upon restoration of ties to notify the ruling hierarchs.[51]

As Metropolitan Klyment (Vecherya) said, the Council was based on the understanding that each diocese is a local church, and each bishop is the head of his local church. In his opinion, only such a nonstandard form of the further existence of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church will allow it to preserve its internal unity in the conditions of war.[52] If the question of affiliation and transparency of the activities and intentions of the UOC-MP remains a cornerstone in the public space for religious and nonreligious people, these splits in identity and changes of priorities also occur in other religious currents, in particular protestant ones. As we explained above, Protestants experienced a final split with their Russian brothers in faith who remained neutral or loyal to the Russian regime; instead, the majority of Ukrainian Protestant ministers took a proactive position and are trying to rethink the latest crisis theologically.

Considering the metamorphoses of the religious world, we can trace which parts of the identity mosaic prevail. For example, why does national identity come before religious identity for some, and for others, on the contrary, religious affiliation still dominates despite their clear civic position? Our findings from the first eleven months of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine indicate a revision of priorities regarding the components of identity: first, the national component occupies an increasingly important position; second, there are attempts to form and consolidate a religious-civil identity, which remains visible in public but almost does not touch the personal lives and spiritual practices of citizens; and third, there is a split among religious organisations, which traditionally had long-term relations in the post-Soviet space and are now losing or severing ties with Russia. Paying attention to the religious sphere adds to our understanding of the dynamics of identity because religion constitutes an existential component of identity that drives decision-making in the context of crisis. However, it is also worth considering the formation of a civil narrative on the part of religious communities as well as representatives of the authorities and opinion leaders, where the very concept of citizenship can be inclusive and does not concentrate on a certain ethnicity or religion.

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51   Ukrainska Pravoslavna Tserkva, "Resolutions of the Council".
52   Khomenko, Chervonenko, and Lotarieva, "Byttia vyznachaie svidomist".

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