

Andrii Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (eds)

Churches in the Ukrainian Crisis

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Reviewed by Liudmyla Fylypovych, Religious Studies Department, Philosophy Institute, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine

There are historical events that are becoming a catalyst for many processes, not only in the countries where they took place, but also beyond their borders. We are talking about the Ukrainian Euromaidan (2013–2014), which has been repeatedly described meaningfully, but every new attempt is a new frontier in understanding what happened five years ago in a former Soviet Union republic, now one of the Central European countries. Having chosen the events of the Maidan as the starting and final semantic point of the historiosophy of the development of religion in Ukraine, the publishers of *Churches in Ukrainian Crisis* conceptualized the material in such way that it becomes understandable what is happening, even for a person who is not familiar with either the country in general or its religious life in the past and present. Generally, the goal put forward by the editors “to analyze their historical journeys, sense of identity, models of governance, the interpretation of conflict with Russia and visions of peaceful relations, and responses to, the changes that started in November 2013” has been successfully achieved (xi).

The book has five parts. It is natural that the first is devoted to the historical basis of the modern religious situation in Ukraine. Proposed by Thomas Bremer, a brief conceptual presentation of the religious history of Ukraine is pleasantly impressed by a deep knowledge of the situation, the reference to reliable sources, and the ability to use them (3-19). Unlike most English-language studies of the religious history of Ukraine, which are a repetition or reproduction of Russian historiosophy, which regards Ukraine just as a part, albeit early in time but secondary in importance to its all-Russian imperial history, the author rightly fits Ukraine into the European context. The author specifically focuses on explaining the emergence of such phenomena as Greek Catholicism and Ukrainian Orthodoxy, considering them the heirs of Kyivan Christianity (churches of the Kyiv tradition; 10, 15). He is well versed in other Christian churches in Ukraine that define themselves as a part of the Ukrainian spiritual life and support Ukrainian identity (13). The author is convinced that to understand the current situation in the country, including religious relations, without reference to its history is impossible.

Chapter 2 is the prominent element of the first part of the book. It is dedicated to the Ukrainian Greek Catholics and written by Yury Avvakumov, a Christian theologian born in Russia, who received a spiritual education at Russian Orthodox schools and is now a priest of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church (UGCC) residing in the United States. Understanding

who the Greek Catholics are (24-26), what they had to experience through the test (26-28), and what their crossfire status is (a challenge or an opportunity; 29-32) can be explained by the Greek-Catholic intellectual revival (33-34), which the author attributes to the founding of the Ukrainian Catholic University (UCU) and its rector, Boris Gudziak. More understandable is the unanimous support of the Greek Catholics as ordinary parishioners and their spiritual leaders and the events of the Revolution of Belief (34-36), which in fact proposed this definition of the Maidan.

Overcoming ignorance and often misinformation about the Greek Catholics, the author refutes the Moscow myths about Ukrainian Christianity and Greek Catholics for their alleged non-canonicity (22). Avvakumov's approach is very helpful (especially for "Westerners") for the understanding of the nature of Greek Catholicism, which he as a philologist explains through the concept of liminality, what he considers to be as a step toward the post-confessional future of Christianity (29). The author is absolutely right when he writes, "Reconciliation between the Eastern and Western Christianity is attainable not *despite* Greek Catholics and not *through* them, but only *together with* them.... They are neither an appendix to the RCC nor an impure version of the Eastern Orthodoxy. They simply are themselves, with a unique individuality, history, and culture" (37).

Part II, "Orthodox Autocephaly in Ukraine," consists of two parts, the first of which that is devoted to the canonical and the second to the historical dimensions of autocephaly. Paul Bruslanowski from Romania begins with a description of the preparation of the All-Orthodox Council, which among others had to solve the issue of autonomy, autocephaly, and diptych in Orthodoxy. Since 1961, when the decision was made to convene an ecumenical council in Rhodes, inter-Orthodox preparatory commissions and All-Pro-Orthodox pre-assembly conferences met repeatedly; many draft joint documents were worked out, but did not develop a common understanding of autocephaly and diptych. Investigating in detail when and how exactly the concept of autocephaly arose and who has the right to provide autocephaly to newly appointed churches (51-54), the author believes that the confrontation between Moscow and Constantinople in these matters lasts for a long time and no arguments can convince the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) that the Patriarch of Constantinople has such a right. Bruslanowski explores in detail the complex history of the rise of autocephaly, breaking it down into seven stages (54-64). The author separately describes the state of Orthodoxy after the First World War and 1917, revealing the expansionist policies of the Russian Orthodox Church concerning Orthodox churches in Soviet republics and countries in the Warsaw Bloc.

Alfons Brüning offers a look not only at historical facts, but also their interpretation of various subjects of the historical process. Each of them has its own memory of the events of the common history: the baptism of Kyivan Rus', the Florentine unity and the Moscow Patriarchate, the Brest Union, the subordination of Kyiv to Moscow, and the autocephalous movement of the 1920s. The author demonstrates that an alternative interpretation of historical events came about as a result of the intellectual efforts of many generations of theologians, historians, and religious figures. He concludes that "history and memory are like two sisters living in mutual jealousy.... From the perspective of historical memory, the differences can only be reconciled in a narrative that gives due credit to the history of two closely connected and often entangled traditions" (96-97).

As a result of complex and ambiguous religious history, the national identity of Ukrainians was formed, which is studied in Part III. This section opens with chapter 5, written by Natalia Kochan, a Ukrainian researcher who over a period of time fruitfully studied the relationship between nation and religion, so the problems of national identity for her are not new. The author states that in a very short time, Ukrainian society has undergone serious qualitative changes. These changes also took place on an individual level: self-respect and personal

dignity grew. Ukrainians have ceased to identify themselves with *Homo Sovieticus*, but seek to find themselves in historically new time zones, drifting into other civilizational matrices. Kochan highlights the important social patterns that emerged in Ukraine after 2013–2014 and which determine the Ukrainian identity: A nation emerges in the political sense of the word, which ranges around very civic values; the nature of power changes, which becomes more functional; and social solidarity is formed that can mobilize people responsible for their country and their state (108-109).

The testimony of Lydia Lozova, who describes the history of one Orthodox parish belonging to the Moscow Patriarchate (MP), is very interesting: We see the transformations that survived this community under the influence of political and social upheavals in Ukraine. Having a radically different understanding of the role of the church in the life of society, initially even a different attitude to the Maidan, the community eventually became socialized on the basis of Christian values of love for thy neighbor, assistance to the needy, volunteering for ATO (Anti-Terrorist Operation) participants and displaced persons, etc.

The first chapter of Part IV, written by Mikhail Suslov, explains the nature and causes of a Russian-Ukrainian war that nobody expected. The author proposes to analyze official policy, ideological conceptualization, and popular images concerning the relationship with Ukraine. The author's first point is the sociopolitical context, explaining exactly what interests Russia and the Russian Orthodox Church have in Ukraine. The second, more important reason for the confrontation between Russia and Ukraine is an ideology that has its own nucleus of two ideas—the “Russian World” and the Holy Rus’. The author unfolds the history of the emergence of these concepts, which are the basic part of the geopolitical theory and practice of the ROC (139-140). In conclusion, he writes, “Ukraine became the greatest challenge for the ROC since at least 1992 when the Ukrainian Orthodox Church split into the UOC-MP and the UOC-KP. Today the stakes are much higher” (152).

The second chapter of Part IV, written by the famous Orthodox theologian Cyril Hovorun, is a kind of commentary on Suslov's contribution and deepens the history of the appearance and content of the concept of the “Russian World.” According to the author, this concept is the key to understanding the nature of the military conflict in eastern Ukraine. The Archimandrite compares the development of the project of the “Russian World” with the project of the “German World” and finds that the trajectory of the development of ideas is very similar (164). Beginning as a liberal version of the intellectual opposition to Soviet ideology, the concept of the “Russian World” was incorporated into the neo-imperialist project, gaining, in addition to purely cultural connotations, mostly religious ones. Accordingly, all events in Ukraine are treated as a sacred war with the West, as a war between the Orthodox and the (Greek) Catholics. Such paradoxical conclusions suggest that the author considers it necessary to “demolish” the concept of the “Russian World” in order to “stop the fighting in eastern Ukraine and to reconcile the divided people of the country.... As a first step, its ideological component must be removed.... The concepts of ‘Russian world’ and of civilization should be divorced, and the underlying theology that supported their fusion should be liberated from its ideological enchantment. And so should the Church” (170).

The last part of the book, “Ways to Unity, Cooperation and Peace,” starts with a chapter written by Andrii Krawchuk, a scholar from Canada, well known in Ukraine but also abroad. In his opinion, it was the Maidan that created the basis for finding a new identity. Analyzing this new emerging identity, the author believes that it is not just a rethinking of the reinvention of the Orthodox tradition, which remains unchanged, but the construction of that tradition (175). Reflecting on the emergence of a new awareness of their identity in the UOC-MP, Krawchuk identifies and analyzes five principles. The roots of these transformations must be sought in the pre-Maidan period because in this church, there were identity processes before.

But the Maidan and Russian intervention greatly intensified the division between those who identified themselves with Moscow and those who were loyal to Ukraine. Krawchuk is right when he says that the new ideas of the new identity were not accepted by all UOC believers. Despite the war, massive loss of lives, and loss of territory, most Orthodox Christians were influenced by old stereotypes about the brotherhood of the three fraternal peoples, the only historical cradle. But the most progressive and thinking forces began to develop an alternative discourse that parted ways with the official line of their patriarchate (177). The five principles examined by Krawchuk refer to the following ideas: 1) integration with Europe and its values; 2) social justice begins with self-critique; 3) the basis for stable relations with Russia and respect for Ukraine's sovereignty; 4) social reality expands the exclusively canonical understanding of autocephaly; and 5) the pursuit of Orthodox unity in Ukraine (178-191). The conclusions made by Krawchuk testify to the complicated situation within the UOC, which is still unclear about its identity. There are different people there: those who are not ready for any change and want a return to the USSR, those who are ready but do not know how, and those who are ready and know how. Upcoming events will show who will win in this disposition.

What is Ukraine after Euromaidan, what kind of a country should it be, and how does it get out of this crisis, which defines its current life? These questions are discussed in the last chapter of the book, written by Katrina Boeckh. On the basis of sociological data, she draws an objective picture of religious pluralism in Ukraine, fixing the positive influence of religion on the development of the country. The author emphasizes the particularly important role of the Maidan with its religious dimension, inter-religious solidarity, the role of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO), when the churches played the role of the schools of freedom (209). But in Crimea and in the occupied territories, there are problems in religious life for most churches and religious communities. Local authorities persecute those organizations that do not fit their idea of "correct" (canonical) and "non-correct" beliefs. Religious diversity is virtually lost. Freedom of religion and the rights and freedoms of believers are violated. A comparison of the situation in mainland Ukraine and in the occupied territories convinces the author that a "true ecumenism" is better than religious repression (210-212).

The last, 225th page of the book, which is read in one breath, is turned over. Readers look forward to the continuation of such a professional and deep, well-argued and documented talk of religious affairs – not only in Ukraine but also abroad – which was demonstrated on the pages of Krawchuk and Bremer's book.
