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REFORMATION OF CONFESSIONAL SPIRITUAL EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF UKRAINE: CONTAINMENT FACTORS AND LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

The main tendencies, prospects, and complexity of reforming confessional, educational establishments in Ukraine have been systematized and substantiated here. Based on statistics, their quantitative and qualitative characteristics are being examined. Their evolution has been traced from the final years of the Soviet Union to recent days. Currently there are 204 establishments of this kind operating in Ukraine. Due to their large number, they are mostly small. Most of them have dozens of students studying there. Usually, they lack complete and qualified teaching staff and adequate facilities. Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, and representatives of other denominations get theological education there. The most numerous and well-known are the spiritual, educational institutions belonging to the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Churches in Ukraine. However, most spiritual, educational institutions have a limited confessional orientation, which leads to a certain isolationism and conservatism in the educational sphere, practicing old confessional models of teaching in theological disciplines. In Ukraine, for a long time, this isolationism has been caused by the reluctance of some state structures to introduce the specialty of “Theology” into educational institutions, allowing its licensing and accreditation. The situation only changed on August 27, 2010, when the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 787 allowed doing so. Among the examples of successful reformation of spiritual, educational institutions is the Ukrainian Catholic University, which is a modern, open-type educational institution with a religious orientation. Similar reform tendencies are evident in Saints Cyril and Methodius Uzhhorod Ukrainian Theological Academy, which functions along with Augustine Voloshin Carpathian University, and the Ukrainian Adventist Center for Higher Education. Efforts to reform spiritual education, to modernize it, have recently been observed in the newly created Orthodox

Church of Ukraine. The Open Orthodox University of Saint Sophia in Kyiv offers an innovative form of relaying Christian values to the Ukrainian community. It is an extracurricular, interactive platform for learning, spiritual development, and dialogue.

Keywords: theology, education, religious organizations, spiritual educational institutions, isolationism, conservatism, reform, leadership.

Introduction

Ukraine now belongs to the post-Soviet states, where an intensive growth of religious communities and, accordingly, the formation of a network for religious, educational institutions takes place. This is a complex and time-consuming process; the reform of these institutions encounters many problems and requires proper comprehension and recommendations. It is natural that the problem of the development of religious education in Ukraine is the subject of a scientific analysis.

The level of spiritual education in Ukraine in the first decade of Ukraine's State Independence was considered by Larisa Dmitrenko.¹ Mykola Lagodych, the author of several works devoted to higher ecclesiastical schools—primarily Orthodox,² deals with the issues of religious education in Ukraine—both at the level of secondary and higher schools. Some works by Mykola Shkriblyak³ are devoted to similar issues.

This problem is still relevant, so there is a need for comprehensive (non-denominational) consideration. Complexity involves not only identifying the main trends in the development of spiritual education in modern Ukraine, but also analyzing the experience and achievements of the leaders, and analyzing the factors restraining this process—which is the subject of our article.

Spiritual Educational Institutions in Ukraine: from Isolationism to State Recognition

During the period of the Soviet Union's existence, Ukraine was one of its republics. The Soviet Union pursued an atheistic ideology, but even at that time, religiosity in Ukraine remained at a higher level compared to other parts of the Soviet state. Almost half of the

¹ Л. Дмитренко, *Духовна освіта в Україні: стан і проблеми*, *Людина і світ*, №. 4, (Київ, 2004): 31-37.

² М. Лагодич, "Приватні навчальні заклади в системі неперервної релігійної освіти: регіональний досвід та специфіка", (2015), 237-257; М. Лагодич, "Релігійна освіта в сучасній Україні: стан, тенденції та виклики" (2018), 197-203.

³ М. Шкрібляк, "Повернення до християноцентризму як основа сучасної національної освіти та виховання в Україні", (2018), 128-146; М. Шкрібляк, "Філософська та богословська освіта у структурі національної навчально-освітньої парадигми: сучасні можливості і перспективи розвитку", (2018), 123-127.

Orthodox religious communities were concentrated here—moreover, they were numerous. Some Protestant denominations were also active in Ukraine, including Evangelical Christians—Baptists, Evangelical Christians, and the Seventh-day Adventists. Religious life was especially active in Western Ukraine, where the process of imposing Soviet atheism only started during World War II.

Therefore, the religiosity of Ukrainians in some cases was the manifestation of opposition to the Soviet authorities. Accordingly, the authorities took steps to limit the influence of denominations in the republic. In particular, it resulted in the destruction of the spiritual education system. During the period of the so-called “stagnation” (the second half of the 1960s to the first half of the 1980s in Ukraine⁴) —despite the large number of Orthodox believers, there was only one Orthodox seminary in Odessa, while in the Russian Federation there were four Orthodox educational institutions—two seminaries and two academies in Moscow and Leningrad. A considerable part of the students of these institutions were from Ukraine.

The situation began to change during the so-called *perestroika* (*reconstruction*) period, which took place during the second half of the 1980s to the final years of the Soviet Union’s existence. At that time, the religious network in the Ukrainian Republic increased noticeably, and some denominations that had previously been persecuted by the Soviet authorities legalized their activities. There appeared a need for opening spiritual schools to teach the clergy.

Since 1991, with Ukraine's independence, these trends have continued. At that time, relations between the state and religious organizations gained new qualities, characterized by partnership and cooperation. Such relations were affirmed in the Constitution of Ukraine, the Law of Ukraine “On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations,” and other legislative acts. All this ensured the normal development of religious life. Annually there was an increase in the number of religious communities registered in the state, and a network of spiritual educational institutions was formed and developed. In particular, new Orthodox seminaries and academies, Protestant theological institutes, Catholic religious educational establishments, and others were opened. While opening such institutions, there was an appeal to traditions. This is especially true of Orthodox believers and Greek Catholics who had powerful educational institutions in the past.

The educational content in these spiritual educational institutions primarily included providing theological knowledge, but they also taught some secular subjects—in particular

⁴ О. Н. Саган, *Вселенське православ'я: суть, історія, сучасний стан*, (Київ: Світ знань, 2004), 493-497.

history, literature, law, and foreign languages.⁵ The purpose of these educational institutions was to prepare the clergy to satisfy the rapidly growing religious network.

However, the quantitative characteristics of religious communities and their spiritual, educational institutions in Ukraine were not always correlated with qualitative characteristics. Many religious communities were small or even fictitious. Their registration was conditioned by fierce confessional competition in Ukraine. First and foremost, this is true of the competition in the Orthodox environment, where several religious organizations were and are still operating (the largest of them is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, a branch of Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine, established mainly on the basis of the former Kyiv Ukrainian Orthodox Church and Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church). There is noticeable competition between Orthodox and Greek Catholics, as well as competition in the Protestant community. This led to an attempt to attach certain territories to religious organizations, which then led to the registration of small and even fictitious communities. Similar tendencies can be observed during the creation of spiritual, educational institutions. Quantity was often given preference over the qualitative characteristics of these institutions.

Only a few had, and continue to have, a relatively large number of students, high-quality teaching staff, and an adequate material base. As for most of these institutions, their quality should have been better, but many of them had only a few dozen students and some teachers. There were only a few trained theologians and teachers at the beginning of Ukraine's independence. That is why some denominations, including Catholics and Protestants, invited foreigners to teach. At that time, it was common for teachers of religious schools to express conservatism and reluctance to respond to the dynamic social changes and challenges of the time. This was largely driven by post-Soviet realities, where stereotypes regarding the isolation of religious life from social processes existed. Therefore, the necessity for improving, developing and reforming spiritual educational institutions emerged.

One of the major problems of these institutions in the first two decades of Ukraine's independence was their isolation from the state educational institutions. Spiritual educational institutions were not licensed by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, and their diplomas were not recognized by the state. The leadership of many of these institutions were satisfied with this situation. They believed that the clergy training had its own specificity, and therefore it was undesirable that secular institutions interfered with them. This point of view

⁵ Л. Дмитренко, "Духовна освіта в Україні: стан і проблеми", (2004), 31-37.

had its rationale. After all, state agencies, in particular the Ministry of Education and Science, had not included theology in the list of higher education specialties for a long time.

However, the leaders of some religious organizations and theological schools supported the idea of giving their students and clergy the chance to receive a secular education and state diplomas. In particular, in higher education institutions of the state—such as Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University⁶ and “Ostroh Academy” National University⁷—a large number of students (auditors) of Orthodox and Protestant religious schools and clergy majored in Religious Studies. Some priests also created private, educational institutions, which coexisted with spiritual institutions. For example, one well-known institution was the Augustine Voloshyn Carpathian University⁸, where the students of Uzhhorod Ukrainian Theological Academy (named after Saints Cyril and Methodius) studied simultaneously. At that time, this academy was the educational institution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Moscow Patriarchate (now the institution belongs to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine).⁹

On August 27, 2010, the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 787 introduced the “Theology” specialty, which could be licensed and accredited in higher education institutions. The first educational institutions where this specialty was licensed were the “Ostroh Academy” National University, Augustine Voloshyn Carpathian University, Ukrainian Catholic University, and European University.

Since 2012, the Ministry of Education, Science, Youth, and Sports of Ukraine has begun to develop a legal mechanism for the recognition of diplomas of religious higher educational institutions, diplomas of academic degrees and titles of these spiritual institutions, and relevant research institutions. On August 19, 2015, the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 652 “On State Recognition of Higher Spiritual Education Documents, Scientific Degrees and Academic Titles conferred by Higher Educational Institutions” appeared. The “Regulations on the Commission on State Recognition of Higher Spiritual Education Documents” were developed and then approved by the order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine on April 8, 2016. Since then, the diplomas of the spiritual educational institutions’ graduates have started to be recognized.¹⁰ Thus, spiritual education in Ukraine has received state recognition.

⁶ “ФТФ—осередок філософсько-богословської освіти: культурно-просвітницька місія (1875-1940, 1994-2019),” (2019), 92-116.

⁷ *Острозька академія: енциклопедичне видання. Історія та сучасність культурно-освітнього осередку*, (Острог: Національний університет «Острозька академія», 2019), 633-639.

⁸ “Карпатський університет імені Августина Волошина”, (2020).

⁹ “Ужгородська українська богословська академія”, (2020).

¹⁰ “Духовна освіта”, (2020).

The introduction of the specialty of Theology, which could be licensed and accredited by the Ministry of Education and Science, encouraged the reformation of spiritual educational institutions. The recognition of diplomas of these institutions also contributed to this process. This made these institutions more open and integrated into Ukrainian society. At the same time, licensing the Theology specialty helped them to raise the educational standards.

Spiritual Educational Institutions of Ukraine in Statistical Data

Today there is a wide net of spiritual educational institutions in Ukraine. According to the report by the Department of Religions and Nationalities of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine on the church and religious organizations network, as of January 1, 2019, more than 35,000 different religious communities and 204 educational institutions were registered in Ukraine.¹¹ In our analysis, we use these data, which have not changed significantly.

Quantitative characteristics regarding religious communities and their spiritual educational institutions in Ukraine are not always correlated with qualitative characteristics. Many religious communities remain small and even fictitious. Their registration is caused by fierce confessional competition in Ukraine. This is also reflected in the activities of spiritual, educational institutions of both secondary and higher education types. At the same time, spiritual secondary institutions often coexist in combination with the higher ones. Some of them have only a few dozen students and a few teachers. On January 1, 2019, in the spiritual educational institutions of Ukraine (secondary and higher education) 7,939 students studied on a full-time basis and 9,947 studied as correspondence course students. That is 88 students per educational unit. As we can see, extramural ones predominate.

Orthodox educational institutions have the largest share among them—45, which is about 22% of the total number. There is a certain disproportion. After all, in Ukraine (January 1, 2019) the total number of Orthodox communities was 19,209, almost 55% of the total number of religious communities. It should also be considered that the majority of the population of Ukraine identify themselves as Orthodox believers.¹²

However, the relatively small percentage of Orthodox ecclesiastical institutions compared to the percentage of Orthodox communities and, accordingly, Orthodox believers, is compensated by both quantitative and qualitative indicators of these institutions. Their number of students is 5,665, which is almost 32%. The number of students per Orthodox spiritual

¹¹ “Релігійні організації України, (станом на 1 січня 2019 р.)”

¹² Ibid.

educational institution is higher than those in Ukraine as a whole and amounts to almost 126 people. However, one should bear in mind that the spiritual, educational institutions of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church are larger than the spiritual educational institutions of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Kyiv Patriarchate and the Ukrainian Autocephalous Orthodox Church—which are now united in the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.¹³

There is a more balanced situation regarding the number of religious communities and educational institutions in the Catholic Church. In Ukraine, the number of Catholic religious communities out of the total is about 14%. They have 28 spiritual institutions, which is also about 14%. Each of these institutions has approximately 97 students.

The Catholic environment, like the Orthodox, is not homogeneous in Ukraine. Most Catholics in Ukraine are Greek Catholics who follow the Eastern rite. They belong to the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which is the dominant denomination on the territory of historic Galicia—in Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, and most of Ternopil regions. This church has 16 educational institutions. Among them is the Ukrainian Catholic University, which is one of the largest spiritual educational institutions in Ukraine and is well-known both in the country and abroad. In total, there are approximately 142 students per Greek Catholic educational unit. This figure is significantly higher both among Catholics and in Ukraine as a whole.

On the Trans-Carpathian territory, local Greek Catholics have their own peculiarities and belong to the Mukachevo diocese, which is not a part of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. This church structure has two religious institutions, where the number of students is relatively small at 73 people.¹⁴

Additionally, there are also Roman Catholics. The majority of their religious communities are concentrated in the western regions of Ukraine, as well as in the territories of Zhytomyr, Khmelnytsky, and Vinnytsia regions. They have 10 spiritual educational institutions with about 38 people in each.¹⁵

Protestant denominations demonstrate considerable activity. In particular, Baptists have 2,816 communities (January 1, 2019), accounting for about eight percent of the total number. They have a significant number of spiritual educational institutions—49, which is 24% of all institutions of this type. They have a relatively large number of students—6,341 students, which equates to an approximation of 129 people per school. However, the majority of these students are part-time students. Full-time students make up about 14%. Such indicators show that

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Baptists are focused on active missionary activity. This is why they also have a relatively large number of spiritual educational institutions and students disproportionate to the number of their religious communities.

Evangelical Christians who are close to Baptists are also active in spiritual education. With a relatively small number of their communities (371, which is just over one percent of the total), they have nine spiritual educational institutions. This makes up about four percent of all institutions of this type in Ukraine. Evangelical Christians have about 66 people per spiritual institution, which is a good indicator. It is, however, below the average rate.

A significant Protestant denomination in Ukraine is the Evangelical (Pentecostal) Christians. By the number of religious communities, they approach Baptists. There were 2,693 people on January 1, 2019, representing almost eight percent of the total. However, in the area of spiritual education, Evangelical Christians had worse records than Baptists. They had 28 spiritual educational institutions, making almost 14% of the total. And for each spiritual institution they had just over 83 students.¹⁶

Another major Protestant denomination in Ukraine is the Adventists. Altogether (January 1, 2019) they had 1,070 communities in Ukraine, representing about three percent of the total. According to statistics, in the field of spiritual education, they did not show such activity as Baptists or Christians of the gospel faith. Adventists had only four spiritual educational institutions, which is just over two percent of all the number of spiritual institutions in Ukraine. The average number of students per institution is about 64. However, the Adventists managed to create a high-quality educational institution called the Ukrainian Adventist Center for Higher Education in Bucha, near Kyiv.¹⁷ This institution can be considered as one of the examples of a successful reformation of the spiritual educational institutions of Ukraine.

Protestantism in Ukraine is also represented by the charismatic branches. As of January 1, 2019, there were 1,496 charismatic communities in the country, accounting for about four percent. Charismatics had 15 spiritual educational institutions. This made about seven percent of the total number of establishments of this type.¹⁸

In addition to the Christian communities that are dominant in Ukraine, there are also communities of other religions—Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Neo-Pagan, and others. Among them, the Jewish and Muslim communities stand out. It is worth noting that Judaism and Islam have the same long-standing tradition in the Ukrainian lands as Christianity. However,

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ *Український адвентистський теологічний інститут*, (2020).

¹⁸ “Релігійні організації України (станом на 1 січня 2019 р.)”.

currently there are relatively few Jewish and Muslim communities (287 and 265, respectively).¹⁹ They are just under one percent of the total. As for the spiritual schools, the situation in the Jewish community is better than that of Muslims. The former has seven educational institutions, which is just over three percent of the total; and the latter has four, which is about two percent. Jewish religious schools are more numerous than Muslim religious schools, although neither has a large number of students. There are about 44 people per Jewish religious institution, and less than 20 people per Muslim institution.

Ukrainian Spiritual Institutions' Reformation Leaders

Among educational institutions, there are several that are very popular and take the leading positions.

First of all, it is worth mentioning Ukrainian Catholic University,²⁰ which considers itself a successor of Lviv Theological Academy and was established by the leaders of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and existed in Lviv during the interwar period. During the Soviet era, when the church was banned, the academy ceased to exist.

In 1994, at the Lviv Synod of Bishops of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, a decision was made to restore Lviv Theological Academy. It was officially opened in September. In 1998, the Academy was recognized by the Congregation for Catholic Education. The Bachelor of Theology diploma, which was first conferred to the Academy graduates in 1999, is recognized by all Catholic and many non-Catholic educational institutions in the world.

The educational concept of Lviv Theological Academy determined the curricula content in accordance with the requirements of the Catholic Church, considering Ukrainian reality, in part, its post-atheist dimension. The programs of special theological education of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church were intended to ensure the study of classical disciplines (the Old Testament, New Testament, systematic theology, Church history), "Supplementary subjects" (history of religion, social ethics, ecumenism, missiology, philosophy), as well as ancient and modern languages.²¹ In its activities, the Academy was guided by the instructions of the Second Vatican Council, according to which the content of spiritual education was as follows: All clergy and secular "who, being in their gospel ordination, work for the noble educational and

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ *Український католицький університет*, (2020).

²¹ *Львівська богословська академія*, (1998), 8.

school labor of all kinds and degrees ... so as not only to serve the Church, but also to preserve and enhance its benevolent presence in the modern, in particular, intellectual world."²²

On June 28, 2002, Lviv Theological Academy was reorganized into the Ukrainian Catholic University. In 2003, this spiritual educational institution established a spiritual publishing house, which published not only religious literature but also secular literature. This publisher has a wide range of readers.

Nowadays, the Ukrainian Catholic University is an open educational institution, which teaches, not only theology, but also a number of secular disciplines: history, cultural studies, philology, philosophy, computers, political and economic sciences, psychology, sociology, social work, journalism, and law. Currently it has almost 1,500 students. There are different academic levels: undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate and doctoral studies. The teaching process is provided by highly qualified teachers, most of them have scientific degrees. Of particular interest is the publishing series "Kyiv Christianity," launched in 2013, which represents the scientific results of the Humanities and Philosophy-Theological Faculties of the Ukrainian Catholic University educational program "Kyiv Christianity and the Union Tradition."

This educational institution is headed by Bishop Boris Gudziak and Vice President of the University Myroslav Marynovich, a former Soviet dissident, lawyer, and religious scholar. These two people are well known among the Ukrainian people as spokesmen of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. New forms and methods of education and upbringing are being implemented at this university. Within it, a brilliant group of graduates has been prepared, formed as leaders with an active Christian and pro-Ukrainian worldview and high academic standards. The Ukrainian Catholic University has become a platform for scholarly discussions on topics of interaction between church and society and the role of church and faithful people in building the state.

The activities of Ukrainian Catholic University are characterized by the following factors:

First, the teachers of this educational institution provide quality training of specialists, which creates a positive image of the educational institution. In addition, its graduates work, not only in the ecclesiastical areas, but also in secular areas.

²² *Документи Другого Ватиканського Собору: конституції, декрети, декларація*, (Львів: Свічадо, 1996), 303.

Second, the university pays great attention to scholarly work. This educational institution is the venue for various scientific and scholarly forums. It also publishes and presents scholarly works, which are often of high quality and have noticeable responses. It ensures the impact of the university on public life.

Third, the institution's management skillfully conducts public relations activities and attracts famous people to the university, including intellectual leaders (not only Catholics). Today, the Ukrainian Catholic University is regarded as one of the leading humanistic and scientific centers of Ukraine.

Fourth, the high reputation of the university, as well as the skillful public relations policy, enables the management to attract considerable funds for its development. Due to this, the university has created a strong material base, which significantly distinguishes it among both spiritual and secular educational institutions. In particular, Oleksander Kryvenko's Freedom of Memory Lecture, held annually at the university, became popular.

Some religious institutions attempt, at least in part, to follow the example of the Ukrainian Catholic University. There is a similar pattern of activity in the previously mentioned St. Cyril and Methodius Uzhhorod Ukrainian Theological Academy, which works together with Augustine Voloshyn Carpathian University. Here we also see a combination of teaching theology and secular disciplines, an attempt to develop scholarly/scientific activities, and to represent the activities of these educational institutions in the media. The Ukrainian Adventist Center for Higher Education also follows this model.

As for the majority of the spiritual educational institutions in Ukraine, they still retain a certain hermetic and limited confessional orientation. Their teaching is marked by conservatism. This applies, in particular, to the Orthodox spiritual institutions.

Conservatism is the notable feature of Kyiv Theological Academy and Seminary.²³ It is the central spiritual institution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which is a branch of the Russian Orthodox Church (the former Moscow Patriarchate). Recently, this church has demonstrated certain isolationism—reluctance to accept the Ukrainian realities after the Revolution of Dignity, while promoting the ideas of the so-called “Russian world.” This isolationism affects the activities of Kyiv Theological Academy and the seminary. However, the latter is still trying to carry out some scholarly and publishing activities, use the media, and address the contemporary realities.

²³ *Українська Православна Церква. Київська духовна академія і семінарія*, (2020).

More transparent is the activity of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine spiritual institutions. St. Cyril and Methodius Uzhhorod Ukrainian Theological Academy and Augustine Voloshyn Carpathian University activities have already been mentioned. However, the activity of these establishments is regional in nature and mainly covers the Trans-Carpathian region. Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy still remains the central spiritual educational institution of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine.²⁴ Until recently, when it was still a spiritual educational institution of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv Patriarchate, it largely copied the former Orthodox institutions of tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union. However, there is hope that under the current circumstances, Kyiv Orthodox Theological Academy will become more open and utilize the inheritance of other Orthodox spiritual education in foreign countries, including Greece.

A new institution in the Orthodox environment was the creation of the Open Orthodox University of Saint Sophia on March 4, 2016. Its founder was Father Grigory Kovalenko, who, at that time, was dismissed from an official position in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church as a spokesman for its pro-Ukrainian wing (now he belongs to the priesthood of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine). Grigory Kovalenko decided to create extracurricular, interactive platforms for a broad dialogue with society. In fact, St. Sophia's Open Orthodox University, he said, was "to become a platform for promoting European and Biblical [values], shaping of the Ukrainian values and ideas with a focus on the international community, discussing church reforms and the future, as well as ways to restore the unity of Orthodoxy."²⁵The university's platform is an open structure that is targeted towards a cultural and educational audience. Within the framework of the platform, public lectures on "Religion in the 21st century" are held, the round worktable "The Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the 21st Century" is constantly conducted, and the International Conference "Wisdoms of the Earth and Heaven" takes place. There are plans to create a virtual university and e-library together with the publishing department of the "Library of Wisdom." For children within the University, there is the "Anna Yaroslavna School." The school introduces the history and traditions of the religious holidays of Orthodox Ukrainians, there are guided tours of the city center on the history of Kyiv and the activities of its princes, etc.²⁶ Saint Sophia's Open Orthodox University may well be an important factor in reforming spiritual education in the Orthodox environment.

²⁴ *Київська православна богословська академія*, (2020).

²⁵ "У Києві започаткували Відкритий православний університет Святої Софії," (2016).

²⁶ "Спектакль та презентація книжок: перша річниця ВПУ", 2017.

Conclusions

Over the years of Ukraine's independence, a network of spiritual educational institutions has been formed in the country. At present, the vast majority of religious organizations have such institutions. However, the latter face a number of problems.

First, despite the large number of spiritual schools, they are mostly small. Only a few dozen students are studying in many of them. As a rule, they do not have enough qualified teaching staff. Many of them also lack adequate facilities. Secondly, most religious educational institutions have a restricted confessional orientation, which gives rise to certain isolationism, unwillingness to respond to social challenges, conservatism in the educational sphere, and orientation to the obsolete confessional models in the teaching of theological disciplines.

However, there are examples of successful reformation of spiritual schools. In particular, among the examples is the reformation of Lviv Theological Academy of Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church, which was transformed into Ukrainian Catholic University—a modern, open-type religion-focused educational institution. Consequently, it seems promising for the religious organizations of Ukraine to pursue a policy of consolidation of their spiritual educational institutions, creation of powerful educational centers (which would have a large number of students and auditors), numerous and qualified teaching staff, as well as an adequate material base. Another reform is a new form of relaying Christian values to the Ukrainian community by St. Sophia's Open Orthodox University. It is a creative platform for dialogue, obtaining information, exchanging views, and learning.

It is important to overcome some conservatism and isolationism, to create an atmosphere of transparency to foreign theological minds, modern pedagogical technologies, and to develop the ability to respond to contemporary challenges both in Ukraine and in the world.

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