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On Intentions and Facts: Ukrainian Protestants Are Striving for Public Recognition

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EDITORIAL
ON INTENTIONS AND FACTS
Ukrainian Protestants Are Striving for Public Recognition

From a statistical perspective, the presence of Protestants in Ukraine may seem negligible and the public recognition scarce. Protestant Christians place their emphasis on being faithful to God in their own way of worshipping and serving God, providing a welcoming setting for all those who have selected in following these paths of glorifying God and serving their fellow human beings.

The year 2017 seemed to be a new ‘golden’ opportunity. Ukraine was one of the few countries with a non-Protestant majority to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the European Reformation on a de-facto state level. However, these celebrations were soon eclipsed by the societal attention given to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine receiving the right for self-governance (autocephaly) in late 2018. The Western Christmas date of December 25 which was proclaimed a state holiday by the President of Ukraine in 2017, is usually called by Ukrainians the ‘Catholic’ Christmas, ignoring Protestants; most Orthodox churches celebrate Christmas two weeks later. Lastly, the pandemic affected considerably Protestants’ social events, once more minimizing their public ministry.

Under such circumstances, the intellectual sphere became a space where the fledgling Protestant intelligentsia could make an impact. One of the outcomes of this work is this collection of research papers on the history and sociology of Ukrainian Protestantism published in *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*.

In the first section are articles dedicated to the exploration of the life of Protestants in Soviet Ukraine with an emphasis on the oppression of this religious minority by the atheistic regime. In it, one may find some newly discovered aspects of this oppression from the recently opened government archives.

The second and the third sections are focused on Protestant activity in independent Ukraine. The researchers examine acts of charity as the main manifestation of the public presence of Protestants in Ukraine. The authors of this volume are interested in the response of Protestants to the pressing societal challenges during the economic downturn, social vulnerability of the population, armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine, the LGBT controversy, and the coronavirus pandemic.

Valentyna Kuryliak and Maksym Balaklytskyi, guest co-editors