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Oleksandr Brodetskyi

Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Chernivtsi, Ukraine

Iryna Horokholinska

Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University

Mykola Lahodych

Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Chernivtsi, Ukraine

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VALUE VECTORS OF THE WORLD LOCAL ORTHODOX CHURCHES POSITION REGARDING RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

By Oleksandr Brodetskyi, Iryna Horokholinska, and Mykola Lahodych

Oleksandr Brodetskyi, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Chernivtsi, Ukraine. Research interests: philosophy of religion, ethics, religious ethics, esthetics, social functionality of religion.

E-Mail: o.brodetskyi@chnu.edu.ua ORCID ID 0000-0002-1769-9036

Iryna Horokholinska, Doctor of Philosophical Sciences, Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Chernivtsi, Ukraine. Research interests: philosophy of religion, secularization, axiological conditions of post secular world existence, moral theology.

E-Mail: i.horokholinska@chnu.edu.ua ORCID ID 0000-0001-7921-8245

Mykola Lahodych, Candidate of Historical Sciences, Candidate of Theological Sciences, Associate Professor at the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Studies, Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Chernivtsi, Ukraine. Research interests: History of Orthodox Church, Canonical Law, Liturgical Theology, Religious Pedagogy.

E-Mail: m.lahodych@chnu.edu.ua ORCID ID 0000-0003-1299-0948

Abstract

The article deals with the religious contexts of the modern civilizational crisis caused by Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. Among the multitude of thematic lines of this set of problems, the article's authors focus their attention precisely on the position of the world Orthodox Churches regarding this war. The concentration of such attention is objectively determined by the fact that the majority of Ukrainian citizens position themselves as Orthodox by faith, and therefore, are particularly sensitive to the opinion of the leaders of the Orthodox Churches of the world. The article examines the value aspects of the problem of a just peace and considers alternative moral positions about this. Further, with reference to published documents and sources, the article classified the position of the governing structures of the world Orthodox Churches regarding the current war in Ukraine. The positions of autocephalous Churches are considered, and also some of the Churches jurisdictionally subordinate to autocephalous ones. The research is interdisciplinary including religious studies, ethics, social philosophy, and political science. The data of the latest sociological studies in Ukraine are considered.

Keywords: peace, war, government, the Orthodox, Ukraine, the world Orthodox Churches, state-aggressor, value position, religious leadership.

Introduction

Russian military aggression in Ukraine, as is known, has been going on for much longer than since February 28, 2022. Unprecedentedly, it became discussed at international platforms

of various professional fields precisely after the large-scale invasion of the Russian army in February 2022. This invasion undermines not only the idea of world security, but the world economy, and ecology. It also highlights a number of value crises in the world in general and, in particular, in institutions whose purpose is to spread morally adequate narratives and practices (promoting peace building, understanding on the basis of justice). We keep in mind the religious communities and their leaders, and also the willingness or unwillingness of the representatives of the world Churches to be moral authorities during such a critical period of history. It is obvious that the “moral authority” in such sensitive conditions is a person or a community capable not only of repeating the well-known instructions of love and virtue (characteristic of humanist religious and ethical systems). This in itself is not enough. A religious leader, being responsible for the flock and the teaching of religion, must have the courage not only to moralize about the ideal, but also to expose immorality that violates the laws of human coexistence. There is no doubt that international publicity of what is happening in Ukraine, and adequate human and moral evaluations of these events, are extremely important. Not only does the world’s support of Ukraine depend to a considerable extent on how the world will perceive these events, but also how it will evaluate them from the point of view of good and evil. The ability to talk about the actual significance of ethical systems that claim the status of presenters of fundamental humanist moral criteria depends on this.

The question of the role of the Russian Orthodox Church in this war has already been widely researched. Its study is closely related to the analysis of the connection between activation in recent decades of the so-called doctrine of the “Russian world” with the role in its implementation by functionaries and ideologists of this Church and its satellites. This ideological campaign was, figuratively speaking, an “intelligence fight” in the information and cultural war, which Russia launched against Ukraine many years ago (at least since 2014), encroaching on its territorial integrity. The positions of the leaders of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC)—Patriarch Kiril (Gundyayev) and other representatives of this community have become an even more active subject of research since February 2022. One of the latest publications on this theme¹ quite objectively and clearly emphasizes the active participation of the leaders of the ROC in the justification of war and war crimes. It should be noted that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), until May 27, 2022, acknowledge some points of dependence on the Moscow Patriarchate in its Management Statute. Its Primate (Metropolitan

¹ Alar Kilp and Jerry G. Pankhurst, (2022) "Soft, Sharp, and Evil Power: The Russian Orthodox Church in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 42: Iss. 5, Article. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol42/iss5/2>.

Onufriy Berezovsky since 2014) was a permanent member of the Holy Synod of the ROC. Only on May 27, 2022, when the full-scale invasion had already lasted three months, the Council of UOC made the appropriate changes to its Management Statute. However, in wider society, there are still ongoing discussions regarding the completeness and sincerity of this Church's break with Moscow. Additionally, some of the hierarchs of the UOC, after Russia's occupation of the Ukrainian territories, started collaborating with the invaders. This is particularly true of Metropolitan Panteleimon (Povorozniuk) of Luhansk and Alchevsk. According to the open sources, on September 30, 2022, he (and other clergymen of the UOC) attended the meeting in the Kremlin, where Putin announced the illegal annexation of four of Ukraine's regions.²

The position of the current head of Catholicism, Pope Francis, is quite controversial regarding the assessment of Russia's war against Ukraine. However, the analysis of his statements and claims is a separate scientific research task. There is a sufficient number of journalistic reflections on this matter, as well as media statements of religious scholars, diplomats, and other activists in Ukraine. Separate scientific research on this is the task of the near future for religious scholars. We intend to focus here our research view on the appeals and statements of the leaders of the modern Local³ Orthodox Churches of the world regarding Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. We have already explained that the church leaders' position is usually morally important in the assessment of the war by authoritative figures who significantly influence the value choices of people. But it is also interesting from the point of view of the religious study of interactions between jurisdictional centers in world Orthodoxy. We have already mentioned the difficult path to the acquisition of autocephaly by the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU).⁴ The positions of the world Orthodoxy leaders regarding the current war in certain cases (though far from all) are correlated with their recognition/non-recognition of the OCU. (By recognition we mean the Eucharistic communication at the level of the entire church—hierarchical, vertical, and the presence of close and friendly diplomacy of the

² Соня Кошкіна, Митрополит Луганський УПЦ та настоятель чоловічого монастиря з Мелітополя взяли участь у проголошенні незаконної анексії [The Metropolitan of Luhansk of the UOC and the abbot of the Melitopol monastery took part in the illegal annexation declaring]. *LB.ua*. 30 вересня 2022 р. Available at: https://lb.ua/society/2022/09/30/531123_mitropolit_luganskiy_upts.html

³ In Orthodox theology the term "local" indicates a branch of Orthodoxy in a specific geographic locality. The Orthodox Church usually functions within a separate country and has autocephaly or at least a certain level of self-government.

⁴ Oleksandr Brodestkyi, Iryna Horokholinska, and Mykola Lahodych, Mykola (2020) "Ukraine Orthodoxy Autocephaly: Social and Value Challenges," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 40: Iss. 9, Article 3. Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol40/iss9/3>.

Churches). But these positions also demonstrate that regarding such crucial issues as war and unjustified cruelty, Church leaders often have to look beyond the “internal church conjuncture.” They also need to consider the possible negative resonance of their position among their faithful, and the societies and countries where their Churches function. This additionally actualizes the aim of our article not only as a theoretical exploration, but as a practical methodical guide for outlining a specific spectrum of assessment by the Orthodox leaders of the war in Ukraine. This knowledge can be useful for clearer communication of civil society with social institutions of religion on the way to justice and development of solidarity. After all, we are convinced that only a just peace is a guarantee of a stable world security and the effectiveness of humanistic criteria of morality.

A Just Peace and “Peace” at Any Cost: I. Kant and A. Margalit

When it comes to peace in the global context of understanding, the need for a comprehensive discussion of its conditions and grounds becomes obvious. After all, despite the “eternity” of this theme, the history of our civilization, unfortunately, does not know a period when armed confrontations did not take place in some part of the planet. The possibility of speculating about the achievement of “peace in the whole world” at a certain moment seems to be utopian. Though, it is necessary to strive to learn the tragic lessons of the past, especially nowadays, when the “great war” came to Europe after Russia’s predatory attack on sovereign Ukraine. The death of one person due to war is a tragedy; innocent deaths of thousands is a catastrophe, and the potential danger for a significant part of the population of our planet to become victims of the war is a terror against humanity and life as such. This is precisely the danger carried by Russian aggression aimed at the forceful overthrow of the world order and agreements (after World War II and until 2022), designed to establish peace and cooperation between countries in the political and value spheres. A careful value analysis of the narrative and actions of the military, political leaders, and a sizable number of Russian citizens demonstrates that this war is a fight against freedom and democratic rights, and therefore, universal human values. (We will not go into consideration of the role of propaganda and ideology for such worldview deformation of Russia’s population; this also is the theme of a separate research).

Calls for the establishment of peace in such a situation are not only completely understandable from a human point of view and an emotionally obvious desire. It is also completely logical and rationally based. It is about the safety of the physical and social existence of people, as well as the possibility of preserving those values that work to affirm

humanity as a moral phenomenon that involves love, harmony, freedom, and its mutual respect. However, it is important to understand in what way peace is possible after a situation of such an aggression, which began, as we have already written, far earlier than February 2022. It is quite clear that peace agreement “at any cost” that “could” be concluded with an aggressor country is unacceptable. (Looking ahead, we will point out that it is unacceptable not only in this situation, but in no other comparable situation). After all, Russia treacherously violated all the key international agreements. Therefore, in order to achieve peace (which is a completely positive category in axiological terms), a rather important aspect of the potential possibility of its stability would be the establishment of not merely a “peace at any cost,” but “a just peace.” Thinkers of different epochs, hardening their own ideas in the vector of peace and understanding development, tried to crystallize the conditions of such a coexistence.

Immanuel Kant’s instruction is known, that “no treaty of peace shall be regarded as valid, if made with the secret reservation of material for a future war.”⁵ That is, when the aggressor manipulatively “does not recognize,” “does not realize” own aggressive behavior towards the victim, the appeal to the victim to make concessions to the aggressor in order to avoid worse global consequences does not make these consequences possible, but only delays them in time. And this, in turn, gives the aggressor the opportunity to increase the level of belligerence in the future. Especially when the aggressor means to completely eliminate the subjectivity of another state, the right of its citizens for their own identity. For, as Kant states, “no state shall violently interfere with the constitution and administration of another.”⁶ And if the country still manages to do this, then it is obvious that its desires are completely predatory, and the policy of “pacifying” the predator through the inclination of the victim to submission is not the development of peace, but it is illusory. Illusion of peace is not only harmful in terms of efficiency. Beyond that, peace will still be violated because predatory intentions have not been exposed and condemned, and therefore verified as having the right to exist. In terms of values, it is completely antagonistic to peace as the basis of humane coexistence.

Avisahai Margalit’s ideas are an appropriate addition. There is no doubt about his argument that “...peace does not need justification: whenever war is unjustified, peace is by that very fact justified. There is a strong presumption in favor of peace, for the obvious reason that peace is the negation of large-scale violence...”⁷ But this modern thinker clearly

⁵ Immanuel Kant, (1903) *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*. London: Swan Sonnenschein & CO, LIM. p.107.

⁶ Ibid., p. 113.

⁷ Avishai Margalit (2010) *On Compromise and Rotten Compromises*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. p. 79.

demonstrates what was discussed above—that the construction of peace is possible only based on the laws of justice. To demonstrate this truth, A. Margalit uses two concepts: 1) compromise as a way to achieve understanding and peace, or 2) “rotten” compromise as a delayed confrontation, a temporary illusion of peace.

Compromise is the stuff of prescriptive theory. Yet rotten compromise is a category of normative theory. It puts a normative constraint on acceptable compromise. A rotten compromise is, categorically, an unacceptable compromise.⁸

Peace is not possible where there is an awareness of violation of the principles of justice, where for the sake of peace “eyes are closed” to the truth, values, laws.

These are quite important theoretical foundations on which our research relies, aiming to demonstrate the positions of the world Orthodox Churches’ leaders regarding the war in Ukraine. It is obvious that all the local Orthodox Churches of the world are against war. They call for prayers for peace, sympathize with the victims, and participate in the provision of humanitarian aid to Ukraine (some Churches more intensively, some less). At the same time, the position of the leading structures of the world Orthodox Churches regarding the war in Ukraine show two key tendencies. The first is the condemnation of the war with a direct reference to its culprits—Russia and its authorities. The second is sympathy with the war victims, a call for peace, but avoiding condemnation of Russia and its authorities for having unleashed this war.

The second position, from an axiological point of view, is the desire (or imposition) for “peace at any cost,” or making a “rotten compromise” with the aggressor, which, as we tried to demonstrate above, cannot become the basis for enduring peace, because lasting peace is possible only on the basis of justice. Furthermore, we completely agree with A. Margalit’s thought: “...it is much worse to act immorally in the name of moral ideals, just as it is worse to be a hypocrite and act immorally than to act immorally without being hypocritical about it.”⁹ Morally positive calls for peace are only true, when the immoral source of its violation is exposed. Suppression of the real reasons for the loss of peace are the legalization of manipulation, distortion of truth, and therefore all moral ideals.

In the context of these reflections, we must pay attention to the fact that in May 2022, Kyiv International Institute of Sociology conducted a representative telephone survey regarding the possibility of territorial concessions for the sake of achieving peace in Ukraine.

⁸ Ibid., p. 128.

⁹ Ibid., p. 196.

About 82% of respondents believe¹⁰ that any territorial concessions, even for the sake of achieving peace, are unacceptable. Moreover, the next survey of this sociological scientific institution clearly indicates that

...at least 85% of respondents believe that there is no oppression of the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine (in particular, 85% of ethnic Russians and 90% of Russian-speaking residents of Ukraine), that Ukraine has its own long history of formation and statehood (and [is not] an “artificial” creation of Soviet power) that Western powers did not want and did not provoke Ukraine to war against Russia, that the idea of “Nazis” in power in Ukraine is a fabrication, that the war began because of Russia’s desire to conquer Ukraine (and not because of fair claims), that Russian troops are deliberately attacking civilian infrastructure and civilians, that the Russian military is primarily to blame for the destruction of civilian infrastructure and civilian casualties.¹¹

In other words, the Ukrainians are fully aware that the war which Russia has brought to their homes is predatory and invasive, unjust, and groundless. It is interesting that in 2020 another large sociological research was summarized, which was conducted in various countries, and in Ukraine particularly, called “World Values Research.” At that time, both Russia’s information war against Ukraine and its military aggression in Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the annexation of the Crimea, have already been active. When asked what is more important: freedom or security, 65.9% of Ukrainians indicated that security was more valuable.¹² Ukrainians value peace and security, but now they have seen for themselves that focusing on “peace at any cost” was not a guarantee of security. A peace built on deception and manipulation is fragile. Only the exposure of lie, the debunking of state and religiously “sanctified” immorality can become a path to peace developing.

Setting the axiological tonality with the desire to multiply justice and harmony of coexistence is not the least task of religion as a value regulator and a social institution. The above is also the task of religious leaders.

So, let us try using the content analysis method in order to analyze the positions of the leaders (or governing bodies) of the world Orthodox Churches, according to the specified criteria: 1) condemnation of the aggressor and exposure of the source of violations of peace or 2) just a general call for peace.

¹⁰ Readiness for territorial concessions to end the war as soon as possible: the results of a telephone survey conducted on May 13-18, 2022. <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1111&page=1>

¹¹ Perception index of the Russian-Ukrainian war: results of a telephone survey conducted on May 19-24, 2022 Available at: <https://www.kiis.com.ua/?lang=eng&cat=reports&id=1113&page=1>

¹² *Світове дослідження цінностей 2020 в Україні* [World Values Research 2020 in Ukraine] (2020). Український центр європейської політики. Київ. р. 113. Available at: https://ucep.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/WVS_UA_2020_report_WEB.pdf

Peace Development and Calling for Peace: Value Differences in the Positions of the World Orthodox Churches Regarding the War in Ukraine

The following autocephalous Orthodox Churches of the world, which, directly through their Primates or governing bodies, say that Russia is the cause and instigator of the war: The Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Patriarchate of Alexandria, the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, the Orthodox Church of Hellas, the Georgian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church of Romania, the Polish Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church of Albania, the Orthodox Church in America (the autocephaly of which is not recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and a number of other Churches).

The following autocephalous Orthodox Churches of the world, which call for peace, sympathize with the war victims, but whose Primates and governing bodies have not condemned Russia directly (or have not called it the culprit of the war): the Patriarchate of Antioch, the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox Church of the Czech lands, and Slovakia.

Let us specify the forms of manifestation of *the first tendency* according to the documents or public speeches of the authorized representatives of the Churches.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate

In the very first days of the war, the Ecumenical Patriarchate categorically condemned the war in its statement, having assessed it as: “Russia’s, beyond every sense of law and morality, military attack and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, an independent and sovereign state.”¹³ This document emphasizes: “It is the domination of irrationality over reason, hatred over love, darkness over light, death over life.”¹⁴ The principal appeal therefore is “to end the war now.”¹⁵

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew confirms this position in his other speeches. The choice of the political leadership of Russia, in his opinion, “will further be judged in the near and far future, and by history itself, whose pages are being written in the blood of the innocent.”¹⁶

¹³ Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew: End the War Now! February 28, 2022. Available at: <https://www.ecupatria.org/2022/02/28/ecumenical-patriarch-bartholomew-end-the-war-now/>

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Vartholomaïos: Ukraine’s suffering will ‘forever stain’ the perpetrators. Available at: <https://www.ekathimerini.com/news/1183331/vartholomaïos-ukraines-suffering-will-forever-stain-the-perpetrators/>

As is known, during Moscow Patriarch Kyril's sermon on March 6th, blessing Russia's military actions, he was cynically speaking of the corresponding struggle as a "metaphysical" one.¹⁷ Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew expresses his conviction that the war cannot be called "holy" war, because people are dying (including many civilians), cities and towns are destroyed, and a huge human tragedy occurs.

You cannot declare yourself a brother to a people and bless the war your state is waging against them. You cannot stubbornly insist that the Ukrainian church belongs to you and let the faithful...be killed and their churches destroyed by Russian bombardments. Unless they hope the military invasion will settle their ecclesiastical claims."¹⁸

That is, he emphasized the absurdity of the situation: Moscow considers the Ukrainian territories "its" in terms of the church, but at the same time, it destroys the churches and faithful of the same Ukrainian Orthodox Church. This was (and according to some experts still is) a part of the Moscow Patriarchate. Among the various activities of the Ecumenical Patriarch was his meeting in Poland with Ukrainian refugees (March 27, 2022), who had to leave their homeland because of the war. The official website of the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Permanent Delegation to the World Council of Churches notifies that Patriarch Bartholomew "addressed the refugees from Ukraine with cordial words and presented them gifts of aid."¹⁹

More evidence of the active support of Ukraine by the Ecumenical Patriarchate is that the *Orthodox Times* information service refers to an interview given to the *Ta Nea* newspaper by Elder Metropolitan Emmanuel of Chalcedon. In the interview, there is a call to optimize coordination between the governments of Western countries, because Putin's pressure became "suffocating and unbearable."²⁰ It should be noted that he was the church figure who was the chairman of the Unification Council of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine on December 15, 2018. As is known, this was a key stage on the path of the Ecumenical Patriarchate granting autocephaly to Ukrainian Orthodoxy.

¹⁷ Патриаршая проповедь в неделю сыропустную после литургии в храме Христа Спасителя [Patriarch's Sermon on Cheesefare Sunday after Liturgy in the Cathedral of Christ the Savior]. Available at: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/db/text/5906442.html>

¹⁸ Vartholomaïos: Ukraine's suffering will 'forever stain' the perpetrators.

¹⁹ Ecumenical Patriarch visited Ukrainian Refugees in Poland. Available at: <https://www.ecupatria.org/2022/04/20/ecumenical-patriarch-visited-ukrainian-refugees-in-poland/>

²⁰ Elder Metropolitan of Chalcedon: The pressure on Putin must become more stifling. *Orthodox Times*. Mart 15, 2022. Available at: https://orthodoxtimes.com/elder-metropolitan-of-chalcedon-the-pressure-on-putin-must-become-more-stifling/?fbclid=IwAR13YpWNwu-RLU-Ta33qkL756mOgR8aCK2Bo1_-MK5omTSwiKjqwVYuwmA0

Theodore II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa during the first week of the war supported Ukraine and the Ukrainian people in his letter.²¹ In this message, he compared observing the events of the war in Ukraine with “horrific memories” of the events of the Second World War. The current war in Ukraine, according to this Patriarch and Pope, is “paranoid” and “unjust.”²² He compared Russia’s attack on Ukraine with the “ecclesiastical attack” of the Moscow Patriarchate in Africa. It regards the encroachment of the Russian Orthodox Church on parishes in Africa and the creation, despite canonical traditions, of an ROC exarchate on the African continent—over which the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Alexandria extends that happened a few months ago. In his interview for the state radio of Greece (fragments of which are quoted by the *Orthodox Times*), Theodore II expressed his thoughts about the Russian dictator Putin as follows: “It is not possible to cross yourself, pray to God, and at the same time kill children and people in general.”²³ The Primate of this ancient Church emphasized that Putin demonstrated his devotion to Christianity in the past. Though, the religious leader believes that due to power intoxication and imperial ambitions, Putin has lost this trait.

In the words of the Patriarch, there is admiration for the courage and bravery of the Ukrainians, which they have been demonstrating during World War II and are demonstrating now: “They are a very heroic people, with a great hug of love that never hurts anyone... They are patriots and they will defend their homeland even if the last Ukrainian has to give all his blood.”²⁴ Thus, one of the most authoritative church figures in the world Christianity recognized the complete right of the Ukrainian people to defend their Motherland from Russian attacks.

In his statement on March 16, 2022, Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch Elijah II says that Russia’s military actions in Ukraine are costing thousands of lives.²⁵ The Georgian Orthodox Church, with the blessing of its Primate, makes quite active efforts to provide humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian refugees. The website of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church informed about one

²¹ Message of support from His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa to the people of the Ukraine. *The official web site of Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa*. Mart 1, 2022. Available at: <https://www.patriarchateofalexandria.com/en/mhnyama-symparastashs-ths-aom-toy-papa-kai-patriarxoy-alexandreias-kk-oeodwroy-b-pros-ton-oykraniko-lao>

²² Message of support from His Beatitude Theodoros II, Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa to the people of the Ukraine.

²³ Patriarch of Alexandria: Putin, the emperor of our times. *Orthodox Times*. Mart 3, 2022. Available at: <https://orthodoxtimes.com/patriarch-of-alexandria-putin-the-emperor-of-our-times/>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ სრულიად საქართველოს კათოლიკოს-პატრიარქის მიმართვა [Address of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia]. Mart 13, 2022. Available at: <https://patriarchate.ge/public/news/2927>

of such important initiatives²⁶ (with a link to the relevant material on the website of the Georgian Patriarchate).

The Primate of the Church of Cyprus, Archbishop Chrysostomos II condemns the war directly. He rhetorically asks whether Putin's crimes are compatible with the Christian faith: "Putin can go to church, repent, put up his cross, commune, but at the same time kill. Is this his Orthodoxy?"²⁷ And, regarding the number of Churches that take an indistinct position in war condemning, he claims, "Let us not forget that half of Orthodoxy was under communism and unfortunately they are still influenced by the Russians."²⁸

Romanian Patriarch Daniel quite clearly stated in his statement from February 24, 2022, that Russia was the instigator of the war against Ukraine, a sovereign and independent state. Among other things, he emphasized that he was praying to God for protection of the Ukrainian people: "We pray to the Merciful God, the Lord of peace, justice, and love, to protect the Ukrainian people and give all responsible political leaders peace-making wisdom."²⁹ The Romanian Orthodox Church is active to provide the humanitarian aid to Ukraine and the Ukrainian refugees. "Considering the current background of the humanitarian crisis caused by the war in Ukraine, the Romanian Orthodox Church continued its social and charitable activities."³⁰

The Synod of the Church of Hellas under the leadership of Archbishop Ieronymos II blamed "the violent invasion of Russian troops and the war in Ukraine."³¹ In the relevant statement, they emphasize the absurdity of the ongoing war in Ukraine; condolences and support are expressed to all victims. The Holy Synod of the Church of Hellas expresses real

²⁶ Грузинська Церква відкрила центр гуманітарної допомоги для українських біженців. Українська православна церква [The Georgian Church opened a humanitarian aid center for the Ukrainian refugees]. Синодальний інформаційно-просвітницький відділ УПЦ. 07/27/2022. Available at: <https://news.church.ua/2022/07/27/gruzinska-cerkva-vidkrila-centr-gumanitarnoji-dopomogi-dlya-ukrajinskix-bizhenciv/>

²⁷ Αρχιεπίσκοπος: «Ο Πούτιν μπορεί να κοινωνεί, να πηγαίνει εκκλησιά, αλλά σκοτώνει» [Archbishop: "Putin can take communion, go to church, but he kills"]. *SigmaLive*. 13/03/2022. Available at: <https://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/925291/arxiepiskoposo-poutin-mporei-na-koinoneina-pigainei-ekklisiaaalla-skotonei?fbclid=IwAR2XcVvqW56FSbTvH1uAncU4XZ-1fGMNACIeJthToZRswbPZJ5r7cdqmU>

²⁸ Αρχιεπίσκοπος: «Ο Πούτιν μπορεί να κοινωνεί, να πηγαίνει εκκλησιά, αλλά σκοτώνει».

²⁹ Patriarch Daniel calls for end to war in Ukraine, urges prayers for peace. *News Agency. Basilica.Ro*. Mart 24, 2022. Available at: <https://basilica.ro/en/patriarch-daniel-calls-for-end-to-war-in-ukraine-urges-prayers-for-peace/>

³⁰ Ajutorul oferit de Biserică pentru refugiați a ajuns la 7,6 milioane euro. Bilanț 16 mai – 1 iulie [The aid offered by the Church for refugees reached 7.6 million euros. Balance sheet 16 May – 1 July]. *News Agency. Basilica.Ro*. July 6, 2022. Available at: <https://basilica.ro/ajutorul-oferit-de-biserica-pentru-refugiati-a-ajuns-la-76-milioane-euro-bilant-16-mai-1-iulie/>

³¹ Εγκύκλιος Ιεράς Συνόδου περί του πολέμου στην Ουκρανία [Circular of the Holy Synod on the war in Ukraine]. *ΡΟΜΦΑΙΑ*. 20.03.2022. Available at: <https://www.romfea.gr/ekklisia-ellados/48974-egkyklios-ieras-synodou-peri-tou-polemou-stin-oukrania>

concern about the danger of a nuclear tragedy. The same statement contains guidelines for the forms of providing humanitarian aid to war victims.

The Council of Bishops of the Polish Autocephalous Orthodox Church approved the document that contains words condemning Russia's military actions in Ukraine as Cain's sin. An appeal was expressed to the Russian authorities and the President of Russia to stop military actions as being "evil and incomprehensible."³² The Primate of this Church, Metropolitan Sabbas sent the letter to Patriarch Kiril asking him to raise his voice for ending the war ongoing by the Russian army in Ukraine.³³

The Albanian Orthodox Church calls for peace, opposing all forms of violence.³⁴ It is significant that on the official Facebook page of the Primate of this Church, Archbishop Anastasios, a special statement was made that he did not avoid calling Russia to be the culprit of the war. For example, his Easter message says:

In the course of these days, when pain, grief, and confusion, brought about by the fratricidal war of Russia against Ukraine, are overwhelming our thoughts and souls, referring to love may be seen as strange. Obviously, aggressive war consists of the most tragic and atrocious insult and denouncement of love. However, under the present crucial conditions, our considerations seeking an egress from these difficulties understandably looks towards the foundational values of our faith. Simultaneously with the condemnation of crimes it is urgent for the power of love to be strengthened within ourselves and around us. Ultimately, only love can be victorious over the arrogant strength of power, therein affirming our bond with the God of peace and reconciliation.³⁵

The Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America (the autocephaly of which is not recognized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and other autocephalous Churches but is recognized by the Russian Orthodox Church) also condemns the war in its statement. This statement calls Russia's actions an aggressive war and expresses solidarity with the suffering Ukrainian people.³⁶

³² Uchwała Soboru Biskupów ws. wojny w Ukrainie [Resolution of the Council of Bishops on the war in Ukraine]. *Orthodox.pl*. Available at: <https://www.orthodox.pl/uchwala-soboru-biskupow-ws-wojny-w-ukrainie/?fbclid=IwAR0qPLvfYHuWuAx99mMWignUFuzaASswtUKMli28ky-t6oRCrOXcMtNxb6k>

³³ Metropolita Sawa wzywa patriarchę Cyryla do interwencji w sprawie Ukrainy [Metropolitan Sabbas calls on Patriarch Cyril to intervene in the matter of Ukraine]. *Miscyjne.pl*. 19/03/2022. Available at: <https://miscyjne.pl/metropolita-sawa-wzyka-patriarche-cyryla-do-interwen-w-sprawie-ukrainy/>

³⁴ Sincere prayer for the cessation of the war between brothers and sisters and for peace in Ukraine. Available at: <https://orthodoxalbania.org/2020/en/2022/02/28/sincere-prayer-for-the-cessation-of-the-war-between-brothers-and-sisters-and-for-peace-in-ukraine/>

³⁵ Archbishop Anastasios Official Facebook page. May 13, 2022. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/arxiepiskoposalbaniasanastasios/posts/557721349079196>

³⁶ Statement on Ukraine. Orthodox Church in America. Available at: <https://www.oca.org/holy-synod/statements/holy-synod/statement-on-ukraine>.

Orthodox Churches with Ambiguous Calls for Peace but Not Condemning Russia

As already noted, there is a number of world Orthodox Churches where among the statements of their primates or leaders, there is a negative reaction to the fact of the war, but Russia and its authorities are not called as the instigators of this tragedy. Let us analyze this point in more detail.

The Patriarchate of Antioch, for example, calls for peace and dialogue. Patriarch John X sent a letter to Metropolitan Onufriy (Berezovsky) as the Primate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (June 7, 2022) with words of support and sympathy. The letter, in particular, compares the suffering of the Ukrainians with the suffering of the Syrians during armed actions. However, there is no indication that Russia is waging the war.³⁷

Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III called for prayer for peace, for admonition of the leaders of all interested parties, but without specifically naming the culprits of the war.³⁸ It is significant that the Moscow Patriarchate propagandistically uses the position of some functionaries of the Jerusalem Patriarchate. For example, his website shared the abstracts of the interview with Metropolitan Theodosios, where he “defended” Patriarch Kiril and called him a peacemaker, despite Kiril’s repeatedly stated position of supporting the aggressive Russian government and army.³⁹

Serbian Patriarch Porphyrios expresses sadness because of the war; he considers it to be a threat to all of Europe and the world and he calls for negotiations. However, he refrains from calling Russia the culprit.⁴⁰ His speeches focus on initiatives to support refugees from Ukraine. At the same time, it is clear that the Serbian Orthodox Church considers the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (headed by Metropolitan Onufriy) to be a part of the Moscow Patriarchate.

³⁷ Antioch Patriarchate Official Facebook page. June 6, 2022. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/Antiochpatriarchate.org/posts/4422186251218387>

³⁸ Statement on Situation in Ukraine by His Beatitude Patriarch of Jerusalem Theophilos III. February 27, 2022. Available at: <https://en.jerusalem-patriarchate.info/blog/2022/02/27/statement-on-situation-in-ukraine-by-his-beatitude-patriarch-of-jerusalem-theophilos-iii/>

³⁹ Archbishop Theodosios of Sebastia: We perceive the provocations against the Patriarch of the Russian Church as provocations against the entire Orthodox Church. Available at: <http://www.patriarchia.ru/en/db/text/5940396.html>

⁴⁰ Патријарх Порфирије: Посведочимо јеванђељску и хришћанску љубав према страдалној браћи у Украјини [Patriarch Porphyrios: Let us bear witness to the gospel and Christian love for the suffering brothers in Ukraine.]. *Српска Православна Црква*. 6.03.2022. Available at: <https://spc.rs/%d0%bf%d0%b0%d1%82%d1%80%d0%b8%d1%98%d0%b0%d1%80%d1%85-%d0%bf%d0%be%d1%80%d1%84%d0%b8%d1%80%d0%b8%d1%98%d0%b5-%d0%bf%d0%be%d1%81%d0%b2%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%be%d1%87%d0%b8%d0%bc%d0%be-%d1%98%d0%b5%d0%b2/>

This is evidenced by the very description of the jurisdiction of this Church in the notifications on the official website of the Serbian Orthodox Church.⁴¹

In his appeal, Bulgarian Patriarch Neophyte states that one Orthodox nation is fighting another Orthodox nation in unjustified and unnecessary bloodshed. He calls to be peacemakers, but not to tolerate the evil. Russia is not mentioned directly.⁴² However, the Bulgarian Church has hierarchs expressing themselves more concretely and radically. For example, Metropolitan Nicholas of Plovdiv having condemned the war, recognizes and denounces Russia's attack on Ukraine. He says: "This is so wrong, so against God... This is not the war for faith... This is a geopolitical war."⁴³ In his reflections during one of his public speeches, he emphasizes that Russia at one time should not have denied autocephaly of the Ukrainian Orthodoxy. Though, since it has done it, the Ecumenical Patriarchate as the mother Church remedied the situation (it is about the granting of autocephaly to the Orthodox Church of Ukraine by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2019). Having showed a negative reaction to this step, the Russian Orthodox Church started a chain of actions leading to negative processes. Here is one more important Metropolitan Nicholas's thought:

Russia is attacking Ukraine, and this is a sin before God! The Bible says, "You shall not kill!" and this is God's commandment, which no one has the right to violate. If anyone hesitates whose side to take, let him ask his conscience. Whose side would Jesus Christ take? The side of the attacking or the one being attacked. I assure you; Christ would protect those who were attacked.⁴⁴

Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church of the Czech lands and Slovakia Rastislav on behalf of the Holy Synod of this Church, sympathizing with the victims, at the same time did not call Russia the culprit of the war. This is evidenced by the corresponding statement published on March 1, 2022.⁴⁵ However, there are eparchies of this Church where Russia is

⁴¹ Патријарх Порфирије: Увек и свагда да говоримо умом и срцем: Дођи Господе! [Patriarch Porphyrios: Always and always let us say with mind and heart: Come, Lord!] *Српска Православна Црква*. 17.07.2022. Available at: https://spc.rs/patrijarh-porfirije-uvek-i-svagda-da/?fbclid=IwAR0DzkK5D5FEmTlIzazSlgSrjJdeWs_1PGVhtFtHYqkwzVCxJFGCOdHcGoJ0

⁴² Обръщение на Българския патриарх Неофит по случай Деня на храбростта с освещаване на бойните знамена на Българската армия [Address of Bulgarian Patriarch Neophyte on the occasion of the Day of Courage with consecration of the battle flags of the Bulgarian Army]. 06/05/2022. Available at: <https://bg-patriarshia.bg/news/obrashtenie-na-balgarskia-patriarh-neofit-po-sluchay-denya-n>

⁴³ Митр. Николай: Войната в Украйна е геополитическа война, породена от гордост [Metropolitan Nicholas: The war in Ukraine is a geopolitical war born of pride]. *Двери на православие*. 03/04/2022. Available at: <https://dveri.bg/component/content/itemid,100723/catid,14/id,71255/view,article/>

⁴⁴ Митрополит Николай: Във войната между Украйна и Русия Христос щеше да защити нападения, а не нападателя [Metropolitan Nicholas: In the war between Ukraine and Russia, Christ would protect the attacked, not the attacking]. *News 247*. 07.05. 2022. Available at: <https://novini247.com/novini/plovdivskiyat-mitropolit-nikolay-komentira-voynata-v-ukrayna-vladikata-zayavi-pred-4421205.html>

⁴⁵ Vyhlášení Posvátného synodu Pravoslavné církve v českých zemích a na Slovensku k vojenskému konfliktu na Ukrajině [Declaration of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in the Czech Lands and Slovakia on the military conflict

directly called the culprit of the war and condemned because of it. For instance, the Olomouc-Brno Eparchy made a very principal statement: it is about the unprovoked aggression of Putin's Russia against Ukraine, which is characterized not only as a violation of international law and a barbaric act, but as a terrible sin (Cain's sin). The statement emphasizes that the Russian Church is in Putin's captivity and has not condemned this sin.⁴⁶

The Estonian and Latvian Orthodox Churches, which were under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate, joined the statement of the Council of Churches of their countries regarding the judgement of Russia's war against Ukraine.⁴⁷ Metropolitan Inokentijus, the Primate of the Orthodox Church of Lithuania of the Moscow Patriarchate, condemned Russia's war against Ukraine and expressed disagreement with the position of Patriarch Kiril.⁴⁸ It's interesting that in September 2022, the law amendments were established by the Parliament of Latvia. It declared the Independence of the Latvian Orthodox Church from the Russian Orthodox Church. It was the initiative of the President of Latvia.⁴⁹

However, the Moldavian Orthodox Church (under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate) failed to condemn Russia, even though its leading hierarch, Metropolitan Vladimir, was born in Chernivtsi region, Ukraine. The corresponding statement speaks only about praying for the resolution of the "armed conflict."⁵⁰

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⁴⁶ Vyjádření naší eparchie k vojenské agresi Ruské Federace proti Ukrajině [Statement of our eparchy on the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine]. *Oficiálních stránkách Olomoucko-brněnské eparchie Pravoslavné církve v českých zemích a na Slovensku*. Available at: <https://www.ob-eparchie.cz/2022/03/10/vyjadreni-nasi-eparchie-k-vojenske-agresi-ruske-federace-proti-ukrajine/>

⁴⁷ Head of Russian Orthodox Church in Estonia signs anti-war statement. Available at: <https://news.err.ee/1608535288/head-of-russian-orthodox-church-in-estonia-signs-anti-war-statement> And The Latvian Orthodox Church condemns the war in Ukraine. Baltic News. March 7, 2022. Available at: <https://baltics.news/2022/03/07/the-latvian-orthodox-church-condemns-the-war-in-ukraine/>

⁴⁸ Обращение митрополита Виленского и Литовского Иннокентия. Виленско-Литовская Епархия. Православная Церковь в Литве [Appeal of Metropolitan Inokentijus of Vilna and Lithuania. The Vilna-Lithuanian Earchy. The Orthodox Church in Lithuania]. 03/17/2022. Available at: <https://www.orthodoxy.lt/novosti/3615-obrashenie-mitropolita-vilenskogo-i-litovskogo-innokentiya>

⁴⁹ Saeima affirms independence of Latvian Orthodox Church from any ecclesiastical authority outside Latvia. *Latvijas Republikas Saeima*. 09/09/2022. Available at: <https://www.saeima.lv/en/news/saeima-news/31372-saeima-affirms-independence-of-latvian-orthodox-church-from-any-ecclesiastical-authority-outside-latvia>

⁵⁰ Православная Церковь Молдовы оказала беженцам из Украины гуманитарную помощь на сумму 6 450 000 леев [The Orthodox Church of Moldova provided humanitarian aid to refugees from Ukraine in the amount of 6,450,000 lei]. *Православная Церковь Молдовы. Кишиневско-Молдавская Митрополия*. 03/18/2022. Available at: <https://en.mitropolia.md/%d0%bf%d1%80%d0%b0%d0%b2%d0%be%d1%81%d0%bb%d0%b0%d0%b2%d0%bd%d0%b0%d1%8f-%d1%86%d0%b5%d1%80%d0%ba%d0%be%d0%b2%d1%8c-%d0%bc%d0%be%d0%bb%d0%b4%d0%be%d0%b2%d1%8b-%d0%be%d0%ba%d0%b0%d0%b7%d0%b0%d0%bb/>

Conclusion

Russia's armed aggression against Ukraine has put the modern world in a situation of security risks unheard of since World War II and the Cold War. In these circumstances, the value unity of all those people and forces that are faithful to the ideals and humanist practice is fundamentally important. Such value cohesion presupposes the courage to name the culprits of aggression as culprits. This is especially significant for religious leaders of the highest level. Indeed, their word is particularly influential; it directs the activities of thousands or even millions of people. Incompleteness in assessment can become a factor of deepening aggression, and it will mask the true state of affairs and can paralyze appropriate preventive actions. The analysis made it possible to determine that many of the leaders and governing bodies of the world Orthodox Churches have the courage to tell the truth about Russia's unprovoked aggression against independent Ukraine. At the same time, there are some Orthodox Churches whose leaders limit themselves to a general call for peace and sympathy with the victims of the war but refrain from naming its culprits. Among the complex reasons for this, we should mention the geopolitical factors of the connections of the corresponding Churches with the interests of Moscow, and, at times, the general conservative attitude of the Church functionaries. Such a position can be characterized within the parameters of authoritarian religiosity, the essence of which is highlighted by Erich Fromm. Authoritarian religiosity is attracted by its own kind. In those communities, many fully agree with the reactions and decisions of the militant government (in this case, the Russian government). Maybe, the leaders of the corresponding Churches themselves do not fully realize such a social psychological aspect, but nevertheless, this motivation is working clearly or implicitly. In any case, the task of academic religious scholars and philosophers is to create a platform for a more active acceptance of a principal moral position by religious functionaries with the help of objective research. The criterion of integrity of such a position are validity and an uncompromising attitude towards the evil that currently threatens the basic values of civilization in the form of the aggressive power and behavior of Russia.

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