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INDESTRUCTIBILITY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST EVIL: THE THEOLOGICAL VIEW ON THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

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Abstract. The article shows that the fight against evil, namely Russian aggression against the Ukrainian people, creates a unique concept of “indestructibility.” The appearance of the term “invincibility” in the theological world, as a rule, is associated with the side of goodness and freedom. The Russian Federation has shown in the 21st century aggression unprecedented in its scale, including the desire to appropriate foreign territory, the bombing of peaceful territories and civilians, the distortion of faith, religion, and ideology to achieve goals by military means, etc. As a result, in the theological world of Ukraine, this phenomenon was called “evil.” That is why, in this article, the author presents the connection between the concept of “invincibility” and “indestructibility” in the fight against “evil” in the process of fighting against Russian aggression.

Keywords: invincibility, indestructibility, theological view, Russian-Ukrainian war, fight against “evil.”

Formulation of the Problem

For over a year and half, Ukraine has been fighting the Russian Federation, the aggressor country, despite the fact that at the beginning of a large-scale invasion, experts from some countries assumed that Ukraine would be able to hold out only for a conditional “three days.” During this war, the citizens of Ukraine were able not only to overcome the state of shock that many had at the beginning of the invasion, but also to strengthen their faith in the invincibility of the Ukrainian people. And if during the Revolution of Dignity of 2013-2014 the key word in the information media was “dignity,” reflecting the value for which the Ukrainians fought at the Maidan, then, after this full-scale invasion, one of the key words is “invincibility.” After all, it reflects that will to live, that character, that determination with which Ukrainians are ready to defend the values of dignity and freedom. It should be said that dignity and freedom underlie the social doctrines of many religious organizations and churches that actively help Ukrainian society survive. Therefore, these concepts have been considered by many authors belonging to religious (primarily Christian) circles, and the spiritual meaning and justification of these values were repeatedly analyzed.¹ Thus, today it will also be relevant

¹ Л.О. Филипович and О. В. Горкуша, eds., *Майдан і Церква. Хроніка подій та експертна оцінка* (Київ: СаммітКнига, 2014). [“Unbreakable, unbreakable,” Academic Explanatory Dictionary (1970-1980),]

to consider the idea of indestructibility in a spiritual context, and resistance through the help of Holy Scripture.

The purpose of our study is a comparative analysis of the secular (horizontal) and spiritual (vertical) content of invincibility, the search for a similar concept or idea in the Bible, with the identification of the spiritual aspects of this concept.

Historiography

In the public space, the indestructibility of Ukrainians can be heard in official appeals and statements of Ukrainian high-ranking officials, starting with the President of the State, in the names of institutions or events (points of indestructibility, the festival "Indestructible in Spirit", etc.). One can hear about the idea of indestructibility in various interviews, articles, and programs devoted to the topic of resistance to aggression. At the scholarly level, this concept is just beginning to be considered, since it is associated with recent history and is new to this discourse. However, some researchers in scholarly publications are already considering the invincibility of the Ukrainian nation in the context of lessons for the world. Notable examples include publications in scientific journals by Alla Litvinenko and Tatiana Bukina,² as well as Natalia Rodinova and Alla Lazareva,³ where the idea of indestructibility is viewed through the prism of the national character.

Presentation of the Main Material

In the Academic Explanatory Dictionary of the Ukrainian Language, the word “indestructible” is defined as follows: “Which cannot be overcome, subdued, broken, etc.; invincible... showing stamina, firmness, steadfastness in intentions, views, deeds, actions, etc.; true to his convictions; unshakable.”⁴ In his address on the anniversary of the large-scale invasion, President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky defined the invincibility of the Ukrainian nation as follows: “We withstand all threats. shelling. Cluster bombs. Cruise missiles. Drones-kamikaze. Blackout, cold. We are stronger than this. It was a year of perseverance. A year of

² Алла Литвиненко and Тетяна Букіна, “Незламність української нації – уроки для світу,” *Політична культура та ідеологія*, no. 1 (2022): 109–14. [Alla Lytvynenko and Tetyana Bukina, "The indomitability of the Ukrainian nation - lessons for the world," *Political Culture and Ideology*, no. 1 (2022): 109–14]

³ Наталія Родінова and Алла Лазарева, “Незламність української нації – важливий урок для світу,” *Літопис Волині. Всеукраїнський науковий часопис*, no. 26 (2022): 146–50. [Nataliya Rodinova and Alla Lazareva, "The indomitability of the Ukrainian nation is an important lesson for the world," *Chronicle of Volyn. All-Ukrainian Scientific Journal*, no. 26 (2022): 146–50]

⁴ “Незламний, незломний,” Академічний тлумачний словник (1970—1980), n.d., <http://sum.in.ua/s/NEZLAMNYJ>. ["Unbreakable, unbreakable," *Academic Explanatory Dictionary (1970-1980)*,]

indifference. Year of courage. Year of pain. Year of Hope. Year of endurance. Year of Unity. Year of indestructibility. February is the year of invincibility.”⁵

Researchers who consider the invincibility of the Ukrainian nation as an example for the world conclude that patriotism is the basis of indestructibility, as well as one of the best features of the national character, among which are: "hard work... courage, determination, heroism, self-sacrifice."⁶ Also, the Ukrainian people are characterized by "deep" and "well-meaning" religiosity.⁷ Under the influence of tragic events, realizing that they can lose themselves as a nation and a sovereign state, Ukrainians show “national desire for freedom and free expression of will,” and unity and solidarity “in the struggle for national identity,” opposite “Soviet values” and “colonial mentality.”⁸ At the heart of Ukrainian patriotism is love for the Motherland and moral principles that "mobilize... for work and service in the name of the people." It is also noted that "today Ukrainians are a symbol of invincibility and indestructibility, a symbol of the fact that people in any country can become the best people on earth at any moment.”⁹

Patriotism and the desire to preserve national identity can be attributed to the horizontal (earthly) dimension of indestructibility. However, there is also a vertical (spiritual) dimension. The values that Ukrainians are now upholding are freedom and dignity, as well as the best features, including readiness for self-sacrifice, and commitment to the mission of serving one's people. All of these categories have a centuries-old religious (in particular, Christian) dimension and origin. The first of the ten commandments of the Law of God speaks about freedom as a universal human value (opposite to slavery). Understanding the war with the aggressor as a fight against evil that has infernal roots, and positions Ukrainians as turning to the Creator, hoping for God's protection. For a religious person, the Creator is a source of justice and truth, as well as a high Guarantor of their implementation. Polls of Ukrainians conducted by the sociological service of the Razumkov Center from April 28 to May 3, 2023,

⁵ Офіційний канал Офісу Президента України в YouTube, “Лютий. Рік незламності. Звернення Володимира Зеленського,” *YouTube*, February 24, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y8DmKLL6E_g. [The official YouTube channel of the Office of the President of Ukraine, "Feb. The year of indomitability. Address of Volodymyr Zelenskyi,"]

⁶ Наталія Родінова and Алла Лазарева, “Незламність української нації – важливий урок для світу,” *Літопис Волині. Всеукраїнський науковий часопис*, no. 26 (2022): 148. [Nataliya Rodinova and Alla Lazareva, "The indomitability of the Ukrainian nation is an important lesson for the world," *Chronicle of Volyn. All-Ukrainian scientific journal*]

⁷ Алла Литвиненко and Тетяна Букіна, “Незламність української нації – уроки для світу,” *Політична культура та ідеологія*, no. 1 (2022): 111. [Alla Lytvynenko and Tetyana Bukina, "The indomitability of the Ukrainian nation - lessons for the world," *Political Culture and Ideology*]

⁸ Наталія Родінова and Алла Лазарева, *op. cit.*, 149-50.

⁹ Алла Литвиненко and Тетяна Букіна, *op. cit.*, 112.

show that Ukrainians, in order to strengthen themselves in opposition to the aggressor and overcome uncertainty in the future, turn to God more than the forecasts of the head of the Main Intelligence Directorate Budanov (32.3% respondents). The polls also found that “29.4% ask [God] to help those who defend the country, and almost 34% to help Ukraine survive.”¹⁰

Just like the lessons that Ukrainians demonstrate to the world with their character, their invincibility, the lessons of resisting evil and the experience of invincibility contained in spiritual sources, primarily in the Holy Scriptures, the Bible, remain and become even more relevant for our people. This source, like no other, teaches how to become "better people," upholding a just society.

Love for God and neighbor as the main motive does not lead to passive contemplation (nor to immersion in the so-called "internal emigration"), but to active work aimed at transforming the world. In a situation of war, it encourages many people at the front and in the rear to do surprising things in service of victory.

The main biblical principles that Ukrainians can rely on are as follows:

1. The vertical dimension of human existence (relationship with God, loyalty to God's laws) fills the horizontal dimension (national identity, originality, patriotism) with perfect content. After all, the values of dignity and freedom, on the protection of which the invincible stand, are values, the source of which is God, therefore they are inalienable from the moral law of God. Understanding this leads to a focus on God's values rather than the national character, which will only strengthen the nation against evil.

2. We can agree that the character of both a person and an entire people is formed as a result of a constant moral choice, but one cannot rely only on the national character and national achievements that have developed in the past. For new trials, the historical character may not be enough (Ezekiel 18:24). Moral choices are always made in the present, here and now, which allows for the development and improvement of the national character, getting rid of certain shortcomings that are also inherent in the nation. It is a mistake to say that now the main thing is to win, and all the shortcomings can be eliminated later. Rather, on the contrary, their detection and correction here and now can bring victory closer.

3. Considering that the struggle of the Ukrainian people is existential, that is, one on which the very existence of the nation depends, it is extremely important how we see our future,

¹⁰ Катерина Шоткіна , “Війна. Як змінилися відносини українців із Богом та церквою,” Дзеркало тижня, 2023, <https://zn.ua/ukr/war/vijna-jak-zminilisja-vidnosini-ukrajintsiv-iz-bohom-ta-tserkvoju.html>. [Kateryna Shotkina, "War. How the relationship of Ukrainians with God and the church has changed," Dzerkalo tychnya]

our eschatology. Do we already live by the principles and values of this future? The high degree of corruption in Ukraine, which is reported almost daily by the media, not only contradicts the commandments of God, but also undermines the strength of Ukrainian society, weakening its invincibility. The question is relevant: do we defend a rule of law society, where freedom is based on the respect of the whole society for fair laws, or a society that is thoroughly corrupt, where the elite of different levels receives more rights and freedoms by violating the rights and freedoms of other citizens? Without a clear vision of what kind of future we are fighting for, whose “kingdom” we are heading to, there will be no point in invincibility, just as Jesus taught: “every city or house divided against itself cannot stand” (Matthew 12:25). Thus, the struggle against the external enemy must become inseparable from the struggle for the observance of God's laws within society.

4. Love vs hate. Just as God gathered the people of Israel not to sin, but to reflect His glory, so the Ukrainian people have more chances to win if they prove worthy of the values they declare. However, the understanding of these values is not yet unambiguous in society. An example is the recent discussions in the public space about the right of Ukrainians to manifest hatred towards enemies, about the boundaries and forms that it can take. Considering the brevity of our study, we will allow ourselves only one quote on this subject from the message of the sociologist and Christian essayist Denis Gorenkov: “In The Chronicles of Narnia, the book The Last Battle, God’s people suffer a military defeat. ‘Friends’ advise “call the goddess Tash, that is, Satan, for help. The Narnians call Tash... she comes bringing even greater horrors and chaos... It is very dangerous to call Tash for help in battle... We fight without losing our nobility.”¹¹

5. On the inflexible path to victory, it is important to be aware of one's weaknesses and understand that victory depends not only on the efforts of Ukrainians, but also on God's intervention in the course of history, especially in a situation of a duel with an enemy more armed, having much more resources. In particular, according to the testimony of Ukrainian defenders, the ratio of firepower among the troops of the Russian Federation and the troops of Ukraine in the first days of a large-scale war was 10 to 1. However, analysts from the Institute for the Study of War have repeatedly pointed out the mistakes made by the aggressor country, which prevent it from successfully achieving its goals. It is also no secret that, having its own limited resources, Ukraine needs large-scale international support. Analysts are trying to

¹¹ Денис Гореньков [Denis Gorenkov], Facebook, 2023, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=10159637279351134&set=a.10151197254556134>.

predict what kind of support certain Western countries will provide to Ukraine in the future, whether this support will be sufficient, and what may change if the “wrong” candidate comes to power in a friendly country. Forecasts are constantly being adjusted. All this indicates that there are things in modern history that are beyond the control of both Ukrainians and any person on earth. Understanding this should encourage Ukrainian inflexibilities as an objectively weak side to sincerely seek support from the Creator of the universe, who is able to interfere in human history, carry out a fair trial and protect the weak when the truth is on their side.

Conclusion

Just as researchers consider Ukrainian invincibility during a large-scale war as an important lesson and example for the world, so can the invincibility of the righteous in the Bible be a lesson for Ukrainians themselves. In our opinion, thanks to the lessons taken from the Bible, based on biblical principles, the Ukrainian nation can also be more strengthened in its invincibility on the path to victory.

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