

Ukrainian Baptist Communities in an Orthodox Context: A Study of Church Relations Between 1917–2024

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Abstract

This article focuses on relations between Ukrainian Baptist and Orthodox churches from 1917 to the present day. It shows the shift from the position (specific to the time of the Russian Empire) when the two movements rejected each other, and from hatred and harshness towards Baptists on the part of Orthodoxy, to more positive dynamics, particularly in the context of the Soviet Union when, under communism, the Orthodox Church lost its position and became one among others persecuted by the State. More positive changes continued in the period after the Soviet Union (USSR) collapsed and as Ukraine became an independent country. At the same time, the article argues that despite some good dynamics in relations, negative experiences for followers of both traditions still exist, which show the need for improvement in relations with each other. Baptists and Orthodox followers may still view each other as straying far from the truth and as in need of salvation.

Key words

Ukraine; Baptists; Orthodoxy; inter-church relations

Introduction

This article concentrates on the history of relations between Ukrainian Baptists and followers of Orthodoxy since 1917. The historical analysis pays attention to the similarities and differences in approaches that are seen in the periods chosen as the focus for this article in comparison to what is found in those Ukrainian territories in the time of the Russian Empire. One can hear horrible stories from that time of Empire when Baptists sometimes passed through ‘medieval torture’, and read of believers ‘being forced to cut off prickly burdock with their bare hands’

or being ‘flogged with rods’.¹ This is just a small part of the torture that was practised.

Over the course of time, we might expect changes in different periods regarding relations between Baptist and Orthodox communities, but this has not been analysed as much as the situation in the time of the Russian Empire. This article is divided into three periods. The first speaks about the time from the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917 until 1944. The end date of 1944 is the moment when the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists was formed. Before 1944, the Baptist movement was represented by two independent groups of believers, one of which was called Baptists and the other the Evangelical Christians. The second period covers the years 1944–1991. The final period speaks about independent Ukraine from 1991 to the present.

The observation of these chosen periods shows us different and more positive dynamics in relations between the two traditions that became the reality from 1917 onwards in comparison to the situation during the Russian Empire. In paying attention to sources in Ukrainian as well as in other languages that deal with analysing contexts, we find evidence in the first two periods of positive contacts between traditions in the USSR area under a communist regime that turned Orthodoxy into another of the religious groups under the pressure of the State. The situation in independent Ukraine also shows the presence of these positive dynamics. Nevertheless, the story of relations has certainly not been ideal since 1917, and tensions still exist.

1917–1944

When we consider Ukrainian believers of the Baptist faith and their relations with Orthodoxy since 1917, we can observe a case from 1923

¹ S. Sannikov, *Istoria baptisma* [The History of the Baptist Movement] (Bogomyslie, 1996), p. 355. Other good sources to read concerning that time period are Constantine Prokhorov’s ‘Orthodox and Baptists in Russia: The Early Period’, in *Baptists and the Orthodox Church: On the Way to Understanding*, ed. by Ian M. Randall (International Baptist Theological Seminary, 2005), pp. 98–112; and Volodymyr Domashovetz, *Ukrajins’kyj jevangel’s’ko-baptysts’kyj rub v jogo 150-litnij juvilej, 1852–2002* [The Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Movement on Its 150th Jubilee, 1852–2002] (Khrystyianske zhyttia, 2002), p. 29.

from Dovgiv village, Volyn (the western area of Ukraine, which at that time was a part of Poland). Here, an Orthodox priest organised a protest against followers of the Baptist movement² who tried to perform a baptism near his church. First, it started with the sermon the Orthodox priest delivered against so-called sectarians, sparking people's anger in relation to them, and finished with people trying to mutilate such believers. It was only because some were found who opposed such deeds and who managed to stop others, that the situation did not end as badly as it could have done.³

Another incident of tensions between followers of the two traditions, again from Volyn, happened in 1934. The followers of the Baptist tradition tried to bury a member of their community but were faced with opposition from the Orthodox priest, who saw the local cemetery as belonging to the Orthodox Church. Only after a conversation with the local government was permission granted, despite the hostility of the Orthodox priest towards such a decision.⁴

We also have data concerning tensions in relations with the Orthodox Church in the Ukrainian territory (Bukovina,) that belonged to Romania from 1918 to 1939. Even though the Orthodox Church became one among other religious groups under communist pressure in the USSR, the Romanian Orthodox Church continued to be the state church. One of its patriarchs even held the position of Prime Minister. The Orthodox Church did not appreciate the presence of Protestants on its territory and the Baptist movement had to endure many and various difficulties, especially from 1938 when having worship meetings was prohibited.⁵

² It should be remembered that the Baptist movement was represented in Ukraine by the Baptist Union and the Evangelical Christians Union at that time. They formed the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians and Baptists in 1944 and the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians Baptists (AUCECB) in 1946.

³ L. A. Gaponjuk, M. O. Pyrozshko, and V. G. Chajka, *Jevangeke's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljab ludej* [The Evangelical Movement in Volyn in the Documents and Destinies of People] (Ukrajins'ka Misija Blagovistja, 2009), p. 144.

⁴ Gaponjuk, Pyrozshko, and Chajka, *Jevangeke's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljab ludej*, p. 148.

⁵ Ju. Reschetnikov and S. Sannikov, *Oglad istorii evangeljsko-baptistskogo bratstva v Ukraïni* [Survey of the History of the Evangelical-Baptist Brotherhood in Ukraine] (Bogomyslie, 2000), p. 165.

In addition, there is a negative story from the Volyn area in 1943 during the German occupation. We hear about the Orthodox clergyman who, together with a number of men carrying guns, took a group of the followers of the Baptist movement into the Orthodox Church, where they abused them.⁶

As we face this negative approach to the Baptist movement on the part of Orthodoxy, it is reasonable to see its roots in the previous politics the Orthodox Church formed in the Russian Empire, where the first Ukrainian Baptists appeared. We remember that since 988 CE, Ukrainian lands, which then became a part of the Russian Empire, gave priority to the Orthodox Church.⁷ Other faiths were seen as strange and heretical without rights to exist in the Orthodox land. In the Orthodox view, this was a normal church approach to deal with the heresy they felt Baptists presented.⁸ As for the element of strangeness, it is related to the view that the Baptist movement was an instrument of Germany to destroy the Russian government.⁹ It can also be noted that Orthodoxy played a quite active role in putting pressure on the Baptist movement; it was indeed more active than the State itself.¹⁰

In spite of the negative stories observed in the period since 1917, an interesting event happened in the USSR in which some Ukrainian territories became a part in 1922.¹¹ In the beginning of the 1920s, the Renovationism movement appeared in the Russian Orthodox Church which tried to bring some reforms to Orthodoxy: for example, to become open to laypersons' activity in the church; to make an emphasis on preaching in liturgy; or to deal with paganism and superstition found

⁶ Gaponjuk, Pyrozshko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljah ludej*, p. 187.

⁷ To read about the acceptance of Orthodoxy by the people of Kiev Rus, see Sergij Golovaschenko, *Istorija brystyanstva* [History of Christianity] (Lybid, 1999), pp. 214–219. Also, Konstantin Prohorov, *Russkij baptizm i pravoslavie* [Russian Baptism and Orthodoxy] (BBI, 2017), pp. 9–11.

⁸ S. I. Golovaschenko, *Istorija evangel'sko-baptysts'kogo dvizhenija v Ukrainie. Materialy i dokumenty* [History of the Evangelical-Baptist Movement in Ukraine: Materials and Documents] (Bogomyssie, 1998), pp. 164, 178.

⁹ Domashovetz, *Ukrains'kyj jevangel's'ko-baptysts'kyj ruh v jogo 150-litnij juvilej, 1852–2002*, p. 28.

¹⁰ L. Zhabko-Potapovych, *Hristove svitlo v Ukraini. Istorija ukrainskogo evangel'sko-baptysts'kogo ruhu* [Christ's Light in Ukraine: History of the Ukrainian Evangelical-Baptist Movement] (Vseukrajinske Evangel'sko-Baptystske Bratstvo, 1991), p. 153–155.

¹¹ Reschetnikov and Sannikov, *Oglad istorii evangel'sko-baptysts'kogo bratstva v Ukraini*, p. 134.

in the churches.¹² I. S. Prokhanov, one of the leaders of the Baptist movement and head of the Evangelical Christians Union that united Ukrainian communities, saw a possibility of setting relations between his Union and this new movement in Orthodoxy. It is reasonable to assume that members of the Union, including those from Ukraine, were open to Prokhanov's ideas about developing relations with Orthodoxy.

In September 1922, on behalf of the Union, Prokhanov prepared the document *Evangelical Call* as his proposal to the authorities of Renovatism.¹³ The call included the steps that could be taken by Renovatism to purify the Orthodox Church. He suggested that the Orthodox Church had to correct such mistakes as teaching about icons, traditions, saints, relics, child baptism, and so forth. For example, in terms of the issue of mediators, there is only one, and, based on 1 Timothy 2:5, this is the Son of God, Jesus Christ. The most important issue for Prokhanov was to see the church made of 'living stones, of souls who consciously came to faith [...] and live righteously and piously'.¹⁴ Obviously, the intention was for Orthodox churches to be transformed into Evangelical Christian communities. In Andrey Puzynin's words, the followers of the Renovatist movement had 'only one simple option, namely, to become identical' to followers of those non-Orthodox churches.¹⁵

During the development of relations between Orthodox and Evangelical Christians in the 1920s (which was in the period of time

¹² D. A. Golovushkin, 'Russkoe pravoslavnoe obnovlenchestvo v 1922–1923 gg.: reformaciya ili cerkovnaya revolyuciya?' [Renovatism in Russian Orthodoxy in 1922–1923: Reformation or Religious Revolution?], *Izvestiya Irkutskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta* [News of the Irkutsk State University], 8, Seriya Politologiya. Religiovedenie (2014), pp. 232–240 (p. 236) <<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/russkoe-pravoslavnoe-obnovlenchestvo-v-1922-1923-gg-reformatsiya-ili-tserkovnaya-revolyutsiya/viewer>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

¹³ Vladimir Popov, "Evangel'skij klich" I. S. Prokhanova kak proekt i popytka realizatsii idej Reformatsii v dvizhenii pravoslavnyh obnovlentsev nachala 20-h gg. XX veka' [I. S. Prokhanov's 'Evangelical Call' as a Project and an Attempt to Realise the Idea of Reformation in the Renovatism Orthodox Movement at the Beginning of the 1920s of the XX Century], *Bogoslovskie razmysleniya* [Theological Reflections], 17 (2016), pp. 79–90 (p. 81). Electronic version available at <http://reflections.ceit-edu.info/article/view/79351/pdf_28>.

¹⁴ I. S. Prokhanov, *Novaya ili evangel'skaya zhizn': Sbornik* [New or Evangelical Life: Collection] (Hristianskij centr 'Logos', 2009), pp. 88–93.

¹⁵ Andrey Puzynin, *The Tradition of the Gospel Christians: A Study of Their Identity and Theology during the Russian, Soviet, and Post-Soviet Periods* (Pickwick, 2011), p. 160.

Prokhanov saw as the realisation of a prophecy he had previously received from God¹⁶), there was a place made for worship meetings in the church of Evangelical Christians in Moscow organised for different believers including Orthodox, and for an invitation to Prokhanov to preach in Orthodox Churches.¹⁷ Prokhanov developed friendly relations, in particular with Metropolitan Antonij. Writing about those relations, he mentions Antonij's delight in his collection of songs, 'Gusli', and the metropolitan's testimony before others at one meeting where he described Evangelical Christian communities as following Christ's teachings better than others.¹⁸

However, as Vladimir Popov notes, it should be said that it was not the case that all Orthodox followers from that movement then stopped seeing other Christian religious groups as sectarians. There were still those who thought that the Orthodox position should be careful in setting cooperation with such a group.¹⁹ According to Prokhanov's memories about his participation in one of the Orthodox congresses where he got the chance to preach and pray, while there were those who enjoyed it, there was also a voice of indignation, a voice Prokhanov describes thus: 'What do I see! The representatives of sectarians have the right to speak at this congress of the Orthodox Church! What would our holy fathers think if they were alive!'²⁰

If we consider the presence of the negative reaction from Orthodoxy in relation to Prokhanov's *Call*, we also hear Popov saying that such a reaction could not be any different. Prokhanov saw the whole Tradition in Orthodoxy as the problem, erroneously overlooking the fact that this Tradition included the Bible that was definitely so precious for Evangelical Christians. Prokhanov's understanding of Orthodoxy was not so deep in comparison to the one developed by another famous minister, Vladimir Martsinkovsky.²¹ Martsinkovsky

¹⁶ I. S. Prokhanov, *V kotle Roccii: Avtobiografija* [In the Caldron of Russia: Autobiography] (World Fellowship of Slavic Evangelical Christians, 1992), p. 84.

¹⁷ Popov, "Evangeliskij klich", pp. 84–85.

¹⁸ Prokhanov, *V kotle Roccii: Avtobiografija*, pp. 207–208.

¹⁹ Popov, "Evangeliskij klich", p. 86.

²⁰ Prokhanov, *V kotle Roccii: Avtobiografija*, p. 210.

²¹ Popov, "Evangeliskij klich", p. 86.

related to the Baptist movement²² without holding membership in a Baptist community. He was a ‘non-denominational Christian’, or a believer who did not limit himself to a particular denomination.²³ Martsinkovsky, who welcomed the Evangelical Christian Union’s activities with Orthodoxy, saw many valuable elements in the Orthodox Church. As two examples, we can mention his appreciation of some Orthodox theological insights and of their music. Martsinkovsky thought people could benefit from Protestantism as well as from Orthodoxy. It could be a new form of Russian Christianity. In terms of Protestantism, he considered such important elements as its emphasis on ‘conscious personal faith’.²⁴ This element was also substantial for Orthodoxy, where, as Martsinkovsky noted, it was still possible to find ‘alive people who passionately strived for the transformation of the church’.²⁵ As Martsinkovsky, born in Ukraine, contributed to the intellectual development of the Ukrainian Baptist movement through his scholarship,²⁶ we must leave space for his influence on at least a more restrained Ukrainian Baptist position related to Orthodox followers.

We can also note in the context of the mentioned negative reaction from the followers of Renovatism in relation to contacts with the Evangelical Christians Union, that some disapproval also came from other parts of the Baptist movement, particularly from the leadership of the Baptist Union. They worried about possible

²² See his testimony about relations with the Baptist movement without being a member of any specific community in Vladimir Martsinkovskij, *Zapiski verujuscego* [A Believer’s Notes] (Posoh, 2006), pp. 249, 275.

²³ Konstantin Harchenko, ‘Uchitel slovesnosti Vladimir Martsinkovskij (1884–1971)’ [A Teacher of Literature Vladimir Martsinkovskij (1884–1971)], *Bogomyслиe* [Thinking about God], 19 (2016), pp. 166–196 (p. 184). Electronic version available at <<http://almanah.bogomyслиe.com/article/view/121665/116679>>.

²⁴ Martsinkovskij, *Zapiski verujuscego*, pp. 246–249.

²⁵ Martsinkovskij, *Zapiski verujuscego*, p. 274.

²⁶ Lina Borodynska, ‘Ukrajinski schtryhy do portreta Volodymyra Martsinkovskogo’ [Ukrainian Brushstrokes to Vladimir Martsinkovskij’s Portrait], *Bogomyслиe* [Thinking about God], 19 (2016), pp. 146–165 (pp. 147, 154–157, 161). Electronic version available at <<http://almanah.bogomyслиe.com/article/view/108968/183676>>.

syncretism. In addition, Renovatism showed an interest in cooperation²⁷ with the communist government, which also in the longer term put pressure on the followers of this Orthodox movement.²⁸ At the same time, when we speak about pressure on or persecution of the whole of Orthodoxy in the USSR, it can also be noted that according to Ukrainian Baptist theologian Sergei Sannikov, the situation can be seen as both ironic and logical. Before the communist era, the Orthodox Church, seeing danger in so-called sectarians, concentrated on fighting them with State instruments and did not pay enough attention to the spirituality of the people of ‘Holy Rus’. In the end, the church was struck severely by these unconverted people²⁹ and not by those sectarians it was afraid of.³⁰ It was precisely those who were unconverted who laid the foundation in the USSR for church-state relations in 1917, when a decree was passed on their separation that destroyed the privileged position of Orthodoxy.³¹

In summary, we can say that there was the presence of tension as well as some marks of positive relations with Orthodoxy. We saw that some Orthodox followers viewed Baptists as a dangerous element and tried to make it more difficult for their movement to function. However, the picture of relations from that time is not without positive situations. We have the example of one of the leaders of the Baptist movement who developed friendly relations with some Orthodox followers from the Renovatist movement, even if the expectation was that Orthodoxy had to be changed or corrected.

²⁷ Ukrainian history is complicated and complex concerning how different church groups acted during the communist regime. Both Orthodox Christians and Baptists at times betrayed their faith and chose an atheistic worldview. Thus, we cannot speak only of a single church tradition choosing the wrong side in this time period. Gaponjuk, Pyrozshko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj ruh na Volyni v dokumentah i doljah ludej*, pp. 261–263.

²⁸ Popov, “Evangel'skij klich”, pp. 87–88.

²⁹ We hear that the Orthodox Church was the primary goal of persecution from the State in the 1920s. See S. V. Sannikov, *Populjarna istorija brystyjanstva. Dnadsjst stolit u dorozji* [The Popular History of Christianity: Twenty Centuries on the Road] (Sammit-Knih, 2012), p. 381.

³⁰ Sannikov, *Populjarna istorija brystyjanstva*, p. 376.

³¹ Tatjana Nikolskaja, *Russkij protestantizm i gosudarstvennaja vlast v 1905–1991 godah* [Russian Protestantism and the State in the Years 1905–1991] (Izdatelstvo Evropejskogo Universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2009), pp. 60–61.

1944–1991

When we observe the situation from 1944 onwards, we continue to be faced with negative cases. In 1945, there is again a report from the Volyn region, which was then a part of the construction of the USSR. This report is from a responsible person authorised by the State to examine religious groups. In December 1945, he noted the dislike of Orthodox clergy for followers of the Baptist movement. Orthodox clergy noted that sectarians, on the one hand, created problems for the Orthodox Church, while, on the other, they undermined the strength of the State, in particular through their pacifist approach to war. As for the responsible person, who was clearly on the side of the Orthodox Church, he saw the need for the involvement of Orthodox missionaries to improve the situation with sectarians.³²

We have a report from the same year from one such Orthodox missionary that deserves attention and concerns the situation in Volyn, the location for which he was responsible. L. A. Gaponjuk, M. O. Pyrozshko, and V. G. Chajka, in analysing the report, draw our attention to negative claims made by the missionary in relation to Baptist believers. The Baptists are presented as ‘unwelcome elements’ of society, as bothering Orthodoxy, or as connected with ‘dark forces’.³³

Seeing Baptists as a threat was a continuing attitude among the followers of the Orthodox tradition across the USSR territories of which Ukraine was a part. Tatjana Nikolskaja draws attention to Orthodox complaints (cases from 1951 until 1957) to State authorities (in Russian lands) about Baptists evangelising people among whom their believers were represented. Also, Baptists were faced with the label ‘heretics’.³⁴

Despite the negative examples, we also find positive data on relations between the two traditions in the USSR. There is the testimony of a person who converted to the Orthodox Church from the Baptist church (in the Russian territories), who states that there were no

³² Gaponjuk, Pyrozshko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj rub na Volyni v dokumentab i doljab ludej*, p. 194.

³³ Gaponjuk, Pyrozshko, and Chajka, *Jevangek's'kyj rub na Volyni v dokumentab i doljab ludej*, pp. 195–196.

³⁴ Nikolskaja, *Russkij protestantizm i gosudarstvennaja vlast v 1905–1991 godab*, p. 158.

conflicts between followers of Baptist and Orthodox churches during the anti-religious campaign under Nikita Khrushchev's leadership (1958–1964). We hear from this convert that as a child during that time, having lost their father, the family received support from some old women from the Orthodox church in addition to help from people who belonged to the Baptist church. Then, speaking of the time after this anti-religious campaign up to 1990, they mention the cooperation with some Orthodox followers in obtaining the Bible and about an absence of 'significant tensions', noting in addition that cooperation was possible because both groups were persecuted.³⁵

The episode above is in tune with other assessments of Orthodoxy under communism in those years. For example, Richard Wurbrand, a Lutheran pastor who ministered in the USSR and wrote of those years in the story of his life, described Orthodox underground churches as 'in reality evangelical, fundamental and very close to God', churches in which there were martyrs for their faith.³⁶

These marks of good relations with Orthodoxy might be viewed as the natural result of changes in the ideology of the State. The Communist regime was atheistic and cold towards all religious groups, including the Orthodox Church. The church could no longer expect the State to act on its side. This change might have pushed the transformation of the Orthodox mindset in relation to Protestant groups, though to only a certain extent. Sannikov, describing the situation of relations between Baptists and Orthodox believers in the late Soviet period, notes that on the one hand there was a time of absence of conflicts between them. On the other hand, there was still the presence of old negative perceptions from the Orthodox side in relation to Protestants as sectarians and their communities as without God's grace.³⁷

In continuing to analyse the issue of relations between these two traditions, it is also worth drawing attention to two momentous events

³⁵ Igor Pochekovskij, 'Ja byl protestantom v chetvertom pokolenii' [I Was a Fourth Generation Protestant], *Pravoslaviie* [Orthodoxy], 14 December 2015 <<https://pravoslaviie.ru/88730.html>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

³⁶ Richard Wurbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (Hodder and Stoughton, 2005), p. 139.

³⁷ Sergej Sannikov, personal email to the author, 18 November 2022.

that happened in the 1960s. The Orthodox Church and The Baptist Union (AUCECB) decided to join the World Council of Churches (WCC) and participate in that ecumenical movement.

The Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) joined the WCC in 1961, although it had condemned ecumenism in 1948.³⁸ This move to join happened as the ROC started to feel that others were becoming open to ‘convergence’ with Orthodoxy, although this is not to overlook the fact of the State’s influence on the ROC’s position in becoming a member of the WCC.³⁹ In the time before joining, there was a different Orthodox feeling in which the WCC was seen as an institution closed to their influence.⁴⁰ In general, the desire was to see others becoming close in their views to the Orthodox Church, taking, for example, the status of an autonomous unit.⁴¹ Concerning other Christians, the ROC saw them in the category of heretics and their communities as not having the status of being a real church.⁴²

The AUCECB joined the WCC in 1962.⁴³ The leadership of the Baptist Union spoke about the good opportunity to minister together with others in serving people’s needs globally or to ‘serve as bridge-builders between enemies’. The idea was to build fellowship rather than to merge into a single institutional church, though that fellowship created together the single voice of Christianity.⁴⁴ It should be noted that participation of the Baptist Union of the USSR was similarly not

³⁸ Oleg Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu brystyjanstvi* [Phenomenon of Ecumenism in Contemporary Christianity] (Natsionalnyj Pedagogichnyj Universytet Imeni M. P. Dragomanova, 2009), p. 56.

³⁹ Maksim Kozlov, *Pravoslavie i inoslavie* [Orthodoxy and Those Expressing Faith Differently] (Nikeja, 2009), pp. 3–153 (pp. 91, 94). See also Viktor Livtsov, ‘Uchastie RPTS v ekumenicheskom dvizhenii i ego vliyanie na duchovnuju zhizn SSSR (60-80-e gg. XX v.)’ [Participation of the Russian Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement and Its Influence on the Spiritual Life of the USSR (1960–1980s of the XX Century)], *Vlast* [Authority], 9 (2008), pp. 119–121 (pp. 120–121) <<https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/uchastie-rpts-v-ekumenicheskom-dvizhenii-i-ego-vliyanie-na-duhovnyu-zhizn-sssr-d60-80-e-gg-xx-v/viewer>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

⁴⁰ Kozlov, *Pravoslavie i inoslavie*, pp. 80–81.

⁴¹ Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu brystyjanstvi*, p. 59.

⁴² Kozlov, *Pravoslavie i inoslavie*, pp. 68–69.

⁴³ Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 64.

⁴⁴ Walter Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II* (Herald Press, 1981), p. 368.

without influence from the State as had been the case with the ROC. This is how the USSR tried to improve relations with the West, in particular by using religious platforms.⁴⁵ It could even be said that there was a place for the State having its agent (in service to the Committee for State Security) in the International Department of the Baptist Union, who tried to direct the Union from the inside to pursue the interests of the State.⁴⁶

Walter Sawatsky, analysing the participation of the ROC and the AUCECB in the WCC, observes that there was a place for some kind of cooperation between them in attempts to create a better image of their country at the international level. Sawatsky applied the expression 'junior partner' to the AUCECB that together with the ROC tried to hide the facts of state persecution in relation to believers.⁴⁷ Alexander de Chalandaeu, reflecting on USSR Baptist and Orthodox cooperation in the WCC, comments,

I have learned that in the session in Geneva and elsewhere at the World Council of Churches, the Evangelical Christian-Baptist delegation from the Soviet Union, before any vote is made, is always guided by the Russian Orthodox delegation which is led by the Metropolitan Nikodim and, together with the other Soviet delegations, they form a voting bloc.⁴⁸

We can note that the State's interest in international relations followed the death of Joseph Stalin and grew again later in the era of détente, which means 'relaxation' in French and referred to a cooling of tensions in relations between the USSR and the United States. Thus, the State played its role in making the Orthodox Church and the Baptist Union participants in the international ecumenical movement, with the perhaps unintended consequence of this also leading to Soviet inter-denominational activities. Among these inter-denominational activities in the USSR, were the local ecumenical meetings with representatives from the two traditions that took place in Moscow and Leningrad in

⁴⁵ Alexander de Chalandaeu, *The Christians in the U.S.S.R.* (Harper, 1978), p. 167.

⁴⁶ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*, p. 365.

⁴⁷ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*, pp. 368–369. On the ROC working for the State's purposes, see Philip Walters, 'The Russian Orthodox Church and Foreign Christianity: The Legacy of the Past', in *Prosefytism and Orthodoxy in Russia: The New War for Souls*, ed. by John Witte, Jr and Michael Bourdeaux (Orbis Books, 1999), pp. 31–50 (p. 43).

⁴⁸ De Chalandaeu, *The Christians in the U.S.S.R.*, p. 170.

1976, which both sides appreciated. We hear from Baptists about their acceptance of ecumenism as God's work to unite Christians, which, however, should not be understood as a way to make others look like your own tradition.⁴⁹ Also, in the Baptist Union in the 1970s and 1980s, there was an openness to giving room in their official journal *Bratskij vestnik* (Brotherly Herald) to Orthodox thinkers, finding their ideas good for edification.⁵⁰ Thus, while the State strived for its goals through pushing churches to participate in the international ecumenical movement, it laid the foundation for inter-denominational relations as such, seeing something positive in them.

However, there was also another effect from the State shaping the involvement of the Orthodox Church and Baptist Union in the ecumenical movement with the desire to reach a political goal of forming a positive image of the Soviet Union before others. Baptists living in the USSR expected rather different results at home. They wanted to hear the WCC speak about the real situation in their country concerning persecution, but it did not happen. As a result, it brought disappointment over participation in such an ecumenical institution. At the same time, it should be said that the negative view of ecumenical relations was not just due to the USSR government's involvement in the process of development of relations with others. Some USSR Baptists, in particular Ukrainians, fearful of ecumenism and also being under the influence of fundamentalists from abroad, looked at the WCC as 'the Babylonian whore which is to lead the church astray in the end of times'.⁵¹ We can surmise that Ukrainian Baptists were more sensitive to the possibility of the erosion of truth in the context of the pluralism that can be the reality of an ecumenical movement.

Thus, we see that the data on this period is filled with positive as well as negative stories. We heard testimony from the Baptist camp about good relations with Orthodox followers under communism. However, we also saw the presence of real tensions (as in the cases from Volyn). In addition, we saw that the old Orthodox view was still present, which saw Baptists as those in need of God's gift of grace acting in their

⁴⁹ De Chalanda, *The Christians in the U.S.S.R.*, pp. 167, 169.

⁵⁰ Prohorov, *Russkij baptizm i pravoslavie*, pp. 79, 94–95.

⁵¹ Sawatsky, *Soviet Evangelicals since World War II*, p. 369.

communities. Yet, it seems the great enemy that the churches of both traditions concentrated on was communism. We can note too, the Ukrainian Baptists' intense wariness towards relations tied to ecumenism, in which they probably saw the danger of loss of their identity.

1991–2024

The next situation we turn to is the period in Ukrainian history after 1991. The Baptist movement in modern Ukraine is represented primarily by three unions. The first is the All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christian Baptists (AUUC ECB, which separated from AUC ECB in 1990).⁵² This body is one of the largest Baptist Unions in Europe⁵³ and is the largest among all Protestant unions in Ukraine.⁵⁴

The second union is the International Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (IUC ECB). It emerged in the USSR and was known previously as the Council of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (CCECB). When the USSR collapsed, this Union decided not to form national bodies but to continue to be unified and present in different countries.⁵⁵ The third is the Brotherhood of Independent Churches and Missions Evangelical Christian Baptists of Ukraine (BICM ECBU, which was the Brotherhood of Independent Churches and Missions in Soviet times).⁵⁶ In addition to these three unions, there are other independent Baptist churches in Ukraine. They

⁵² A. Kolodnyj and P. Jarotskyj, *Reformatsija v Ukrajinі: Poshyrennja rannogo protestantyzmu i stanovlennja baptizmu*, [Reformation in Ukraine: Expansion or Early Protestantism and Formation of Baptism] (Samit-Knyga, 2017), pp. 400–401.

⁵³ Baptist Union of Great Britain, 'Ukraine Baptists: Responding to the War "with Compassion and Open Hearts"', *Baptist Times*, 16 March 2022 <https://www.baptisttimes.co.uk/Articles/631671/Ukraine_Baptists_responding.aspx> [accessed 18 September 2024].

⁵⁴ VST's YeHB, 'Pro Soiuz YeHB' [About Union of ECB], *Baptyst*, n.d. <<https://www.baptyst.com/pro-soyuz/>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

⁵⁵ Kolodnyj and Jarotskyj, *Reformatsija v Ukrajinі: Poshyrennja rannogo protestantyzmu i stanovlennja baptizmu*, p. 402.

⁵⁶ Kolodnyj and Jarotskyj, *Reformatsija v Ukrajinі: Poshyrennja rannogo protestantyzmu i stanovlennja baptizmu*, pp. 402–403.

were created with assistance from different mission organisations and foreign missionaries.⁵⁷

Orthodoxy in Ukraine similarly finds expression in more than a single church form. Two churches form the largest groupings. One, which for a long time was considered the biggest, is the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC; Moscow Patriarchate).⁵⁸ This church is historically tied with the ROC or, as Kateryna Pano describes, is in reality ‘in the sphere of influence of the Moscow Patriarchate’.⁵⁹ However, in 2022, as a result of the war between Russia and Ukraine, the UOC decided to soften connections with the ROC, attentive to the fact that it supports Russian aggression.⁶⁰ A 2022 poll indicates that the UOC may have begun to experience a loss of supporters. Many followers of Orthodoxy decided to choose another of the largest Orthodox Churches, the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) instead of the UOC.⁶¹ This tendency started to grow after the UOC fell under law Number 8371 (20 August 2024) against ‘religious organisations’ connected with Russia. The UOC’s connections with the ROC are seen

⁵⁷ Kolodnyji and Jarotskyj, *Reformatsija v Ukrajinii: Poshyrennja rannogo protestantyżmu i stanovlennja baptyżmu*, p. 403.

⁵⁸ Derzhavna sluzba Ukrajinj z pytan etnopolityky ta svobody sovisti, ‘Statystyka tserkov i relihiinykh orhanizatsii v Ukraini stanom na 1 sichnia 2021 roku’ [Statistics of Churches and Religious Organisations in Ukraine as of January 1, 2021], *RISU*, 1 July 2021 <https://risu.ua/statistika-cerkov-i-religijnih-organizacij-v-ukrayini-stanom-na-1-sichnya-2021-roku_n118842> [accessed 8 June 2024].

⁵⁹ Kateryna Pano, *Motyvy ta naslidky vtruchannia vlady u mizhkonfesiine protystoiannia v Ukraini* [Motives and Consequences of Government Intervention in Interfaith Conflict in Ukraine] (Kiev: n. pub., 2004), p. 6.

⁶⁰ Roman Romanuk, ‘UPT’s viddylitsja vid RPT’s administrativno, ale zberezhe duhovne spilkuvannja — dzherela’ [The UOC (Moscow Patriarchate) Will Separate from the ROC Administratively, but Will Retain Spiritual Communication — Sources], *Ukrayinska Pravda* [Ukrainian Truth], 27 May 2022 <<https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/05/27/7349010/>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

⁶¹ Jaroslav Pryshepa, ‘Lyshe 4% ukrayintiv zarahovujut sebe do virjan Moskovskogo Patriarhatu’ [Only 4% of Ukrainians Consider Themselves Believers of the Moscow Patriarchate], *Suspilne* [Public], 5 July 2022 <<https://suspilne.media/268305-lise-4-ukrainciv-zarahovuut-sebe-do-viran-moskovskogo-patriarhatu/>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

as creating a threat for Ukraine.⁶² As for the OCU, it received a tomos⁶³ of autocephaly, or official status of independence, signed by Patriarch Bartholomew in 2019.⁶⁴ In addition to these two main Orthodox churches there are also others.⁶⁵

Regarding church relations after 1991, Oleg Kiselov states that at the beginning of the 1990s, all churches were competitors who, after the fall of communism, tried to gain more benefits strictly for themselves from the current favourable situation. Churches were certainly not interested in such a phenomenon as ecumenism, especially remembering the State's control in Soviet times over the churches' participation in the ecumenical movement which helped the State to achieve its own goals.⁶⁶

Miroslav Volf, analysing the situation in Eastern Europe after the USSR collapsed, speaks about the Orthodox desire to return to the place they had before communist rule. They wanted to return to being the state church and felt offended when they saw foreign missionaries from other churches evangelising people in their countries. In the Orthodox view, these missionaries did not pay attention to the fact that people had already encountered Christianity through their local church tradition. If missionaries wanted to evangelise, they needed to go to non-

⁶² 'Rada uchvalyla zakon pro zaboronu UPTS (MP) v Ukraini – deputaty' [Parliament Passed the Law on Banning the UOC (MP) in Ukraine: Parliamentarians' Overview], Radiosvoboda, 20 August 2024 <<https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-moskovskyy-patriarkhat-zaborona/33085530.html>> [accessed 21 August 2024].

⁶³ This word is of Greek origin and its meaning is 'a section'. Used in Orthodoxy it refers to 'a scroll or a small book, but one with a very specific purpose — it codifies a decision by a holy synod, or council of Orthodox bishops'. Bermet Talant, 'Ukraine's word of 2018: Tomos', *Kyiv Post*, 21 December 2018 <<https://www.kyivpost.com/post/10821>> [accessed 7 October 2024].

⁶⁴ PTsU, 'Istoriya' [History], pomisna, n.d. <<https://www.pomisna.info/uk/tserkva/istoriya/>> [accessed 8 June 2024]. As a further note on autocephaly, this word in Greek consists of two components: αὐτός (self) and κεφαλή (head). In Orthodoxy it speaks about independence of a particular church from others. Arkadii Zhukovsky, 'Autocephaly', *Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine*, 2005 <<https://www.encyclopediaofukraine.com>> [accessed 27 October 2024]. See also on autocephaly Andrew Sorokowski, 'Autocephaly in a Nutshell', *RISU*, 3 May 2018 <https://risu.ua/en/autocephaly-in-a-nutshell_n90612> [accessed 27 October 2024].

⁶⁵ Derzhavna sluzhba Ukrainy z pytan etnopolityky ta svobody sovisti, 'Statystyka tserkov i relihiinykh orhanizatsii v Ukraini stanom na 1 sichnia 2021 roku'.

⁶⁶ Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi*, pp. 94–95.

Christian countries.⁶⁷ It can be noted that when we hear Orthodox followers tie their tradition to a particular land, it can be in reference to the concept of canonical territory. The idea is that some territories within their nations belong to a particular church, and there is no need for evangelisation from other churches.⁶⁸ As Kateryna Pano shows, such an understanding is common for the UOC, which remembers that Ukrainian territories once belonged to the ROC and now logically should belong to them.⁶⁹ Any attempt to share the gospel from non-Orthodoxy in such a context is seen in the category of proselytism.⁷⁰ However, it should be noted that there are still Orthodox voices who think that it is wrong for the church to concentrate simply on the issue of territory belonging to a particular confession rather than on nurturing its people in the Christian faith.⁷¹

In examining Orthodox approaches to Protestants in Ukraine and to Baptists in particular, the most important event to pay attention to relates to 2000, when the ROC, as the church attempting to rebuild past connections with the State in the new millennium and in post-communist times,⁷² passed a document on relations with others. This document, as Oleg Kiselov notes, is likely to also serve as a guide for the UOC that continues to have close connections with the ROC.⁷³

⁶⁷ Miroslav Volf, 'Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond: Mission and Proselytism in Eastern Europe', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 20.1 (1996), pp. 26–31 (pp. 26–27), doi:10.1177/239693939602000107.

⁶⁸ Lesja Kovalenko, 'Ponyattya "kanonichna terytoriya" u cerkovnomu pravi' [The Concept 'Canonical Territory' in Church Law], in *Ukraina: Chyya kanonichna terytoriya?* [Ukraine: Whose Canonical Territory?] ed. by Myroslav Marynovych and others (Ukrainskyj Katolyckyj Universytet, 2006), pp. 2–5 (pp. 3–4).

⁶⁹ Pano, *Mofyy ta naslidky vtruchannia vlady u mizhkonfesiine protystoiannia v Ukraini*, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu brystyjanstvi*, p. 59.

⁷¹ Andrii Jurash, 'Religieznavchi aspekty panyattya "kanonichna terytoriya"' [Religious Studies Aspects of the Concept 'Canonical Territory'], in *Ukraina: Chyya kanonichna terytoriya?* [Ukraine: Whose Canonical Territory?] Myroslav Marynovych and others (Ukrainskyj Katolyckyj Universytet, 2006), pp. 6–9 (p. 9).

⁷² S. V. Sannikov, *Fundament: Nachatki uchenija* [Foundation: The Elements of Teaching], 3rd edn (Odessa: n. pub., 2012), p. 390.

⁷³ Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu brystyjanstvi*, p. 97. For the influence of the document on the UOC, see Ivan Havano, 'Rozdumy nad "ekumenichnoiu" kontseptsieiu Rosiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy' [Thoughts on the 'Ecumenical' Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church], *Boboslovnia* [Theologies], 65 (2001), pp. 110–121 (p. 110).

There is an emphasis in this document, called *Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church toward Other Christian Confessions* (hereafter *Basic Principles*),⁷⁴ that the Orthodox Church is the only one true Church of Christ from which others are separated, in particular Protestant churches.⁷⁵ This is something that can be described through ‘Orthodox Exclusiveness’, according to Andrej Murzin (Baptist) and Ivan Havano (Greek-Catholic).⁷⁶ The Orthodox Church does not see any reason to speak about the equality of all churches. Others should join Orthodoxy through ‘repentance, conversion and renewal’, accepting right beliefs definitely in an Orthodox understanding.⁷⁷ Regarding right beliefs, in another document from the ROC published in 2005, we hear that others should accept the vision according to which the Orthodox Church ‘maintains the teaching taught by Christ the Saviour to His disciples fully and without any error’.⁷⁸

Despite the fact that they believe the ideal church is Orthodox, according to *Basic Principles*, other churches can still be seen as places where God’s grace works, though not fully.⁷⁹ Thus, we have the fact of Orthodox recognition that grace is working (even if partially) in other churches on the one hand, while on the other there is the ongoing emphasis on the position of ‘only saving Orthodoxy’. In such a situation, the logical step for the non-Orthodox churches, who have received

⁷⁴ RPTs, ‘Osnovnye printsipy otnosheniya k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi’ [Basic Principles of the Attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church toward the Other Christian Confessions], mospat, n.d. <<https://mospat.ru/ua/documents/177-osnovnye-printsipy-otnosheniya-k-inoslaviyu-russkoy-pravoslavnoj-tserkvi/>> [accessed 8 June 2024]. Available in English on the web pages of the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church that can be accessed through Orthodox Europe at <<http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/7/5/1.aspx>>.

⁷⁵ RPTs, ‘Osnovnye printsipy otnosheniya k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi’, 1.1, 1.13.

⁷⁶ Andrej Murzin, *Dialog s pravoslaviam: Govorite istinu s ljubiju, nabjudaja za soboj* [Dialogue with Orthodoxy: Speak Truth with Love, Looking for Yourself] (Knigonosha, 2014), p. 22; Havano, ‘Rozdumy nad “Ekumenichnoiu” kontseptsiiu Rosiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy’, p. 112.

⁷⁷ RPTs, ‘Osnovnye printsipy otnosheniya k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi’, 2.7, 4.4.

⁷⁸ Komissija Moskovskogo Patriarhata i Russkaja Zarubezhnaja Tserkva, ‘Ob Otnoshenii Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi k Inoslavnym Veroispovedanijam i Mezkhkossionalnym Organizatsijam’ [About the Relation of the Orthodox Church to Different Confessions and Interfaith Organisations], in *Pravoslavie i inoslavie* [Orthodoxy and Those Expressing Faith Differently] (Nikeja, 2009), by Maksim Kozlov, pp. 154–158 (pp. 155–156). The document can also be seen in the original language at Sedmitza <<https://www.sedmitza.ru/lib/text/429880/>>.

⁷⁹ RPTs, ‘Osnovnye printsipy otnosheniya k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi’, 1.15.

some grace in advance, would be that they should join Orthodoxy where that grace will be realised fully.⁸⁰ The document notes the following important elements for recognising grace in others: ‘The Word of God, faith in Christ as God and Saviour who came in the flesh [...] and sincere piety.’⁸¹

Andrej Murzin, examining relations between Protestants and Orthodox followers in Ukraine, comments that according to the document *Basic Principles*, if Protestants for example recognise Christ as God and human, they should not be described as a sect but as ‘praising God in a different way’ (‘inoslavie’ in Russian).⁸² However, not everything is so clear with this term. As Viktorija Lubashchenko notes, ‘inoslavie’ together with ‘sectarians’ and ‘those who believe differently’ (‘inovirtsi’ in Ukrainian), all express an Orthodox ‘anti-sectarian’ position against Protestants.⁸³ Also, we should not ignore such a negative word as ‘heretics’ which can linger behind the term ‘inoslavie’.⁸⁴

Orthodox voices like theologian Maksim Kozlov, responding to the interpretations of these words, tries to argue that the word ‘heretic’ (from the Greek *haíresis*) in particular should not be understood as ‘an abusive concept; heretic is simply someone who is separated from the unity, the fullness of the Universal Church’.⁸⁵ The same is true with the word ‘sect’, which, according to Sergej Savchenko, is simply a technical term which does not have to immediately imply an offensive emphasis. Everything will depend on the closeness of a particular community to truth. Yet, the reality is that for an ordinary Orthodox follower, there is no difference when comparing Baptists with Jehovah’s Witness

⁸⁰ Havano, ‘Rozdumy nad “ekumenichnoiu” kontseptsiiu Rosiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy’, p. 114.

⁸¹ RPTs, ‘Osnovnye printsipy otnosheniia k inoslaviju Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi’, 1.16.

⁸² Murzin, *Dialog s Pravoslaviami: Govorite istinu s ljubovju, nabjudaja za sobojnu*, pp. 22–23.

⁸³ Viktorija Lubashchenko, ‘Protestantskyj pogljad: za i proty’ [Protestant View: Standing for and against], in *Sotsijalno zorientovani dokumenty Ukrajinjskoi Greko-Katolytskoi Tserkvy* [Socially Oriented Documents of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church] ed. by Lesja Kovalenko (Vydavnytstvo Ukrajinjskogo Katolytskogo Universytetu, 2008), pp. 635–645 (p. 645).

⁸⁴ Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hristyjanstvi*, p. 57.

⁸⁵ Kozlov, *Pravoslavie i inoslavie*, p. 41.

communities; both can be seen as sects with the negative connotations of this word.⁸⁶

The ROC, as Ivan Havano shows, can be quite uncomfortable with the existence of others and with the ecumenical movement in particular. Havano analyses Orthodox sources published close to the date of *Basic Principles* and draws our attention to the fact that Protestants, in addition to Catholics, are seen more as enemies. They are associated with the West, which is seen as a threat to the Russian Federation. There is a call in the Orthodox Church to be careful with ecumenism which can water down the truth. We might note that even Orthodox participation in the ecumenical movement is about proclaiming the truth to others.⁸⁷

When we focus on another large Orthodox Church in Ukraine, the OCU, we see that the Church also tries to ‘occupy a dominant position in Ukrainian Christianity’, particularly among all Orthodox churches.⁸⁸ According to Lubashchenko, there are some signs of antipathy found in this church towards religious freedom as the possibility for a person to choose non-Orthodoxy, and this dislike can frighten Protestants.⁸⁹

The views the OCU has in relation to others can be analysed through the lens of the document *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (hereafter *For the Life of the World*)⁹⁰ prepared by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 2019. This is the approach recommended by Rostyslav Vorobii, an OCU priest who holds the

⁸⁶ Sergej Savchenko, “‘Eretiki”, “sektanty”, “idolopoklonniki”. O predelax politkorrektnosti v mezkhkonnessionalnyh otnoshenijah’ [‘Heretics’, ‘Sectarians’, ‘Idol Worshippers’: On the Limits of Political Correctness in Interfaith Relations], *Religija v Ukrajinі* [Religion in Ukraine], 30 November 2011 <<https://www.religion.in.ua/main/analitica/page,1,1,13345-eretiki-sektanty-idolopoklonniki-o-predelax-politkorrektnosti-v-mezhkonnessionalnyx-otnosheniyax.html>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

⁸⁷ Havano, ‘Rozdumy nad “ekumenichnoiu” kontseptsieiu Rosiiskoi Pravoslavnoi Tserkvy’, pp. 111, 117–118.

⁸⁸ Pano, *Motyry ta naslidky vtrubannia vlady u mizhkonfesiine protystoiannia v Ukraini*, p. 11.

⁸⁹ Lubashchenko, ‘Protestantskyj pogljad: za i proty’, p. 645.

⁹⁰ Ecumenical Patriarchate, ‘For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church’, goarch, n.d. <<https://www.goarch.org/ru/social-ethos?>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

position of secretary of the Synodal Commission on Inter-Christian Relations.⁹¹

The document, attending to ecumenical relations in Section VI, also identifies the Orthodox Church with the Church of Christ.⁹² Radu Bordeianu describes the Orthodox Church as the one church that is church ‘in the fullest sense’.⁹³ The Orthodox Church tries to show ‘the beauty of Orthodoxy’ to others and calls them ‘to the fullness of the faith’⁹⁴ which definitely abides in Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, the Church is open to being enriched by others who are described in the category of brothers and sisters. There is willingness from the Ecumenical Patriarchate to ask for forgiveness from those in this category in case there is any guilt, seeking for unity as the final end.⁹⁵ It can be noted regarding the category usage of brothers and sisters that while the ROC document does not speak about brotherly/sisterly relations, the vocabulary ‘brothers’ in relation to Protestants is present among the followers of the UOC too, even though this church is under the influence of the ROC.⁹⁶

In turning to relations between churches and their followers in particular locations, we have an episode that occurred in Volyn, where in one village, the UOC tried to prevent Baptists from performing a baptism in a local lake. One Orthodox priest specifically spoke about canonical territory in relation to the place for baptism. In addition, he expressed dissatisfaction with the law on freedom for all religious denominations.⁹⁷ S. Tretjak, speaking about the Baptist church in Lubny

⁹¹ Rostyslav Vorobii, personal email to the author, 15 May 2024.

⁹² Ecumenical Patriarchate, ‘For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church’, §50.

⁹³ Radu Bordeianu, ‘Reciprocity and Particularity in Orthodox Ecumenical Relations’, *Journal of Orthodox Christian Studies*, 5.1 (2022), pp. 124–126 (p. 124) <<https://muse.jhu.edu/pub/1/article/875108/pdf>> [accessed 27 September 2024].

⁹⁴ Ecumenical Patriarchate, ‘For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church’, §51.

⁹⁵ Ecumenical Patriarchate, ‘For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church’, §51–52.

⁹⁶ Svjato-Troitskij Ioninskij Monastyr, *Otvety pravoslavnyh na voprosy protestantov* [Orthodox Answers to Protestants’ Questions] (Svjato-Troitskij Ioninskij Monastyr, n.d.), p. 3.

⁹⁷ Dmitro Dovbush, ‘Konflikt dovkola ozera: Yak na Volyni pravoslavni baptistam hrestytsysa zavazhaly [Conflict Around the Lake: How the Orthodox in Volyn tried to Prevent Baptism as

village (Poltava region), describes the Orthodox attitude to Baptists in this location as ‘aggressive’. Such an attitude is also adopted by many people who see Orthodoxy to be their traditional religion.⁹⁸

We should say that it is not only Orthodoxy that can behave badly in relation to Baptist churches; the reality is that Baptists can behave similarly towards Orthodoxy. Ukrainian Baptist theologian Mihajlo Cherenkov notes that Baptists in post-Soviet countries would, if they had the possibility to control the educational area in their countries, remove the right of Orthodoxy to teach religion in schools. Cherenkov makes the observation that Baptists are only ready to defend religious freedom if it relates to their movement.⁹⁹ Besides, Baptists can be among those Protestants Leonid Kishkovskij describes, based on his Eastern European experience, who ‘often criticise hardly or even offensively’ everything related to the Orthodox.¹⁰⁰ Protestant criticism can be expressed in the Ukrainian context with the following words: ‘There are only dead traditions, ceremonial religion.’¹⁰¹ As Sergej Savchenko notes regarding Protestants in post-Soviet countries, they can be offended to hear others connecting them to being a sect. Yet, they can do the same in relation to others, including Orthodoxy. Orthodox followers can be described as ‘idol worshipers’ or ‘conjurers with relics and icons’.¹⁰²

Delivered by Baptists], *RISU*, 5 July 2017 <https://risu.ua/konflikt-dovkola-ozera-yak-na-volini-pravoslavni-baptistam-hrestitisya-zavazhali_n85471> [accessed 8 June 2024].

⁹⁸ S. Tretjak, “Tserkva “Nadija” (m. Lubny) [The Church of Hope (Lubny city), in *Vslid za Hristom: Narysy z istoriji evangelsko-baptistskyh tserkov v Ukraini* [Following Christ: Essays on the History of Evangelical-Baptist Churches in Ukraine], book 1, ed. by Oleksand Bezpartochnyj (Kremenčuk: Hrystyjanska Zorja, 2007), pp. 223–225 (p. 225).

⁹⁹ M. N. Cherenkov, ‘Svoboda sovesti v istorii i praktike baptizma: Deklaracii i realnost’ [Freedom of Conscience in the History and Practice of the Baptist Movement: Declarations and Reality], in *400-letie baptizma i princip svobody sovesti: Istoricheskiej, bogoslonskiej i sociokulturnyj kontekst* [400-years of Baptist Movement and the Principle of Religious Conscience: Historical, Theological and Social-Cultural Context], ed. by S. Sannikov and others (Odessa: n. pub., 2010), pp. 99–106 (p. 102).

¹⁰⁰ Leonid Kishkovskij, ‘Vidpovid Miroslavu Volfu’ [The Response to Miroslav Volf], in *Religijna svoboda i prava lyudyny* [Religious Freedom and Human Rights], ed. by Myroslav Marynovych and Lesja Kovalenko, vol. 3 (Monastyr Svyato-Ivanivska Lavra ta Vydavnychyj Viddil ‘Svichado’, 2004), pp. 411–414 (p. 411).

¹⁰¹ Murzin, *Dialog s pravoslaviem: Govorite istinu s ljubovju, nabjudaja za soboj*, p. 8.

¹⁰² Savchenko, “Eretiki”, “sektanty”, “idolopoklonniki”. O predelah politikorrektnosti v mezhkonnfessionalnyh otnoshenijah’.

Despite the existence of negative experiences in relations between traditions, it is certainly possible to speak about positive relations as well. For example, we can mention the call to enrichment between traditions that has been made by Ukrainian Baptist theologian Mihajlo Cherenkov in his book *Vidkrytyj protestantizm* [Open Protestantism].¹⁰³ At the same time, it is interesting to observe that the publisher of Cherenkov's book was one of the Orthodox educational institutions in Ukraine. Cherenkov is even mentioned among the lecturers of this university.¹⁰⁴ This can be seen as a mark of openness and the overcoming of 'haughtiness', which, according to Sannikov in his analysis of Orthodoxy in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe, started to appear at the end of the twentieth century. Sannikov testifies with gladness to the 'return of the idea of personal faith and personal experience of communication with God for every Christian' in Orthodoxy, especially in view of the negative approach to non-Orthodoxy that can be seen in the ROC.¹⁰⁵

Another positive experience to mention is the cooperation that takes place at such formations as the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations (UCCRO), which has been in existence since 1996. The UCCRO has many different interests, among which are the dialogue between different religious bodies and church and state relations.¹⁰⁶ It should be noted, however, that while the UCCRO can look like an ecumenical body, it is not such an entity. When the UCCRO was created, it was not that churches or religious organisations themselves looked for any kind of unity and decided to create such a platform in which to work. The initiative came purely from the State's interest in the development of relations with groups representing the religious segment of society.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, we should be careful not to connect the 'constant dialogue' spoken about by the head of the OCU

¹⁰³ Mihajlo Cherenkov *Vidkrytyj protestantizm* [Open Protestantism] (Vidkrytyj Pravoslavnyj Universytet Sviatoi Sofii-Premudrosti; Duh i Litera, 2017). See specifically the section 'Protestantism and Historical Churches', pp. 79–88.

¹⁰⁴ Vidkrytyj Pravoslavnyj Universytet Sviatoi Sofii-Premudrosti, 'Lectory', oou, n.d. <<https://oou.org.ua/lectors/>> [accessed 7 September 2024].

¹⁰⁵ Sannikov, *Fundament: Nachatki uchenija*, pp. 425–427.

¹⁰⁶ UCCRO, 'Information about UCCRO', vrciro, n.d. <<https://vrciro.org.ua/en/council/info>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

¹⁰⁷ Kiselov, *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu hrystyjanstvi*, p. 105.

in the context of the UCCRO's work¹⁰⁸ with ecumenical dialogue. Baptists in particular try to stay away from ecumenical initiatives. This is what the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic scholar Myroslav Marynovych discusses, noting that 'some Protestant groups (Ukrainian Baptists, for example) even restrain themselves from taking part in ecumenical events trying to avoid involvement in the doctrinally foreign projects of other denominations'.¹⁰⁹ This echoes the attitude to ecumenism discussed in the second section of this article. If we speak about dialogue in the UCCRO, it is more in the sense of discussing practical issues. For example, in December 2006, the State was asked not to allow same-sex marriage to gain rights at the level of legislation. From the UCCRO's perspective, legislation should support only traditional families, though the Council also added that it was against discrimination in relation to those having a different vision of the family.¹¹⁰

In summary, we can note that this period shows the continuation of more positive dynamics in relations between Orthodox and Baptist followers. We did not find evidence of such harsh pressure from Orthodox churches towards Baptists in independent Ukraine as was common during the time of the Russian Empire. However, some tensions are obviously still present. Followers of both Baptist and Orthodox churches can accuse each other of being mistaken and of trying to convert others to their own tradition. Nevertheless, there are

¹⁰⁸ PTsU, 'Mytropolyt Epifanij zustrivsjja z naukovtsjamy j spetsialistamy z pytan religiji v Dzhordzhtaunskomu universyteti u Vashyngtoni' [Metropolitan Epiphanius Met with Scholars and Specialists in Religion at Georgetown University in Washington], pomisna, 25 October 2019 <<https://www.pomisna.info/uk/vsi-novyny/mytropolyt-epifanij-zustrivsjja-z-naukovtsjamy-j-spetsialistamy-z-pytan-religiji-v-dzhordzhtaunskomu-universyteti-u-vashyngtoni/>> [accessed 8 June 2024].

¹⁰⁹ Myroslav Marynovych, *An Ecumenist Analyzes the History and Prospects of Religion in Ukraine* (Ukrainian Catholic University Press, 2004), p. 43.

¹¹⁰ Vseukrajinska Rada Tserkov i religijnyh organizatsij, 'Vidkrytyj lyst Vseukrajinskoji Rady Tserkov i Religijnyh Organizatsij do Verhovnoji Rady Ukrainy z pryvodu initsiatyv legalizatsiji tak zvanyh odnostatevyh shlubiv (reestratsiji odnostatevyh partnerstv)' [Open Letter of the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations to the Supreme Council of Ukraine Concerning the Initiative on Legalisation for so Called Same-Sex Marriages (Legitimation of Same-Sex Partners)], in *Sotsijalno zorientovani dokumenty Ukrajinskoji Greko-Katolytskoji Tserkery* [Socially Oriented Documents of Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church], ed. by Lesja Kovalenko (Vydavnytstvo Ukrajinskogo Katolytskogo Universytetu, 2008), pp. 503–505.

also the marks of cooperation, as, for example, in the case of the UCCRO or Mihajlo Cherenkov and the Open Orthodox University.

Conclusion

As we finish our quest to discover positive changes in relations between Baptist and Orthodox traditions since 1917 as a contrast to times in the Russian Empire, we can now summarise the evidence of such changes. The time of severe persecution on the part of the Orthodox Church towards Baptists in general certainly ceased with the end of the Russian Empire.

We saw how in the USSR the Orthodox Church lost its primacy within the State, passing with other religious groups through persecution. In this period, some Orthodox followers became open to Protestants. As a result, we heard about I. S. Prokhanov, a Baptist movement leader responsible for the Evangelical Christians Union, who developed positive relations with the Renovationism movement in Orthodoxy. Then, we have testimony from Baptists about cooperation particularly in obtaining the Bible in communist times.

Contemporary history continues to speak about positive relations as well. We find Baptist theologian Mihajlo Cherenkov's view that each tradition can enrich others. It is important to note his cooperation with an Orthodox educational institution. We also cannot ignore the usage by the Orthodox of the expression 'brothers' in relation to Protestants. In addition, Orthodox and Baptist Churches have also cooperated in the UCCRO, advocating Christian values.

Despite the presence of the positive experience of relations, the negatives have also remained. We found many cases of tensions in western Ukraine. Those that involve violence are especially unpleasant. Up to the present, each tradition has been ready to concentrate on its exclusivity and the mistakes of the other, and it should also be acknowledged that the Baptists themselves have distanced from ecumenism, which they consider could lead to a loss of true faith tied with their identity.