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## THE ETHNO-MENTAL NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY IN UKRAINE: BETWEEN THE EAST AND THE WEST

*The present article deals with the ethnical and mental nature of Christianity in Ukraine regarding the country's geographical position. Also, the research's material deals with borderland issues, the territory linked to the concept of the symbolic whole, which creates its cultural type – the space of cross-cultural communication.*

*Attention is given to the formation by different churches of different views on a man and their mission in the world. The specific state-building process in the Ukrainian region, considering the peculiarities of the dominant religion, is explained.*

*The article also focuses on the mental changes that Christianization caused to the local population. The concepts of the "East" and the "West," "cultural heritage," and the cultural and mental essence of this region are specified.*

*The article studies ethnical shades of Ukrainian Christianity, distinguishing it from others, primarily Russian. Confessional pluralism is considered, which is the result of Ukrainian lands being in the cultural and political circle of other states. Adopting Eastern Christianity as a determinant of forming the local population's mentality and moral values landmarks has been critically considered.*

*Attention is given to other religions presented in the Ukrainian region, primarily Islam and Buddhism. Briefly, it provides an understanding of the Crimean peninsula's modern religious and cultural environment – the region of the long-lasting coexistence of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.*

*The religious life of Ukraine is considered among the critical cultural and social processes that took place at different times in Europe. The brightest mental types of Ukrainians of past eras are highlighted, and the main features of the existence of Ukrainians between the imperial "poles" are also formulated. The materials of the article will be helpful to everyone who wants to get a conceptual view of Ukrainian Christianity and the local socio-humanitarian environment.*

**Keywords:** *Ukrainian Orthodoxy, confessional pluralism, church dialogue, ethnomentality, Ukrainian region, cultural heritage, baptism of Rus.*

## ЕТНОМЕНТАЛЬНИЙ ХАРАКТЕР ХРИСТІЯНСТВА В УКРАЇНІ: МІЖ СХОДОМ І ЗАХОДОМ

*В статті розглядається етноментальний характер християнства в Україні в контексті географічного розташування українських земель. Матеріали дослідження зачіпають проблему порубіжних земель – простору, який пов'язаний з концептом символічного цілого і який створює власний культурний тип – простір для міжкультурної комунікації.*

*Акцентується увага на формуванні різними церквами відмінних поглядів на людину та її місію в світі.*

*Уточнюються поняття «Сходу» та «Заходу», «культурної спадщини», а також висвітлюється культурно-ментальна сутність цього регіону.*

*Пояснюються специфіка державотворення в українського регіону з урахуванням особливостей панівної релігії. Звертається увага на ментальні зсуви, яких зазнало місцеве населення в процесі християнізації.*

*Досліджується етнічне забарвлення українського християнства, яке відрізняє його від інших, насамперед – російського. Розглядається конфесійний плюралізм, який є результатом перебування українських земель в культурно-політичному колі інших держав. Критично розглядається прийняття східного християнства як детермінанти формування ментальності та морально-ціннісних орієнтирів місцевого населення.*

*Приділено увагу іншим релігіям, представленим в українському регіоні, насамперед ісламу та буддизму. Побіжно надається уявленнь про сучасне релігійно-культурне середовище Кримського півострову – місця тривалого співжиття українців та кримських татар.*

*Релігійне життя України розглядається з-поміж важливих культурно-соціальних процесів, які в різні часи відбувалися в Європі. Висвітлені найяскравіші ментальні типи українців минулих епох, а також сформульовані основні особливості існування українства між імперськими «полюсами». Матеріали статті будуть корисні всім, хто бажає отримати концептуальний погляд на українське християнство та місцеве соціогуманітарне середовище.*

**Ключові слова:** українське православ'я, конфесійний плюралізм, церковний діалог, етноментальність, український регіон, культурна спадщина, хрещення Русі.

**Introduction.** The task of humanities is to reflect on reality, define public discourses, and form a nation's ethnomentality through educational institutions. In the spiritual and education spheres, an ethnos retains its historical memory and recreates itself in the next generations by transmitting the key ideas that differentiate it from others. Worldview orientations, peculiarities of behavior, and specific ethics in its representatives' different spheres of activity are preserved and transmitted.

In Ukraine's recent history, it is not difficult to identify the starting point of the two primary discourses: "Ukraine is not Russia" and "Ukraine is Europe." The geographical position of Ukrainian lands and related culture and historical context dictates such a direction of the public discourse.

The fight for the Ukrainian church, or more precisely – for the Church of Ukraine, can be seen in the local religious space. The confrontation between the UOC-MP and OCU represents this fight. Thus, the first is seen by some of the local society's representatives as the "fifth column" inside the country. The second

positions itself as a national church in the state religious politics framework, which gives it a significant *carte blanche* that, in turn, causes tension not only in the community of Orthodox believers but also in the local society in general.

However, it is a vast simplification to consider the Ukrainian realities only through the prism of the relations with the Northern neighbor. The local confessional pluralism results from the time Ukrainian lands spent under other states' political and cultural influences. Therefore, studying regional mentalities and characters of Christianity within the country is essential.

The study of the ethnomental nature of Christianity in Ukraine aims to explain the peculiarities of state-forming processes on these lands in the context of religion, as the Christianization of the pre-Ukrainian lands is closely tied with ethnicity and specific mental changes.

Considering the present topic enables us to generalize the past and present Ukraine's religious life without bias and better understand the socio-cultural environment in which the specific ethnic and religious mentality of Ukrainians was formed.

**Research methods.** The *research uses the historical method* to consider critical events in Ukraine and East Slavic lands. The role of the Christianization of Rus in the processes of state formation, the formation of a specific education system, and the entry into the Byzantine religious and cultural circle are considered. Different views on the Old Rus heritage and the consequences of the Brest Union (first of all, the entry of Ukrainian lands into the Western European civilizational circle) are considered.

The *comparative analysis method aims* to define the main differences between Eastern and Western Christianity and provide a general understanding of the process of Russification of Ukrainians and Poles during the Russian Empire. The educational and cultural activities of the Church in the Left Bank and the Right Bank Ukraine are compared.

Applying *the dialectical method* in the study allowed us to consider the dynamics of the formation of a specific ethno-confessional mentality of

Ukrainians, balancing between East and West, having specific attributes of both poles. Also, this method made it possible to trace the changes in Ukrainian Orthodoxy caused by the Russian-Ukrainian armed conflict.

**Results and Discussion of the research.** Several opposites actualize the problem of defining the essence of this region. Existing concepts do not withstand criticism because they are either in the plane of the postcolonial narrative or formed as a reaction to social upheavals in and around the state. Blessed L. Huzar, in his time, was critical of the perception of Ukraine as a “bridge” between East and West, emphasizing the unclear essence of the territory. S. Plochy defines Ukraine as the “gate of Europe,” which is also debatable. L. Kuchma, in his work “Ukraine is not Russia,” expressed an opinion regarding the inadmissibility of perceiving the country as a “buffer zone” between Russia and Europe. Therefore, the definition “Ukraine is the shield of Europe” is limited since it does not correspond to the region's thousand-year-old cultural and religious traditions and is purely reactionary.

Ukraine belongs to both the Orthodox and Catholic worlds, which was confirmed by the visit of John Paul II in 2001. It is worth recalling the words of the pontiff, which he said in his first speech on Ukrainian land: “I come to you, dear residents of Ukraine, as a friend of your noble people. I come as a brother in faith to embrace the great number of Christians who remained faithful to Christ amid severe suffering. I come guided by love to all the children of this land, to Ukrainians of every cultural and religious affiliation, to express my respect and sincere friendship” (*Martynets, 2021*).

In the Pope's speech, the polyconfessional and multicultural nature of Ukraine was emphasized, which is connected with its unique nature and geopolitical mission, which does not consist in dividing East and West (or “East and other non-West” according to S. Huntington) (*Huntington, 1996*), but in providing a platform for intercultural communication.

In this context, M. Kolinko's study, dedicated to the problem of borderland, which is “connected or with the idea of an end, edge, limit, or with the concept of a

symbolic whole, space “between” that creates its type of culture; <...> the concept of “between” contains intercultural dynamism of communication, the possibility of its reconfiguration and restructuring” (*Kolinko, 2017: 93*). Different churches have formed different cultures, and hence a different view of man.

The essence of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church is the implementation of the decisions of the Second Vatican Council regarding active missionary activity and social service.

Acquaintance with Buddhism on these lands took place during the contacts of the Ukrainian Cossacks with the Kalmyks, who practiced Buddhism. Still, the religious movement only aroused more profound interest among the Ukrainian intelligentsia in the 19th century.

The development of Buddhism in Ukraine was interrupted during Soviet rule, and its revival occurred here after gaining independence in 1991. The first Buddhist community was registered in Donetsk. There are about 100 Buddhist communities in Ukraine now, 38 of which are officially registered. The largest are communities that profess the Tibetan branch of Buddhism, according to the Vajrayana tradition. The most common community is Karma Kagyu, a branch of the Tibetan Kagyu-pa school. These communities have their association – the “Ukrainian Association of Buddhists of the Karma Kagyu school.” On the territory of Ukraine, the center's spiritual practices are aimed exclusively at the laity. The association has a journal, “Buddhism Today” (*Zhambo, 2004*).

Crimean Tatars connect the state with the Islamic world. Under M. Yakubovych, “In the present conditions, it is challenging to trace a single and specifically “Islamic” narrative among the Crimean Tatars: here we have more and more movements, approaches and visions, some of which are secular, while others are religious, liberal and conservative. However, ideologically, almost all of them are tied to Crimea as a “sacred territory,” roughly just like hundreds of years ago. This “Crimeanness,” in fact, became the key to the coexistence of Crimean Tatars and Ukrainians, where religious differences, no matter how significant they are, recede into the background” (*Yakubovych, 2003*).

Protestant churches are active. The largest community of Ukrainian Protestantism is the Baptist, followed by Christians of the evangelical faith and close to the trio of organizations of the charismatic movement. (*Khrystyiany dlia Ukrainy, URL...*)

To correctly define the subject of discussion, it is necessary to clarify what “East” and “West” mean in the context of the ethno-mentality of Ukrainian Christianity. Despite the regional heterogeneity of Europe, the concept of “West” is often synonymous with “Europe” as a whole. In this sense, Ukraine is an “organic part of the European community,” which is justified not only by physical geography but also “common cultural and social heritage,” which a priori appeals to the historicity of any connection and gives the cultural component more importance than the geographical one. For example, the Ottoman Empire, for several centuries, occupied a large area of the European continent but was not a part of the European continent's culture (*Rudnytskyi, 1987:1-2*).

“Common cultural heritage” should not, however, be understood as its homogeneity since general cultural unity does not exist, and it is more appropriate to talk about the similarity of “religion, social structure, social system, and dominant values” (*Huntington, 2021: 33*).

Among historians, there is also a consensus regarding Muscovite Rus of the XV-XVII centuries, which during this period kept its distance from the Western world and underwent Westernization during the reign of Peter I. Unlike Russia, Ukraine has never needed violent and radical Europeanization because it had a European essence. It should be noted that modern Ukrainians, speaking about Western Europe, usually mean the countries of Central Europe, first of all – Germany. In the local bourgeois consciousness, there is a dichotomy “Russia – Europe,” in which the first is a synonym of regression and degradation, and the second – is a social system role model.

Metaphorical definitions of the essence of geographical and spiritual space are also found in other nations. Thus, Poland is a “stronghold of the Western, Catholic world,” the Czechs are “a single Slavic nation with European living

standards,” and Romanians are the “proud descendants of Roman legionnaires.” As can be seen, this self-perception of people emphasizes exclusive “Westernness” and a detached attitude towards the East. Ukraine's European “core” does not exclude its contacts with other cultural layers, primarily Russian and Polish (*Rudnytskyi, 1987:2-3*).

L. Kuchma emphasizes the fact that Ukraine cannot be a typical European country “under the roof, covered with red shingle”: in terms of size, its territory far exceeds European states; it is the heiress of several empires, and therefore feels the influence of various regional mentalities, and is “legit heiress of all these vanished worlds” (*Kuchma, 2003:36*). There is an opinion under which the choice of Eastern Christianity was wrong and led to the political and intellectual stagnation of the Old Rus. However, as it is known, history doesn't know the subjunctive mood.

Y. Kalakura evaluates the adoption of Christianity more optimistically: “The adoption of Christianity was the first attempt to break through from the pre-axial time to axial. The baptizing of the Rus and its cultural and historical consequences are indissociable from the development of Ukrainian culture, namely education, literature, architecture, and folk art.” (*Kalakura, 2015:175*). Gradually, among the local population, mental and value-based changes took place. The landscape had been changed – instead of pagan temples, new dominants occurred – churches.

The entry of ancient Russian lands “into the orbit of Byzantium contributed to strengthening the differences between Eastern and Western Europe” (*Brodel, 2008:506*). It determined this territory's “historical destiny” and its derivatives, including the modern Ukrainian state at the intersection of the Greek and Latin worlds and their cultural and historical areas.

The long-term coexistence of a particular population territory precedes the formation of a “stereotype of behavior” of a people. Gradually, individual ideas about lifestyle, behavior, tastes, and worldview orientations are formed along with the features of social interaction that representatives of the ethnic community consider as the “only correct and possible.” The historical development of people

is studied by contrasting them with neighboring peoples, considering the geographical environment in which they live (*Humilov, 1989*).

I. Rudnytsky points to the formation of the national character as a socio-cultural phenomenon that distinguishes one nation from another. However, such a character is not unique but the “unique combination of traits widespread in the world” (*Rudnytskyi, 1987:1*).

The article does not aim to prove that Ukrainians are not Russians, as it is evident: different languages, distinct political and institutional traditions, different anthropological types, and mentality. Ukrainians and Russians have different attitudes towards the Western world: mistrust and reluctance on the part of Russians and openness and loyalty on the part of Ukrainians. Different visions of the past and the future are no less important. Inside Russia, the Ukrainian context is poorly understood and is mainly connected with increased attention to language issues.

The Old Slavic heritage is often controversial in the scientific community. However, the importance of Kyiv lands as a platform for the future development of the Russian church and statehood is not in doubt. It is much more challenging to reach a consensus regarding scientists, writers, and artists who were ethnic Ukrainians but built a career in Russia and fulfilled their talents using the Russian language.

There are also examples of the return route – from Russia to Ukraine, but they are less common (*Kuchma, 2003*). It is indicative that the modern moral ideal of Ukrainians is the Cossack, not the bogatyr, which is explained by the intentions of detached attitude towards the ancient Russian past shared with Russia. O. Tolochko is ironic, saying that one gets the impression that Ukrainian history can do without the Old Rus period (*Tolochko, 2021*).

It will not be challenging to prove Ukraine's European membership: the local people have no intentions to expand and tend towards compactness. Moreover, much of Ukraine is connected to the “Latin” world. Although the occurrence of



Ukrainians is often considered among other nations that declared themselves after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it is necessary to remember the experience of statehood even in the times of the Hetmanate (*Kuchma, 2003*).

Russia, in its turn, gravitates toward political and religious expansion, and the local Church is part of the state apparatus, which is relevant to Coker's observation, according to which local civilization “co-exists with the state” (*Coker, 2019*).

Whereas Ukraine is immersed in its internal problems, which emphasizes its individuality. However, The Orthodox Church of Ukraine also has all the features of a state church, as evidenced by the political statements of its head – Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Ukraine Epiphany (*Zhukov, 2019*).

In his turn, Metropolitan Onufriy repeatedly emphasized that the ministers of the Church should preach only in the temple and be focused primarily on social service.

Religion “never existed outside the ethnic soil” and “seems to be woven into the structure of the ethnic mentality, starting from clans and tribes and ending with nations” (*Lutko, 2008:55*). Peculiar features of Ukrainian Christianity were formed “between two worlds - the Orthodox East and the Catholic West” (*Plokhii, Kryzhanivskiy, 1994: 48*), under the influence of the pre-Christian worldview and early feudal psychology. Adaptation of Byzantine Christianity was expressed in the borrowing of “elements of the Orthodox concept of power,” while the perception of doctrines was superficial (*Kukhta, Teploukhova, 1996:39*).

The practical implementation of the statist concepts of Christianity was to be found in its instruments of consolidation of Rus' population and intentions towards administrative independence. Old Russian Christianity was part of the state ideology, which formed in interaction with ethnic elements the specific nature of East Slavic Christianity, which many researchers define as “Kyiv Christianity,” the originality of which lies in the sophistry and recognition of the equality of all peoples and their “gradual historical involvement in the culture of Christianity,” gravitation towards locality (*Yarotskyi, 2020*).

K. Gudzyk reminds us that “there was no religion on earth that did not split over time into two or more branches”; <...> In the first millennium of the new era <...>; at ecumenical and local councils collegially discussed essential issues, dogmatic questions for everyone, made decisions binding for all churches.” The schism of 1054 echoes even today - it “affects the life, habits, attitude to the world and mentality of millions of people” (*Gudzyk, 2004*).

During the baptism of Rus, there was no division into Orthodoxy and Catholicism, but there were Eastern and Western jurisdictions of church activities. Over time, the contradictions between the Eastern and Western churches deepened, which led to a schism in 1054, but communication between them continued, and the church split became noticeable much later.

Per I. Kongar, the Western Church’s roots of primacy lie in “God's mission and <...> the apostolic presence of Peter and Paul.” The barbarian-occupied West was a favorable environment for affirmation of a single Latin-Roman Church since, unlike the East, the local peoples did not have “ancient regional cultures.” The researcher writes: “In the West, they pray for the unity of the Church, and in the East - for the welfare of the holy God’s Churches” (*Kongar, 2011:1-24*).

Accession of Ukrainian lands to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, later - the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth - brought them closer to the Western European civilizational circle, which J. Toynbee defines as the “semi-westernized borderlands” of Russia (*Toynbee, 1995: 146*). The geographical position of Ukraine made possible the penetration of Western and pan-European culture and socio-religious phenomena, primarily the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. Byzantine worldview was supplemented by the ideas of humanism and a broader interpretation of God and the Church. Protestant individualism stimulated the appearance of the “Peresopnytsia Gospel” - a translation of the Gospel into the Old Ukrainian language (*National Library of Ukraine, URL...*).

Schweipolt printing house appeared, which was the first to start printing books in Cyrillic for the needs of the Orthodox Church (*Gudzyk, 2004*). Simultaneously with reformist ideas, Ukrainians also assimilated old Catholic

doctrines supplemented with ethnic features of various European peoples, which M. Hrushevsky defined as “a distinct combination of Ukrainian-Byzantine foundation life with Western influences” (*Hrushevskyi, 1994*).

Loyal attitude to Western Christianity on these lands (in contrast to Eastern Ukrainian lands, where the Orthodox clergy kept a distance from Western influences and formed a negative attitude towards them among Orthodox believers) led to the use of prayers in which the Western saints were mentioned; gradually appears the cult of the Virgin Mary; Catholic teaching on purgatory is added to the consciousness of believers. A. Ignatusha aptly calls the Catholic Church the “spiritual core of European civilization,” which became the stronghold of the struggle against the Ottoman Empire. The activity and independence of the Catholic Church contrasted with the influence of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which was weakened due to being under the rule of the conquerors (*Ihnatusha, 2001*).

The peculiarity of Western Christianity is that it “underwent special tests. It is a descendant of the Roman Empire. Christianity conquered this empire, but its victory coincided with “imperialization of Christianity,” which began to bear fruit when - immediately after the disappearance of the empire in the 5th century - Christianity took on tasks related to the support of “world structures.” “The Western Church, ecumenical in nature, goes beyond the boundaries of societies and individual states; it uses a single language, Latin, which acts as a weapon of unity. In addition, it has preserved its hierarchy, centralization, and ancient and glorious capital - Rome, since the time of the empire. <...> The Western church immediately took a position on political and social problems <...>. She became a community capable of responding to the demands of the times: the needs of spiritual and material life, evangelization, education, colonization of new lands...” (*Braudel, 2008: 506*).

In turn, the “Byzantine Church in the 10th century existed within the boundaries of a powerful empire that managed to survive many upheavals and did not need to put the burden of temporary expansion on its church. The empire ruled

over the church, subjugated it to its interests, and limited its influence only to the spiritual sphere. Orthodox Church <...> to a lesser extent than the Western one, it differed from its believers and was half indifferent to politics. She was ready to limit herself to the national boundaries given to her, did little to deal with issues of church organization and hierarchy, being concerned mainly with spiritual tradition, inherited from Greek thinkers” (*Ibid: 507*).

F. Braudel defines the difference between the “spiritual tradition” of the Eastern and Western churches: “The word “truth” in the Greek language and to a greater extent in Old Slavic means eternal, constant, existing in reality, outside the created world, as our mind understands it.” Instead, “Latin truth in the legal, philosophical, or scientific sense always means confidence, reality, reasonableness.” The understanding of the “sacrament” in the West also differs, is connected with the religious hierarchy, and is characterized by the corresponding sacredness; in the East, the concept of the sacrament is associated with mysticism - a divine secret [*Ibid: 507*].

Differences between churches also lie in some features of worship. Yes, “Holy Week, which precedes Easter, takes place in the West under the sign of mourning, <...>, suffering, death of Christ in the figure of a person. In the East - under the sign of joy, hymns to the glory of the ascension of Christ in divine hypostasis. Eastern crucifixes show Christ peaceful, calm in death, while in the West, they show a suffering savior” (*Ibid: 506-507*).

In the literature, the geographical position of Ukraine is characterized as being on a line of the “geopolitical rift”: this is where Western Christianity ends, and therefore Western Europe (*Huntington, 1996*). “Two currents of world history - East and West” pass through ancient Rus lands. This is where they collide and begin to interact, thus connecting the two worlds. There is a physical correlation between geography and “spiritual geography,” expressed in the immensity of the spiritual world of residents and their orientation towards infinity, which is associated with the dominance of flat landscapes (*Berdiaiev, 1933*).

Researcher H. Hachiev talks about national images of God (*Hachiev, 1988*), and O. Spengler believes no anthropomorphic ideas about God exist and that a man created him in his image (*Spengler, 1993:405*).

The Ukrainian people also have their particular image of God, which M. Hogol defined as an image of a loving father (*Hohol, 1967*), consistent with the definition of I. Kolesnyk – a “maternal type” father who, in turn, is connected with the phenomenon of “atamanism,” in which the ataman takes care of his sons and protects them (*Kolesnyk, 2002:28*).

A different sense of service, its external and spiritual aspects, led to the formation of “different national types of Christianity,” which in turn is connected with the specifics of the national mentality: “Ethnic traits, peculiarities of national culture, traditions, folklore heritage - all this affects cult actions, and it is precisely because of this that the latter interact with folk culture and penetrate the everyday sphere” (*Lutko, 2008:56*). The image of “friend” and “foe” is formed based on “confessional, national and regional criteria” (*Lomachynska, Deineha, Donets, 2021:35*).

Following I. Kolesnyk, the everyday life of Ukrainians is based on family values and uniting in small groups to implement social interaction. However, in the historical plane, the representatives of the Ukrainian people are at the crossroads of different ethnic groups and religious and political traditions. The lack of a common denominator between historians and cultural experts regarding Ukraine's place at the “civilizational crossroads” between “East and West” and “Europe and Asia” is a “genetic manifestation of the consciousness of the “border man.” (*Kolesnyk, 2002:29*).

The Union of Brest in 1596 caused a crisis in Ukraine's religious and political life, strengthening the nobility's position and dividing the territory into Eastern and Western (*Plokhii, Kryzhanivskyi, 1994: 271*). Entry of Ukrainians into the cultural area of other ethnic and religious communities led to the formation of two of the brightest mental types - the “Little Russian” and the Catholic nobleman. Representatives of both types are harshly criticized by nationally conscious

citizens, which, however, does not diminish the importance of this phenomenon in the history of Ukraine.

L. Kuchma successfully characterizes the ability of Ukrainians to adapt to new socio-cultural conditions using the concept of “valency” (*Kuchma, 2003*). Ukrainians acquire unique qualities and master new skills in a new environment. An example of such “valency” is the activity of the Ukrainian clergy during the times of the reforming activity of Peter I. Openness to progressive Western trends, education, and, at the same time, loyalty to Orthodoxy enabled the fruitful work of ethnic Ukrainians in the service of the empire. There was a synthesis of acquired knowledge, missionary activity was successfully carried out, and the educational sphere was reformed. The peak of the influence of Ukrainians on all spheres of social activity in the empire fell during the reign of Elizaveta Petrovna. It began to decrease during the reign of Catherine II, who actively pursued a policy of unification of the empire and equalized career development opportunities for Ukrainians and Russians (*Kharlampovych, 1914: 7*).

The Catholicization of the Ukrainian nobility often led to a complete break with Ukrainianism: Catholicism was synonymous with Polish self-awareness. If the connection with the Ukrainians was still preserved in the first and second generations, then in the third - that's not the case.

The Left Bank and the Right Bank Ukraine's educational institutions and churches served the dominant interests of two states - Russia and Poland, respectively. The location of Ukrainian lands between the imperial poles is one of the main factors of the specific features of ethno-mentality of local Christianity. Religious life in Volyn at the end of the 16th - the first half of the 17th century. It was characterized by a “specific ethno-confessional consciousness,” a manifestation of which, on the one hand, “awareness of one's “Russian” origin,” and, on the other – “a conscious belonging to the Union, a combination with emphasized respect for the spiritual tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, which bordered on the double faith” (*Dovbyshchenko, 2008:487*).

Such ethno-confessional consciousness was characteristic of the Union Church, which was “squeezed between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, forced to withstand attacks and accusations from both sides. In the confrontation with the Orthodox Uniates, they were forced to constantly defend their “Russianness” because by the end of the 16th century, concepts of “Russian” and “Orthodox” almost meant the same. The creation of the Uniate Church destroyed the mono-confessional character of the “Russian nation.” The Uniates had to prove they were not pro-Poland or pro-Latin but were “Russian” on par with Orthodox (*Plokhii, Kryzhanivskiy, 1994:46*).

The influence of new religious and cultural trends “complicated the further process of national consolidation and created conditions for the assimilation of the Russian aristocracy” (by assimilation is meant Polonization or Latinization in a broader context). Yes, “the families of Catholic converts of the first generation were still aware of its Russian origin, and the Catholic Church was defined as “Catholic Church of the Polish and Russian People,” at the level of the second-third generation, the process of their Polonization was almost finished.” As a result, “Different approaches to understanding the relationship between the concept of “national” and “religious” factors in the life of the Russian people led to the formation of two vectors of socio-religious and cultural and national development of Ukrainian societies – Orthodox and Uniate” (*Dovbyshchenko, 2008:490*).

Russification and Polonization educational policy towards Ukrainians, who are Russian and Polish elites considered Russians and Poles, respectively, ignored the ethno-mental characteristics and needs of Ukrainian children. The assimilation of the population during the time of the Russian Empire took place in different ways and with various dynamics. For example, Orthodox Ukrainians of Right Bank Ukraine were the object of a policy of cleansing from “alien” cultural and religious influences and returning to the bosom of the “great Russian nation” (*Bovua, 2020*).

In the early 1970s, members of the Club of Rome predicted the assertion of religion as an aggressive element in society, which is confirmed by the recent history of Ukraine, in which a clear division of citizens was formed on religious grounds. Modern Ukrainian Orthodoxy is characterized by “ethnicization” and “politicization” of distancing from other East Slavic cultures, as well as the “creation between the latter of religious and cultural barriers,” aimed at the formation of “ethnocultural nationalism,” in which church and religious attributes reflect the basis of the “spiritual unity of the nation” – “Ukrainian Orthodoxy” and “unified local churches” (*Voinalovych, Yelenskyi, Kyriushko, Kochan, Rublova, 2012:40-41*).

The reverse tendency consists in the “absolutization” of both the past and the present (for example, the concept of “three brotherly peoples” or the recently created concept of the “Russian world,” which sought to direct the geopolitical development of Ukraine towards Russia but quickly acquired a negative connotation in both countries). So, “ethnicized” Ukrainian and “absolutized” pan-Slavistic Russian Orthodoxy is associated with a particular “real or imaginary ethnic culture” and is closely related to the geopolitical interests of both states, which leads to the loss of Christian universalism (*Ibid: 41*).

**Conclusions.** Summarizing the consideration of the ethno-mental nature of Christianity in Ukraine, it must be said that each side of the “cultural borders” believed and believes that “in this space took place (and continue to take place) different stories” (*Tolochko, 2021*). This phenomenon is caused by the different mental and religious contexts of the population of other regions of Ukraine, thanks to which confessional and cultural pluralism is made possible.

As a result, the “spiritual” West and the “industrial” non-religious East are the usual regional antipodes of the Ukrainian state, supported by relevant statistical data and justifies the feasibility of creating an ethno-confessional map of Ukraine. However, it is essential to reach beyond these borders to compare the Ukrainian cultural and spiritual space with others, to understand the origins of socio-cultural



features of different regions of the state, and to outline the prospect of further coexistence of various ethnic and religious groups in Ukraine.

The ethno-mental “physiognomy” of Ukrainian Christianity acquires even more apparent features. Although it is characterized by gravitation towards change and the idea of progress, it refers to hoary antiquity and establishes “historical justice.” The materials of the article generally confirm that religion acts as a peculiar guardian of the “genetic code” of the people, keeping in it both constructive – creative and destructive – conflicts unresolved in time that are unfolding in new socio-political conditions with new forces, thereby determining peculiarities of the country's humanitarian environment.

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