

UKRAINIAN INTEGRAL NATIONALISM AND THE GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE 1920-30S

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In 1934, after a series of terrorist attacks carried out by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in Galicia, the head of the Greek-Catholic Church (GCC), Metropolitan Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, issued a pastoral letter which sharply condemned “the criminal deeds of Ukrainian terrorists”.¹ It was the highest point in the conflict between the Greek-Catholic Church and the revolutionary Nationalist movement.² Why did the conflict arise? The most obvious answer is: because the Church could not condone violence and murder. But this is only part of the truth.

Although there are numerous studies on the history of radical Ukrainian Nationalism and the GCC, the ‘uncomfortable’ aspects of their relations still await special research. In full accordance with Ernest Renan’s famous aphorism,³ nationalist historians directly resorted to selective emphasis or ‘forgetting’ of historical events: they preferred to write about how the Church supported the struggle for liberation and about the clergy participation in the Nationalist movement, but quite understandably avoided discussing the conflict between the OUN and the Church.⁴

In the depiction of Soviet historians, “the criminal activities of Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists always found support on the part of the Uniate Church,” whose head, “the Trojan horse of Vatican” count Sheptyts'kyi, was the nationalists’ spiritual father.⁵ No conflicts between the ‘father’ and the ‘children’ were mentioned. Ironically, in this respect the approaches of the nationalist historians and their Soviet counterparts – leaving

¹ Andrei Sheptyts'kyi, *Pastyr's'ki poslannia*, vol. 2: 1918-1939, 2009, Andrei, Lviv, p. 177-178.

² In this article, the words ‘Nationalism’ and ‘Nationalist’ are capitalised when related to the organised Ukrainian integral nationalist movement, especially the OUN.

³ “Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality” (Ernest Renan, ‘What Is a Nation?’, in: Homi K. Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration*, 1990, Routledge, London-New York, p. 11).

⁴ See e. g. Petro Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN. 1920-1939 roky*, 2007 (3^o), Ukrains'ka vydavnycha spilka, Kyiv.

⁵ Volodymyr Zamlyns'kyi, *Shlyakh chornoï zrady*, 1969, Kameniar, Lviv, p. 38-39.

aside their propagandist rhetoric – were quite similar.

The old conception of an alliance between the GCC and extreme nationalism did not disappear with the collapse of the Soviet historical school and found an interesting continuation in an article by Ukrainian political scientist Anton Shekhovtsov, published in a special issue of a solid Anglophone journal (the issue was later republished as a book). Shekhovtsov tries to prove several key theses: 1) Dontsov's and the OUN's Ukrainian Nationalism was a variety of fascism; 2) the GCC was dominated by a trend favouring an alliance with Ukrainian fascism in order to destroy communism and considered the OUN as a tool for the expansion of Greek-Catholicism towards the East; 3) there also existed an influential group of 'clerical fascists' (Fr. Mykola Conrad and other proponents of 'Christian nationalism') who sought not only an alliance but also a synthesis of Ukrainian Catholicism and fascism.⁶

In Shekhovtsov's article there are many correct observations, for example, that the main stumbling block in the relations between the Church and Ukrainian Nationalism was the Nationalists' insistence upon replacing the idea of God by that of the nation or, in other words, the tendency to create a political religion. There is also some truth in the thesis that a part of the clergy considered an alliance with Nationalism on the platform of anti-communism and anti-liberalism both feasible and desirable.⁷

However, in proving the existence of Ukrainian 'clerical fascism', the author resorted to rather selective quotation of sources and arbitrary interpretations. I will not enumerate all the inaccuracies present in his article, but I have to point out the saddest mistake which unfairly tarnishes Metropolitan Sheptyts'kyi. Seeking to prove the thesis of 'double standards' of the GCC's highest hierarchy which, according to Shekhovtsov, blessed the bloody nationalist struggle against communism, the author gives the following quotation, allegedly from an article by Sheptyts'kyi:

“All laws which are offensive to the laws of God and nature, all the laws which are unjust and harmful for citizens and people, are not obligatory in the context of Catholic doctrine [...] Ukrainian nationalism must be ready to use all means of fighting against communism, not excluding mass physical extermination, even at the cost of millions of human lives.”⁸

⁶ Anton Shekhovtsov, 'By Cross and Sword: 'Clerical Fascism' in Interwar Western Ukraine', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 271-285 (reprinted in: Matthew Feldman/Marius Turda/Tudor Georgescu (eds.), *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe*, 2008, Routledge, London, p. 59-73).

⁷ Shekhovtsov, 'By Cross and Sword', op. cit., p. 280-281.

⁸ Cited in Shekhovtsov, 'By Cross and Sword', op. cit., p. 279.

The first sentence of this quotation is really taken from the Metropolitan's article 'The Ukrainian Catholic Union and Politics',⁹ while the second one comes from an editorial article which was published in the next issue of *Meta* ['The Goal'] newspaper and bore no relation to Sheptyts'kyi.¹⁰ On the whole, in my opinion, the author failed to prove convincingly any of his main theses.

In sum, it can be said that previous studies on the issue of the GCC's relationship with Ukrainian integral nationalism and the latter's attitude to religion were either biased or, even if adopting an impartial point of view, still failed to account for the fact that Ukrainian integral nationalism itself showed a tendency to transform into a political religion whose adherents were inclined to consider the Church as a dangerous rival and met a similar attitude on the part of the Church.

In this article I will try to apply Emilio Gentile's theory of political religion and Roger Griffin's conception of 'palingenetic ultra-nationalism' to the study of Ukrainian integral nationalism and its relations with the GCC.¹¹ Although both theories were developed in the study of fascism, they can be equally useful for the investigation of various ultra-nationalist movements, even those which never obtained power.

Nationalism as Religion

Some contemporary observers and later researchers regarded interwar Ukrainian integral nationalism, whose main manifestations in the 1920-30s were the 'active nationalism' of political writer Dmytro Dontsov and the 'organised nationalism' represented by the ideology and practice of the OUN, as a variety of fascism. Indeed, it had much in common with fascism, including attempts to create a political religion, and met some generally accepted definitions of fascism, e.g. Roger Griffin's famous definition: "Fascism is a genus of political ideology whose mythic core in its various permutations is a palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism."¹²

⁹ Mytropolyt Andrei [Sheptyts'kyi], 'Ukrains'kyi Katolyts'kyi Soiuz i polityka', *Meta* 14, April 10, 1932.

¹⁰ 'Vahannia i vyrvniuvannia. Uvahy do pytan' ukrains'koi polityky', *Meta* 15, April 17, 1932.

¹¹ See Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, 1996, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.); 'The Sacralisation of Politics: Definitions, Interpretations and Reflections on the Question of Secular Religion and Totalitarianism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 1/1, 2000, p. 18-55; *Politics as Religion*, 2006, Princeton University Press, Princeton-Oxford; Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 1993, Routledge, London; 'Cloister or Cluster? The Implications of Emilio Gentile's Ecumenical Theory of Political Religion for the Study of Extremism', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 6/1, 2005, p. 32-52; and *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, 2007, Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

¹² Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., p. 44.

However, unlike fascism, Ukrainian integral nationalism was an ideology of a stateless nation. Its closest 'ideological relative' in Europe was the Croatian Ustaša before its transformation into a state party.¹³ Some scholars believe that the Ustaša was a fascist movement from the very beginning.¹⁴ But in my opinion, the ultra-nationalist organisations of stateless peoples like the OUN, the Ustaša and so on constitute a separate genus of political movements and respective ideologies, different both from fascism and from the democratic trend in the national liberation movement. Unfortunately, there is no special term in political science for this kind of movements. Without being peremptory, I would suggest that the proper designation for the ideology and practice of the OUN and similar movements is not fascism, but rather 'ustashism', which can be defined as revolutionary integral nationalism developing under conditions of perceived foreign oppression and using violence for the purpose of liberating the nation and creating an independent authoritarian state. Ustashism did share some essential characteristics of fascism, so it can be regarded as proto-fascism which could turn into a fully fledged form of fascism in case it won independence.

The best soil for integral nationalism is formed in situations of a serious political or military defeat that humiliates national dignity, a crisis of national identity, and a real or perceived danger for the survival of the nation. It was under such circumstances, formed as a result of the defeat of the Ukrainian independence struggle, that D. Dontsov developed his theory of 'active nationalism'. Reflecting on the causes of defeat of the Ukrainian struggle for statehood, Dontsov concluded that the leaders of the Ukrainian national revival were marked by "overgrowth of intellect": they had too much trust in the omnipotence of reason, admired science, but had no faith in the power of their own national idea. Ukrainian democratic nationalism learned a "vulgarised religion of reason",¹⁵ but lacked the religious fervour without which no idea can win. Thus, Dontsov intended to create a new outlook, inspired by a truly religious faith in the only absolute – the nation.

In the article 'Church and Nationalism' Dontsov noted closer relations between two previously hostile forces – nationalism and the Church. Writing about the latter, he had in mind primarily the Catholic Church, to which he felt deep respect. Dontsov considered "a slow assimilation of the worldview of modern nationalism to the theological outlook of the Church"

¹³ For the history of the Ustaša, see Srdja Trifkovic, *Ustaša: Croatian Separatism and European Politics, 1929-1945*, 1998, Lord Byron Foundation for Balkan Studies, London.

¹⁴ See e. g. Mark Biondich, 'Radical Catholicism and Fascism in Croatia, 1918-1945', *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8/2, 2007, p. 383-399.

¹⁵ Dmytro Dontsov, *Tvorcy*, vol. 1: *Heopolitychni ta ideolohichni pratsi*, 2001, Kal'variia, Lviv, p. 252.

the main reason for the rapprochement of the Church and nationalism. Just like the Church, modern nationalism rejected the idols of materialism, rationalism, and socialism, worshipped by the older generation, and adopted a dogmatic belief in the idea of the nation:

“Our time has become a disaster for rationalism. In the political realm, it has been supplanted by reckless national dogmatism. The idea of nation has assumed the axiomatic nature of an idea that finds its justification in itself and is based not on reason, but solely on faith. Speaking through the lips of its greatest apostle, Maurice Barres, modern nationalism has dethroned *l'intelligence*, replacing it by passion as the most explosive force in the history of humanity. Modern nationalism is looking for its God not in an ideal, produced by mind, but rather in its own desire, in its own faith, not in arguments, but in its own *contra spem spero!* [...] By this evolution from mind to passion, from logic to faith, from rationalism to dogmatism, in this rebellion against the almighty mind – the new nationalism has considerably assimilated the theological outlook of the Church, which in the ‘Syllabus’ of 1864 rejected the view that ‘human reason is the sole arbiter of truth and falsehood’.”¹⁶

According to Dontsov, this modern nationalism demands

“total self-denial in the name of Nation as the Absolute. Dreaming only about serving this Absolute and approaching it just like a faithful approaches his Saviour – a modern nationalist, like medieval *fidei defensor*, has regard neither for the number of existences which must be sacrificed for the triumph of his idea, nor for the moral or material ruin he will bring about, as he had no regard for all those things in 1914”.¹⁷

Here we can see how the nation is surrounded by a halo of holiness and becomes an object of worship, in fact, a substitute for God in the eyes of the nationalists.

Other features which, according to Dontsov, contribute to the theological nature of nationalism and make its worldview similar to that of the Church include its militant spirit, intolerance, readiness to resort to ‘saving violence’, and uncompromising fanaticism. Dontsov goes as far as to declare war the essence of both the new nationalism and Christianity.¹⁸

In 1926, Dontsov published his most famous book, *Nationalism*,¹⁹ formulating a number of ‘requirements’ which followed from his ‘active nationalism’ and which included dogmatism, fanaticism and illusionism. These requirements could be summarised in a sentence: to be successful, nationalism should become a religion.

The requirement of illusionism was especially important. By ‘illusionism’ Dontsov, much like Georges Sorel, meant a purposeful creation

¹⁶ Dmytro Dontsov, ‘Tserkva i natsionalizm’, *Literaturno-Naukovyi Vistnyk* 23/2, 1924, p. 76-77.

¹⁷ Dontsov, ‘Tserkva i natsionalizm’, op. cit., p. 77-78.

¹⁸ Dontsov, ‘Tserkva i natsionalizm’, op. cit., p. 79.

¹⁹ Dontsov, *Trory*, op. cit., p. 243-425.

of social myths. Only myths and illusions, not logical constructions, can mobilise masses to revolutionary work. According to this requirement, Dontsov himself appears as a mythmaker in his works. Among the key myths that permeate all his works written after World War I, the most important are: 1) Myth of national rebirth. This myth is typical for any nationalism, but Dontsov reinterpreted it in a spirit very similar to the fascist palingenetic myth,²⁰ as national regeneration in a post-liberal new order which will follow a period of perceived decline and will be based on the dominance of strong races and nations; 2) Myth of Ukraine's mission as a bulwark of the European civilisation in front of barbarian Asia and Russia as an Asian vanguard; and 3) Myth of the last fight, in which the new religion of nationalism will prevail over the dying religion of socialism with its numerous sects.

The admiration for Italian fascism and Nazism, which became political religions in their respective countries, strengthened Dontsov's confidence in the need to fill Ukrainian nationalism with religious content. In January 1937, Dontsov published the article '1937' inspired by the civil war in Spain and the signs of an approaching Second World War. He wrote about the clash between two "ersatz-religions": "the dying religion of socialism with its subsects of liberalism and masonry" and the new worldview of nationalism, including fascism. However, Dontsov warned:

"Of course, nationalism can not be called a religion in the proper sense of the word. So, when talking about the struggle of the two 'religions', we refer only to their purely religious spirit of faith in one's cause and dedication to it. Obviously, these ersatz-religions have not their own concepts of God, the future life, immortality, etc. But these 'ersatz-religions' exist, and there is a war between them."²¹

Finally Dontsov expressed his belief in the inevitable victory of the 'religion' of nationalism:

"To think that the two 'religions' may come to an agreement is a vain hope. [...] The new 'religion' that will win is the one whose believers will demonstrate more recklessness and a greater spirit of dedication. [...] The new faith that will win is the one which is hostile to Pharaoh's servants and will let neither Marxists nor Erasmists lead it astray."²²

²⁰ For a definition of the fascist palingenetic myth, see Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, op. cit., p. 35, 240; 'General Introduction', in: Roger Griffin (ed.), *Fascism*, 1995, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 2-4; 'Palingenetic myth', in: Cyprian P. Blamires/Paul Jackson (eds.), *World Fascism: a Historical Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, 2006, ABC-CLIO, Santa Barbara (Calif.), p. 498-499.

²¹ Dmytro Dontsov, '1937', *Vistnyk* 5/1, 1937, p. 57.

²² Dontsov, '1937', op. cit., p. 64-65. "Erasmists" (from Erasmus of Rotterdam) here mean 'cosmopolitan humanists'.

As Stepan Lenkavs'kyi, a later OUN activist, noted as early as 1928, Dontsov's ideological system "represents a theoretical worldview which has important distinctive marks of religion: strong emotional colouring, fanatical belief in the truth and inviolability of its dogmas, reckless intolerance to and negation of everything that does not agree with it."²³

Thus, by creating his 'active nationalism', Dontsov constructed not simply a new ideology: he deliberately sought to establish a new political religion, although he preferred to put the word 'religion' in brackets, understanding the difference between nationalism and religion "in the proper sense". Has he achieved his goal? To some extent, yes. In the memoirs of his contemporaries we can often read that young Galician Ukrainians perceived Dontsov as a prophet of a new faith and his works, as a 'gospel'. The 'active nationalism' influenced the ideology of the OUN, which also assumed a quasi-religious character. But Dontsov failed to create a fully fledged political religion.

For the existence of any religion, including a political one, at least two things are required: a 'holy scripture' and a 'church'. Dontsov's works could really become a 'holy scripture' for new Ukrainian Nationalism. The role of the 'church' could be performed by the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists, but actually the relations between Dontsov and the OUN were uneasy. Having experienced the influence of 'active nationalism' at some stage, 'organised nationalism' nevertheless went its own way.

The OUN was formed in 1929 as a result of the consolidation of several nationalist groups both in Galicia and among Ukrainian émigrés. Like Dontsov, the OUN aspired not only to the political liberation of the Ukrainian nation, but also to a larger spiritual revolution in order to create a new Ukrainian man. "Armed revolution? We will achieve nothing by it [...] until we first accomplish a revolution of minds, a revolution of education and morality, a spiritual revolution," – wrote the head of the OUN Secretariat Volodymyr Martynets' in 1929. He believed that Nationalists had to re-educate the Ukrainians, spoiled by Bolshevik rule, by any means, including violence:

"Indeed, in this kingdom of boors and beggars we shall have – as soon as the Ukrainian power is established – to resort to the methods of Peter the Great: by terror we shall have to teach them to respect human dignity, by terror we shall inculcate in them the respect for human self (what a paradox), by terror we will impose cleanliness and order, etc. We shall even have to issue official prescriptions about wearing collars, manners of behaviour, meals and so on. One dictatorship should be replaced by another, which will turn into the people's rule only gradually as the dictatorship itself will educate the masses. [...] Apparently, one cannot make slave

²³ Stepan Lenkavs'kyi, *Ukrains'kyi natsionalizm: Tvory*, vol. 1, 2002, Lileya-NV, Ivano-Frankivsk, p. 505.

a free man otherwise than with a rod. For the good of that unfortunate people, we must whip them, or they will never wake up and throw off their yoke. We must replace the enemies with ourselves, we, Ukrainians (a part of us), must become the 'Varangians' over ourselves (the general mass), for there is no other way to get rid of the alien 'Varangians'.²⁴ [...] Let us face the truth: it is by terror and violence against our own people that we shall obtain its liberty."²⁵

However, the OUN's leaders understood that 'whipping' could not be the only means for creating a new Ukrainian man. An important feature of the OUN, which resembled totalitarian movements – both leftist and rightist –, was the sacralisation of politics, aimed at creating a sort of religious movement. In 1929, to underscore the fact that the OUN was not a party, but a "separate faith in the political field",²⁶ S. Lenkav's'kyi wrote the famous 'Ten Commandments of the Ukrainian Nationalist', better known as 'The Decalogue'. The introduction to it, written somewhat later by Ivan Gabrusevych, declared: "I am the Spirit of the eternal element that saved you from the Tatar deluge and put you on the edge of two worlds to create new life..."²⁷ Here, the "Spirit of the eternal element" has taken the place of the biblical God who gave his 'Ten Commandments' to Moses, and Ukrainians represent the chosen people. A few years later, 'The 12 Character Traits of the Ukrainian Nationalist' and 'The 44 Rules of Life of the Ukrainian Nationalist' were written and became important attachments to 'The Decalogue'. In form, they resembled various lists of Christian virtues, but they significantly differed from them in the content. In the introduction to 'The 44 Rules', we see an example of the 'palingenetic myth' constructed according to the scheme 'former glory of the nation – ruin – rebirth in the struggle':

"The immortal imperious will of the Ukrainian Nation, which ordered your ancestors to conquer the world and brought them to the walls of Constantinople and beyond the Caspian Sea and Volga; which erected a powerful Ukrainian state and marked by sword and plough the borders of its power; which, in its fight against the hordes, fulfilled the historical mission of Ukraine as manifested in acts of statesmanship and creative intentions of the Great Hetmans and Geniuses who rose from the ruin to new revolutionary action and state building – now claims authoritatively a new life, inaugurates a great era of Ukrainian nationalism and tells you: Stand up and fight! Listen and believe, conquer and win, so that Ukraine may now become as powerful as it was formerly and may create new life to its own liking and its own will."²⁸

²⁴ "Varangians" here mean '(foreign) rulers who establish order'. According to the 'Primary Chronicle', in the 9th century disorders among Slavonic and Finnish tribes prompted them to invite the Varangians "to come and rule."

²⁵ *Tsentrul'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv brovads'kykh ob'iednan' Ukrainy*, fond 269 (Kolektsiia dokumentiv 'Ukrayins'kyi muzei u Prazi'), inv. 1, file 174, p. 81.

²⁶ Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN*, op. cit., p. 106.

²⁷ Cited in Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN*, op. cit., p. 106.

²⁸ Cited in Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN*, op. cit., p. 107.

In the 'Rules', even God is interpreted in a nationalist manner:

"11. The powerful God of Princess Olga and Volodymyr the Great requires of thee not tears, not mercy or passive contemplation, but courage and active life. 12. Know, that God is best honoured through Nation and in the name of Nation by active love for Ukraine and by the strict morals of a fighter and founder of independent state life."²⁹

The prominent OUN activist, Dmytro Shtykalo, even wrote that "*nationalism requires faith in the nation, not in God.*" However, "*the religion of nationalism cannot be against the fact that its faithful (nationalists) profess dogmas of another religion [Christianity] as long as these alien dogmas harmonise and coincide with its own.*"³⁰

The necessity of strengthening the faith of the militants motivated the creation of the OUN's own cult with its own rites, rituals, symbols, etc. Thus, a 'cult of heroism' became central to the political and educational activities of the OUN.³¹ The expressions of this cult included veneration of the graves of Ukrainian soldiers killed during the war for independence, and especially mourning ceremonies in memory of OUN militants sentenced to death by Polish courts or killed in combat.

After the murder of OUN leader Yevhen Konovalets' by a Soviet agent in 1938, his posthumous cult as "the Leader, the Founder and the Renovator"³² began to spread. After the split of the OUN in 1940, both successor organisations created the cults of their own respective leaders – Andriy Melnyk and Stepan Bandera. But that is another story that goes beyond the chronological scope of this article. In August 1939, drawing a line under its efforts to create a new nationalist religion, the II Grand Assembly of the OUN, held in Rome, stated: "From deeds, blood and death for the sake of the idea there is born a new faith of Ukrainians – Ukrainian Nationalism".³³

Church Response

The tendency towards a Nationalist religion was strong enough to provoke sharp criticism from the Greek-Catholic Church and its Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytskyi. The confrontation between the Nationalist and the

²⁹ Cited in Mirchuk, *Narys istorii OUN*, op. cit., p. 108.

³⁰ Dmytro Shtykalo, *Nad sviutom siaie khrest mecha*, 1936, Nakladom Olhy Hrozovs'koi, Lviv, p. 25.

³¹ See e. g. Roman Brut, *Kul't heroizmu*, 1937, Promini, Lviv.

³² 'Vidozva II Velykoho Zboru Ukrain'skykh Natsionalistiv', in: Taras Hunchak/Roman Solchanyk (eds.), *Ukrains'ka suspil'no-politychna dumka v 20 stolitti: Dokumenty i materiyaly*, vol. 2, 1983, Suchasnist', [s. l.], p. 420.

³³ 'Vidozva II Velykoho', op. cit., p. 421.

Catholic camp resulted in a sharp debate which unfolded both in the press and in separately published books and pamphlets. The immediate impulse for the escalation of the conflict was the young Nationalists' public opposition against the 'Ukrainian Youth for Christ' celebration (1933) and against the establishment of the Catholic Action of Ukrainian Youth. However, neither this nor even the OUN terrorist acts were the main reason for the confrontation.

The essence of the divergences between the Church and 'neonationalism' was correctly observed in an anonymous article in *Meta*. It rejected the view that the conflict had been caused by the incompatibility of nationalism with a religious Catholic outlook, as some Nationalists thought:

“Nationalism as a doctrine does not contradict Catholicism. [...] The whole religious and spiritual agenda of the Ukrainian Catholic Church and Ukrainian Catholicism is so definitely emancipatory, so, one might say, nationally-Ukrainian, that it is really hard to identify the point of contention...”³⁴

However, the conflict was not accidental and, given that its underlying cause had not been removed, the article predicted even more bitter confrontation. The biggest danger in the eyes of the Church was that

“neonationalism gives the civil instinct that leads to the creation of complex human communities a mark of exclusivity, the status of the highest regulator of all human initiatives, endeavours and even thoughts. As a result, it endows the concept of 'nation' with the meaning of an absolute truth. So, as if rearranging the hierarchy of ethical values, it puts the 'nation' and not God at the top of the hierarchy. Moreover, it demands religious worship of this highest value and therefore, becomes a religion itself.”³⁵

A similar opinion was expressed by Fr. Dr. Mykola Konrad in his sermon for Ukrainian students, delivered at the Church of the Holy Spirit in Lviv. He stated that in the modern era, under the influence of humanism, liberalism and socialism and as a consequence of the desire to separate education and moral life from religion, the moral education of youth had declined disastrously:

“In place of God, the human was installed, be it an individual, a community, a nation, a state, or humanity as a whole. Elevated to the pedestal of divinity, they became the sources of law, the criteria of good and evil, the highest rules of education and life. Recently, this plague has also infected some nationalists both in our country and abroad. They have substituted nation for God and embraced an ethics independent of God and religion.”³⁶

³⁴ 'Ukrains'kyi neonatsionalizm i katolytyzym', *Meta* 50, December 17, 1933.

³⁵ 'Ukrains'kyi neonatsionalizm', op. cit.

³⁶ Mykola Konrad, 'Propovid' dlia Akademichnoi Molodi', *Meta* 51, December 24, 1933.

This and other similar statements by the leaders of the GCC and the Ukrainian Catholic movement show that the Church saw a serious danger in the transformation of the Ukrainian ‘neonationalism’ of Dontsov and the OUN into a secular religion, which sought to subordinate traditional Christianity – a trend that became fully evident by 1933.

Among the clergy, there were different approaches to Ukrainian nationalism. Bishop Hryhoriy Khomyshyn, who was wholly loyal to the Polish authorities, criticised not only the extreme nationalism but also the much more moderate organisations like the Ukrainian National Democratic Alliance, while Metropolitan Sheptyts’kyi and his followers supported the moderate nationalist movement but condemned the OUN’s ideology and terrorist practice.

However, some Ukrainian Catholic activists, while criticising Dontsov’s ideology, still felt that militant nationalism can play an important role in the fight against the main threat – communism. From this stemmed the idea of an alliance between Catholicism and nationalism in the common struggle with communism and other ideologies that were considered hostile to the Church, but the nationalism had first to be purified of its anti-Christian elements. This conception was most consistently expressed by Fr. Konrad in his pamphlet ‘Catholicism and Nationalism’ (1934):

“Nationalism and Catholicism are powerful allies in the struggle against liberalism and socialism. To bring a new, energetic and enthusiastic elite together and to put it under the guidance of conscious and strong-willed leaders, to push masses to action, to the resolute and victorious struggle against the rotten spirit of capitalism and Satanic communism, for a renewal of human life – private, family, national and state life – based on the principles of Christian justice and love – this is the order of the 20th century. The contemporary Catholic and nationalist movement is a modern crusade. In Catholicism, its slogan is: I believe! It is the will of God! – while in nationalism it is: I want! Voglio! The union of religious ethos and nationalist pathos is an irresistible force! Sword and cross – herein lies the hope of nations and the humankind for a new and better tomorrow, when **pax Christi in regno Christi** will triumph.”³⁷

This is the main text which A. Shekhovtsov takes into consideration when formulating his concept of the alleged Western Ukrainian ‘clerical fascism’ marked by an exclusive, palingenetic vision of both national and church life. However, Konrad’s pamphlet shows solely that its author regarded the ‘modern nationalism’, including fascism, as a lesser evil in comparison with communism and considered desirable an alliance of Catholicism and nationalism in their struggle against the common enemies – communism and anticlerical liberalism. In this case, integral nationalism had

³⁷ Mykola Konrad, *Natsionalizm i katolytyzm*, 2003, Hran’, Ivano-Frankivsk, p. 29.

to be purified from its “Nietzschean perversions”, return to the bosom of Christianity and recognize the authority of the Church. As to the palingenetic discourse, it is peculiar to Christianity no less than to nationalism (by the way, not only the fascist one). Indeed, the important component of both ideologies – revolutionary integral nationalism and political Catholicism – was a myth of social palingenesis. To the ultra-nationalists, it meant the rebirth or rather a new birth of the nation in a post-liberal new order based on the domination of strong and healthy nations. To the Catholics, it meant a Christian rebirth of the person, society and nation through the restoration of the ideals of “noble medieval Catholicism” and the establishment of *pax Christi in regno Christi*. However, for Konrad any acceptance of purely fascist ideas was out of the question. On the contrary, he criticised the tendency to dissolve personality within nation, the ‘statolatry’ (idolatrous worship of state) and so on. Hence, the term ‘clerical fascism’ here is nothing but misleading.

Konrad’s pamphlet became one of the manifestations of ‘Christian’ or ‘Catholic nationalism’, whose adherents (Bishop Ivan Buchko, Markiyan Dzerovych, Konstantyn Chekhovych and others) tried to combine Christianity with conservative nationalism and sometimes even sought an agreement with the revolutionary Nationalists. However, the idea of a Catholic-Nationalist alliance was never implemented. Moreover, in 1934, when a member of the OUN shot a prominent Catholic activist, Director of the Ukrainian Gymnasium in Lviv Ivan Babiy, relations between the Church and the nationalist movement became extremely strained. After the OUN regional leaders, headed by Stepan Bandera, were arrested and convicted in the mid-1930s, the conflict lost its sharpness, but still simmered up to 1939.

Conclusion

Thus, Gentile’s and Griffin’s theoretical models can really help to understand the development of Ukrainian integral nationalism, the intentions of its leaders and theorists, the sources of its influence and its relations with the Church. But, of course, one should use these models with discretion, taking into account the specific context of interwar Western Ukraine and the limitations imposed by the stateless status of Ukrainians.

Like other integral nationalist movements in Europe (including the fascist ones), Ukrainian Nationalists had a tendency to sacralise politics and create a political religion, using the following discursive strategies: 1) absolutisation of the Ukrainian nation and its placement at the centre of their system of beliefs and myths; 2) creation of special ethical codes designed to unite the members of the movement in a sacred community of fighters; 3) representation of the nationalist organisation as an elect community invested with a messianic role; and 4) development of a political liturgy, which included the cult of heroism and rituals connected with the *sacred history* of the liberation

struggle.

The Nationalists praised the Church as one of the most important foundations of the nation and attempted to establish a symbiotic relationship with Christianity for the ultimate purpose of incorporating it into the nationalist religion.

Nevertheless, Ukrainian integral nationalism never became a fully fledged political religion. Acting in underground and lacking their own state, Ukrainian nationalists could not use the educational system and media to indoctrinate the masses. Besides, secular religion is a modern phenomenon, while the inter-war Western Ukrainian society remained traditional in many of its aspects, so most of the Galician Ukrainians, especially the older generation, had no need for a secular religion to fill the gap, created by an ontological or 'nomic' crisis. Their devotion to Christianity of the Greek-Catholic rite put a brake on the nationalist sacralisation of politics.

On the basis of its attitude towards Ukrainian nationalism, the highest hierarchy of the GCC and the Catholic movement's leadership can be divided in two camps: 1) a relatively small group surrounding Bishop Khomyshyn who was loyal to the Polish authorities and displayed a negative attitude to the very notion of Ukrainian nationalism even in its moderate form; and 2) the main camp, headed by Metropolitan Sheptyts'kyi, consisting of clergy and intellectuals who held moderate nationalist views but rejected the terrorist methods of the Nationalist movement and its tendency towards creating a secular religion. Inside this camp, there was a group of 'Christian nationalists' who tried to bring about a synthesis of Catholicism and nationalism on the anti-Communist and anti-liberal platform.

In addition, many ordinary priests actively supported the Nationalist struggle for independence. The relations between the clergy and the OUN remained ambivalent until the end of World War II, when both the Greek-Catholic Church and the Ukrainian Nationalist movement were suppressed by the Soviet regime.