

Part II. Memory and practical steps to reconciliation and Christian unity

Introduction to Part II

There is quite a lack of healthy discussions on memory in the Ukrainian context. People are reminded of it

“from anniversary to anniversary, so to speak. We are used to going from one extreme to another: we either keep a diffident silence about our conflicts or bend over backwards to prove that things are bad here. Regularly rethinking Ukraine’s post-totalitarian and post-colonial experience is still the preserve of a handful of intellectuals. Most of us took Vynnychenko’s observation¹ quite literally and, having taken an overdose of ideological, propagandistic, or myth-laden bromide, are in a state of sheer bliss.”²

The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church does not shrink from that challenging task. Ukrainian national reconciliation can happen through raising awareness “vis-a-vis our own history – recognition of the Holodomor, debates on the Ukrainian experience in World War II, Babyn Yar, the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, ecumenical initiatives, and interfaith cooperation.”³ As already demonstrated, most of those topics are treated in the documents of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church.

In the previous part of the book I analysed the vision of reconciliation and its elements in the official Church pronouncements. An essential component of reconciliation is dealing with the burdened memory, and it is to this theme that I will dedicate the entire chapter V of the book. In Ukraine such a work on memory is necessary because of the decade-long presence of communism. Archimandrite Kyrylo Hovorun of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church justifiably claimed:

“In Western Europe, the crimes of Nazism, including the Holocaust, forced the Christian Churches to radically reconsider their relationship with state and society.

1 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, a Ukrainian writer and politician, claimed that one cannot read Ukrainian history without taking a dose of bromide (Volodymyr Vynnychenko, *Shchodennyk*. T. 1, 1911-1920 {Dairy. Vol. 1, 1911-1920}, ed. Hryhorii Kostiuk (Edmonton-New York: KIUS, UVAN, 1980), 285.

2 Kovalenko, *Those Who Forget*.

3 *Ibid.*

A distinct discipline of political theology was born as a reaction to the Nazis' totalitarianism and the atrocities of World War II. In Ukraine, however, neither the persecutions of the Church by the Bolsheviks, nor the Holodomor, nor Stalin's purges, nor the war, nor persecutions under Khrushchev, nor the liberation of the Church from the atheist pressure and its immediate splitting into warring religious groups have led to similar consequences."⁴

The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church dares undertake that task in her documents and in chapter V we will follow how the Church does that. Except for the general approach to the purification of memory I will show specific ways of dealing with the memory of the past in Polish-Ukrainian and Ukrainian-Russian relations, dividing memories of war or missing memories of Jews.

Chapter VI will be dedicated to the search for all-Ukrainian reconciliation in the documents of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. Official texts of that Church show that the point of national cohesion among Ukrainians of different identities is to be found in their spiritual unity which will arise when the Churches of the Kyiv tradition unite in a single Kyiv Patriarchate. I will unfold and challenge the practical feasibility of that vision. The final research question of the volume will be dedicated to the issue of bringing about social transformation in Ukraine and reaching reconciliation. The specific spiritual bottom-up approach of the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church will be elucidated in the light of our reference authors.

4 Cyril Hovorun, "On Maidan," <http://sainteliaschurch.blogspot.it/2013/12/on-maidan-archimandrite-cyril-hovorun.html> (accessed January 20, 2014).