

EXISTENTIAL AND COGNITIVE DIMENSIONS OF PERSONAL DENOMINATION-ORIENTED RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: A FEW CASE STUDIES FROM THE STILL-RELEVANT STORY OF AN ACADEMIC PROJECT

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INTRODUCTION

Personal anniversaries – which, by the way, occur only because some extraordinary individuals live among us – always present a serious opportunity to recall past work, contemplate our present existence, and reflect on the future. After all, the extraordinary people (and now we are talking about the prominent Ukrainian theologian, church historian, and religious educator, Sergii Sannikov, on whom the Lord has bestowed his first seventy-year anniversary) are not merely interesting “in and of themselves.” In fact, they are interesting to us and important because they become mediators and exponents of things that are general, common, and typical, such as typical traits of character, typical existential experiences, typical cognitive intentions, or typical efforts of activity.

“Typical” here does not mean “average” or “ordinary.” Rather, it is something universal, generally important, relevant all around, capable of being “on the frontline” in pursuit of new ways of development, which are important and relevant to all of humanity or to one specific group. It is the pursuit of new benchmarks of existence, new cognitive horizons that refresh, expand, and enrich the world picture. It is the pursuit of new ways of self-awareness and self-organization of a community whose aspirations and ideals are expressed by this or that extraordinary individual. This is how new history is being created, the history of a community, the history that determines the development of all humankind; though in itself it is determined, triggered, and directed by the existential, cognitive, volitional, and activity-oriented (truly “political” in its original sense) efforts of a particular individual.

Meeting such a person, communicating and, if you are lucky, working with such an individual, appears to the average person as a vital participation in the creation of new history. Such a vital occurrence often resets one’s perceptions of the world, opportunities, and prospects. It sets life goals that bring meaning to decades of intellectual, public, or instructional work. This is exactly what happened to me back in the early 1990s. I met and had the honor to communicate with and, even more, to cooperate with Sergii Sannikov. And that is why I feel that I have a moral obligation to tell that story, perhaps in imperfect and clumsy language, but in order to define something important.

I will try to recall and, at the same time, rethink several events and facts of this cooperation, which, I believe, once proved to be and still remains consistently revealing evidence of the transformation of our common world – an existential, value-based, cognitive, activity-oriented transformation which we all still experience. I will focus only on a small portion of these facts but will emphasize their common importance.

I would like to tell about some of the reasons for and the outcomes of one research project that Sergii and I literally “invented” one autumn evening in 1993. The project was about discovering and processing documents related to the history of the Evangelical Baptist movement in Ukraine. Without exaggeration, it became the first large-scale study in independent Ukraine, implemented in close cooperation between secular academics (Department of Religious Studies, Institute of Philosophy, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine) and church scholars (Evangelical Baptist Brotherhood).¹

Based on rather extensive field studies, this endeavor later branched out into several new efforts to collect empirical data “in the field” (including research on the “oral” history of the church), as well as organize and work through the collected material. I was lucky enough to have a hand in the latter effort. I am referring to the compilation of a collection of materials and documents, one of the first works of this genre and area in our academic environment.² Furthermore, the results of this research project served as an asset and catalyst for the academic efforts of several national Protestant historians of the church. Sergii Sannikov was among them.³

Having written that the aforementioned research project was “invented,” I am fully aware of how frivolous it may sound without a proper explanation or clarification. The clarification will be a necessary “bridge,” a transition to, and a teaser for the next part of this text. What would I like to note here? This “invention” – which took place almost immediately after a couple of short but highly motivated brainstorming sessions between a young theologian and a theologian and preacher, already mature at the time – apparently developed on a certain foundation and was not an accidental occurrence or some sort of game. That is, I am not prepared to recognize a happy accident (which could be interpreted as the Lord's providence) and an element of intellectual play (which can also be explained in terms of “inspiration” by the Holy Spirit).

¹ P. Kosukha, S. Golovashchenko, V. Dykhanov, *Istoriia ievangel'skykh khrystyian-baptystiv na Ukraïni: pershi rezul'taty doslidnyts'koho proektu* (Odesa : Bogomyслиe, 1996).

² S. Golovashchenko, ed., *Istoriia evangel'sko-baptystskogo dvizheniia v Ukraine. Materialy i dokumenty* (Odesa: Bogomyслиe, 1998).

³ Iurii Reshetnikov, Sergei Sannikov, *Obzor istorii evangel'sko-baptystskogo bratstva v Ukraine*. Odesa : Bogomyслиe, 2000; Serhii Sannikov, Iurii Reshetnikov, *Ohliad istorii ievanhel's'ko-baptyst'skoho rukhu v Ukraïni*. http://old.baptyst.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=63%3A-ssi-o-i---s&catid=66&Itemid=131&lang=ua

Instead, I am firmly convinced that the success and fruitfulness of the decision made then was based on certain foundations that are objective, or rather inter-subjective, in nature. What do I mean? Such “occasions” are always a manifestation of certain typical collective and personal intentions: existential, cognitive, volitional, or activity-oriented. Certain actors involved in these events (such as Sergii Sannikov and I at that time) are representatives of and participants in a collective historical drama. They represent and reveal features of a certain cultural type, and respond to certain socially meaningful demands.

In my personal case, there was a conscious desire to expand my cognitive and research horizons, which transpired during the global, systemic transformations that were taking place in ideology, culture, science, and political practices. Having received my education and started my professional development in one paradigm, like many of my peers and colleagues, I realized the need for a shift in my self-determination, an aspiration for new professional and life horizons.

However, this is not about me. It is much more interesting for me now to speak about the existential and cognitive intentions of my counterpart, which I almost intuitively absorbed from the beginning and only reconsidered later. Opinions about certain cultural and denominational peculiarities that I once expressed at a conference dedicated to one of the prominent figures of the Reformation,⁴ as I further look into it today, seem to be extremely applicable to the personal intentions of Sergii Sannikov himself, which manifested and evolved during our cooperation and then acquired a new quality and new significance in independent Ukraine. And my counterpart and colleague became a true personification of those important features pertinent to the denominational culture to which he belonged.

Further on, I would like to review some of the worldview, spiritual, and social patterns embedded in the type of Christian culture that our prominent colleague has represented so significantly and existentially in Ukraine. I will outline a number of points that are significant from the angle of the history of religion, the history of culture, and the sociology of the factors that determined the unique nature of the Protestant cultural and denominational community on the terrain of prevailing Eastern Christian tradition, including Ukraine. I anticipate that the proposed discourse will be useful for understanding both the existential and cognitive intentions in the context of which an intellectual framework has emerged and developed since the 1990s, which provided the platform for interesting inter-denominational projects focusing on studies and instruction in Ukrainian religious history.

⁴ S. Holovashchenko, “Protestantyzm ta skhidne slovianstvo: persona u spil’noti (do problemy ‘vkorinosti’ tradytsii),” in *Filosof’s’ko-teolohichnyi dukh Reformatsii: do 500-richchia Filipa Melankhtona* (Sumy: Sobor, 1997), 35–40.

DOMESTIC PROTESTANTISM AS A SPECIAL TYPE OF EXISTENTIAL, SPIRITUAL, AND COGNITIVE PRACTICE

Protestantism in Ukraine (primarily the so-called Evangelical movement) historically emerged as the result of a complex and lasting pursuit. Its specific ethnic features bear evidence of an indigenous spiritual awakening influenced by the Western Christian tradition. Its social peculiarity was marked by the intense persecution of believers, first during the tsarist era and later by the Soviet totalitarian system. As a result, the religious communities were forced to develop a rather restrained relationship with the rest of the world. Today, however, the rather close involvement of all Protestant churches in social development urges them to study their own history and consistently work to preserve it. Because, from its beginnings, Protestantism was not a “local” phenomenon, either geographically or culturally, it is quite fair that, given our cultural context, this tradition must again and again ascertain itself in the East Slavic world, define its “roots” and “inherency” in relation to local forms of social life and spirituality. Virtually all Protestant denominations have built themselves into the local cultural and historical framework as a sort of “bridge” that connects the “Western” and “Eastern” Christian worlds, which differ quite a bit in the way religion is expressed, the way the church system is structured, and in the way public life and government are organized.

In comparative analysis, religions and various beliefs are examined through, among other things, the kind of social forms in which they manifest themselves, and the way that individual and institutionalized religiosity influence the balance of personal and public elements in human life. It is concerned with the way religion addresses the problems of “the individual and society,” “the individual and the Church,” “the individual, the Church, and the State” as a projection of the fundamental religious problem of “the individual and God.” It required a revision of the “earthly” reasons for individual existence. Why do we highlight this?

Western European religiosity developed historically as “personalized” when religious experience and individual spiritual freedom were addressed as issues. The issue of free will was viable for both Western Orthodox (Catholic) thought and that of the Reformation. We may recall the debates surrounding Pelagianism, St. Augustine’s *De libero arbitrio*, and Martin Luther’s *De servo arbitrio*. The personalization of Western religiosity was combined with its “internalization,” i.e., its emphasis on the need to infuse the rite with faith and internal religious experience. It comprised a trend towards abandoning ritual formality in combination with the continual search for new forms of community. This spiritual situation, in my opinion, was consistent with the combination of the dogmatic stability of Western Christianity and the fluidity of social forms, the discreteness of statehood in Western Europe, which has evolved since the times of the Ecumenical Councils. In the days of the

Reformation, this was reflected in the resurgence of the Apostle Paul's New Testament doctrine of justification by personal faith and ideas of religious freedom, as well as in the development of political and legal ideology during the Enlightenment.

In this country, however, personalized religion of the Western type (constancy of internal spirituality combined with a variety of social forms) was rooted on the foundation of holistic Eastern Christian denominational and cultural tradition characterized by the primacy of "the common," the expression of individuality through "co-participation" in the community. Yet another dimension of this cultural paradigm was a centralized statehood that sought absoluteness. Key social institutions, such as the rural community (*mir* – "the public," "community") and the state, imposed the primacy of the collective. State authority was a sacred value, even in times of political division, which was viewed as somehow temporary and surmountable. The ideal type of the state, a religiously authorized one that encompassed all spheres of life, was perceived and implemented as the embodiment of a super-historical idea rather than as the result of a historically determined life choice. Even the principle of "symphony," ideally providing for the separation of spiritual and secular powers ("what is God's and what is Caesar's"), politically led to the statization of the Church in exchange for the doubtful advantage of making the State more integrated with the Church. The interests of secular bishops ("bishops of foreign affairs," beginning with Emperor Constantine) often acted under the disguise of the religion of Christ.

Therefore, the ideology and institutions of the Orthodox Church, due to the stability of their structure and succession of power, objectively organized public life and were among the most important factors in keeping it integrated. On the other hand, they were the fundamental elements that shaped individual religiosity. According to Church teaching, salvation was inconceivable outside the Church or its mediation. The power to follow the spiritual path must be drawn from the grace coming from the sacraments of the Church. The will and confidence in the truth of the faith and in its "Orthodoxy" had to be acquired through the rational or intuitive reception of mystical knowledge incorporated not only in the Holy Scriptures but also in Church Tradition. Therefore, the Eastern Slavic *mir* ("the public"), structured by the church-bound "Orthodox" monarchy and the state-oriented Church, implemented the Byzantine principle of universality (with Platonic roots). "Orthodoxy" was achieved through the "participation" of God in an individual – through secular and ecclesiastical authorities, and of an individual in God – through the Church, both earthly and heavenly, through belief in the sacred inviolability of the social principles prescribed by God: kin, family, state.

In this framework, traditional religiosity stemmed rather from social and cultural factors: state life, the tribal communal system with its blood ties and roots in

the cycle of nature. The “naturalness” of the community (its consistency with the principles of ancestral agrarian culture) revealed itself, in particular, in “natural” religiosity. In this regard, we may recall the so-called “dual faith.” Its “pagan” roots have been most thoroughly studied. This speaks of the way that agrarian life was rooted in the dynamics of nature, which historically has led, to some extent, to the incorporation of traditional perceptions about the universe in Orthodox Church practices.

However, we can regard this phenomenon in general as the rise of the popular tradition to internalize spirituality using informal religious patterns. Then we can note yet another manifestation of “dual faith” in Eastern Christian culture, i.e., “spiritual” worship as a way of “internalizing” and “personalizing” religiosity. It has nothing to do with the elite mystical and ascetic practice of Orthodox monks. It was a sort of alternative, popular Christianity born in the depths of the community (*mir*). The individualized perception of revelation, the experience of personal faith, and conscious personal responsibility for salvation, both individual salvation and the salvation of “kin” or the community (*mir*) through maximum liberalization of social life, developed as an alternative to the formal community of individuals and their co-participation through official rites and the state Church.

The concepts of “truth,” “justice,” “brotherhood,” responsibility to God and people were loaded with religious and ethical content. These were often expressed socially through efforts not only to create a new religiosity but also more just patterns of social organization. Such were the “heresies” of the fourteenth century in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Novgorod Land, the movement of Orthodox fraternities in Ukrainian and Belarusian territories in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, the “spiritual Christianity” communities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sometimes they emerged under the influence of the Reformation, but more often independently, similar to trends in Europe.

We can therefore contend that we had our own Reformation within the Eastern Christian world, which paved the way for the ideological and social patterns of the “Evangelical emergence” in the nineteenth century. It was this wave of Protestantism that most vigorously raised the issue of reform with the national spiritual tradition and the public system. And it happened not through political or economic slogans, but through raising awareness of the urgent need for a renewal of mindset and public life. As far as politics or economics, twentieth-century Protestantism in Ukraine made the pursuit of religious freedom a universal principle, which in the long run was able to determine social, political, and economic freedoms.

Protestant principles of an active, moral life as proof that Divine Providence is at work with respect to an individual; the principles of religious tolerance that lead

to recognition of the freedom of conscience; the ideals of genuine equality incorporated in the universal priesthood and the democratic setup of communities -- all these things acquired a powerful transformative energy and opposed the spiritual and political despotism that were the prevailing principles in the social order of the former Russian Empire. Hence, we observe the obsessive desire of officials in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to present the Evangelical movement as alien and hostile to the “national spirit” (in fact, the spirit of Orthodox tsarist autocracy) and, therefore, as politically threatening (often described as “socialist oriented”).

As to internal indicators of the transformative power of the Protestant tradition, without a doubt, it proved its productivity primarily as applied to critical spiritual and social situations. Such situations would include a crisis of the traditional social order as whole; crises within communities at various levels; the emergence of new patterns in economic and social life; the need for a change of spiritual priorities. In European history, such crises occurred especially at the beginning of the Christian era and at the beginning of the Reformation processes of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. As for Ukrainian history, this applied to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the present day. The latter, in fact, keeps our history from ending up in the archives.

Both then and now, the Protestant tradition applies the experience of overcoming social and spiritual crises. It applies the experience of strengthening communities based on real life principles, such as work, morality, community service, solidarity, mutual assistance, and responsibility – the ultimate baseline for a strong state. Both then and now, this tradition is a universal bridge between cultures and nations, recognizing the human being (rather than a depersonalized social structure) as the medium of God’s design on Earth and in earthly life; a human being who is consciously limited by unconditional precepts and, at the same time, is an independent actor in choosing his or her life path – and is therefore free.

THE STUDY OF RELIGIOUS HISTORY AS A SOCIOLOGICAL AND PHENOMENOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE: RESEARCH AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES IN INTER-DISCIPLINARY FOCUS

As I have already noted, the outputs of the project that studied archival sources on the Evangelical Baptist movement in Ukraine later influenced the progress of fruitful research into the history of Protestantism in Ukraine. And in my personal professional history, these documents (primarily those included in the 1998 collection) determined not only research but also my instructional interests and activities.

For many years, I have been fortunate to teach church history (both world and Ukrainian history) in several religious schools, mostly to a Christian audience, primarily Protestant. In different times and at various places, it has consisted of both young and more mature people who were preparing for various types of church service – theological, pastoral, or missionary – in various Baptist and Evangelical Christian denominations. Therefore, I would like to note a detail relevant to the current discussion: many modern and thoughtful Protestants in Ukraine have sometimes contradictory feelings about the Ukrainian history of religion and church. The connection with the popular, national tradition is sometimes perceived in an overly-dramatic way. Is there a deeply-rooted Protestant worldview and practices, or are they culturally translated from the outside and happen to be a manifestation of some sort of globalization? There is also an opposite but related feeling that pertains to the Orthodox tradition. This refers both to official church structures and the so-called “Orthodox community,” which at the same time is the medium of a certain set of stereotypic judgments about Ukrainian Protestants.

And so, it develops that, for the students, the church and religious history of our country is probably the most essential way to live through and overcome the above contradiction. The need to study church history here grows not only out of pure academic interest. Rather, this need is spiritual, much like that of the Christians of the early Church. For such students, church history is not a science but rather a way to “draw” the line of holy legacy from Christ and the apostles to themselves, to their brothers and sisters, across time. Therefore, being involved in the university teaching of archival sources and published historical documents proved to be relevant in a practical sense. It offered interesting opportunities for both the development of methods for the use of documents in instructional and educational practices and ways of improving students’ comprehension.

During my teaching practice, I eventually participated in several HESP-ReSET research and education projects from 2008 to 2013.⁵ Some of them (such as “Christianity, Judaism, Islam in the History of Europe: A Comparative and Inter-disciplinary History of European Religious Traditions,” 2008-2011) were directly focused on incorporating the relevant research material into university education. And so, the former efforts, the intentions discussed above, have been reignited, reinvigorated, and brought to second life both during the years of active instruction of church history to students in various schools and during the implementation of these projects.

⁵ “Higher Education Support Program Regional Seminar for Excellence in Teaching,” sponsored by the Open Society Institute.

The most interesting here was the use of archival materials, collected at the time in the following two aspects or ways. The first aspect was the integration of documentary data into active work with the students in class as the “living evidence of the time” for the most realistic reconstruction of certain stages of world history or Ukrainian religious history. In this way, the experience of studying historical documents was developed and tested by running various scenarios on the history of Christianity both in the student and expert communities.⁶ The second aspect of utilizing the source base and topics developed, thanks to the documents discovered during archival research, was the heuristic potential of their inter-disciplinary study (the ReSET projects were clearly inter-disciplinary). This aspect, in my opinion, deserves a more detailed look as it clearly demonstrates the cognitive potential of the intellectual field where S. V. Sannikov was and is one of the most outstanding ploughmen and sowers.

Next, we will review a historical case once presented in one of our lectures entitled, “The Pursuit of Religious Identity by New Protestant Groups in the South of the Russian Empire in the Late 19th Century (based on an official survey of 1896).” At the time, I attempted to develop an inter-disciplinary problematization of this case by comparing the religious, cultural, phenomenological, and historic sociological approaches.⁷ The adoption of an inter-disciplinary approach as a principle for the study of empirical material and methodology for the development of explanatory models in the field of religious history enriches this topic by combining the efforts of historians, theologians, philosophers, cultural studies scholars, and sociologists. Today I recall this story as an example of a sustainable, continuous implementation of the Protestant cognitive and existential intention that we discussed above in a broad disciplinary field, including academic research, theological studies, and education. This case is based on the collection of documents discussed above on the history of the Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist movement.

A number of documents reflected both the common and unique nature of an event which occurred in the late nineteenth century in Ukrainian religious history. The first set of documents captured the unique precedent of mass confessional manifestations of “sectarian” groups, which became an important factor in their self-identification. These are the manuscripts of confessional records made in 1896,

⁶ S. Golovashchenko, “Khristiane v Rimskoi imperii: metodicheskaia model' prepodavaniia i usvoeniia pervoistichnikov po istorii rannego khristianstva (Opyt rolevoi igry),” in D. Polyviannyi, ed., *Religioznye traditsii Evropy i sovremennost': izuchenie i prepodavanie v universitetakh: Sbornik nauchnykh i nauchno-metodicheskikh statei*. (Ivanovo : Ivanovskii gosuniversitet, 2011), 258–273.

⁷ S. Golovashchenko, “O vozmozhnosti realizatsii mezhdistsiplinarnogo podkhoda k osvoeniiu arkhivnykh materialov po tserkovnoi istorii, in Polyviannyi, ed., *Religioznye traditsii Evropy i sovremennost'*, 170–179.

at the request of government authorities, by presbyters and mentors of the Molokan and the Spiritual Christian communities of the villages of Astrakhanka and Novo-Vasylivka, Berdyansk district, Tavriya province.⁸ The second set of documents comprised the minutes of meetings of the Orthodox Tavriya Missionary Committee, presenting an expert evaluation of the situation. The committee's extensive "report" and "meeting journal" contain "reference memos" created by missionaries and police officers. The records contained detailed information about the activities of "sectarian" branches, comments about their religious persuasions, as well as an explanation of the reasons for the inquiry. The main reason was the need to distinguish between Molokanism and Stundism in certain communities in order to clarify the limits for enforcement of the "anti-Stundist" decree of 1894. As a result, some groups were identified as Molokan and others as Stundist.⁹ Finally, there was a "Petition" by the leaders of the Molokan communities of the village of Novo-Vasylivka, Berdyansk district – named Kolodin and Kharitonov – addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs, bearing vivid apologetic coloring. It reflected the ideological evolution of the doctrine and rituals of various Molokan branches, an "insider" perspective on the identity of their own tradition.¹⁰ Further on, for the convenience of readers, I will provide references to the pages of the Collection of documents.¹¹

How can we reveal here the uniqueness of a rather typical situation of development, self-recognition, and articulation of religious and public identity in a rather localized and, at first glance, marginal confessional environment (from the perspective of "great church history")? I accept the productivity of sociological, cultural, and anthropological analysis of confessional self-determination of certain religious groups. After all, it is closely linked to cultural and public self-determination. First, we should underscore the desire of the "actors" in this story to correlate their own tradition with several levels of spiritual, cultural and public life. They compare themselves to (a) another, "foreign," "alien" tradition (traditions); (b) a certain ideal image of "Christianity" ("spiritual" or "evangelical"); (c) real "other" but still "similar" religious groups; and (d) the "domestic," "popular" tradition, often labelled as the "Orthodox" one.¹²

⁸ Tsentral'nyi Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Respubliki Krym (TGARK). Fond 26. Opis' 2. Delo. 3929, List 2–23, "Veroucheniia obshchin 'evangel'skogo' i 'dukhovnogo' khristianstva (molokan, dukhovnykh khristian, prygunov, evangel'skikh khristian, baptistov) razlichnykh 'tolkov' i 'sobranii' sël Astrakhanka i Novo-Vasylivka Berdianskogo uезда Tavricheskoi gubernii."

⁹ TGARK, Fond 118. Opis' 1. Delo 2476, List 35–41, "Spravki i raport Tavricheskogo eparkhial'nogo missionerskogo komiteta."

¹⁰ TGARK, Fond 118. Opis' 1. Delo 2476, List 42–47, "Proshenie v adres ministra vnutrennikh del presviterov 2-go Donskogo tolka molokan v sele Novo-Vasylivka Berdianskogo uезда Tavricheskoy gubernii krest'an V. N. Kolodina i A. E. Kharitonova."

¹¹ Golovashchenko, *Istoriia evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizheniia v Ukraine*, 227–255.

¹² *Ibid.*, 277–244, 254–255.

One can see here how “insiders” use some sort of comparative method for self-identification (through the mechanism of “identification” and “dis-identification”). Such use encourages the researcher to turn deliberately to the comparative method as it is rather congenial to the subject of the study itself. At the same time, the “actors” of this story assert that they are “involved” in the cultural and public entity. Given the historical era, it could be that they referred to affiliation with the so-called “Imperial nation,” which took the shape of “allegiance” to the empire state.¹³ In connection with the latter statement, we should note a powerful subjective factor that determined the need and possibility of the discussed self-identification and its specific manifestations. This factor is the position of the state, the authoritarian absolutist empire, in its efforts to modernize itself. Here, the balance between archaic (tribal, ethnic, religious and worship-related) and modern (public, legal and political) criteria of affiliation, inclusion, and identity becomes very dynamic.

What comes up in this context? First of all, it is the legalization of a multi-denominational arrangement. But a critical observer may ask: what kind of legalization could there be in the late nineteenth century? After all, we are discussing a case based on an incident caused by the need to implement the discriminatory decree of 1894 banning so-called “Stundism,” that is, limiting the multi-denominational structure at the supra-national level (the level of “imperial nation”)! My answer would be that it is a kind of “negative” legalization, revealing an official legal response to a certain objective reality, the actual recognition of a “new” religiosity by an entity designed to conduct legal assessment and exercise administrative enforcement. We may draw a parallel to the logic and methodology of science where the principles of verification and falsification are considered equally valuable. We should also add that the “positive” legalization of multi-denominational structure became a legal fact in the Russian Empire only in 1905 after the famous Manifesto of October 17 and a number of related regulations were adopted.

Here is another dimension of the situation from the perspective of cultural studies. In the late nineteenth century, we observe the emergence (in fact, the domination, to be more precise) of new ways to establish historical facts or social events (in other words, the “credibility of a historical or social fact”) in the Russian Empire. What does this mean? Simply that the role of archaic techniques, such as admission, confession, and testimony, which had functioned for more than two thousand years in ancient culture (including the Middle East) and later in the

¹³ *Ibid.*, 230, 232–235, 242–244, 254, 255.

European legal culture, had declined.¹⁴ In the last third of the nineteenth century, “late modern” techniques were used more intensively under the influence of modernization based on the European model. They employed such types of intellectual activity as statistics and professional expertise. Such techniques recognized the leading role of science not only in the study of nature (as in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries) but also in the realm of social reality, in the field of culture, and even in religious and church life. The methodological and instrumental basis of these techniques was developed in the course of the mutual intellectual competition of such traditions as Hegelianism, Marxism, neo-Kantianism, and positivism.

Subsequently, the turn to statisticians and professional experts for measuring and explaining social processes directly determined the emergence of European sociology as a field of scientific reflection focusing on social reality. In fact, sociology as a source of verifiable quantitative data and expert opinion sometimes provided quite competent output, but sometimes its ways were downright exotic. For example, sociological research in Great Britain and Germany grew out of the social demand for the study of production, labor, and the daily life of the working class. This demand came in response to the growing conflict between labor and capital. In the framework of that “formally adequate” sociology, by the way, the sociology of religion emerged, and religious motives of economic behavior were explained for the first time, as can be clearly seen from Max Weber’s experience.

Be that as it may, our case study demonstrated an immensely interesting cultural and denominational situation. Modern statistics and expertise appeared to be “packaged” in the archaic institutional forms of an administrative inquiry, as well as repressive ideological influence (“anti-sectarian missionary work”). In fact, the public need here was not to obtain objective information (as in the case of private capital in Europe). Instead, the state bureaucracy needed to ascertain how well directives and regulations were being enforced.

Therefore, we observe an effort to document what may be the first-ever sociological study of practical religion in domestic history. The lack of a “normal” (by today’s standards) institutional framework, of a scientific or academic type, should not mislead us. Everything took place in a system set according to the bureaucratic rules of the time: the police department, the missionary section of the diocese, the diocesan department. But it was sociology. No doubt they used the following specific sociological methods:

¹⁴ Author’s note: The most firmly established example is the biblical tradition of live testimony; we may mention such things as the role of confession in the symbolic “salvation of a sinful soul,” practiced at one time by the Catholic Inquisition. Nor is it too much also to mention efforts to revive such techniques in the context of the restoration of quasi-theocratic political-legal models (“Confession is the queen of proof” in the Soviet juridical practice of the Stalinist period).

- observation, including participant observation;
- document analysis (“ceremonial books,” religious and liturgical texts);
- interviews (interview reports, answers to questions about religious doctrine and creed);¹⁵
- expert evaluations (responses of missionaries, “apologetic” writings by presbyters/representatives of “sectarian” religious communities).¹⁶

The cited archaic techniques of “testimony” and “self-confession” were not completely rejected, but they lost their crucial weight and were merged as secondary elements with the expert evaluation. Also, a comparative method was used to determine the key and essential differences between “Stundism” and “Molokanism.” Emphasis was placed on practical identification criteria, including the following:

- the presence or absence of religious acts interpreted as “sacraments” (in the Orthodox sense) or “rites” (in the sense of the late Reformation, associated with Zwinglianism and Calvinism);¹⁷
- sources of religious doctrine and practices (only the Holy Scriptures or the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition; acceptance or non-acceptance of the Holy Fathers’ tradition as a source; the similarity or non-similarity of certain rituals with Orthodox ones).¹⁸

Using methods of observation and expert evaluation made it possible to identify the following:

- the channels and means through which the new tradition (identified as “proselytism” in the dominant confessional discourse) was spreading: the data on this was quite contradictory;
- the factors of dissemination: ideological propaganda, cultural, social, and even economic.¹⁹

It is interesting how the indicator of “unity” and “affiliation” with a particular tradition was determined, also using methods of observation and expert evaluation. This indicator was based on the availability and nature of certain types of prayer and organizational contact (communication) between individuals and groups of believers.²⁰ It was historically problematic to examine it specifically for the Orthodox Church culture, which spread within the framework of an ideologically homogeneous and hierarchically organized disciplinary social structure. Here

¹⁵ Golovashchenko, *Istoriia evangel'sko-baptistskogo dvizheniia v Ukraine*, 245.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 245–255.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 247, 248, 249.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 227, 231, 233, 244, 249, 253.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 246, 251–253.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

the Orthodox “expertise” encountered a different type of ecclesiology and communication – a quasi- or fully congregational one (sometimes even synodically congregational). Typologically (and sometimes genetically) such ecclesiastical and communal communicative structure was tied to the Reformation or Zwinglian-Calvinist tradition mentioned above.

Therefore, the development of a new discourse that could describe the new religious reality – the legalization of denominational diversity – pushed Orthodox missionary experts in the late nineteenth century to take account of criteria of affiliation and identity that would be specific and alternative to their “own” traditional criteria. Thanks to that, both the missionaries and officials of that time and today’s researchers received documented and authenticated “internal,” “in-house” criteria of self-identification (when representatives of the religious communities themselves acted as experts). Furthermore, one can single out various aspects for the determination of such criteria, such as ideological, political-juridical, religious-dogmatic, liturgical, practical-theological, and organizational-institutional.

The ideological, political, and legal criteria quite clearly position the identity of the late Protestant groups in the south of Ukraine in relation to the state, based on the type of affiliation with the “imperial nation.” The rest of the criteria operate in a rather tense problem area of “identification/dis-identification” where the trends of separating from Orthodox tradition and self-identifying with ideal images of “apostolic” or “evangelical” Christianity intermixed with the trends of choosing between the authentic culture of “Spiritual Christianity” and the European Protestant tradition.²¹

Therefore, the historical case under discussion and the method of its documentary recording demonstrated the appearance of the first attempts to do sociological, comparative religious, and comparative cultural studies of new religious phenomena in the Russian Empire at the juncture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This made it possible for us to study today the “Christianity that is being experienced,” which still remains an area of more or less speculative historical reconstruction for earlier periods. Therefore, we enter a new era, when the sociology of religion, comparative religion, and cultural studies become methodologically valuable and heuristically fully functional partners for the history of religion and church history in the study of their specific sources.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 254–255.

CONCLUSION

Thus, already in the late twentieth century, a number of essential features of the national Protestant cultural and denominational tradition determined opportunities for the personal realization of existential and cognitive intentions which gave rise to an intellectual dimension that, in its turn, prompted the emergence of interesting projects for the study and teaching of Ukrainian religious history. The need for such studies has turned out to have many aspects. First of all, traditionally for all Christians since apostolic times, the desire to study church history grows not only out of scientific interest. Rather, it is spiritual. Church history is not a science in the first place but a way of “drawing the line” of holy legacy from Christ and the apostles to people themselves, to their brothers and sisters, across time, eras, space, and generations. What is also important is that for many modern Protestants in Ukraine, the connection with the popular, national tradition is very relevant, including the deep roots of the Protestant worldview and practices.

The project that studied archival sources devoted to the Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist movement, initiated in part by S. V. Sannikov in the early 1990s in Ukraine, was one of the first examples of sustainable implementation of the above-mentioned Protestant cognitive and existential intention in a multi-faceted and inter-disciplinary problematic field, including academic research, theology, and education. On the one hand, this project influenced the progress of prospective research into the history of Protestantism in Ukraine. In addition, it illustrated how relevant the use of archival sources and published historical documents could be for university education, both in terms of methods enabling the use of documentary sources in teaching, and in terms of improving students’ comprehension.

The inter-disciplinary approach to the study of empirical material and the development of explanatory models in the realm of religious history allowed us to see – in an almost ordinary story concerning the dramatic relations between early Protestant groups in southern Ukraine and the then- autocratic government – one of the first sociological studies of practical religiosity in the Russian Empire at the juncture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Modern statistics and professional expertise were “packaged” in archaic institutional forms of administrative inquiry and repressive ideological influence (“anti-sectarian missionary work”). As a result, we have a reconstruction of the first local effort to develop an understanding of new religious phenomena by using sociological, comparative religious, and comparative cultural study approaches. This marked a new era, when the sociology of religion, comparative religion, and cultural studies became methodologically

valuable and heuristically fully functional partners of the history of religion and church history in the study of their specific sources.

This era is one of openness and cooperation and it continues to the present day, nourished by the energy, intellect, will, and efforts of extraordinary individuals such as Sergii Sannikov. By God's will, such individuals are "on the cutting edge" in pursuit of new existential landmarks, relevant to the whole of humankind as it unveils new existential benchmarks and sets new cognitive horizons, refreshing, expanding and enriching the picture of the world. Accordingly, this is the way new history is being created through the existential, value-based, cognitive, and activity-oriented transformation of our common world, as we all continue to experience it.

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