

UDC 27-523.42(477)  
DOI 10.24919/2519-058X.20.240042

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**MOST-SUFFERING FATE AND GLORIOUS VICTORIES  
OF THE UKRAINIAN GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**(review of the monograph: Vehesh M., Kontsur-Karabinovich N., Marchuk V.,  
Palinchak M., Golonich Ya., The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church:  
past and present. Academic publishing Fairmont, 2020. 380 p.)**

**БАГАТОСТРАЖДАЛЬНА ДОЛЯ І СЛАВНІ ЗВИТЯГИ  
УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ГРЕКО-КАТОЛИЦЬКОЇ ЦЕРКВИ**

**(рецензія на монографію: Вегеш М., Концур-Карабінювич Н., Марчук В.,  
Палінчак М., Голонич Я., Українська Греко-Католицька церква:  
минуле і сучасне. Academic publishing Fairmont, 2020. 380 с.)**

The peer-reviewed publication highlights the historical path of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and church-religious transformation in the western Ukrainian region. The main milestones of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky's life, spiritual ministry and national valour are traced.

**In Chapter I** of the work "The Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church: Pages of History", the authors did the research on the source base, the scientific development state of the topic and

analysed the historical progress and main activities of the UGCC, identified the contribution of the church to the development of the Ukrainian national idea, to the consolidation of State-conciliar forces, tracked its suffering path in the 1940s – 1980s, determined the role and significance of the UGCC in the state system – Church Relations of Ukraine.

**In subsection 1.1.** “UGCC in the Light of Historiographic Heritage and Documents” a historiographic review of scientific studies on the topic was conducted and the theoretical and factual achievements in the history of this unique religious formation were analysed. The authors logically identified three periods of the research on the history of the UGCC: 1) the first half of the XXth century; 2) the period of catacomb existence (from the notorious Lviv Cathedral in 1946 to the legalization of the UGCC); 3) the modern stage (from the legalization of the church in 1990, etc.). The authors noted that the focus of research interest in emigration and in western Ukraine dealt with prominent figures of the Church, the history of religious printing, and the spiritual and cultural education of the UGCC among the population. It is also noted that the Soviet historiography of the XXth century, despite its ideological bias, also has a certain value as a historiographic source. Modern studies of the history of the UGCC are covered in detail, presented in the 4th volume of the ten-volume book “History of Religion in Ukraine”, in the monographs of B. Hudziak, A. Sapeliuk, A. Pashuk and the others. In accordance with the opinion of the authors, appropriate studies of the church history of Galicia, Transcarpathia, Bukovyna, Nadsiania, vicissitudes of the foundation and activity of individual monasteries and religious centres are also considered. Several pages are submitted for viewing foreign studios, primarily the Polish ones (pp. 27–29). In general, the authors proved that the available source base allows studying the transformations of church and religious life in the western Ukrainian lands.

**In subsection 1.2** “The Struggle for the Preservation of the National Idea as Part of the Activities of the Greek-Catholic Church” scholars applied the problem-chronological dimension, highlighting in the history of the Church events of universal significance: baptism of Ukraine-Rus; the Brest Union of 1596; the underground and the revival of the UGCC in the XXth century. Therefore, the authors’ definition of the Ukrainian Christianity as a symbiosis of the Eastern Christian tradition with the Western one on the basis of the pre-Christian culture of Rus-Ukraine looks appropriate, which expressed the spiritual face of the Ukrainian nation already at the end of the XIth century (p. 34). The authors noted that the Union of Brest was a natural result of the process of integration of Eastern and Western church traditions in Ukraine and the second epochal event in the history of the Ukrainian Christianity after Vladimir’s baptism of Kyiv in 988.

Later, the historians highlighted the educational activities of monasteries, the circumstances of the restoration of the Galician Metropolitanate in the XVIIIth century, noted the role of the “Russian Trinity” and the Greek-Catholic hierarchs M. Levitsky, H. Yakhimovich, I. Sembratovich in the national revival of the XIXth century. It is rightly noted that at that time the clergy became almost the only representative of the Ukrainian population in relations with the authorities. Obviously, the priests and the worshippers of the UGCC mainly shared the ideas of fr. V. Podolinsky, who defended the salvation of Galicia from perishing in the cathedral independent Ukrainian state (p. 49, 52). The thesis about the huge role of the UGCC, metropolitan A. Sheptytsky, in fact, that the centre of the national movement moved to Galicia, and the region received the name “Ukrainian Piedmont”, is supported by facts. As a result, it is stated that the UGCC and its worshippers at the end of the century were ready to fight both for national and cultural rights, and for the statehood and conciliarity of Ukraine.

At the beginning of **subsection 1.3**. “The Contribution to the Consolidation of State-Conciliar Forces (the first third of the XXth century)” it is noted that a new era in the history of the UGCC was initiated by Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, who launched consummate activities in various fields. It is noted that A. Sheptytsky called on Lviv residents to defend their faith and, at the cost of his arrest and exile, nullified the intentions of transferring the church under the Moscow Patriarch in 1914 (p. 67). It is noted that the clergy of the UGCC welcomed the proclamation of an independent UNR, took an active part in the November Revolution of 1918 and the development of the ZUNR and UGA. It is observed that during the interwar period, the UGCC maintained the Theological Academy and community, libraries, choirs, theatres and study clubs, collaborated with Prosvita, Ridna Shkola, published some magazines, donated to orphanages, supported the UNDO, and over the course of time even its own parties – UCO, UKNP, etc. It is summed up that in the interwar 20th anniversary, the national character of the UGCC, which had 16 bishops and dioceses in Transcarpathia and overseas, crystallized finally. In Galicia alone, the Church numbered 1 907 parishes in the 1920s, where 2 298 priests worked (p. 76).

The history of confessional and ethnic, political transformations during World War II (1939–1945) is described in **subsection 1.4**. The authors recalled that on the eve of the war, the UGCC was the largest (4.3 million worshippers) and the affluent among the Ukrainian churches in Poland (p. 86). It is confirmed that, having annexed in the autumn of 1939, western Ukraine, the Bolsheviks carried out the first stage of “Sovietization”, during which dozens of priests were killed and deported, educational and scientific institutions, magazines were closed, church lands and buildings were nationalized (pp. 88–90). At the same time, scientists, adhering to the principle of objectivity, noted that the UGCC suffered the least losses among other faiths. Owing to metropolitan Andrey, who called for obeying the laws, but not interfering in politics, the authorities were unable to use the Church for their own purposes, and the Metropolitan himself formed 4 exarchates outside of Galicia, including in Soviet Ukraine.

It is noted that the outbreak of the Soviet-German war on June 22, 1941 changed the religious situation significantly. The authors traced the change in the attitude of the Metropolitan of the UGCC towards the German authorities: from gratitude for liberation, from Bolshevism to condemnation of Nazism and hostility expressed in the letter to Pope Pius XII in August of 1942. A. Sheptytsky wrote: “the German government is evil, almost diabolical, and then to an unprecedented greater extent than the Bolshevik government” (p. 92). It is recalled that at the same time, the Metropolitan condemned the genocide of the Jews, and in November, in a pastoral letter “Do not kill”, strictly warned that the Curse of the Church would fall on all and sundry, who shed innocent blood.

The historians came to the conclusion that at the time of the “second Soviets”, the attitude of communist leaders towards the UGCC was associated not only with “the Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism”, but also with collaboration through the participation of the clergy in the leadership of Galicia District, the formation of the Galicia Division, and assistance to the OUN(B). However, according to the historians, Moscow, in connection with the war, was aware of entering into an open conflict with the UGCC, that is why, it extended the policy of “partnership” with the church adopted in 1943 to the Greek-Catholics. Therefore, the delegation sent to Moscow, headed by the new Metropolitan I. Slipyi, received assurances that the UGCC could act on an equal basis with other faiths (pp. 99, 100). This, of course, did not save the Church from the supervision of special services and repression for its close ties with the UPA.

In **subsection 1.5**. “The Suffering Path of the Church in the Second Half of the 1940s – 1980s” it is proved that the Soviet government fully supported the action to liquidate

the UGCC. The sabotage culminated in the pseudo-Council of 1946 in Lviv, which annulled the resolutions of the Brest Union of 1596 and proclaimed “reunification” with the All-Russian Orthodox Church (p. 107). The historians have given arguments to prove the illegitimacy and uncanonicity of the decision of the “council” (pp. 113, 114). It is noted that by 1947, only 43% of UGCC clerics joined the Russian Orthodox church, while the majority of priests continued to resist the destruction of the Church. “Thus, the Lviv Council of 1946 did not become the moment of a decisive turn of the Uniate clergy and worshippers towards Orthodoxy, as the Soviet government and the hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church expected,” the historians stated (p. 109). They rightly noted that it was obvious to the international community that the liquidation of the UGCC was not the will of the people, but the result of political coercion to weaken the Vatican. It is no coincidence that out of 267 priests who returned from exile during Khrushchev’s “thaw”, only 14 headed Orthodox parishes, while the rest served in the catacomb UGCC (pp. 123, 124). It is noted that in the 60s there was another wave of the struggle of Communists with the “opium of the nation”. And only the Helsinki Accords of 1975 forced the Kremlin to weaken its offensive slightly. It is noted that in the 1980s, the communist regime weakened, and the movement for the restoration of the church grew stronger.

**In subsection 1.6.** “The UGCC as a Church-Religious Institution of Independent Ukraine” it is noted that in 1987, the new head of the Church, M. Lubachevsky, and the Synod of bishops appealed to Orthodox hierarchs for reconciliation. In Ukraine, the movement for the restoration of the church was headed by Bishop Pavel Vasylyk. It is noted that the turn in the CPSU’s policy towards churches took place in April of 1988, when Mikhail Gorbachev announced the abolition of discriminatory acts against religion. In the same year, the UGCC priests held a number of unauthorized services for the millennium of the baptism of Rus, sent petitions to international forums, and sent a delegation to Mikhail Gorbachev (pp. 127–131). It is stated that only on November 21, 1989, the government of the Ukrainian SSR finally allowed the registration of the Greek-Catholic communities. It is indicated that Archbishop V. Sterniuk on January 23, 1990, convened a council of the UGCC in Lviv, which recognized the pseudo-Council of 1946 as non-canonical and legalized the Church. This led to an avalanche-like Return of worshippers from orthodoxy and registration of the UGCC communities (p. 133, 134). The authors also analysed interfaith relations in independent Ukraine, the organizational structure of the UGCC, the training of clergy, information resources, provided statistics on churches and monasteries returned to the church, etc.

**In subsection 1.7.** “The UGCC in the System of State-Church Relations of Ukraine”, it is noted that the problem of relations between the church and the state is closely related to the formation of a national-state ideology. The authors agree with L. Kiyanovskaya that in Galicia in the XIXth century, it was the priests, more than anywhere else in Europe, who awakened the consciousness of their nation in the Ukrainian people, laid down scientific, educational, cultural institutions and cells (p. 141). The national and state – forming role of the Ukrainian church during the liberation struggle of 1917 – 1920 was clarified. The struggle for the survival of the Ukrainian Christian churches during the Soviet times is traced. The law of Ukraine “About freedom of conscience and religious organizations” has been considered. It is noted that the National-statist ideology of the UGCC is shared by the Ukrainian political parties of the statist, right-wing directions, as well as the OUN. Analysing the social doctrine of the UGCC, the historians noted that A. Sheptytsky contrasted the Marxist dogma of the class struggle with the need to eliminate the “Fraternal struggle of social strata” and follow the law of God that unites people (pp. 149, 150).

**In subsection 1.8.** “Features of the Confessional Situation in Transcarpathia: History and Modernity” the authors remind that it is the thousand-year-old Kyiv Metropolitanate that rightfully belongs to the name “The Ukrainian Orthodox Church”. The Synodal period of the history of the Russian Church, which subjugated the Ukrainian church by bribery, is characterized as grossly non-canonical and forced (p. 152). It is stated that autocephaly was restored in 1920, but even before the war, the UAOC was destroyed de jure, and almost all hierarchs – physically (pp. 155, 156). Hereafter, the authors traced the circumstances of the transfer of the dioceses of the UGCC to the Moscow Patriarchate in 1946. The process of restoring the jurisdiction of divine services of national churches and the formation of multi-confessionalism in Ukraine has been also analysed.

Regarding the main topic of the subsection, the historians noted that the religious and ecclesiastical life of Transcarpathia has its own characteristics related to the interweaving of interests of neighbouring countries and is marked by confessional diversity: as of January 1, 2019, there were 1,977 religious organizations of 37 faiths and directions in Transcarpathia. It is noted that the UOC remains dominant in the region, and Mukachevo Diocese of the UGCC ranks second in terms of the number of religious organizations – 466 parishes. At the same time, the Reformed Church is widespread in 8 districts of the region where the Hungarians live (p. 165, 166). As a result, it is noted that Transcarpathia has a high degree of trust in religious organizations and Interfaith Harmony.

**The second section** of the monograph – “Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky: pages of life and activity” – is a bit smaller in volume, but contains a thorough study of the activities and teachings of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky.

**In subsection 2.1.** “Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky through the Eyes of Contemporaries and in Historiography” the scientific developments of various aspects of monumental efforts of the transcendent hierarch of the UGCC and his life path have been analysed. Among the special works in which the activities of A. Sheptytsky are studied, the work of V. Laba, the works of S. Baran and V. Doroshenko have been highlighted. The historians also recalled that the contribution of the Galician Metropolitan to the Ukrainian state-forming processes is successfully studied by V. Sergiychuk, his attitude to the Carpathian Ukraine – M. Vegesh and M. Tokar, the national contribution – I. Ortinsky, R. Magochy, V. Kosik, etc. “Important and interesting in all respects” describes the work of R. Tozhetsky – “Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky”, which, in particular, analyses the Metropolitan’s attitude to the OUN, UPA and Division “Galicia” (pp. 178–179). The source base of the dissertation of V. Marchuk, who studied the social activities of the UGCC and its metropolitan, is approved. K. Panas’s opinion on two important goals for which A. Sheptytsky fought was singled out: The Ukrainian Church and the restoration of the Kyiv Metropolitanate within of princely Russia. The article assesses the figure of Metropolitan Ya. Zaborovsky, who agreed with the “quite accurate historical term “the Prince of the Church”.

**In subsection 2.2.** “The Way of Life and Socio-Political Activity of Andrei Sheptytsky” it is noted of the substantive coverage of various aspects of the multifaceted asceticism of the Metropolitan is taken, which gives a holistic view of the greatness of this figure. The authors noted that since 1896, when Roman (Andrey) Sheptytsky was appointed the abbot of the monastery of St. Onuphrius in Lviv, he went “to the people”, where over time he gained great fame and authority among the people. It is noted that the Metropolitan of Galicia (since October 21, 1900) outlined a kind of guide for himself and his flock, which he adhered to all his life: “1) to know their faith well, 2) to know the faith of Orthodox brothers,

3) to pray for unification” (p. 188). A separate page of the study is the evaluation of the attitude of A. Sheptytsky to the Ukrainian military and political forces and to the political regimes (Austro-Hungarian, Polish, Soviet, German) that dominated Galicia at different times (pp. 198–201). It is noted that under all circumstances, the Metropolitan defended the interests of his native people and the national Greek-Catholic Church.

**Authors of subsection 2.3.** “Educational, Cultural and Scientific Activities of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky” based on the facts, proved the thesis about the outstanding role of this church figure in the national and cultural development of the Ukrainians, which manifested itself both in practical assistance to educational, cultural, scientific institutions, and in theoretical developments of issues of spirituality, morality, education, and upbringing of a person. It is traced the evidence of A. Sheptytsky’s believing that the main link of education should be the family, because “the Christian family is a school of the Christian life, but also a school of a mutual, national life”. Among the main elements of Education, A. Sheptytsky refers, firstly, to suggestion, as the influence of the environment on the child; secondly, science and, thirdly, the Christian atmosphere. It is noted that Metropolitan Andrey constantly paid attention not only to what virtues should be brought up but also to what the Christian education should be directed against. (pp. 228–231).

**In subsection 2.4.** “Ecumenical Activity of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky” (pp. 232–267) the role of Andrey Sheptytsky in spreading the Union ideas and mutual rapprochement of Churches is thoroughly analysed. The authors noted that in the diverse activities of the outstanding church figure Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, the central place was occupied by the problem of the Unity of Churches and the associated ecumenical action, which manifested itself throughout his adult life.

**Subsection 2.5.** “Religion and the Church in Carpathian Ukraine” is marked by a particularly balanced presentation and thorough analysis of the events (pp. 267–455). The authors of the subsection use data that give an idea of the general and regional ratio of the number of the UGCC believers. Thus, it is noted that at the end of the 1930s there were 410 000 Greek-Catholics in Transcarpathia (p. 269). There were also 140 Orthodox parishes in Carpathian Ukraine and 155 000 Orthodox parishes. It is noted that A. Voloshyn’s government was loyal to the Orthodox Church, which had positive consequences for the harmonization of interfaith relations (p. 275, 276). One of the cross-cutting problems considered by the historians was the relations between the Government of Carpathian Ukraine and the Czech and the Hungarian authorities and also their attitude to the UGCC. Close attention is paid to the analysis of the situation when Mukachevo Parish was practically divided into pro-Hungarian and pro-Ukrainian Wings with centres in Uzhgorod and Khust.

**Summing up** the contribution of the authors of the monograph to the increment of historical knowledge, we should note the foreseeable source base of the study, which includes more than a hundred titles, including archive records. It is noteworthy that along with empirical analysis of primary sources, the historians have demonstrated a deep understanding of the role of the UGCC in the spiritual life and national and cultural development of the Ukrainian people. The authors rightly noted that Greek Catholicism as a social product of the internal development of the Ukrainian Christianity has organically synthesized the Eastern and Western Christian traditions and clearly showed the Ukrainian national and cultural individuality. The historians have convincingly shown that the Union of 1596 allowed the Western Ukrainians to remain Orthodox in faith and traditions for five centuries, the Catholics – in love and God – saved-in the hope of ethno-spiritual liberation

and conciliarity of ethnic lands. The authors also vividly and competently highlighted the huge theoretical and practical contribution to the revival of the UGCC and the development of the Ukrainian spirituality of Metropolitan A. Sheptytsky provided a professional interpretation of the ideas set out in his works.

Noting the high scientific level of the entire author's team, we believe that the work could be better structured in order to prevent a return to some previously covered aspects, in particular, the versatile activities of Metropolitan A. Sheptytsky, as can be seen in comparing the content of subsections 1.3., 1.4. with the materials of the second section. In our opinion, the name of subsection 1.8 looks somewhat artificial "Features of the Confessional Situation in Transcarpathia: History and Modernity". Only a third of its content contains the analysis of the confessional situation in the region, and that would be logical to combine with subsection 2.5. Obviously, the work should be supplemented in the future with materials on the modern development of the UGCC, the development activities of its Beatitude Lubomyr Husar and Sviatoslav Shevchuk. We believe that as for such a fundamental work, more extensive final conclusions and more systematic analysis of historiographic sources, their distribution in the list of references, are appropriate. In general, the complex and comprehensive nature of the work of the five historians distinguishes it favourably among numerous studies of individual aspects of the topic, as it demonstrates a holistic vision of the historical path and versatile activities of the Greek-Catholic Church and one of its outstanding Hierarchs – Andrey Sheptytsky. Of course, the peer-reviewed monograph has a high professional level and is a significant contribution to the Ukrainian historical science, and first of all, to the study of the church history of Ukraine. Therefore, we are convinced that the publication will be useful for scientists, teachers, clergy and broad public circles.

*The article was received November 29, 2020.  
Article recommended for publishing 31/08/2021.*