

Eurasian matrix of post-soviet protestantism, its manifestations in modern Ukraine

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ABSTRACT

The article researches the current topic of "post-Soviet Protestantism" and its positioning in acute socio-political issues, particularly in the issues of attitude to the Russian aggression against Ukraine. It is proved that the basis of the Russocentrism of post-Soviet Protestantism is Eurasianism as a doctrine of Russian fascism, which proclaims the ideas of the Russian-Asian community in opposition to all others, including the community of Slavs. In addition, it advocates neo-Stalinism and Putin's neo-colonialism. The author compares the two basic concepts of Eurasianism and the "Russian world" for modern Russian geopolitics and suggests that Eurasianism implies the substantial inclusion of numerous Protestant movements in the former Soviet territories into the political system of the Kremlin with its further "orthodoxization" in the Eurasian format. While Russian Orthodoxy prefers to subjugate the entire post-Soviet space to the neo-imperial project of the "Russian world," envisaging the unification of Slavism in the former Soviet geopolitical area, post-Soviet Protestantism is focused on keeping the post-Soviet space in the Eurasian political field. At the same time, by analysing the structure and internal politics of modern post-Soviet Protestantism, the author proves that despite all its (Protestantism's) heterogeneity, it has uniquely retained the general features of Soviet-style Baptism. Moreover, it is prone to establishing private institutions and sub-cultures based on rejection rather than positive self-identification. The results obtained in the course of the study give grounds to significantly adjust the existing ideas about post-Soviet Protestantism, to comprehend its political component in a panoramic and retrospective manner. Therefore, the study states that the officially advocated by post-Soviet Protestants (primarily Baptists and Adventists) idea of the so-called "Euro-Asian" missionary activity is in line with Putin's Eurasian ideology and, consequently, acts within the defined "canons" of Russia's neo-imperial policy.

KEYWORDS

Russia,
Soviet Union,
Ukraine,
"Russian world,"
Eurasianism,
Rashism,
Protestantism,
Russian-Ukrainian war.

Introduction

The New Testament texts testify to Christianity's global essence, teach about eliminating ethnic features and borders, and, as a result, call for the unification of mankind. However, while Western Protestants, preaching "universal Christian brotherhood," are the bearers of postmodern global culture that advocates the abolition of national borders of their churches and unite in transcontinental unions and missions, within the post-Soviet space, the activities of Protestants are expressed in the creation of interethnic Eurasian inter-church activities. The bright example includes Eurasian associations or Slavic missions, which have a pro-Russian political connotation, aiming to restore the former Soviet space with a Russian-speaking and Russian-cultural dominance. As a result, it supports the Russification of the cultural and state territory of the "post-Soviet peoples." Missionaries from post-Soviet countries are focused primarily on maintaining ties at the level of the former USSR and therefore are participants of the Russian Empire restoration processes.

According to the modern political concept of Eurasianism, it is impossible to implement the global "Russia-Eurasia" plan without including post-Soviet countries in

the Russian political agenda. Therefore, according to Putin's current Eurasian representatives, "those states that are usually in the circle of Russian influence, naturally have to stay in it or be returned there," that is, "the integration of the CIS countries into the Eurasian Union is the most important strategic imperative of Eurasianism."¹

In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the acute phase of which began on February 24, 2022, with the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in Ukraine, it seems relevant to analyse, on the one hand, Putin's modern Eurasianism as a geopolitical ideology of Russia's current policy. But on the other hand, it is essential to clarify the political component of modern post-Soviet Protestantism, including in Europe.

Research methods

Being aware of the relevance of the research topic and its insufficient study in Ukrainian science, the author aims to reveal the presence of the leading positions of

¹ Sovremennaya kontseptsiya evraziystva. Konstitutsii gosudarstv (stran) mira. Biblioteka konstitutsii Pashkova. Roman<https://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=1112>

the Eurasian doctrine in the practical activities of Protestants (mainly Baptists and Adventists as the leading Protestant denominations) in the post-Soviet territories (in particular in Ukraine). On the one hand, the author extensively studies the Moscow Orthodox "Russian world" and pro-Putin Eurasianism as projects aimed, albeit in different political ways, at the restoration of the Russian Empire while pointing out several significant differences between them. On the other hand, he studies post-Soviet Protestantism, revealing the presence of a pro-Russian ideological and political component in the official positions of some of its churches. For this purpose, an analysis of publications, media materials of modern Russian Eurasians, Protestant periodicals, books and brochures, and interviews was carried out.

The study's primary purpose is to identify trends in the development of Protestantism in the post-Soviet territories in the context of its "Euro-Asian" missionary activity, to reveal the manifestations of this in Ukraine, and to emphasize the caveats. Particular attention in the article is paid to clarifying the political component of post-Soviet Protestantism, identifying the pro-Russian ideological matrix at the level of official positions of denominations in the activities of communities.

The author used a number of fundamental scientific methods to solve the tasks set, in particular, in general studies of Eurasianism and post-Soviet Protestantism, structural-functional and systemic methods; comparative (comparative-historical) method and method of comparative analysis were used. They were used to analyse the doctrine of the "Russian world" and Eurasianism, which allowed to expose political flows within post-Soviet Protestantism, as well as the "Russian world" and Russian political Protestantism. In addition, in the analysis of post-Soviet Protestantism in its retrospection from the collapse of the USSR to the present day, the historical (historical and genetic) method was applied.

Study of the problem research

As of today, there are no domestic or foreign fundamental works that directly cover the research questions in the article. On the one hand, there is a group of domestic researchers of Protestantism in Ukraine (A. Kolodnyi, P. Yarotskyi, V. Yelenskyi, V. Liubashchenko, O. Spys, M. Cherenkov, A. Zhalovaha, V. Titarenko, R. Soloviy, M. Mokienco, I. Starovoi, G. Tregub, K. Teteriatnikov, etc.) On the other hand, a number of domestic scholars study Eurasianism (mostly articles by O. Ivakhiv, M. Zakirov, V. Tymoshenko, I. Momotiuk, V. Baginsky, O. Solomiy, and others). In their research, scientific studies of Eurasianism have not yet touched upon a part of its religious ideas. Therefore, in both the first and second cases, the provisions and conclusions outlined in these works bypass the problem of the Eurasian ideological matrix of post-Soviet Protestantism. The works of Ukrainian academic, and religious scholars, although covering these issues, clarify them mainly in the context of the Russian political and Orthodox project "Russian world" and the Russian-Ukrainian war. The monographs that are most closely related to the topics studied by the author are "Kirill's "Russian World" is not for Ukraine" (2014) and "Religious Security / Danger of Ukraine" (2019).

Results and Discussion

Suppose the doctrine of the "Russian world" relies primarily on the development of the so-called "Holy Rus" as a "historical Rus," initially seeking to start from the

state-political and religious traditions of Kyivan Rus. In that case, Eurasianism advocates the idea of "cultural and continental unity," which is no longer tied to Kyivan Rus. On its end, the latter is recognised as the "cradle" of Russians as Eurasia's "leading people." However, if the ideology of the "Russian world" is based on the principle of Russian ethnocentrism that brings the "Russian world" closer to Slavophilism, then according to Eurasianism, any orientation to the Slavophilic tradition is detrimental, as it slows down the "historical progress," "ethnic dynamics" of dissolution "in the diversity of ethnic waves that overwhelm Eurasia." Furthermore, it contradicts the idea of "cultural and material unity" inherent in Eurasianism. So it is even though the origins of Eurasianism come from the Slavophilic tradition (Savitskii, 2002: 280), which is indeed understood by some as a continuation of Slavophilism). On the other hand, if the religious foundation of the "Russian world" is exclusively Russian Orthodoxy, then Eurasianism in its "classical" substantive form interprets "orthodoxy" more broadly, considering "orthodoxy" also Russian paganism. The latter is the Russian pre-Christian pagan tradition, stating Orthodoxy as a "native faith," regarded as "potential Orthodoxy." However, modern pro-Putin Eurasianism, in contrast to "classical Eurasianism," treats the concept of "Orthodoxy" even wider - along with Russian Orthodoxy and Russian (as all-Slavic) paganism. This concept also includes Protestantism (and even Catholicism), whose representatives must be, according to one of the authors of the original Eurasianism, M. Trubetskoy, "carriers of the highest all-Russian culture," active builders of "Russia-Eurasia."

The plan for the formation of "Russia-Eurasia" was advised to Putin by Alexander Dugin - philosopher and occultist, leader of the "International Eurasian Movement," "Eurasian Youth Union," ideologist of the Kremlin's project "Novorossia" and once a supporter of the military solution to the "conflict" in Donbas (he has repeatedly publicly called on Putin to send troops into Ukraine). Although the plan of turning Russia into Eurasia looks too far-fetched, at its core, it seems primitively "Soviet" (Dmitruk, 2014); it should not be underestimated because it is currently encouraging rashists of various stripes, inspiring them with nostalgic dreams of building a "great Russia," which, according to Dmitry Medvedev, should stretch "from Lisbon to Vladivostok."²

At the same time, Putin's Eurasianism differs from Patriarch Kirill's "Russian world." Russian political and Orthodox project for the revival of "historical Russia" has one significant difference. Patriarch claims that the "Russian world" is based on Pan-Slavism with the basis of Russian Orthodoxy. At the same time, Eurasianism asserts an identity based on the awareness of the Russian-Asian community, which is opposed to all others, including Slavic, and advocates for neo-Stalinism.

It is not excluded that for this reason, Putin also does not consider Russian Orthodoxy as an internal "fastener" but only as a convenient foreign policy tool, as "an ideology and an instrument of reintegration of the post-Soviet space. However, in his surroundings, Orthodoxy then competes with Eurasianism, which seems more "empire-building" and therefore more operational."³ Nevertheless,

² Medvedev nazval tselyu RF sozdanie otkrytoi Evrazii ot Lissabona do Vladivostoka. Moskva 24. 05 aprelya 2022. <https://www.m24.ru/news/vlast/05042022/448035>

³ Viktor Yelenskyi: Putin rozghliadaie Pravoslav'ia yak bezzasterezhnu antytezu Zakhodu (2017). RISU –

both Putin's Eurasianism and Patriarch Kirill's "Russian world" are projects for the development of Russia in the context of globalization aimed at creating a "special world" in which Russia, having closed in on itself, turns into a "country-civilization." This way, it avoids and protects itself from outside, mainly Western, cultural, and civilizational influences. The model is not new - it has already been implemented by Stalin in the USSR when the "country of Soviets" existed in conditions of rigid isolation, firmly sealed by the "iron curtain" from any relations with the outside world.

As a political ideology, Eurasianism has never been homogeneous - it has always included different political points of view on the future of Russia in political, geographical, administrative, economic, ethno-cultural, linguistic, and religious manifestations. As for religion, in Eurasianism in its different periods, seemingly incompatible positions were sometimes combined - from anti-communism or anti-Bolshevism in the emigrant White Guard version of Eurasianism of the 20-30s to neo-Stalinism (neo-Bolshevism) in its (Eurasianism) current Putin's version. They ranged from the sacralisation of Aryan religiosity to the fascination with Russian paganism; from the idealisation of Russian Orthodoxy to outright anti-Christianity; from the rejection of Catholicism and Protestantism to the desire to turn them into influential participants in the Eurasian movement.

As for the "orthodoxization" of Protestantism, the Eurasians consider this matter relatively easy (in theory, of course) because, in their opinion, "Protestantism is close to Orthodoxy in the sense that it sees Jesus as the spiritual head and establishes friendly relations between believers and clergy. Besides, Catholicism, which derived almost a thousand years ago from the Orthodox tree, has a great opportunity, at least in the context of Russian civilisation, to return to the original historical postulates of Christianity" (Filatov, 2017). It is noteworthy that in the initial versions of the Eurasian program of the 20s of the previous century, there was a clause about the conversion of the whole world to the Orthodox Church, explaining that Russian "Orthodoxy wants the whole world to become Orthodox of itself." Eurasians of that time expected to implement the "voluntary" transitions of representatives of the existing religions in Eurasia to Russian Orthodoxy as the embodiment of the "one truth" (Evraziistvo, 1926: 19) (however, it is unclear how this "voluntariness" could occur). In other words, the idea of "Orthodoxization" of the religion and its privatisation by the Russian Orthodox Church was advocated.

Despite the utopianism of the idea of total "Orthodoxization," Putin's modern Eurasians in no way abandon it. Decisive steps to establish Russian Orthodoxy in the status of "the only truth" (and not only within the Russian Federation) with the support of the Kremlin are carried out by the Moscow Patriarchate. The legislative prohibition in Russia of a number of religious organisations as "foreign agents" or "terrorist organisations," according to the authorities, should intensify some processes. For instance, the ban on the transfer of non-Christians to the Russian Orthodox Church should at least "re-educate" them - make them loyal to the authorities so that they could be easily included in the pro-Kremlin political system. This is evident, for example, in the case of Russian Pentecostal-

ism, which, represented by its leader Sergei Ryakhovsky, can already be considered a "Putin's detachment." In general, the process of active Eurasianisation is being experienced by other Protestant movements - Baptism and Adventism, several neo-Protestant churches: today, they have already introduced the Eurasian political worldview to the level of doctrine, having launched a number of Eurasian projects. For instance, the leaders of Protestant denominations in Russia collectively supported the so-called "Yarovaya package," which prohibits missionary activity in Russia⁴, explaining their position by the fact that under the "missionary activity," they understand "preaching of their denomination," which they have never practiced because they support only one Gospel. At least, this is what the head of the Russian Baptists, A. Smirnov, said in one of his interviews while emphasising that "the law is in line with common sense" (Cherenkov, 2016) (however, this interview was quickly removed from the official website of the Russian Union of Evangelical Baptists)⁵.

Nowadays, Putin's Eurasianism consciously relies mainly on traditional Protestant churches as those already capable of being carriers of imperial ideology. The preparation for the politicisation of Protestants began almost immediately with the collapse of the USSR, when the Russian authorities, instead of the all-Union governing bodies, hastily substituted them with alternative ones - "Euro-Asian." It has been implemented to not discourage them at the level of titles by their current "Russian" or "All-Russian" status. Thus, the former "Soviet" Protestantism, being institutionally organised around Russia, became "Euro-Asian" (Cherenkov, 2016). Significantly, many inter-religious and public organisations in Russia have also changed their titles.

Since 2002, the "Eurasian," founded in 1992, has become The Russian branch of the International Religious Freedom Association.

Even though evangelical Protestantism in the USSR was seriously oppressed, its collapse, paradoxically, was perceived by most Protestants as a tragedy. Therefore, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Protestants were the first to create their supranational structures to continue the relations in the "Soviet format."⁶ Thus, in parallel with the formation of independent countries in the post-Soviet territories "with their borders, customs, laws, currencies, in order to maintain the spiritual communion of Evangelical Christians-Baptists," in 1991, the "Euro-Asian Federation of Unions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists" was created. One of its leaders, V. Nesteruk, the president of the EAU since 2008, compared it to the "Soviet Union," which exists at the level of the post-Soviet Baptist brotherhood⁷.

Therefore, primarily Baptist and Adventist churches and missions in Ukraine after the collapse of the USSR were the initiators of the establishment in the post-Soviet space of various "Euro-Asian" inter-Christian communities as analogues of the former "all-Union", and now are their active members (for example, "Euro-Asian Union of

⁴ Missionerskaya deyatelnost. Ministerstvo yustitsii Rossiiskoi Federatsii. <https://minjust.gov.ru/ru/pages/misionerskaya-deyatelnost/>

⁵ Soyuz EKbB. Retrieved from: <https://baptist.org.ru/>

⁶ Forum 20" podvel itogi dvadtsatiletiya aktivnoi evangelizatsii skoi missii posle raspada SSSR. Assotsiatsiya "Dukhovnoe Vozrozhdenie". http://asr-rm.org/?page_id=1277-amp;paged=14

⁷ "Russkii mir" glazami protestantov. Slovo dlya tebya, <http://www.word4you.ru/publications/10779/>

Evangelical Christians-Baptists⁸, "Euro-Asian Federation of Unions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists", "Euro-Asian Accreditation Association"⁹, "Eurasian Christian Association of Students", "Euro-Asian Division"¹⁰, which includes the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ukraine¹¹, "Mission Eurasia"¹², etc.).

Since "Eurasianism has become a political continuation of Slavophilism, Eurasianism has become a new Russian ideology - there is no other ideology in Russia today" (Kantor, 2014). This explains why Russian Protestants impose on their fellow believers in post-Soviet countries, along with the Eurasian ideology, another one - Pan-Slavic ideology. Even though classical Eurasianism and, as a result, the pro-Putin Eurasianism of A. Dugin distances itself from Slavism, associating itself with the latter only statistically. Nevertheless, it advocates a formal connection since it relies not on Slavism but on the Asian-Turkic world (Filatov, 2017). Ultimately, within the framework of Russian Protestantism, Eurasianism and Pan-Slavism are bound to create a single Protestant institution in the post-Soviet space - a transnational organisation with a governing centre in Russia. That is, the point is the formation within post-Soviet Protestantism, its "Soviet" similar to a "Eurasian" union.

Behind the formation of Protestant Eurasian institutions in the post-Soviet territory, there is not just the preservation of existing ties from Soviet times but the revival of the USSR, at least at the level of post-Soviet Protestantism and the development of a Protestant Eurasian "council of nations." Protestant denominations in Ukraine (primarily Baptists and Adventists), having their leadership centres in Russia or having already in the post-Soviet period been part of some supranational religious structures with centres in Russia, are under strong Russian influence. Therefore, they constitute a part of Russian political Protestantism and, as a result, become participants of political forces both in Russia and abroad.

It is no coincidence that ideas such as Eurasian or Russian-Mirovian ones in the early 90s of the XX century - immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union - formed the core of the political ideology of the Russian Federation. The easiest and, at the same time, the most effective way to spread and implement such worldviews in the then post-Soviet space were religious organisations, which in the post-Soviet period continued to be directly subordinated to the former "all-union" central bodies operating in Russia. Thus, the sphere of post-Soviet Orthodoxy and Protestantism remained entirely under Moscow's control. Consequently, sending the necessary directives from the centre to the local level was not difficult.

But since the primary basis of the Kirill-Putin "Russian world" was declared Russian Orthodoxy, it was unac-

ceptable to Protestants for purely religious reasons¹³. The Protestants found an alternative with the help of the Russian authorities in the "unified" concept of Eurasianism, which, in its modern embodiment, is aimed at "mobilising people for the revival of the Russian or "Soviet" empire."¹⁴ This was manifested primarily in the changes/replacement of leaders that took place according to the same scenario in the legally existing Christian communities of Orthodox, Baptists, and Adventists in the Soviet years. Thus, in Ukraine, removing the pro-Ukrainian Metropolitan Filaret (Denysenko) from the leadership of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the early 90s of this century, a replacement for him was found in Russia. Thus, Metropolitan Vladimir (Sabodan) of Rostov was sent to Kyiv. At the same time, the pro-Ukrainian Baptist leader Yakov Duhonchenko was replaced by Hryhoriy Komen-dant (also a Ukrainian) from Russia, and Ukrainian Mykhailo Murha from Russia replaced the President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Mykola Zhukalyuk. In this way, the Russian special services preserved the indivisibility of the actual Russian respective denominations. After the formation of independent Ukraine, both the UOC and the all-Ukrainian communities of Baptists and Adventists continued their activities in the Eurasian (or "Euro-Asian", as it is called in Protestant circles) confessional community, with centres in Russia. Fortunately, this trick failed with the Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals). Its then head Mykola Melnyk unraveled the plan of the Russian special services and hastily withdrew his denomination from subordination to Moscow.

It is noteworthy that the Protestants (at least at the level of governing bodies) are fully aware of the political essence of Eurasianism, so for their reassurance, they chose other terms - "Euro-Asianism." Thus, they formally dissociated themselves from Eurasianism as such. However, such a modification did not deprive the idea of Protestant "Euro-Asianism" of its political (namely Eurasian) content. Therefore, the "Euro-Asianism" of post-Soviet Protestants did not notably change their pro-Russian affiliation - they traditionally continued to think of themselves in the former "all-Union" coordinate system. Moreover, the Protestants' explanations of their "Euro-Asianism" are very similar to the former rhetoric of some representatives of the "pro-Ukrainian wing" of the UOC-MP. The latter preached (and also, obviously, for their reassurance) that the "Russian world" had to be understood not as "Russian", but as "Kyivan."¹⁵

⁸ Evroaziatskii soyuz evangel'skikh khristian-baptistov. Etnolog.ru. <http://etnolog.ru/religion.php?id=133>.

⁹ EAAA. <http://www.e-aaa.org/>; Evro-Aziatskaya Akkreditatsionnaya Assotsiatsiya. ETU.

<http://evangelts.org/ru/content/evro-aziatskaya-akkreditacionnaya-associaciya>

¹⁰ Evro-Aziatskii divizion (EAD). ESDA. <https://encyclopedia-adventist.org/article?id=BD91&lang=ru>

¹¹ Uniony, vkhodyashchie v EAD. Tserkov' Khristian Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnya. <https://esd.adventist.org/church-structure/unions-belonging-to-esd/>

¹² Mission Eurasia - Field Ministries. Retrieved from: <https://missioneurasiafield.org/>

¹³ "Forum 20" podvel itogi dvadtsatiletiya aktivnoi evangel'skoi missii posle raspada SSSR. Assotsiatsiya "Dukhovnoe Vozrozhdenie". http://asr-rm.org/?page_id=1277&paged=14

¹⁴ Sovremennaya kontseptsiya evraziystva. Konstitutsii gosudarstv (stran) mira. Biblioteka konstitutsii Pashkova Romanah<https://worldconstitutions.ru/?p=1112>

¹⁵ Heorhii Kovalenko: "Russkiy mir" - tse nahaduvannia i rosiiskii spilnoti pro vytoky" UNIAN. 2010, 20 Juli. <http://religions.unian.ua/orthodoxy/381934-georgiy-kovalenko-russkiy-mir-tse-nagaduvannia-i-rosiiskii-spilnoti-pro-vitoki.html>; Pro "Kyievotsentryzm" (2016). Den. №77-78, http://www.religion.in.ua/news/ukrainian_news/31499-yeks-spiker-upc-otlichaet-moskovskij-russkij-mir-ot-kievskogo-ruskogo-mira.html

In addition, Kyiv Baptist M. Cherenkov notes "Eurasia" in Protestant discourse means "the post-Soviet territories centred around Russia" and is a space "where Russia retains a leading role" (*Cherenkov, 2016*). Therefore, it is naive to believe that Protestants in Ukraine do not realize the importance of their "Euro-Asian ministry", and do not recognize their "Euro-Asianism". Nevertheless, most Protestant churches in Ukraine are still subordinated to Euro-Asian governing structures. It is noteworthy that the former All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists was not transformed into the "All-Russian" according to the template "Russia - the successor of the USSR", but immediately became the "Euro-Asian Federation of Unions of Evangelical Christians-Baptists", thus preserving its former "all-imperial" status.

Scrolling through the present-day website of the Euro-Asian Federation of Baptist Unions, one can feel nostalgia for the Soviet past, a kind of pro-Bolshevik negative attitude to the formation of independent states in the post-Soviet space, because of which "people began to disperse to national apartments" (*Stalin, 1946: 290*). For example: "In the autumn of 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, independent countries were formed with their borders, customs, laws, currencies, and each of the former Soviet republics established its Union of Churches. In order to maintain the spiritual fellowship of Evangelical Christians-Baptists of these countries and for mutual assistance of the Unions in evangelizing the peoples inhabiting these countries, the European Federation of Baptist Unions was founded, which was documented at the congress in 1992."¹⁶

In general, the majority of Protestants and neo-Protestants in Ukraine are ethnically nihilistic. The latter provokes the corresponding style of their behaviour and, as a result, the behaviour of most of their religious institutions. The most crucial thing in this process is that Protestantism in Ukraine refers to Ukrainians not in their native language, usually using Russian (mainly, it is used to print confessional literature, hold religious and ceremonial events, and support Internet resources). The data of anonymous surveys of members of some Protestant communities conducted by the Department of Religious Studies of the H. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine in the 2nd half of the 90s of the XX century recorded mostly Russian-speaking believers. Since then, unfortunately, little has changed (*Romaniuk, 2016*). By the way, Pentecostals in Ukraine have only decided to Ukrainianise their communities now¹⁷. Until then, they have been tolerating their traditional, inherited from the Soviet era, Russian-speaking communities mainly in the centre, east, and south of Ukraine.

Judging by the websites and periodicals of the SDA Church in Ukraine, this denomination does not have a pro-Ukrainian position either - it is partly similar to that advocated by the Baptists. In general, a number of Adventist websites in Ukraine are exclusively in Russian. It is necessary to highlight that the SDA Church in Ukraine recognises Crimea as Russian territory, as evidenced by the map on the website of this denomination. According

to it, "Structurally, the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ukraine is the Ukrainian Union Conference, which unites eight conferences and Crimea, as evidenced by the map of Ukraine within the borders of the conferences. But information about Crimea, like other conferences, is absent.¹⁸ This is because Crimea, according to the official website of Russian Adventists, is Russia.¹⁹

The primary Adventist resources, including those in Ukraine, also prefer not to mention Russia as a terrorist country, limiting themselves to the implementation of purely humanitarian programs for victims "as a result of the ongoing hostilities", in particular, "providing life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable people in Ukraine and abroad"²⁰. In general, the Russian-Ukrainian war is understood as a "conflict".²¹ Therefore, without calling the war a war, avoiding references to Russia and its participation in the war against Ukraine, the Adventist community now expresses only abstract calls "for peace for the people of Ukraine".²²

Therefore, no wonder that in Ukraine, in the fourth decade of its independence, there are no Ukrainian Protestants, or Ukrainian Protestantism, since their "Ukrainianness" is primarily geographical. Inspired by the "Eurasian mission", post-Soviet Protestants, including in Ukraine, call themselves "Christians of Eurasia" (*Tselostnaya missiya ..., 2017: 114*). In one of the modern Protestant publications published in Kyiv, we read: "At a time when war and conflict have divided the churches and peoples of Eurasia, we offer the unifying idea of an active mission of reconciliation. Today the idea of reunification is becoming dominant in the understanding of the post-Soviet churches of their mission. We managed to preserve and strengthen the international format of ministry. People from different nations and cultures are in our teams, events, and projects. Their countries are enemies and even in war, but they serve together. This is the model of reconciliation. The church becomes the only place where warring nations reconcile, serve together and serve each other" (*Tselostnaya missiya ..., 2017: 7-8*).

Inspired by the idea of "evangelical pacifism", Protestants in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war officially advocate an abstract "peace in all things", because, without naming who is the aggressor and who is the victim, they profess a "neutral-universal" position as a "model of reconciliation". However, it is unclear whether it is a rec-

¹⁸ Структура тсеркви. Adventist.ua. <https://adventist.ua/structure/>

¹⁹ Uniony, vkhodyashchie v EAD. Tserkov' Khristian Adventistov Sed'mogo Dnya. <https://esd.adventist.org/church-structure/unions-belonging-to-esd/>

²⁰ ADRA Partners with Southwestern Adventist University for Ukraine Benefit Concert. 2022, March 1.

<https://adra.org/adra-partners-with-southwestern-adventist-university>

²¹ Statement by ADRA President Michael Kruger on ADRA's Humanitarian Response in Ukraine and Surrounding Regions. 2022, March, 31. [https://logosinfo.org/2022/03/12/rossiya-tretya-mirovaya-voyna-i-bibleiskie-prorochestva/](https://adra.org/statement-continuing-response-ukraine; Rossiya, Tretya mirovaya voyna i bibleiskie prorochestva. Logos info. 2022, March, 12. https://logosinfo.org/2022/03/12/rossiya-tretya-mirovaya-voyna-i-bibleiskie-prorochestva/)

²² ADRA Calls for Peace for the People of Ukraine and Mobilizes Relief for Millions of People Impacted by the War. ADRA. February 26, 2022. [https://logosinfo.org/2022/03/18/zhiznennye-istorii-o-vojne-kotoraya-ne-imeet-smysla/](https://adra.org/adra-calls-for-peace-for-the-people-of-ukraine-and-mobilizes-to-relief-for-millions-of-people-impacted-by-the-war; Zhiznennye istorii o voine, kotoraya ne imeet smysla. Logos info. March 18, 2022. https://logosinfo.org/2022/03/18/zhiznennye-istorii-o-vojne-kotoraya-ne-imeet-smysla/)

¹⁶ Bratstvo EKHB. E-A Federatsiya Soyuzov EKHB. https://eafecb-com/?page_id=514

¹⁷ Ukrainskyi interes. (2022, July, 25). Z Bohom! Piatydesiatnyky vyrishyly ukrainizuvatysia. <https://uain.press/news/z-bogom-p-yatidesyatniki-virishili-ukrayinizuvatysia-1646561>

conciliation of the aggressor with the victim or the victim with the aggressor and on what terms. This idea of "reconciliation" is similar to the one voiced in the Kremlin. The only difference is that, unlike the Kirill-Putin notion of "reconciliation", the Protestant one is formally presented in evangelical tones. By the way, the official Vatican also considers the Russian-Ukrainian war in a similar "peace-keeping" framework: since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and occupied parts of the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, the pontiff has avoided acknowledging Russia as the igniter of war in Ukraine, does not call the war in Ukraine a war, instead prayerfully calling the parties to the "conflict" or "armed conflict" to peace.

It is indicative that a lot of Protestants in Ukraine still admit Russia as a terrorist country, an aggressor, and an occupier. Nevertheless, many of the Protestants have become volunteers, serve as chaplains, and some, despite the strict prohibition for Protestants to take up arms. The leaderships of some Protestant and neo-Protestant denominations express their attitude to the war rather circumspectly, urging their believers to pray exclusively for the end of the war but not for the victory of Ukraine.

For example, the All-Ukrainian Union of Churches of Evangelical Christians-Baptists and the Church of Seventh-day Adventists in Ukraine, as of the 9th month of the war, have not been able to condemn Russia's military aggression against Ukraine at the official level. Instead, they repeat the Kremlin's mantra since 2014 that their believers are out of politics, that not Russians are to blame for the war, but only the political leadership of the Russian Federation and the Russian army. This neglects the fact that Protestants in Ukraine, following the example of their Russian brothers in Christ, continue to be strongly oriented to the "expanses of Eurasia", and are members of various "Euro-Asian" unions with the centre in Russia. Thus, they continue to be actively involved in the Eurasian integration processes led by Moscow, acting in the light of Russian political Protestantism. Currently, Protestant institutions in Ukraine do not observe any significant severance of Euro-Asian ties. At the same time, this explains why, according to the majority of Protestant Internet resources, Protestants in Ukraine, while continuing to pray for peace, for the end of the war in Ukraine, at the same time avoid praying for the victory of Ukraine in this war.

Meanwhile, the Ukrainian Church of Christians of Evangelical Faith (UCCEF), despite no official statement of this denomination on the Russian-Ukrainian war on its website (there is only the "Statement of the AUCCRO on the genocide of the Ukrainian people committed by Russian troops in the Kyiv region" of April 6, 2022²³), clearly indicates that Ukrainian Pentecostals condemn the war, take care of humanitarian issues for the victims, and volunteer. Although it is important to note that, in general, Protestant volunteering is quite a pacifist due to the fact that "Jesus forbade us to ever use violence against another person"²⁴. At the same time, the UCCEF youth movement on its official Instagram page published an

appeal to the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in which it assured him of its prayer support and thanked him "... for his work and the entire Office of the President! We see and appreciate everything. We continue to pray for everyone who works for the welfare of Ukraine. Everything will be fine. Glory to God! Glory to Ukraine! Glory to the heroes!"²⁵.

While implementing the Protestant Eurasian project, Russian political Protestantism relies primarily on Russian-speaking believers outside Russia. For this purpose, the Russian language is imposed on the latter in both church and non-church environments. For example, in Ukraine, the vast majority of translations of the Bible, the New Testament, biblical commentaries, and liturgical literature among Protestants are distributed mainly in Russian. Also, liturgical events are usually held in Russian, and sermons are mostly preached in Russian. Thus, most Protestants in Ukraine, at least within communities, are Russian-speaking. The Russian language, dominating at religious events, sometimes becomes the norm in everyday life (Romaniuk, 2016). Therefore, it is straightforward for the majority of Protestants and neo-Protestants to instill a Eurasian mindset beneficial to the Kremlin, using them as carriers of its political programme, as a tool for its (programme) dissemination and establishment, as a means of building Russia as Eurasia.

Conclusions

Consequently, if the rashism of Russian Orthodoxy manifests itself in the desire to subjugate the entire post-Soviet space to the neo-imperial project of the "Russian world", then within the framework of post-Soviet Protestantism, Putin's fascism manifests itself in the desire to create structures such as "Eurasian unions" or "Slavic missions." In one way or another, they aim to retain the former Soviet space in the Russian political field and, above all, are organised in such a way as to become centres for the Russification of the religious and the ethno-cultural territory of the "post-Soviet" peoples.

The Kremlin planted the Eurasian ideology on Protestants with a far-sighted purpose. Russian-speaking, Soviet mentality, a vast network of organizational ties, a clear hierarchical structure, and, as a result, the influence of governing bodies on subordinate institutions, ordinary believers help turn Protestants in the post-Soviet territories into potential promoters of Eurasianism. Thus, propagandists of ideas on the revival of the Russian Empire spread the racist ideology in a "Christian packaging." Such tendencies are extremely dangerous, and especially now, when Russia is not just waging war against Ukraine, it is committing genocide against Ukrainians. Therefore, if Protestants leadership in Ukraine does not clearly and distinctly indicate their position on the war, hiding behind the mask of some kind of "pacifism," do not stop praying for the approach of an abstract "peace", do not admit the anti-Ukrainian nature of their Euro-Asian cooperation, it will continue acting in the political arena controlled by the Kremlin (now it does not matter whether it is willingly or unwillingly).

²³ Zaiava VRTsiRO pro henotsyd Ukrainskoho narodu, vchynenyi rosiiskymy viiskamy na Kyivshchyni (2022).

Ukrainska Tserkva Khrystyian Viry Yevanhelskoi. <https://www.chve.org.ua/vhciro-zayava-pro-genocyd-06-04-22/> (In Ukrainian)

²⁴ Khrystyiany ta viina. Kyivska bohoslavka seminariia. <https://ktsonline.org/zhyttya-seminarii/statti/524-khristiyani-ta-vijna>.

²⁵ Rukh molodi UTsKhVle zvernuvsia do Prezydenta Ukrainy zi slovamy pidtrymky (2022). Ukrainska Tserkva Khrystyian Viry Yevanhelskoi. Retrieved from: <https://www.chve.org.ua/gomolod-zvernennya-do-prezydenta/>.

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Євразійська матриця пострадянського протестантизму, її вияви в сучасній Україні

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У статті досліджується актуальна тема «пострадянського протестантизму» та його позиціонування в гострих соціально-політичних питаннях, зокрема в питаннях ставлення до російської агресії проти України. Показано, що в основі руссоцентризму пострадянського протестантизму лежить євразійство як доктрина російського фашизму, яка проголошує ідеї російсько-азійської спільності в протиставленні всім іншим, у тому числі й спільності слов'ян, обстоює неосталінізм та путінський неоколоніалізм. Виконано порівняння двох базових для російської сучасної геополітики концепцій євразійства та "русского міра" і показано, що євразійство передбачає присутнє включення численних протестантських рухів на колишніх радянських теренах у політичну орбіту Кремля з подальшим його "оправославленням" у євразійському форматі. І якщо російське православ'я воліє підпорядкувати весь пострадянський простір неоімперському проекту "русского міра", передбачаючи об'єднати слов'янство в колишніх радянських геополітичних координатах, то пострадянський протестантизм зорієнтований на утримання пострадянського простору в євразійському політичному полі. Водночас, аналізуючи структуру і внутрішню політику сучасного пострадянського протестантизму, автор доводить, що, попри всю його (протестантизму) неоднорідність, він унікальним чином до сьогодні зберіг у собі загальні риси баптизму радянського штибу і схильний до утворення закритих структур і субкультур, заснованих на відмові, а не позитивній самоідентифікації. Отримані у процесі дослідження результати дають підстави суттєво скоригувати існуючі на сьогодні уявлення щодо пострадянського протестантизму, панорамно і ретроспективно осмислити політичну його складову, констатувати, що офіційно обстоювана пострадянськими протестантами (передусім баптистами та адвентистами) ідея, так званої, "євроазійської" (чи "євро-азійської") місійності відбувається у фарватері путінської євразійської ідеології, а, отже, діє у визначених "канонах" неоімперської політики Росії.

Ключові слова: Росія, Радянський Союз, Україна, "русский мір", євразійство, рашизм, протестантизм, російсько-українська війна.

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