

Theological perspectives for post-war Christianity in Ukraine. "Theology after Bucha"

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ABSTRACT

The town of Bucha became a collective symbol of the modern genocide of Ukrainian people, because it was there where the scale of all the crimes committed against Ukrainians was revealed during the liberation of Kyiv Oblast from the Russian occupiers in March-April 2022. It was Bucha that gave many people in Ukraine the reason to debate if there is God at all. Today, Ukrainian churches began to consider the possibility of "theology after Bucha", asking practically the same questions that Christians and Jews were concerned with after World War II. As then the main question was "Where was God at Auschwitz?" Now the question is where Biblical God was during Bucha genocide, and in a broader context, where God is with the love and mercy in Ukraine after February 24, 2022. The article is nearly the first scientific research of Christianity in Ukrainian academic religious studies during the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war. The author examines the conditions for the foundation of a new theological system in the realm of Ukrainian Christianity after the victory over rushism, following the example of the theology after the Holocaust/Shoa in Western Christianity after WWII. The article analyses a number of caveats that, if not addressed today, could make the constructive development of the abovementioned theology impossible. The author predicts possible parallels between "theology after Auschwitz" and the future "theology after Bucha". In fact, "theology after Auschwitz" did not radically affect Western, primarily European Christianity after 1945 because it did not provide unambiguous answers to a range of urgent essential questions related to the existence of a believer in the world recovering from the great war. So, with a considerable degree of probability (already evident from the remarks of individual representatives of different religious denominations) there is concern that "theology after Bucha" may fail practically at its beginnings, becoming a "pure theory", having no chances to be applied at the all-Christian level. It is partially clear today that an attempt would be made to launch "theology after Bucha" exactly along the ideological tracks of "theology after Auschwitz", that is, to direct it exclusively to the search for the arguments shifting the burden of responsibility for "Bucha" from God and thereby possibly save Christianity from the ideological crisis it has been in Ukraine after February 24, 2022. The author concludes that if "theology after Bucha" really begins to move along the similar ideological fairway like "theology after Auschwitz", the post-war Christianity in Ukraine will face a disappointing perspective to lose social relevance and, as a result, will be radically reduced to ritualism.

KEYWORDS

*Christianity,
Holy Scripture,
theology after
Auschwitz,
theology after Bucha,
Russian-Ukrainian war,
genocide in Ukraine,
Holocaust*

Introduction

Analysis of literary sources and definition of the problem. The subject of the article is relatively new research area for Ukrainian scientists, since "theology after Bucha" is, so to speak, a working concept, one of the possible names for the theological direction inherent in post-war Christianity in Ukraine. Some representatives of the churches have only begun to voice the possibility of such

"theology". In view of this, directly related reference literature about the "theology after Bucha" has not been developed yet. There are only separate declarations, remarks and proposals of the theologians and priests. However, they clearly indicate the inevitable prospects of similar theology in future, and therefore they can be considered as the beginnings of its ideological foundation. The article draws possible parallels between "theology after Auschwitz" and the future "theology after Bucha". Based on the

outcomes of the first one, the author warns potential "theologians after Bucha" against the inevitable problems that they may encounter and which led "theology after Auschwitz" to false conclusions and, ultimately, to oblivion. There are also no Ukrainian investigations specifically focused on the study of "theology after Auschwitz." To some extent, this is explained by the fact that this theology was a phenomenon of Western (primarily European) Christianity in the second half of the 20th century. In Soviet times, this theme was not popular for ideological reasons, and during the period of restoration of Ukraine's Independence, it was overshadowed by the more important and urgent research projects aimed at the rehabilitation and restoration of our historical issues generally, and Ukrainian Christianity in particular. Therefore, modern Ukrainian researchers only start to investigate the themes of "theology after Auschwitz" rather indirectly, among them are Maryna Gogulya, Yulia Vintoniv, Halyna Pastushuk, Vitaly Bryzhnik, Oleksiy Tkachenko, Anatoliy Denysenko, and others. Kharkiv researcher, Doctor of Philosophy Viktoriya Sukovata was the only scientist in Ukraine who approached closest to the study of the "theology after Auschwitz".

Objectives and purpose. The purpose of the article is to explain the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war on Christianity in Ukraine and to point out the changes in the religious concepts in the wartime conditions. The objectives are to investigate the possibility of "theology after Bucha" after the victory of Ukraine, similar to the analysis of "theology after Auschwitz", which developed in Western Christianity after the victory over Nazi Germany in 1945. The author sets the objective to analyze an array of sources, primarily Christian (mainly Internet publications), which highlight the position of various Christian denominations during the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine. Based on the performed analysis, the author aims to find out whether a theological discourse similar to "theology after Auschwitz" is possible in Ukrainian Christianity, and, on the other hand, attempts to predict probable prospects for the Christian religions in a post-war Ukraine.

Research methods and scientific novelty

To solve the outlined problems, the author used a number of basic scientific methods, in particular, structural-functional and system analysis methods were used in general studies of "theology after Auschwitz". The historical (historical-genetic), comparative (comparative-historical) methods and the method of comparative analysis made it possible to examine, on the one hand, Western Christianity after World War II, and on the other hand, "theology after Auschwitz", that had been actively developing within its frame in the first post-war decades. The article also uses the following general philosophical methods as dialectical, phenomenological, and hermeneutic analyses. The research is based on the principles of scientific objectivity, historicism, secularism, tolerance, and non-denominationalism.

Being the first among Ukrainian researchers to perform such analysis, the author examines religious, in particular theological, component of Christianity in Ukraine during the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war; he outlines the possible features of the "theology after Bucha", at the same time pointing to the prerequisites that will either make it impos-

sible, or may lead to the wrong path similar to that of "theology after Auschwitz", which failed to change the ideological paradigm of Western Christianity after World War II.

Results and Discussion

The new Ukrainian reality emerged after February 24, 2022 and revealed a conceptual gap between the church creeds and the practices of their believers. The vast majority of Protestant denominations in Ukraine proved to be helpless in explaining the wartime reality by the Holy Scriptures. The numerous Russian war crimes, revealed to the whole world after the liberation of Kyiv Oblast in March-April 2022, included the places of torture and mass executions of Ukrainians in Bucha, Irpin, Borodyanka, and destroyed the established religious worldview, marked the gap between the theoretical foundations of Evangelical beliefs and their practices during the Ukrainian national liberation war. The city of Bucha became a collective symbol of the modern genocide of Ukrainian people, because it was the first city to testify with the evidence to the scale of Russian crimes against Ukrainians after the liberation of Kyiv Oblast. It was Bucha that gave many reasons to question if there is God at all. They say there are no atheists at war. This is not entirely true, because there was an increase in those Ukrainians who despaired not only of Christianity, but of religion in general after Bucha.

Christianity teaches that "God is Love". In peacetime, this statement is perceived by believers quite naturally. It is acceptable to profess evangelical pacifism with its "love for enemies", with the ideas about non-violence towards another person and non-resistance to evil. Christianity have traditionally taught that God is omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omnibenevolent (all-good) in nature. However, according to many believers and unbelievers, these views are in apparent contrast with the injustice and suffering in the world. However, during the war, when injustice, suffering, grief, and death are all around, it is quite difficult to believe that God is Good and is all-merciful Creator. If "God is Love" according to the New Testament, the why did he allow mass suffering and killing of innocents? Why didn't he protect the children at least? If he didn't want to, then he is not Love. And if he could not do it, then he is not the God Almighty, not "a pillar and buttress of the truth." (*sermoncentral.com, 2024*).

Humanity has asked similar questions before. Here, for example, is how the ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus formulates them. "God," he says, "either wants to eliminate bad things and cannot, or can but does not want to, or neither wishes to nor can, or both wants to and can. If he wants to and cannot, then he is weak – and this does not apply to God. If he can but does not want to, then he is spiteful – which is equally foreign to god's nature. If he neither wants to nor can, he is both weak and spiteful and so not a god. If he wants to and can, which is the only thing fitting for a god, where then do bad things come from? Or why does he not eliminate them?" (*Epicurus, Fragment 374*).

After World War II, another question was asked: "Is Christianity possible after Auschwitz or Oświęcim?"¹ In light of the magnitude of depravity seen in the Holocaust, many people have also re-examined classical views on this subject. A common question raised in Holocaust theology

¹ Auschwitz and Oświęcim are two symbols of the Holocaust and often are used to name the same place. Oświęcim is a place in

Poland and "Auschwitz refers primarily to the largest concentration and extermination camp of the Third Reich situated near the town of Oświęcim.

is "How can people still have any kind of faith after the Holocaust?" If the Biblical God allowed the Holocaust, then he can no longer be considered the personification of Love. The Shoah is not an abstract concept for Jewish theology. It was a fundamental assault on the core concepts of Judaism that had nurtured Jews for nearly 2000 years. Any theology or theological thinking after Auschwitz must confront the reality that the existence of Auschwitz and other killing centers – the Endlösung – is a negation not only of Jewish lives but an assault on a way of life in the presence of God that included Torah, Commandments and Deeds of love and kindness. Since 1945, this theological problem has remained unresolved by the representatives of the religious denominations, the famous slogan "never again" turned out to be a senseless promise, because "never" did happen again in the center of Europe, in Ukraine after 77 years! And the entire long-established biblical and humanistic conceptual system of the Western civilization broke down after February 24, 2022, because, contrary to the whole world, which was convinced of the inviolability of this "never again", the Russian totalitarian machine, unleashing the war against Ukraine in 2014, proclaimed the opposite slogan – "we can repeat". And so, they repeated, unexpectedly for the West, realizing their criminal intentions with particular audacity and in the most insidious, cruelest way (*Metropolitan Epiphanius, 2023*).

Both "theology after Auschwitz" and Christianity after Bucha turned out not to be able to explain the catastrophic reality with the help of religious tools. How do we talk about God after Auschwitz? How is it possible to discuss God's goodness after witnessing the brutality of the Holocaust? Any traditional justifications, such as "God is love", "God loves the world", "God loves a man" look like an insult to the memory of the victims of the Catastrophe; any other explanation will prove the inability of Christian God to oppose evil. The attempts to explain the catastrophe also look hideous, while trying to apply the texts from David's Psalms or the Book of Job, or apocalyptic sections of the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah on the one hand and seeking to draw some parallels between the martyrdom of Christ and all the murdered people in the occupied territories on the other hand.

On the 10th day of Russian full-scale invasion, OCU archpriest Georg Kovalenko published the video as he was trying to answer the major questions: "Where was God during Bucha genocide?", "Why didn't he stop it?", "How could he possibly allow it?" In his analysis, the priest was trying to get the explanation from the Bible, but this only led his listeners to the deduction that there are no convincing answers in the Holy Scriptures. One of the concluding propositions of his sermon boils down to the argument that one should simply believe that as Son of God once suffered himself and was killed, but then the Savior resurrected, so will Ukraine be resurrected and will rise again. However, this does not in any way explain the role, participation, and position of God in the tragedy of Bucha. Therefore, the questions voiced at the beginning of the sermon remained unanswered: since "these questions are difficult to answer", because "words are not enough" as the priest concludes, so "it is better to be silent at the moment" (*Kovalenko, 2022*).

Hennadii Khrystokin is a Ukrainian Orthodox theologian, philosopher, religious scholar, and Bucha resident, who survived the occupation, and he also seeks to find any explanation for a terrible Bucha genocide, asking the questions "What is the reason?", "How could this happen?",

"What are the mechanisms involved?", "What didn't work?". However, he also does not see the answers, and therefore only states that despite all the incredible sacrifices "life won over death" in this city after the liberation of Bucha by Ukrainian defenders. H. Khrystokin notes that during the occupation he himself, like the Biblical Job, turned to God, but felt only His silence. By the way, other Christians experienced similar silence as well. For example, Ivan Rusyn, an evangelical pastor from Bucha, testifies about his experience: "I don't know how to explain it, but sometimes I hear God's voice in His silence. This is a very controversial statement. But in His absence, I feel His presence" (*Hennadii Khrystokin, Oksana Ghorkusha, 2022*).

Christianity traditionally views the Holocaust as an example of martyrdom: after Auschwitz, the martyrs were mainly Jews, after Bucha, they were Ukrainians. "During the Second World War, this led to the destruction of almost two million people, mostly of Jewish origin. Let the memory of these terrible events awaken in all of us aspirations and actions for the benefit of peace. History repeats itself. We see what is happening in Ukraine now. Let us pray for peace," calls Pope Francis (*UKRINFORM, 2022*). According to the Pope, "Ukrainian people are martyred people; if there are martyred people, then there are the ones who torture them" (*CREDO, 2023*).

As Jews, having lost faith in God from the Old Testament, renounced Judaism and became "cultural Jews" after World War II many, so many believers in Ukraine, like Jews after Auschwitz, stopped being Christians after Bucha. However, they did not become someones like "cultural Orthodox", "cultural Catholics" or "cultural Protestants", they gave up their religion altogether, because they did not find answers they needed in the creeds and, most importantly, in the biblical texts. There were also those who, primarily for the sake of preserving their own faith, began to preach that it is God Almighty, who punishes Ukrainians with war for their sins. Similar ideas are actively spread by representatives of the Moscow Orthodox Church (as well as Protestants), using supporting biblical fragments about the punishment of the Jewish people by the Assyrians, Babylonians, or Romans.

In its development, "theology after Auschwitz" has essentially amounted, if not to the complete denial of God, then at least to the criticism of biblical concepts of the Divine. Theological interest in history should be to detect the hand of God there. Hence the theological problem as it is hard to see how the same God was involved in both the Holocaust and the Israel's reestablishment. The idea of two revelations the Jews received in their history (the Revelation at Sinai and the Revelation at Auschwitz) has become popular in modern Judaism. And if the first one proved God's presence, mercy and protection, then the second became the complete opposite to the first, because in that way God proved to be absent among his people, he proved to be helpless. The latter is quite difficult to admit, so in order not to come to radical conclusions, the Holocaust is attributed to the "laws of nature" and "laws of this world" created by God. In this way, Judaism bypasses possible statements about a sadistic God, about divine punishment for the sins of the Jewish people and therefore shifts the responsibility to people (*Gold, 2013*).

Here are some common concepts that modern Judaism operates with. "... God does not save us from all kinds of seductions and temptations. He does not prevent fights,

conflicts and other problems, because they do not "complicate" or "overshadow" life, but they are life itself. Internally, Judaism teaches that ultimately Jews must search within their souls why "bad things happen to good people". The purpose of creating the world and placing a man in it is not that life should be good, but that people should be good. And they will become such if they fight against evil, existing both outside and inside themselves. Therefore, evil should exist and every problem or conflict is a challenge and a test to how a person will act. Is one worthy or not? Will one pass the test or fail it?" (*Muchnik, 2023*). "God Almighty created men and the surrounding world with "flaws" so that people could improve themselves and the whole world. And this is their work, which will be rewarded" (*Kuklin, 2008*). "Kabbalah teaches that this is one of the reasons God created humans with free will and with obligations, and that in order to maintain that free will, God reduces the extent to which he manifests himself in the world. The world was created in order to ensure the possibility of the existence of evil, which is contrary to the will of the Creator. This, in turn, guarantees a person freedom of choice" (*Sokrytie Tvortsa, URL...*).

So, there is no answers to the Holocaust/Shoah tragedy either in Scripture, or in Jewish tradition in general. "What could be more presumptuous and more cruel than to 'justify' the death and suffering of millions of innocent men, women and children? Can we dare to suppose that an explanation is concise enough to fit into the limited human mind and can account for a horror of this magnitude? We can only admit that there are things that lie beyond the limited range of human consciousness" (*Khar'kovskii muzei Kholokosta, 2016*). Some Jews, of a decidedly pietistic sort, have argued that the Holocaust is God's punishment for the Jews having been seduced by the modern temptation to become part of the non-Jewish world and abandon their traditional faith and practice (and with them the whole world) by God through His chosen Messiah. Yet, there is another version of the explanation in Judaism, arguing that the Holocaust is God's sign of the approach of the Messianic time: through the Holocaust, the Almighty brings the world to perfection, revealing himself in it. One might identify the position of the pietists as a form of "apocalyptic messianism" (*Zilber, 2016*). However, this explanation is too theoretical, and therefore fundamentally merciless to the victims, because it views them as a kind of "expendable material" in the game of heavenly forces.

Now Christian communities have already begun to talk about "theology after Bucha", asking practically the same questions that Christians and Jews were asking after World War II. Anticipating that there will be no answers, or they may not like them, the believers hide their urgent questions behind their honest silence, because, as Ukrainian journalist Maksym Vikhrov notes, it takes time to "digest the experience of a direct encounter with evil we are currently receiving in shock doses" (*Vikhrov, 2022*). Roman Soloviy, a Ukrainian philosopher and theologian and current director of the East European Institute of Theology, frankly admits: "I am not ready to talk about this today. The Ukrainians will have to search for the answers to these questions for a long and painful time, like the Jews after Auschwitz. We will have to frame our new theology – the theology after Bucha" (*Soloviy, 2022a*).

Such dismay is caused primarily by the fact that all possible use of Holy Scriptures to explain the atrocities the Russian-Ukrainian will be unconvincing theorizing, and this may well challenge Christianity itself, as it once happened

with "theology after Auschwitz." The one who dares to become a "theologian after Bucha" will be dealing with a system of beliefs significantly different from "theology after Auschwitz" primarily because they were dealing mostly "with critical self-reflection", delving into "endless searches for whom to blame in Germanness, Europeaness, Christianity and almost in God himself" until finally it became a "destructive phenomenon" for Christianity (*Zahrebelnyi, 2023*). Instead, "theology after Bucha" will not follow the path of "critical self-reflection", since the latter will clarify the problem "about the evil caused by the Other" (*Zahrebelnyi, 2023*). That is, those who commit evil crimes are not (or should not be considered) Christians in the main sense, meaning that evil will immediately be positioned "outside Christianity" in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, because the culprits are said to be the "others".

If so, then "theology after Bucha" will be concerned with the only problem how to shift the responsibility for evil from God, how to exempt those "others" from the responsibility for atrocities as they were mostly Russian Christian Orthodox believers. If it were possible, then some abstract "sinful men" would be blamed for evil, it would determine the evil by the apostasy of a man, and it would call for massive reconciliation of everyone and everything, both victims and executioners, making them equal with each other and thus striving to demonstrate the evangelical essence of Christian all-forgiveness and understanding. However, with such a layout of the problem, "theology after Bucha" per se is not needed at all, because it would not bring any new senses, and therefore would not add a new ideological perspective to a post-war Christianity in Ukraine.

In August 2023 a Christian newspaper "Slovo viry" (The Word of Truth) explained the wartime tragedy in Ukraine in traditional way as God "leads us through some of the trials that Jesus went through. Does this mean that God is the reason of tragedies? No, God is good. He will neither provoke evil nor do evil. But God can use dark and challenging times for good. He will use them to show us how to help others, teach us to trust Him, and bond us with other believers" (*Ieshua.org, 2023: 1*). And it goes that "At all times and to this day, the devil tries to destroy us. A spiritual war is going on so that Ukraine is not a missionary Christian vanguard" (*molytva.org.ua, 2023: 5*).

Christian Pentecostal newspaper "For the Evangelical Faith" proclaims that "God is not the origin of war," but He allows it to happen. Therefore, wars are judgments over the whole countries and peoples, and this has happened many times in human history" (*Panochko, 2023: 1*). In view of this, it turns out that no Victory is possible, but only peace at most or some abstract peace for all. "We must honestly and truthfully analyze our relationship with God. Do we treat God as the Almighty in our country? After all, He is the Lord, none of us would exist without His decision... The people of blessed Ukraine turned away from God and turned to the devil through sorcerers, fortune-tellers, psychics, astrologers, they address to all kinds of occultism. Even now, some actors want the servants of the devil to help Ukraine in the war and this is such blindness in which the devil fulfills his direct function, as "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (Jn. 10:10)" (*Panochko, 2023: 5*).

Similar ideas were interpreted and preached by the Orthodox theologian Nikolaj of Serbia (Velimirović) (1880-1956). "Was the Savior for or against war?" I'm sorry, but this question is similar to another one, – "Was a mother for or against beating for her child? No sane mother would resort to harsh punishment without an urgent need. But when

she has exhausted all other possible means, then she resorts to beating to correct a child. Not out of anger, but out of a mother's anxious love, lest her child be lost; so that other children should not follow the wrong path in the end. ... And the war is nothing but punishment of God who wants to save His children from final destruction. God's love is incomparably greater than a mother's love and, of course, the Lord allows punishment only because he loves and cares for men" (*Serbskii*, 2016: 75-76).

Therefore, not a "theology after", but a "good old" repentance based on the consideration that a man cannot do without God should constitute the need for Christianity during the war and, rather, after it is over (*Volkovskiy, Samchuk*, 2023: 32). According to the "theology after Auschwitz", it was primarily about the repentance of German Christians for the crimes of the Nazi regime, so "theology after Bucha" is not possible as such without the redemption of Russians for their crimes committed in Ukraine by the their military, controlled by the Kremlin and supported by the ideology of Moscow Orthodox Church.

Roman Soloviyi states that "From the first days of the war, many of our friends from abroad wishing us good began to call on Ukrainian Christians to forgive the Russians and to reconcile with Russian Christians, who, with a few exceptions, responded to the horrors of Russian aggression in Ukraine with silence or were openly supporting the criminal policy of their country. In my opinion, such appeals, despite their superficial orthodoxy and biblical nature, still are untimely. People in Ukraine entered our Gethsemane period with the beginning of the war. We are painfully experiencing the cowardly betrayal and silence of those who did not miss an opportunity to speculate about brotherhood in Christ" (*Soloviyi*, 2022b).

According to Oleksandr Henish, current editor of a Christian newspaper "For the Evangelical Faith", – "Christianity has come unprepared for the worst of times, especially charismatic churches that virtually deteriorated, unlike classical Christianity that managed to survive the challenge. Where is your theology of prospering? Where is your God who is merciful, blessing and rewarding for the worship? Bind the devil now, drive him out of Ukraine, trample him! Where are Muntyan's followers now with their methods of exorcising demons and destroying ancestral curses? They have disappeared, they have fled away, they have been keeping silent. ... After Bucha, Hostomel, and Mariupol many churches have experienced a certain fault in their theology" (*Henish*, 2022).

One way or another, everything is about the question "Where was God?" The majority of believers in Ukraine do not even dare to voice it. Others are consciously looking for answers to it. For example, Ukrainian writer Nadiyka Gerbish asked the speakers the question "Where was God when people were being tortured in Izyum?" at the "War and Faith" discussion panel, which took place on September 17, 2022, during the "Wind on Action" festival in Krakow. "Only when we feel the pain of our time, the pain of what is happening now with our loved ones, only then can we talk about everything else not superficially, but sincerely, giving very honest answers. It seems to me that after such a question, we will not switch to easy answers "Well, everything is fine, God is Good God, God is Love." I know His love. I believe in this. But this answer is not enough. ...The question "Is religion or poetry possible now?" was asked after Auschwitz. Now it is important for me to the question, what kind of theology is possible after Bucha and Izyum? And that's why we continue writing. We

are not running away, not trying to smooth things over. ... The only thing we can give ourselves right now is the right to be honest with each of our emotions, even the darkest ones. And it is our right as Christians to question God" (*Trójka Polskie Radio*, 2022).

Ihor Kozlovsky, a Ukrainian scientist, religious scholar and public activist who spent in Russian captivity almost 2 years. He gave the following answer to the question where God was during the Russian-Ukrainian war, – "God, creating a man, gives him freedom of choice, freedom of will. We would turn into robots without it. God gives a man the opportunity to realize both virtues and vices. This causes people and even entire civilizations to face different choices. This war is about values. ... When we raise a child, we treat him/her more strictly than other children around us in order to raise our child more worthy. God does not need our justification or our criticism, he has other plans. It's ridiculous when we try to attribute our plans to him, because we cannot even be sure about our own plans. We often think of God as a magician whom we ask something from and he should do it. We ask him for a gift, like St. Nicholas or Santa Claus. It doesn't happen like that" (*TSN*, 2023).

Hans Jonas (1903 – 1993) is a German-born American Jewish philosopher, well known for his contributions to the field of ethics built on the principle of human responsibility and he suggests another perspective to the problem. In his writings devoted to the understanding of the tragedy of Auschwitz, he practically built a new theodicy according to which God is not to blame for the Holocaust, since after the creation of the Earth he entrusted its further fate to man (*Jonas*, 1987; 1996). He used this concept in support of his ethical approach to show the special role that God assigned to humanity to act as a steward of His creation. Therefore, the fate of the world is not in the competence of the Creator, but entirely belongs to men, and therefore depends on them. The Almighty can only regret that he allowed the world to live his life. If so, then theodicy itself is fully dependent on man, which means that it is transformed into "anthropocentric theodicy". It turns out that in his efforts to justify God, to substantiate his non-involvement in the Holocaust/Shoa, the philosopher only underlined the fact that God has no power in the face of evil, and therefore negated the very notion of the merciful God of the Bible.

Many Jewish theologians also adhere to the version that after the creation of the world, the God Almighty let it "float freely", and therefore everything that happens in the earthly world is not the work of his hands, but the culprit is exclusively humans as the image of God in their moral, spiritual, and intellectual nature, so they "improperly" rule this world. In other words, God has nothing to do with human sufferings. Even the biblical Satan, as the personification of apostasy, evil and sin, is already receding somewhere into the background, being overshadowed by the evil that man does.

It turns out that Ihor Kozlovsky was supporting the same concept arguing that "We should not think of God as a magician" as "He has other plans", thus – "God does not need our justification or our criticism". However, under such conditions, the religion advocating such God needs to be criticized. What then, exactly, is the point in such religion if it considers evil as a product of human activity in the earthly world?

The progress of "theology after Auschwitz" was stagnated almost at its very beginnings, because it did not find answers to a number of important existential questions:

some were disappointed in the omnipotence and omniscience of the God of the Gospels, others left Christianity, the reaction of the third was reduced to silencing the Catastrophe, and the fourth continue to teach that human sins are to blame in everything that happened. Even now after Bucha, most Christians only state, – "We do not know the exact reason why God allowed the war in Ukraine. But in general, the Bible speaks of sin as the cause of all troubles. Man, because of his stubbornness, chose his own way instead of having fellowship with God. This choice, which is expressed in active disobedience to God, is called a sin. Now man is separated from God and deserves to die. But God loves us and has a wonderful plan for our lives. Through Jesus Christ, you can be reconciled with God and be freed from human sins. To do this, you need to accept Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. Only then will we be able to understand God's love and His plan. Wars will continue until the end of the history of the world as long as there are people in the world who have not believed in Jesus Christ and they have not given up their sins" (*Kalyna, 2022*).

The phrase "now man is separated from God and deserves to die" is especially "relevant" against the background of the Buchan tragedy and is a "worthy" explanation of the Catastrophe. This thesis contains the whole prospect of a possible "theology after Bucha". If we approach the initiation of "theology after Bucha" with the same methodological interpretation as it was used before, then it will not conclude anything significant. Moreover, post-war Christianity itself will not change, since, without providing conscious answers to the question "Where was God?" the religion of Christ will remain unchanged as it used to be not only "before Bucha", but also "before Auschwitz", and in general, whatever catastrophe in history "before...", it will remain a hostage of dogmas, canons, and established religious tradition.

As French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1905-1995) underlines, war is an extreme form of violence, it suspends morality, reorienting the ethical relationship of I and Other. He stresses that violence towards the other is a violence against their free will, against their moral judgments, and in a word, against their integrity, which is inseparable from their moral being. Violence is the attempt to compromise what makes a human human, against the "humanity of the human". In the face of violence, pain, deprivation, terror, and fear for one's life, to hold onto moral principles, to remain responsible, and to provide for the other and for others becomes much more difficult or almost impossible (*Lévinas, 1979: 21*).

Modern life could hardly be understood by the standards of life in Europe after Auschwitz, because, as the Austrian psychiatrist, psychotherapist and philosopher of Jewish origin Viktor Frankl (1905-1997) once emphasized, "Every age has its own neurosis, and every age needs its own psychotherapy to cope with it" (*Frankl, 1988:152*). Since the "neurosis" after Auschwitz was not properly treated, it led to a relapse and the appearance of a new "Auschwitz" in Ukrainian Bucha.

German philosopher Theodor Adorno (1903-1969) postulated the new education as an anti-ideological enlightenment, as knowledge that educates primarily politically aware young citizens, as an effective means of preventing the return of authoritarian government and, consequently, the repetition of Auschwitz (*Adorno, 2019*). As we witness the repetition of Auschwitz atrocities in Ukrainian Bucha, then, in our opinion, the entire civilized humanity of

the 21st century must be focused on ensuring that its "political education" prevents similar disasters somewhere in the future. In other words, if Auschwitz was the personification of pure evil during the 2nd half 20th century, then Bucha became personification of pure evil for humanity in the 21st century.

We are inclined to believe that if "theology after Bucha" develops along the algorithms of "theology after Auschwitz", it is going to be useless as it will not establish any new senses. As it could be interpreted from the individual statements today, its purpose will not consist of clarification of the prospects of post-war Christianity in Ukraine, but of the search for arguments to exempt God from responsibility for "Bucha" and thereby save Christianity from the ideological crisis it has been since February 24, 2022. The majority of nominal believers are not able to notice this crisis, but the "true believers" are experiencing it already, striving to find the answers in the Bible. However, the doctrinal thesis "God is Love" is not enough for a profound answer to the question where God was during the Bucha disaster, or where he is now during the Russian war in Ukraine. Delayed answers do not add clarity, on the contrary, any delay complicates the problem.

Emil Fackenheim (1916-2003), a Jewish philosopher-theologian, articulated the problem of what it means to be a Jew after the Shoah. Fackenheim noted that "the main miracle for a Christian is a miracle of Annunciation. No complete miracle is possible for a Jew without the threat of complete horror after the Holocaust. Therefore, it is not surprising that modern Christian theology, striving to preserve the miracle, most often overlooks this horror, minimizes it, dissolves it in the universal horror that is everywhere and, therefore, nowhere. But this path also does not lead to salvation because to dissolve the horror means to dissolve the miracle as well. Only by opening up to horror can the Christian faith and Christian theology save its integrity and hope to be surprised again by the joyful news of Annunciation" (*Fackenheim, 1994: 278*).

In the same way, the joy of Easter miracle of Resurrection can be overshadowed by the horrors of war after Bucha. Trying to ascribe the horrors of genocide to a purely human factor, the Gospel religion would turn the modern Ukrainian Holocaust into a "universal horror" and, thus, deprive it of specifics, erase the faces and names of the innocent victims and thereby, equating the victims and the executioners, would therefore silence the crime and hide the guilt. Until Christianity takes some of the blame by admitting that there were Christians of various denominations among the executioners and collaborators (churches are responsible for the actions of their believers) and brings all them to repentance, Bucha will deepen the gap between Christianity and humanism in Ukraine. As Easter would be washed not only with the blood of the One who is considered the Savior, but also of those whom He did not protect from the Russian extinction, those, whom He did not save from death, the miracle of Easter would be washed with the blood of the victims of Russian genocidal war against Ukraine. Once again, we can agree that the reasoning of Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) and Paul Tillich (1886-1965) about the pacifist "silence" of Christianity after Auschwitz is still relevant today after Bucha in Ukraine.

Conclusion

A number of philosophers of post-war Europe tried to make sense of Auschwitz as a symbol of the Holocaust and civilization catastrophe that Europeans experienced during 1933-1945. One of the first to talk about the morality of

those who survived the war was Karl Jaspers (1883-1969). His works and lectures later gave impetus to the establishing of social and humanitarian research direction known as "philosophy after Auschwitz." K. Jaspers accused European Christians of supporting and spreading of anti-Semitism in Europe by their "silence" and being pacifists and apolitical, in fact, they failed to prevent the Holocaust. Subsequently, Theodor Adorno, Hannah Arendt, Bruno Bettelheim, Emmanuel Levinas, Alan Badiou and many other Western thinkers developed the ideas of "philosophy after Auschwitz" in their scientific investigations, laying the foundation for a new ethics known as "ethics after Auschwitz". American Protestant theologian of German origin Paul Tillich (1886-1965) followed K. Jaspers and established the "theology after Auschwitz" ("theology after Auschwitz"). Paul Tillich, following the example of Jaspers, also accused Christians of being passive and unwilling to defend Jews during the years of German Nazism. "Post-Holocaust Theology" essentially passed judgment on Christianity, according to its conclusions, as the Gospels as the religious source ceased to be the heart of European culture after Auschwitz because it destroyed the belief in justice and the biblical virtues. In view of this, P. Tillich and other Christian thinkers emphasized not so much the moral and political responsibility of Christians for the Holocaust, as they discussed the question of the meaning of being a "Christian" after the Catastrophe, the problem of the meaningful core of Christianity in the face of the Holocaust, since it was already about the existence of Christianity in the world after Auschwitz. The response to Auschwitz had to result in not only ethical, but also religious conclusions. However, the outcome never came. The call of "theologians after Auschwitz" was never heard by the Christian community, and therefore this theological direction remained to be unrealized project.

Now Christian communities in Ukraine have already begun to talk about "theology after Bucha", asking practically the same questions that Christians and Jews were asking after World War II. The main question is where Biblical God was during Bucha genocide, and in a broader context, where God is in Ukraine after February 24, 2022 and how we can perceive his love and mercy during Russian aggression. Today it is partially clear that an attempt will be made to launch "theology after Bucha" exactly along the ideological tracks of "theology after Auschwitz", that is, to direct it exclusively to the search for the arguments that would shift responsibility for "Bucha" and thereby possibly save Christianity from the ideological crisis it has been in Ukraine after February 24, 2022. With such a layout of the problem, "theology after Bucha" would not bring any new senses, and therefore would not add a new ideological perspective to a post-war Christianity. Reconciliation is not possible without repentance. Without the necessary repentance, any "theology after..." will not save Christianity, it will not change it, and therefore will not make it relevant for existence after Ukrainian victory. Currently, the fate of post-war Ukrainian Christianity depends on the believers. The post-war Christianity in Ukraine will face a disappointing perspective to lose social relevance if it remains as it used to be before the war. As a result, it would be reduced to ritualism and the adepts will be purely "cultural", that is, nominally customary "congregants" in the literal sense of the word, they will be insensitive to the Christian kerygma because of the formal ecclesiastical nature of their beliefs. A formal, ceremonial Christianity, detached from moder-

nity, would not be integrated into the world of modern humanity with their urgent needs, problems and requests, such Christianity is not likely to be a demanded ideology.

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Богословські перспективи для повоєнного християнства в Україні. «Теологія після Бучі»

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Місто Буча стало сукупним символом сучасного геноциду українського народу, оскільки в ході звільнення Київщини протягом березня-квітня від російських окупантів саме воно виявилось першим, яке засвідчило масштабність злочинів рашистів проти українців. Саме Буча дала привід багатьом задуматись в Україні, а чи є взагалі Бог? Сьогодні в українських церквах почали говорити про можливість появи «теології після Бучі», ставлячи практично ті самі питання, якими переймались християни й юдеї після II Світової війни. Головним тут знову є питання «Де був Бог?» під час Катастрофи. – Де був Бог Біблії під час Бучанського геноциду, а в ширшому контексті де він є у його любові й милосерді в Україні після 24 лютого 2022 року? Стаття є чи не першою в українському академічному релігійно-навістві науковою розвідкою християнства в Україні доби нинішньої російсько-української війни. Автор з'ясовує умови появи в царині українського християнства після Перемоги над рашизмом нової теологічної системи, за прикладом тієї, яка започаткувалась у західному християнстві по завершенні

II Світової війни. Водночас у статті розкривається ряд застережень, які можуть, якщо на них не зреагувати вже сьогодні, унеможливити конструктивний розвиток зазначеної теології. Автор прогнозує можливі паралелі між «теологією після Освенцима» і майбутньою «теологією після Бучі». Так, виходячи з того, що «теологія після Освенцима» не вплинула на західне, і передусім європейське, християнство після 1945 р., оскільки не надала християнству 2-ї пол. XX ст. притомних відповідей на коло нагальних смислбуттєвих питань, пов'язаних з існуванням вірянину у світі, який оговтується після війни, то з чималою долею ймовірності (і це вже видно з зауваг окремих представників конфесій) й «теологія після Бучі» практично на своїх початках може забуксувати у своєму розвитку, перетворюючись на «кабінетну теорію», позбавлену шансів для втілення на загальнохристиянському рівні. Сьогодні вже частково стає зрозуміло, що буде чинитись спроба пустити «теологію після Бучі» саме ідейними коліями «теології після Освенцима», цебто спрямувати її винятково на пошук аргументів, якими б можна було звільнити Бога від відповідальності за «Бучу» і тим само уможливити спасіння самого християнства від ідейної кризи, в якій воно опинилось в Україні після 24 лютого 2022 р. Автор робить висновок, що якщо «теологія після Бучі» й справді стане рухатись у колишньому ідейному фарватері «теології після Освенцима», на повоєнне християнство в Україні чекає невтішна доля – втрата ним суспільного авторитету і, як наслідок, стрімке перетворення на обрядовірство.

Ключові слова: християнство, Святе Письмо, теологія після Освенцима, теологія після Бучі, російсько-українська війна, геноцид в Україні, Голокост.

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