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## THE CHALLENGES OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR FOR UKRAINIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES: METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

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*The authors propose to deepen and expand the classical methodological principles formulated by Ukrainian academic religious studies in the pre-war period. The necessity of contextualization as one of the main methodological approaches in the study of modern religious processes is substantiated. Not only the universality and effectiveness of some research methods in the new circumstances of the Russian-Ukrainian war need rethinking. In the hierarchy of religious principles, the principle of contextuality is especially demanded by the real events of the war. The authors remind about the contextual dangers for the life world of Ukraine that exist in its religious segment, highlighting external and internal factors that cannot be ignored when analyzing the contemporary religious situation in Ukraine and the world. Tragic changes in the context of the life of Ukrainians – linguistic, cultural, informational, religious, etc. necessarily correct expert neutrality, objectivity, non-involvement. According to the authors, the war situation liberates from impartial, out-of-contextual analysis. The admissibility of such a methodological approach is subject to discussion.*

*The methodological approaches used in academic religious studies in pre-war times have not lost their functional significance even now, during the Russian-Ukrainian war. But now the contextual approach is especially relevant, which proves the change of the paradigm of modern methodological thinking in the study of religion. Therefore, the conceptual and methodological problems of religious research, analysis and forecasting in the conditions deformed by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, need to be strengthened by the principle of contextualization, correlation/correction, reconciliation of formulated assumptions with reality, weighing the appropriateness of using certain methods and definitions, critical rethinking of the chosen methodological apparatus. The modern contextuality of religious studies dictates the need to understand not only the problems of metatheory, but also metapractice.*

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## ВИКЛИКИ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ ДЛЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО РЕЛІГІЄЗНАВСТВА: МЕТОДОЛОГІЧНІ АСПЕКТИ

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Автори пропонують поглибити і розширити класичні методологічні принципи, сформульовані українським академічним релігієзнавством у довоєнний час. Обґрунтовується необхідність контекстуалізації як одного з головних методологічних підходів у вивченні сучасних релігійних процесів. Переосмислення потребують не тільки універсальність і дієвість деяких дослідницьких методів в нових обставинах російсько-української війни. В ієрархії релігієзнавчих принципів особливо затребуваним реальними подіями війни стає принцип контекстуальності. Авторі нагадують про ті контекстуальні небезпеки для життєвого світу України, що існують в релігійному його сегменті, виділяючи зовнішні і внутрішні чинники, які не можна ігнорувати при аналізі сучасної релігійної ситуації в Україні та світі. Трагічні зміни контексту життя українців – мовного, культурного, інформаційного, релігійного тощо з необхідністю корегують експертну нейтральність, об'єктивність, незаангажованість. На думку авторів, ситуація війни звільняє від безстороннього, позаконтекстуального аналізу. Допустимість такого методологічного прийому виноситься на обговорення.

Методологічні підходи, що використовувалися в академічному релігієзнавстві у довоєнний час, не втратили своєї функціональної значимості й зараз, в період російсько-української війни. Але нині особливо актуальним постає контекстуальний підхід, що засвідчує зміну парадигми сучасного методологічного мислення в релігієзнавстві. Відтак концептуальні і методологічні проблеми релігієзнавчого дослідження, аналітики і прогнозування в умовах, деформованих військовою агресією Росії проти України, потребують посилення принципом контекстуалізації, кореляції/корекції, зв'язки сформульованих припущень із дійсністю, зважування доречності застосування певних методів та визначень, критичного переосмислення обраного методологічного апарату. Сучасна контекстуальність релігієзнавчих досліджень диктує необхідність осмислення не тільки проблем метатеорії, але й метапрактики.

**Ключові слова:** релігієзнавство, релігія, російсько-українська війна, методологічні підходи, структурно-функціональний підхід, контекстуальність, інтерпретативність, "руський мір", євразійство.

**Formulation of the problem.** From the moment of the establishment of Ukrainian academic religious studies as a separate field of humanitarian knowledge, Ukrainian religious scholars took a responsible approach to the need to define methodological approaches and appropriate methods of their research. It is obvious that the prevailing methodological requirements in the Soviet period could not satisfy the needs of a science of religion free from militant ideology, which set out on the path of its own identification, rationally distancing itself from scientific atheism and theology.

The vast majority of religious works of that time contained methodological considerations about the object and subject of religious research, about the general methodology of the academic study of religion, about special applied methodological programs that were used in works on the history of religion and religions in Ukraine, when analyzing religiosity, when identifying connection of ethnic, political, social, cultural and religious factors in the history and modern life of mankind, including Ukrainians. An interesting and rich material has been developed, which needs systematic generalization in the form of a series of books, conferences,

and theoretical seminars. Part of this has already been done in previous works on the methodology of religious studies.

But in general, methodological problems in religious studies were in the shadows. And not because of the lack of scientific interest in the problems of metatheory, but because of the lack of resources directed to the intellectual mastery of more pressing issues related to the practice of social and religious life. Fundamental works on the methodology of religious studies, which are still waiting for the religious studies community, require special academic conditions:

1) a sufficient number of empirical and industry studies with positive and negative results, the analysis of which will contribute to the formulation of more or less successful methodological guidelines;

2) time and professional training for the conceptualization of own methodological assets in comparison with and taking into account global methodological achievements.

In their methodological searches, Ukrainian religious scholars turn mainly to Ukrainian material. Religious scholars of various generations, schools, traditions, and trends joined the clarification of the subject field of methodology, realizing that "the problem of methodological substantiation of studies of religion and religious phenomena has always been distinguished by the complexity and ambiguity of the solution" [1: 3].

According to some scientists, this is due to many factors, first of all, "the uncertainty of the disciplinary status of such studies: Which among them belong to the philosophy of religion, which to the self-reflections of religious consciousness and theology, which to the history or sociology of religion, and which to religious studies proper?" [1: 3]. During the theoretical discussions [2], it became clear: what is religious studies – just a generalized name for methodologically heterogeneous research strategies and directions or a theoretically self-justified science within

which different research topics should take their place?

However, the foreign work also caught the attention of Ukrainian religious scholars, who followed various research trends in foreign science, which also sought to expand and improve methodological approaches in the process of learning about religious phenomena. Western methodology (as an independent part of religious studies) is not a very common topic of research abroad. In addition, it is usually understood there not as a metatheory, but as a set of specific research methods [3], within which phenomenology of religion, anthropology of religion, sociology of religion, history of religion, philosophy of religion, and even psychology of religion are proposed precisely as methodological approaches in the study of religion.

This approach prevails in universities, where future scientists are recommended to master these classic research methodologies. They can be modified, but generally remain within the tradition. One of the textbooks on religious studies states that "there are basically three ways of approaching the study of religion, that is, the philosophy of religion (phenomenology), the study of religious communities (functionalism), and the study of all aspects of the beliefs, practices, and experiences of the followers of a particular religion (lived religions) [3].

Despite a longer tradition of methodological research, Western scholarship relatively recently summarized developments in the field of methodology, publishing a multi-page work on research methods in the study of religion [4]. A partial analysis of this unique edition leads to the conclusion that the domestic search for a satisfactory methodology is very close to the Western experience, since we, academic religious scholars, share the opinion about the importance of methodology in the study and research of religion: "methods, together with theories, concepts and categories, are the basis of modern science: knowledge

accepted as "scientific" must be based on empirical materials (data) collected using methods that are accepted as "scientific", and their analysis must take place according to the rules based on "scientific" methods, involving concepts and theories, accepted by the relevant academic community" [4: 3].

Unlike our foreign colleagues, our interest in methodological approaches in the study of religion is determined not so much by the general theoretical needs of the science of religion, but by a practical request for a critical rethinking of the classical methodologies of the pre-war period, the need for their correction and clarification in force majeure situations, which turned out to be full-scale multilevel aggression Russian Federation against Ukraine.

The refore, **as the purpose of the speech**, the authors chose the need to justify contextualization as one of the main methodological approaches in the study of religion and modern religious processes, in particular during the current war.

**Discussion and results.** Today, there are various methodologies of religious studies, within which the whole variety of religious topics is discussed, where, according to the definition of the founder of academic religious studies in Ukraine, Professor A. Kolodny, "...truth as a scientific system of knowledge about religion in its development must coincide with truth as a process of knowing it. This happens only when scientific knowledge comprehends religion in its inner necessity" [5: 41]. There is even a question of the typology of research methods. According to the same A. Kolodny, methods are divided into "objective" and "subjective", global-general and particular-disciplinary.

The latter are considered the most common. Their differences are determined by the philosophical and worldview position, attachment to different cultures or religious traditions, and the scientist's understanding of the natural functions of the study of religion. Religious studies, adequately knowing religion, necessarily develops new

methodological approaches or actualizes the most in demand at the time. In the pre-war period, academic religious scholars were more interested in general questions:

– what is the nature of religious research – is it a kind of rational knowledge, or is it a "revealed" knowledge of being, an intuitive understanding of the transcendent?

– what should be the objective conditions for understanding religious phenomena: should the researcher have his own religious experience?

– if religious studies are an independent branch of scientific knowledge, then what laws does its subject area have, through which categories is it revealed?

– does religious studies have its own specific methods of scientific research, or should it only use the methods of other sciences?

The step-by-step and natural search of scientists in the general field of the methodology of religious studies is interrupted by the current situation of war, which requires reconsidering not only the universality and effectiveness of some methodological principles in new circumstances, but also the paradigmality/normality of science in general, the means of which "turn out to be insufficient for finding answers to extremely complex questions that arise before science as requests of society or its individual segments" [6: 142].

We share the opinion of fellow philosopher T. Hardashchuk that "science undergoes changes not only as a result of the accumulation of scientific facts and as a result of the internal logic of the development of scientific research, but also due to changes in the external conditions of its functioning" [6: 142]. It is debatable what should come first in the study of religion: the accumulation of concrete material or the development of methods for its study? In our opinion, it is ideal when these processes are simultaneous and interconnected, but, as a rule, methodology as a set of certain methods spontaneously accompanies the collection of data about religion, but

methodology as a meta-theory within which the patterns and trends of the development of religion and religious processes are clarified, is realized somewhat later in this general process of cognition of phenomena.

Back in 2000, when creating the well-known work "Academic Religious Studies", domestic academic religious scholars foresaw the need to write down their methodological approaches in the study of religion. It was actually the first attempt to move away from that single methodological discourse, given the ideological task of criticizing and refuting religion, which dominated the long decades of the XXth century. In this work, which opened the door to Ukrainian academic religious studies in the XXIst century, the authors, in addition to the first two chapters saturated with methodological issues, devoted a separate paragraph to the topic of "methodology" "Change of paradigms of methodological thinking in religious studies" [7: 87–98].

The ideas laid down there, summarized by R. Trachuk under the leadership of A. Kolodny, are not yet a concept or a theory, but they determined the theoretical foundations of religious research in Ukraine for a long time. The identified and substantiated principles of the scientific study of religion (objectivity, non-confessionality, worldview pluralism, etc.) have become normative and foundational for any religious analysis. According to the authors of "Academic Religious Studies", "it is the system of these defining principles and norms of scientific research that constitutes the content of the methodology of religious studies" [7: 90]. However, for more than two decades, there was a need to supplement and develop these principles.

The philosophy of religion [8: 83–97], which deals with the constitution of the main scientific approaches and programs in the study of religion, remains the defining meta-theory for Ukrainian academic religious studies. It actually became that theoretical-reflective branch that provided and provides separate

applied studies of religion in all the diversity of its empirical manifestations with a common methodological foundation. The philosophy of religion includes:

1) regulatory guidelines – scientific principles;

2) proven and effective tools: approaches and methods by means of which the subject of attention is given for research and theoretical analysis;

3) a defined special thesaurus, thanks to which it is possible to record and transfer acquired new knowledge about religion.

It was this that made it possible to perceive religion as a certain integrity, which has (different from other subjects of humanitarian focus and research attention) properties that give us reason to talk about religion as such a phenomenon of human existence, which, although given for research in the most diverse forms and images, however, has an essential meaningfully described self-identity. Of course, in addition to the methodological theoretical-reflective function, the philosophy of religion also has its own subject within the scope of the study of academic religious studies – religious consciousness and worldview, religious functionality in its variability depending on cultural and historical circumstances and the properties and characteristics of religion in various ways of its contextual manifestation [8: 83–97].

Based on this, Ukrainian academic religious studies interprets religion in the whole complex of its functioning system, carefully examines both the structural components that make up the phenomenon of religion, and the peculiarities of its functioning as a specific integrity [5: 39], which acts as a system of interconnected elements, each of which, having its own functional (socio-historical) purpose, at the same time becomes a significant factor in both the influence of religion on society and man, and the self-development of religion as a special phenomenon human life. Since academic religious studies can study only that side of religion that manifests itself fixedly in the context of

human life, the task of the science of religion is to understand how:

- 1) religion affects society and man;
- 2) society and man influence religion;
- 3) specific conditions correlate the consequences of these interactions.

That side of religion, which is the subject of special interest of theologians and religious philosophers and is outside the limits of scientific cognitive capabilities, therefore does not lend itself to religious measurement, analysis and research. Instead, Ukrainian philosophers of religion within the framework of academic religious studies are primarily interested in the functional purpose of religion – to be an effective means of contextual self-determination of a person in the world, and for this – to provide the believer's worldview with additional parameters for orientation in the world, life, and relationships. A person's worldview, his world- and self-understanding, world- and self-cognition and feelings, the way of acting and the purposefulness of all life activities depend in particular on whether (and which one) an idea of the supernatural is present in a person's consciousness, what regulated mechanisms and evaluation criteria are laid down by this representation, which behaviour models are set.

Hence the structural-functional approach to religion, articulated by a holistic system of branches of academic religious studies [5: 78–85], and a specific methodology – a system of methods structured by main principles, aimed at the analysis of religion as a whole, manifested by a wide range of consequences of various functions-influences of religion in social, cultural, historical, political, economic, national, etc. contexts of human life. Such an academic-religion methodology is focused on the disclosure of religion in its onto-sense-content-institution-genesis through the synthesis of a multitude of separate direct and mediated empirical manifestations in a specific industry-content filling of religion, with the aim of promoting positive practical consequences due to

the possible improvement of its functional effects. After all, as Anatoliy Kolodny proves in his methodological considerations, science cannot remain a thing-in-itself. It should functionally declare itself.

Therefore, Ukrainian academic religious scholars strive to approach the understanding of religion by distancing themselves, not from the dimension of an external non-systemic observer (which is fundamentally impossible), but from the status of an analyst and scientist who is not engaged in an ideological task (apologetic or refuting-critical-condemning) and who is fully aware that his personal the worldview matrix should not replace the object of research or damage its substantive development, but, on the contrary, is a platform for questioning and recognizing religion in its confessional, physical, social or worldview images, free from the dogmatism of certain ideologies.

On the other hand, each of us is engaged by our own identity parameters. The well-known Polish researcher of religion A. Bronk drew attention to this, speaking about the impossibility of unconditional religious studies, since a religious researcher in the course of research, guided by certain cultural (Eurocentrism, Ukrainian centrism, Russian centrism, etc.), religious (Christian centrism or any other "centrism"), worldview, or ideological interests when interpreting religious phenomena necessarily produces a distorted interpretation of religious phenomena.

Trying to avoid the pragmatically oriented results of the scientific understanding of religion is not only difficult, but also dangerous, because both religion and religious studies, as a systematic knowledge of religion in its various manifestations, is a purely human, humanistic, anthropocentric phenomenon/cognition that has a specific practical task: salvation human (for religion); providing a person with adequate knowledge of what religion is (for religious studies).

Taking into account, but not absolutizing, the above-mentioned problematic aspects of the methodology of religious research, the Ukrainian religious studies crystallizes the understanding that "the texture of reality can be captured only by personal experience (contextuality of knowledge of religious reality), and the volume – by the depth of familiarity with the subject and its specifics" [9: 8]. According to the authors of the book "Maidan and the Church: a chronicle of events and an expert assessment", in which we tried to carry out a proper contextual religious analysis of a socio-historical event, "interpretive-informational indirectness, temporal-spatial and cultural-worldview distancing" should not replace reality, as a subject of analysis and forecasting by an "ideologically aligned and contextually formed" simulacrum [9: 10]. Moreover, in the conditions of war (reality in its event-extreme state), contextuality becomes an extremely important methodological basis, in fact becomes the dominant principle of understanding, ahead of other possible competing methodological approaches.

As scientists, we are aware that the current methodology of the science of religion is not absolutely perfect, it is in a state of formation and transformation, especially in the conditions of war. Therefore, the system of blocks of some methodological principles proposed by academic religious scholars is also working. Its heuristic value lies in the fact that it makes it possible to differentiate the role of the considered methodological principles in religious knowledge [5: 35–64].

Traditionally, according to "Academic Religious Studies", several approaches are distinguished in the study of religious phenomena:

1) Diachronic study of causes and consequences in the history of religious institutions, ideas and methods of activity. "In order to clarify today's religion historically, we must see what preceded it, and we must make an attempt to interpret its forms on the basis of the past" [10: 359]. This applies

not only to traditional religion, but also to new religious movements that arose during the 20th century, as well as "consciously" created religions.

2) In the comparative study of modern religions, interest is directed to parallels and differences in various religious systems at the moment. Yes, nowadays in almost all religions a distinction is made between "modernist" and "traditionalist" trends, which can be compared.

3) The contextual study of religion involves the study of the ways in which religion is influenced by its social, political, and other contexts.

4) In the hermeneutic study of modern religion, the main attention should be focused on the interpretations that people give to religious phenomena. "Hermeneutic studies are particularly productive if we consider new interpretations of old religions as a kind of spiritual solution to problems that seem unsolvable in other ways and that are existential in nature" [7: 90].

The choice of specific methods of religious studies and their priority use depends both on the qualities (condition) of the religious object being studied, and on the specific tasks that the scientist sets before himself [1: 4]. Aware of the force majeure of war as a phenomenon in general, and the danger of Russian aggression against Ukraine in particular, which destroys not only the external, but also the internal worlds of Ukrainians and all of humanity [11], we will focus a critical analysis of the religious situation on consideration of those risks that affect this situation on a global and local scale, not only in the immediate, but also in the long-term projected perspective.

Methodology as the logic of the religious cognitive process should be integral and comprehensive. But today we understand that in the hierarchy of religious principles, such important principles as worldview and confessional pluralism are inferior to the principle of contextuality and interpretability, demanded by the reality of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Realizing that contextualization is one of the main methodological approaches of modern religious research, religious scholars emphasized as early as 2000 that the cultural and historical context is the primary basis of modern human existence. Examining it, S. Krymsky noted that in the context of the so-called anthropological catastrophe, the meeting with oneself is a valuable problem of spirituality, when the phenomenon of personality is brought to the forefront of history. Based on the perspectives set by philosophical anthropologists, religious scholars explain/interpret any events, phenomena of religious life, based on the vital/vital/existential interests of a person, people, human community.

In the extreme conditions of war, when the usual context of our life can suddenly disappear (as it happened in the Ukrainian territories occupied by enemy troops or as a result of the destruction from shelling and bombing of entire cities and districts, where mastered, normalized and adjusted, cultured loci of existence of human communities were destroyed), contextuality seems extremely important. So, for example, the change in the geopolitical context due to the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula by the RF led to catastrophic consequences for Ukrainian citizens and institutions that were the bearers and representatives of the Ukrainian world.

The aggressor-occupier (Russian invaders) changes the context of human life – linguistic, cultural, informational, religious. Destroying the noses of Ukrainian civic consciousness, the Russian Federation is spreading a destructive effect on Ukrainian confessions, educational institutions, books, language, and memory. The Kremlin is convinced that by changing the Ukrainian context to that of the Russian world, it is possible to change reality and force people to renounce their Ukrainian civil, cultural, and religious self-determination. By forcefully imposing the "russian's peace" ideology, which is promoted and imposed, in particular, through the preaching of the

Russian Orthodox Church, which performs the function of sacralising and legitimizing the russian's peace context of life, the RF unifies the enslaved territories and peoples, deliberately drawing millions of people into its contextual orbit.

Ukrainian religious scholars, contextually analysing the religious situation even in pre-war times [12: 55–64], warned about these dangers. Two levels of dangers/risks were distinguished – external and internal [13]. Realizing the transience and changeability of the modern world, since the beginning and throughout the large-scale war, some of the indicated risks and dangers have changed in intensity. Therefore, their clarification and deepening is possible only through the contextuality of religious studies and the inclusion of religious scholars in the fabric of reality. External risks include:

- russian's aggression against Ukraine, which was manifested even in the annexation of Crimea and military operations in the East of Ukraine;
- hybrid war, which was and is being conducted at different levels and in different forms;
- the presence of religious centers (Moscow and Rome), whose strategic plans for the world in general and for religious Ukraine in particular do not coincide, and sometimes directly contradict Ukrainian interests. Today, in the religious field of Ukraine, the interests of Rome and Moscow have converged again, which was manifested in the escalation of contradictions: 1) between pro-Ukrainian and pro-Moscow Orthodoxy; 2) pro-Ukrainian Greek Catholics and pro-Moscow Orthodox; 3) Greek Catholics and Roman Catholics.

- Moscow's opposition to the initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate not only in the matter of establishing the independent Orthodox Church of Ukraine, but also in the strategic desire to "reformat" world Orthodoxy in accordance with its own imperial interests. Giving/receiving Tomos-2019 exacerbated intra-Orthodox conflicts between the UOC (MP) and the UOC KP



and UAOC (until 2018), and now between the UOC (MP) and the OCU. Ukraine became a catalyst for the intra-Orthodox conflict between Constantinople and Moscow, which is not known how it will be resolved.

- spread of anti-Ukrainian secular and religious ideologies and theories ("Russian world", "Holy Rus", "Historical Rus", "God-bearing Russian people", "universal mission of Great Russia", Eurasianism, Pan-Slavism, etc.); Ukraine has become, among other things, the object of ideological aggression, when aggressive stereotypes are imposed from the outside, such as: Greek Catholics – Uniates, supporters of the Vatican, Orthodox OCU (formerly UOC KP and UAPC) – schismatics, apostates; Protestants are sectarians, etc.

- the presence of other competing religious centers (Muslim – Turkish, Iranian, Arabian, etc., Jewish, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Indian, new religious, etc.), which play the Ukrainian card for their own profit;

- interference in the religious affairs of political centers (Washington, Moscow, Warsaw, Ankara, Brussels, Paris, Berlin, Beijing, etc.), which demonstrate their interest in the religious orientations of Ukrainians.

In addition to the mentioned external factors, important for the formation of the modern picture of reality – the context of the unfolding of the religious situation – were also internal factors capable of containing the danger of a change in the religious situation, with possible negative consequences for society. These internal risks are caused by different in nature, but related problems: general societal and actually religious.

The first ones, which were already defined earlier [12: 59–60], include:

- Ukrainians' loss of the valuable meanings of their existence, the victory of the dominant malorossiysk;

- internal discord and enmity, division, division between supporters of "Ukrainian Ukraine", disintegration of society, cultivation of induction of emotional chaos;

- the uncertainty of one's own identity, which is manifested in the attitude to the Ukrainian language as the state language, to Tomos as an expression of a new religious identification matrix, the affirmation of autocephaly and self-sufficiency;

- the orderliness and engagement of the Ukrainian mass media and, as a result, distorted, false information, or outright disinformation, aimed at uncritical perception by the audience.

The second group of risks includes [14: 108–109]:

- only a partial solution to the problem of Orthodox division in Ukraine;

- slowness of transitions and joining of UOC MP parishes to the OCU;

- conservatism and paternalism of a large mass of believers oriented towards Moscow (Russia);

- the inertia of the Orthodox environment in the ability to reorient to the new paradigm of "open Orthodoxy";

- the silent resistance of Ukrainian Greek Catholics to pressure from the Vatican: a) regarding the non-recognition of the war in the east of Ukraine as an aggression by Russia; b) regarding calls for reconciliation of Ukraine with ORDLO and removal from the agenda of receiving the patriarchate for the UGCC;

- attachment of some Protestant churches to the concept of Eurasianism as a phantom remnant of the Soviet past;

- the vagueness of the position of Jewish associations regarding the independence of Ukraine in its defense of its national and state interests;

- lack of a unanimous approach of the Muslim administrations of Ukraine, except for the RAMU "UMMAH", to the Russian aggression and occupation of part of the territories in the East of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea;

- the orientation of some of the native faith currents towards the idea of Pan-Slavism;

- prioritization of the values of the mother religion of the East, neglect of one's own traditions, detachment from the Ukrainian context, indifference to Ukrainian problems and realities,

devaluation of Ukrainian citizenship, etc. in most neo-orientalist currents.

Prescribing all these security issues of possible and real risks for Ukrainian society in its religious segment, warning the church authorities about them, religious scholars could not predict the scale of the changes that took place in the lives of believers after the Russian invasion on February 24, 2022. The religious life of the world and Ukraine now takes place in new contexts, the vector of the development of the religious situation has noticeably changed.

We have already written about the changes in the religious landscape of Ukraine during the war [15], about the role of Ukraine in the geopolitical reformatting of the world, which occurred as a result of the Russian-Ukrainian war [16]. But the dynamics of religious life itself precedes our awareness of its changes. At the beginning of 2023, events took place, possibly unexpected for the church, state and society (we mean the loss of the monopoly of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the religious life of Ukraine, the aggressive influence of the Russian Orthodox Church on Ukrainian and world Orthodoxy, a change in the vector of relations between Moscow and Rome, the alignment of church and social the status of the OCU and UOC, the growing role of chaplaincy in the Armed Forces, the provision of spiritual care for Ukrainian refugees abroad, etc.), the foundations for which were defined in the above risks and dangers. But it is the context of the war that determines the speed of all these changes, their dynamics and scale.

When applying general approaches to the analysis of concrete reality, in particular, the position of churches in Ukrainian society during the war, which is monitored by the statements of church leaders, by synodic and council decisions, by the activity of church institutions, etc., we do not concentrate on the dogmas or religious ethics of a specific organization (although this layer of religion is important for clarifying the realization of these beliefs). In addition to

assessing the degree of assimilation of the symbol of faith and the prayer "Our Father", the expert focuses on the nature of the activity, institutional, ritual-cult and other actions that are carried out individually or collectively. When analyzing religion and the religious situation, it is important to pay attention to a number of contextually manifested signs: which patriarch is commemorated at the liturgy, for whom candles are lit in the church, about the resurrection of which state are sung by believing Christians, for what reason information is collected, especially regarding information of a personal nature (about families of military personnel of the Armed Forces, for example) – for real help or for use for another purpose.

In contrast to a personal prayer or confession, the contents of which cannot be verified, public events are subject to wide-ranging theological reflections. Therefore, patriotic appeals to honour Ukraine and its heroes or the Russian-language singing of "mother Russia" in wartime are more than proof for determining involvement in the implementation of risks and dangers for Ukrainian society and the state. Through church rituals, which permeate the entire life background of the church, a social group (in this case, a church community) is affirmed, but in its own way – one as a completely nationally oriented structure, the other as one that was not nationally and religiously defined in the conditions of the Russian aggression.

Contextualization in the application of terms and concepts is extremely important. This is especially relevant precisely because religious studies are not just a humanitarian, but first of all a worldview branch. And to formulate adequate and conscious knowledge in the situation of the information front in the area of the worldview frontier is an extremely responsible matter and requires scientific skill, professional knowledge, rationally grounded and relevant reality in its true understanding of beliefs, critical prudence, discursive consistency and methodological balance

of particular and universal meanings. After all, careless or negligent use of the term can lead not only to the distortion of reality, but also become a weapon in the hands of a skillful propagandist-manipulator. A vivid example of this is the use and demarcation of the terms "Russian peace" / "Russian world" or the replacement of "Russian church" with "Russian". Depending on from which worldview positions the researcher of the religious situation will approach the analysis; he will use one or another term. It is not always appropriate to translate Russian concepts into Ukrainian according to the rules of grammar. After all, the principle of contextuality requires that we invest in the term exactly the meaning that is indicated by the marker corresponding to the context of its use. The translation is carried out on the map of a certain worldview. And if we simply translate a concept with a clearly defined meaning in a certain context as a set of words, we get a falsified result. Of course, in this case, ontological, metaphysical, historical and religious discourses are mixed, meaning is changed and reality is distorted. Therefore, it is necessary to clearly distinguish the contexts in which it is appropriate to use this or that term, and to understand that this or that concept is formed in a certain context, so it is definitely connected with other meaningful discourses. Things (objects, phenomena) must be called by proper names, so that authentic contents, contextually formed and contextually adequately understood, are expressed and revealed.

On the mentioned specific examples, which will still be the object of religious analysis and forecasting, we observe how important today is both the process of fitting oneself as a subject of historical development into a certain cultural and social-event context, as well as its reading. The circumstances of the war require a clear positioning and a conscious choice by the subjects of the context of their own lives. But in order to understand it, you need to be included in the context of events and analyze reality,

and not proceed from the visions of it formulated by someone.

The circumstances of the war require us – both researchers of religion and bearers of one or another form of religiosity – to clearly position ourselves in this system of worldview and effective paradigms: do you belong to the context of the "Russian world" or do you form, protect, defend the Ukrainian world. That is, the war situation liberates from impartial, out-of-contextual, often so-called "objective" analysis. The admissibility of such a methodological technique, which is used in the phenomenology of religion – bracketing the intention – is discussed even in foreign studies.

Conceptual and methodological problems of religious research, analytics and forecasting in the conditions deformed by Russia's military aggression need to be correlated with a practical aspect tested in pre-war times and confirmed by results. Today, we need adequate theories, according to the Ukrainian methodologist of science V. Kuznetsov, practical theories "which scientists use and constantly improve in their everyday practice" [17: 141].

**Conclusions.** So, contextuality as a methodological approach in religious studies consists in the fact that the researcher must take into account and take into account:

1) The event context (in particular, Russia's military aggression against Ukraine) as a condition for the manifestation of religion, which determines its functional and meaningful features. Therefore, the context of reality is the meeting place of a religious scholar with a living religion, and contextuality is the understanding of transformational processes both in religion itself (the historicity of religion) and in its functioning as a human phenomenon in the conditions of war, on the one hand, and the simultaneous immersion of the researcher in this context – on the other hand;

2) Features, depth and intensity of one's (research) contextual inclusion/exclusion. Contextuality

requires the researcher to constantly correct his position, check the assumptions formulated by him with reality, weigh the appropriateness of using certain methods and definitions, critically rethink what he said when the context changes, and by colleagues using the entire methodological apparatus of Ukrainian academic religious studies.

The methodological approaches used in academic religious studies in pre-war times have not lost their functional significance even now, during the Russian-Ukrainian war. But now the contextual approach is especially relevant, which proves the change of the paradigm of modern methodological thinking in the study of religion.

Therefore, the conceptual and methodological problems of religious research, analysis and forecasting in the conditions deformed by Russia's military aggression against Ukraine, need to be strengthened by the principle of contextualization, correlation/correction, reconciliation of formulated assumptions with reality, weighing the appropriateness of using certain methods and definitions, critical rethinking of the chosen methodological apparatus. The modern contextuality of religious studies dictates the need to understand not only the problems of metatheory, but also metapractice.

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