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THE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE RENOVATIONIST MOVEMENT IN THE STAROBILSK REGION IN 1922 – 1930

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ОРГАНІЗАЦІЙНИЙ РОЗВИТОК ОБНОВЛЕНСЬКОГО РУХУ НА СТАРОБІЛЬЩИНІ 1922 – 1930 рр.

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The article attempts to investigate the process of the organizational formation of the renovationist movement in the territory of Starobilshchyna. The course of the institutionalization of the Starobel eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Synodal Church is traced. The historical circumstances of the denominational separation of Ukrainian Orthodoxy in the interwar period are highlighted by the example of a separate region.

Keywords: Orthodoxy, Renovationist movement, Ukrainian Orthodox Autocephalous Synodal Church, Starobilsk Eparchy.

Actuality and problem statement. The historical events around the organizational movement of the Renovationists in the Orthodox Church in Donbass belong to perhaps one of the least illuminated pages of the local religious history of the interwar period. Due to oppressive actions was forcibly destroyed the multi-confessionalism of Ukrainian society caused by suspense of many important internal problems of the Church's life. Consequently, the division of the Church on the similar ground resumed in the conditions of liberalization of the state religious politics at the end of 1980s. The relevance of studying of the historical experience of the organizational evolving of the reformatory orthodox confession on the Donbass territory, its circumstances and personalities of this process acquires an exceptional meaning in the context of defining new conceptual approaches in the development of the local Orthodox Church in the border region of Ukraine and Russia.

Analysis of research and publications. The history of the Renovationist movement in Ukraine, especially of the problem of regulation of the relationship between state and Church on these lands is represented in the works of many local religious historians, like G. Bilan [1], O. Boiko [2], S. Zhyliuk [6], V. Pashchenko [11; 12], A. Kyrydon [12], O. Sagan [13], O. Trygub [14] and others. Though, for such works it is characteristic to attempt a determination of the

general image of the multi-confessionalism development in Ukraine, while the local studies are almost absent.

In the Russian ecclesiastical historiography to this day the leading positions hold PhD works of metropolitan-historians Theodosius (Protsiuk) [16] and Ioan (Snychov) [7]. They give cursory characteristic of the Church movements in Ukraine in the inter-war period and during the German occupation. But these works were written in the middle of 1960s, so they have various factual inaccuracies due to subjective view of the authors on the process of establishment of local Orthodox Church in Ukraine.

Unique without exaggeration are monographs of Russian priests – V. Lavrynov [8; 9] and I. Soloviov [10], due to the contents as well as to the way of presenting the material. These authors worked on a broad horizon of materials of the criminal cases of the Renovationist hierarchs and created substantial guidebooks on the materials of Renovationist church history in the territory of the USSR.

The first fundamental attempt to study the history of the emergence, activity and elimination of organized Orthodox denominations directly in the Donbass area in the context of regulating local state-church relations is the dissertation of the Lugansk lawyer and religious scientist O. Forostiuk [18; 19]. The author was first to introduce a wide range of material on key events, figures of bishops and clerics who played a key role in the religious history of the region, having considered regional events against the background of the general context of the state anti-religious policy in the Ukrainian SSR. Despite the wide range of factual material systematized on the basis of currently inaccessible regional archives of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, unique narrative testimonies of the participants in religious movements in the region, the works of O. Forostiuk are marked however by tendentiousness of denominational perception. They do not exhaust the

amplitude of the task we have outlined and have inaccuracies, elimination of which requires introduction of additional new sources into scientific discourse.

Thus, **the subject** of this research is the activity of the Starobilsk vicariate (later—eparchy) of the Ukrainian Autocephalous (Renovationist) Orthodox Church, which means solving such research tasks as follows: firstly, analysis of the Orthodox Church situation of that time in the Starobilsk region; secondly, to highlight the process of institutional formation of the Renovationist movement in the region. Thirdly, it is also important to determine peculiarities of the church-religious activities of the Starobilsk eparchy in the period of institutional disunity of the Orthodox Church in Ukraine in 1920-1930s. The chronologic limits of the research are set from the time of institutional formation of Renovationist movement in this region in 1922 until its actual abolishment in the mid-1930s.

The goal of the article is to reconstruct the entire picture of organizational development of the Renovationist movement in the Orthodox Church in the Starobilsk region in 1922-1930, basing on the analysis of historic sources and scientific literature.

Exposition of the main material. In the spring of 1922 a quick revolutionary attempt of the representatives of the Renovationist movement, supported by the state authorities to make a revolt in the midst of the Orthodox Church in the USSR, quickly spread throughout key regional centers, however in the Donetsk province it was carried out rather slowly. The first Renovationist communities in the Starobilshchyna, which at that time belonged to the Kharkiv eparchy, appeared in the villages of Neshcheretove and Tytarivka only in January 1923 [19, p. 73]. On January 29, 1923, at the meeting of the Starobilsk region executive committee was established the local executive committee membership of the leading Renovationist group “The Living Church”. The head of the committee was appointed the senior priest of the local Neshcheretove church of the Holy Trinity [18, p. 32]. As recently as on December 5, 1922, in Moscow took place the bishopric ordination of a Renovationist vicar for Kharkiv eparchy, Starobilsk bishop Oleksander (Migulin) [8, p. 59]. Soon afterwards the hierarch was elected the head of the local vicariate administration. An interesting observation by O. Forostiuk shows that newly ordained bishop started broad activity of taking over parishes, but this was not met with sympathy of religious masses [19, p. 73]. As of October 1, 1923, in Starobilsk uyezd only 27 out of 150 officially registered parishes belonged to Renovationists [19, p. 73–74]. Although, it is worth noticing that they were given the antique 18th-century cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection [18, p. 78].

The local authorities reported that the Renovationist movement in Starobilsk region was still in embryonic state. On the 8th–9th of May 1924 in the Starobilsk Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection took place a district meeting of clergy and lay people with participation of one of the leading ideologists of Church renovation in Ukraine, bishop Iosyf (Krechetovych) of

Izum. In the first day of the meeting participated 192 delegates, but the next day were registered only 168 [18, p. 76]. At the convention was also raised the question of electing a new bishop, but the elections however never happened. Instead, the All-Ukrainian Holy Synod shortly after appointed newly ordained bishop Meletiy (Fomin) as the head of Starobilsk district church administration [8, p. 354].

In the first half of 1924 because of active measures of the church opposition the Renovationist Church in Ukraine was brought to a crisis having lost about 1000 parishes all over the republic. The overall number of Renovationist communities in Donetsk governorate was reduced to 85 as at January 1925 [3]. However, it should be noted, that in the official statistics of that time there is no information on presence of the Renovationist parishes in Starobilshchyna before January 1, 1926, which suggests inaccuracy of the data [20].

On May 14, 1925, in Kharkiv was opened a session of the All-Ukrainian Local Council. It adopted a regulation about the autocephalous status of the Ukrainian Church and korenization of the Liturgy. 34 bishops, 88 clergymen and 86 lay people participated in the Council [14, p. 99], including the vicar of the Kharkiv eparchy, bishop of Starobilsk, Meletiy (Fomin). Archpriest of Starobilsk area D. Liunynskyi made an appeal to immediate translation of Liturgical texts into Ukrainian, initiation of Ukrainian language classes for clergy, formation of a committee for developing a special address to UAOC representatives and election of a delegation for negotiations concerning uniting with UAOC [5, p. 3].

Among other regulations the Council also banned the second marriage for priests. Thus, on the 2nd All-Ukrainian Council the Ukrainian Renovationists managed to minimize the excessive reformatory tendencies in their internal Church practice. On October 7, 1925, the autocephalous status of Ukrainian Church was confirmed at the 3rd All-Russian Council [14, p. 100].

The activation of institutional church processes of that time was also favoured by an administrative reform in the USSR, as a result of which the governorate division of the republic changed to a district (okrug) one. According to the new reform in January 1925 the Holy Synod of the Ukrainian Synodal (Renovationist) Church reorganized the eparchial control network. As a result 36 eparchies were formed within the boundaries of corresponding territorial districts, and Starobilsk eparchy was segregated from Kharkiv eparchy [6, p. 175].

In September 1927 the Archbishops Andrii (Odintsov) and Oleksander (Chekanovskiy) visited Starobilsk with the purpose of holding lectures within the frame of theological courses. In a secret letter the local old-Church hierarchy prohibited the clergy and lay people to attend the courses on pain of excommunication. Nonetheless, 10 priests and some lay people ignored the prohibition and became course students. Until November 1934 the district centre

Starobilsk did not have railway connection and was 56 km far from the nearest line, so a well-known bishops' visit and theological course holding were extraordinary events for provincial town residents and animated the dull uneventful life of the local believers. During three days 800 people attended the lectures. The archbishops gave ten lectures of an apologetic character and informed the audience about the religious situation in Ukraine. Archpriest D. Luminarskyi, member of the Starobilsk eparchial administration, expressed sincere gratitude to the hierarchs and a hope that "such courses were held not for the last time, and that "our gospels" would visit our district in future" [15].

As S. Zhyliuk aptly remarked, after the visit of the Starobilsk region by the mentioned archbishops the struggle between the old-Church hierarchy and Renovators somewhat calmed in the eparchy [5, p. 290]. In the end, in the spring of 1928 the Starobelsk eparchy consisting of 62 parishes [16] was one of the largest in the former Donetsk province. In November 1928 the Starobilsk bishop Meletiy (Fomin) headed the Kamianets-Podilskyi eparchial administration. Meanwhile the Starobilsk cathedra remained vacant until its actual abolition in 1930.

In 1929 the Union of Atheists addressed the All-Ukrainian Central Executive Committee requesting to close the antique Starobilsk Cathedral of the Holy Virgin Protection. The All-Ukrainian (Renovatorist) Holy Synod addressed the same committee with the request not to close the cathedral, because that could have bad consequences for the Synodal Church in the region [19, p. 126]. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the Synod the cathedral was closed that year, and in 1933 it was demolished. At the same time commenced an active annulment of actual parishes. Since May 1927 till August 1935 53 churches were closed in the area and as of June 1935 only three Renovatorist parishes were functioning in the region [19, p. 130].

Conclusions. The process of organizational formation of the Renovatorist movement within provincial Starobilsk region took place against the background of an energetic state anti-religious policy, as well as an acute inter-confessional confrontation of separated parts of a once united Orthodox Church. Since in conditions of an escalation of denominational division the representatives of the Renovatorist movement minimized their reformative tendencies at the 2nd All-Ukrainian Council, the institutional crisis within the denomination was partly limited. For some time Starobilsk area became a place for numerous religious disputes for representatives of various denominations. After the appointment of bishop Meletiy (Fomin) to the Starobilsk cathedra the eparchy with active support of the local authorities achieved its highest institutional development, encompassing over one third of the orthodox communities in the region and became structurally the biggest in the territories of the former Donetsk gubernorate.

Unfortunately, nowadays the development of the Renovatorist movement in Donbass is not properly

illustrated in church historiography, moreover, its individual aspects are estimated subjectively. Undoubtedly, the activity of Starobilsk Renovators has to be properly rethought and reassessed from the point of view of particularly Ukrainian church historiography. Because only further non-preconceived study of this topic will allow to reveal the actual circumstances of development and reasons of decline of organized Church structures in Donbass during the difficult period of persecutions and tragic ordeals.

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Рубан М.Ю. Організаційний розвиток обновленського руху на Старобільщині 1922–1930 рр.

У статті здійснено спробу дослідити процес організаційного становлення обновленського руху на теренах Старобільщини. Простежено хід інституціалізації Старобільської єпархії Української Православної Автокефальної Синодальної Церкви. Висвітлено історичні обставини конфесійного розділення Українського Православ'я в міжвоєнний період на прикладі окремого регіону.

Ключові слова: Православ'я, обновленський рух, Українська Православна Автокефальна Синодальна Церква, Старобільська єпархія.

Рубан Н.Ю. Организационное развитие обновленческого движения на Старобельщине 1922–1930 гг.

В статье осуществлена попытка исследовать процесс организационного становления обновленческого движения на территории Старобельщины. Прослежен ход институциализации Старобельской епархии Украинской Православной Автокефальной Синодальной Церкви. Освещены исторические обстоятельства конфессионального разделения Украинского Православия в межвоенный период на примере отдельного региона.

Ключевые слова: Православие, обновленческое движение, Украинская Православная Автокефальная Синодальная Церковь, Старобельская епархия.

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