

# RELIGIOUS TELEVISION OF UKRAINE IN SHAPING SPIRITUAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY MEDIA PRACTICES

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## Abstract

The article is devoted to analyzing religious television in Ukraine as a key institution of contemporary sacred communication, which shapes a new configuration of spiritual presence within the digital media space. Religious TV channels are examined as mediatized spaces for producing and transmitting symbolic meanings, within which traditional theological narratives are adapted to the demands of audiovisual culture, and the sacred acquires new forms of visualization, emotional accessibility, and communicative dynamism. It is demonstrated that television broadcasting provides a unique format of spiritual support, enabling faith communities to participate in prayer practices, catechetical programs, and moral-ethical discourse beyond the boundaries of physical religious space. It is established that religious television, as a mechanism for shaping worldview orientations and a channel for constructing identity, significantly influences the spiritual culture of society. The article emphasis is that through a diversity of genres and the combination of educational, informational, and interactive formats, religious TV channels function as media-religious platforms where the articulation of value meanings, the interpretation of social events, and the development of models for moral evaluation take place. Religious television emerges not only as an instrument for disseminating doctrine but also as a factor of spiritual-cultural stabilization amid informational oversaturation, social crises, and wartime challenges. The article argues that religious telemedia create a new architectonics of sacred space by integrating religious discourse into the public sphere and ensuring the formation of stable channels of spiritual communication. It is stressed that the mediatized form of religious broadcasting expands the horizons of religious presence, shapes individualized models of experiencing religiosity and contributes to deepening cultural-value reflection within contemporary society.

**Keywords:** religious television, media, religious communication, digital spirituality, mediatization of religion, religious discourse, PR-activity, social networks, identity.

## **Introduction**

Within the structure of the contemporary media space, television functions not only as a leading channel of mass communication but also as one of the key platforms for representing religiosity, transmitting sacred meanings, and shaping religious experience in a mediatized society. Throughout the twentieth century, television platforms established themselves as the dominant segment of the mass-media system and the main source of information shaping the behavioral models of audiences. Television has become an important factor in constructing the symbolic space of modern religiosity and one of the defining agents of religious mass communication.

The functioning of television in religious communication demonstrates the powerful influence of mass culture on the mechanisms that shape religious consciousness. Religious television combines elements of sacred and secular communicative experience, forming a mediatized form of religious presence capable of exerting both catechetical and manipulative impact. Similarly to radio, television forms a broad spectrum of social narratives that determine the interpretation of religious symbols, norms, and identities, and may also perform functions of symbolic control over the religious perceptions of the mass audience.

As a communication system, religious television is oriented toward satisfying the spiritual and axiological needs of the individual, social groups, and religious communities. Its structure is based on a complex of communication channels that ensure the transmission of theological ideas, ritual elements, moral-ethical guidelines, and religious practices, employing verbal, non-verbal, visual-symbolic, and emotional-psychological levels of influence. Of particular importance are iconic and symbolic codes that enable the process of sacralization of the screen space and create the effect of “virtual presence” in the religious act.

Despite the development of digital platforms, television retains the status of the most widespread channel of religious communication.<sup>1</sup> It is precisely through television formats that the popularization of religious interpretations, expansion of access to liturgical practice, broadcasting of sermons, catechetical programs, and religious journalism takes place. This transforms religious

<sup>1</sup> J. Storey. *Cultural Studies and the Study of Popular Culture*. Edinburgh, 1998. 9.

television into an important tool for shaping the religious picture of the world within the global information environment.

Researchers note that television significantly changes the structure of religious experience, promoting a shift from traditional forms of communal participation to individualized models of perception.<sup>2</sup> Religion, present in television discourse, is largely adapted to the logic of popular culture: it is presented through genres such as news, documentary, drama, talk shows, and entertainment programs. Such mediatization of religion transforms it toward personalized spirituality and consumer-oriented models of interpreting the sacred.

Marshall McLuhan pointed out that the influence of television and radio technologies led to profound changes in religious practice, including the aestheticization of worship, the renewal of liturgical forms, and the intensification of ecumenical processes.<sup>3</sup> In this context, religious television can be regarded as one of the instruments of “mediatized sacralization,” combining technological capacities with theological content and forming new models of religious experience within the global information space.

### **Television Space as a Factor in the Formation of Contemporary Models of Religious Communication**

To understand the specific influence of the television media environment on the structuring of contemporary religious communication, it is necessary to analyze its fundamental properties, which determine not only the forms of information transmission but also the modes of representing the sacred, the mechanisms of forming religious identity, and the models of interaction between the subjects of spiritual experience.

A leading feature of television space is the high intensity of relevant meanings, which provides the possibility of ontological accumulation and concentrated transmission of religious ideas.<sup>4</sup> Television appears as a technical-symbolic mediator capable not only of transmitting informational fragments but also of modeling holistic conceptions of the sacred order, forming

<sup>2</sup> М. Балаклицький. *Медіатизація протестантизму в Україні 1991 – 2010 років: монографія*. [Mediatization of Protestantism in Ukraine 1991-2010: A Monograph]. Харків: Харківське історико-філологічне товариство, 2011. 56.

<sup>3</sup> М. McLuhan. *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. McGraw-Hill. <https://designopendata.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/understanding-media-mcluhan.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> М. С. Петрушкевич. *Релігійна комунікація у контексті масової культури: монографія*. [Religious communication in the context of mass culture: monograph]. Острог, 2018. 268.

stable images of spiritual reality in the recipient. The visual and auditory nature of television discourse enhances emotional involvement and produces an “effect of presence,” which, in the context of religious communication, can reproduce experiences of spiritual closeness, prayer, or existential support. Such influence is evident, in particular, in the work of the Islamic studio “Minaret,” where religious content is transmitted in a format capable of integrating traditional elements of Muslim spirituality into the contemporary media context.<sup>5</sup>

The intensity of content contributes to the expansion of the thematic scope of religious communication, within which the television environment embeds sacred meanings into spheres that determine the anthropological and socio-cultural experience of modern individuals.<sup>6</sup> This integration makes it possible to reveal religious normativity within everyday practices, including issues of corporeality, ethical behavior, interpersonal relations, and moral responsibility. This mechanism corresponds to the logic of contemporary media religiosity, in which the sacred increasingly manifests through individual spiritual experience and is formed at the intersection of religious prescriptions and personal meanings. An example is the content of the Protestant channel “Nadiya,” which offers a structured system of spiritual-educational programs aimed at forming moral value orientations, Christian spiritual culture, and skills in operating religious knowledge.<sup>7</sup>

An important characteristic is the self-referentiality of television discourse, which results in the formation of a specific media-sacred space. It constitutes a closed system of symbolic connections that sets its own rules for the formation of religious conceptions. In this environment, meaning-making acquires autonomy from direct religious practice and is based on the internal structures of the media flow. Thus, television messages are capable of creating new models of sacrality in which spiritual content appears not as a traditionally ritual phenomenon but as a product of symbolic representation shaped by the logic of the television sign field.<sup>8</sup> This contributes to the re-interpretation of sacred experience, making it more accessible but also more dependent on media form.

<sup>5</sup> “Іслам в Україні.” [Islam in Ukraine]. <https://www.islam.ua/uk/>

<sup>6</sup> А. Шиманович. “Теоретичні передумови місіонерської активності християнських церков у медійному просторі.” [Theoretical prerequisites for the missionary activity of Christian churches in the media space]. *Українське християнство в цифровому світі: виклики та перспективи*. Острого: Видавництво Національного університету «Острозька академія», 2022. 101.

<sup>7</sup> Телеканал Надія. [Nadiya TV channel]. <https://tv.hope.ua>

<sup>8</sup> Д. Г. Сучков. “Аудіовізуальна культура участі: роль соціальних медіа.” [Audiovisual participatory culture: the role of social media]. *Вісник Національної академії керівних кадрів культури і мистецтв*. 2023. № 3. 77.

Television functions as a flow-based system of meaning transmission, where the continuity of messages creates a new form of religious time, unstable, shifting, fragmented.<sup>9</sup> In this mode, sacred meanings lose fixity and become part of the general media stream, which modifies ways of religious comprehension and spiritual reception. Flow dynamics not only structure media time but also shift religious communication into a regime of constant circulation, resulting in a new form of spiritual presence that exists in continuous interaction with the informational environment.

Within the structure of television communication, the coherence of semantic elements is important, as it ensures the integration of religiously significant ideas into socially relevant contexts. In such formats, not only is information transmitted, but also particular forms of spiritual solidarity, ethical responsibility, and empathy are modeled. This is clearly observed in the programs of Ukrainian religious TV channels, where through the theme of human life crises, existential and moral dimensions of religiosity are actualized, such as helping one's neighbor, compassion, readiness for self-sacrifice, and spiritual support.<sup>10</sup> This type of television communication contributes to the formation of para-religious communities united not by institutional boundaries but by value-semantic connections.

In the context of religious communication, it is important to note that the spread of national languages and dialects in television discourse is not merely a linguistic phenomenon. It acquires deep religious significance because it reproduces the principle of culturally rooted sacrality, in which spiritual content is transmitted in the language of the everyday experience of the believing community. M. McLuhan's thesis on the ability of electronic media to renew dialect forms of communication directly correlates with the processes of inculturation of religious traditions.<sup>11</sup> The Catholic Church, having legitimized liturgical multilingualism through the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, actively integrates media into the process of sacred transmission, thereby creating a model in which television space becomes a place for the actualization of local identities.<sup>12</sup> This

<sup>9</sup> Н. І. Цімох, А. В. Гнатюк. "Телебачення як соціокультурний феномен і предмет культурологічного дослідження." [Television as a sociocultural phenomenon and a subject of cultural research]. *Культурологічний альманах*. 2023. №1. 239.

<sup>10</sup> А. Кваско, О. Сухорукова, З. Григорова. "Сучасні методи досліджень в медіаменеджменті." [Modern research methods in media management]. *Економіка та суспільство*. 2021. № 24. <https://economyandsociety.in.ua/index.php/journal/article/view/188>

<sup>11</sup> М. McLuhan *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. McGraw-Hill. <https://designopendata.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/understanding-media-mcluhan.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> "Документи II Ватиканського Вселенського Собору." [Documents of the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council]. [https://katekhytyka-6.blogspot.com/p/blog-page\\_10.html](https://katekhytyka-6.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_10.html)

tendency is less pronounced in Orthodoxy, where liturgical language retains canonical stability, but more visible in Protestant communities, which have been oriented toward linguistic adaptability and cultural diversity from the outset.

In this context, the intertextuality of television discourse becomes especially significant, functioning as a mechanism for breaking boundaries between distinct textual structures and forming a unified cultural-symbolic field. Intertext, in a religious perspective, is not merely a set of textual references; it embodies historically accumulated codes of sacred traditions, models for interpreting spiritual experience, and modes of verbal and non-verbal transmission of religious symbolism. The transformation of linear thinking toward global, multimodal perception indicates a profound shift in ways of operating with religious meanings.<sup>13</sup> In the television environment, religious communication is shaped primarily through audiovisual sign structures that function not only on a cognitive level but also on a bodily-perceptual one, actualizing the phenomenon of “tactile perception” of media information. This enhances the viewer’s involvement in the sacred space, creating an effect of co-presence traditionally associated with religious experience.

Equally significant is the characteristic of interactivity, which manifests in the approximation of television discourse to the tradition of dialogical communication inherent in religious communicative processes. Television’s need for spontaneous dialogue reveals its potential for constructing a communicative model that can be interpreted as a projection of the religious paradigm of “encounter” as a place of mutual disclosure of meanings. In this sense, the activity of the “Nadiya” channel represents an attempt to create a media environment where not only information is transmitted but also the spiritual needs of the audience are comprehended, value-based inquiries are articulated, and a shared search for existentially significant answers takes place.<sup>14</sup> Such a media-religious environment reproduces pastoral communication models characteristic of Protestant tradition—proximity to personal experience, emphasis on testimony, emotional openness, and accessibility.

Extremely important for the study of religion is the property of fragmentation in television discourse, which in mass media manifests in three dimensions: mosaicity, seriality, and

<sup>13</sup> К. В. Чорна. “Використання жанру інфотеймент в українських теленовинах, пошук нових засобів і прийомів гри та розваги в інформаційних програмах.” [The use of the infotainment genre in Ukrainian television news, the search for new means and techniques of play and entertainment in information programs]. *Вісник Київського національного університету культури і мистецтв. Мистецтвознавство*. 2015. Вип. 32. 151.

<sup>14</sup> Телеканал Надія. [Nadiya TV channel]. <https://tv.hope.ua>

discreteness.<sup>15</sup> Mosaicity reflects the way in which television content is constructed from heterogeneous elements often unrelated by direct logical sequence. In the religious context, this means that sacred meanings reach the viewer as fragments, symbols, gestures, images, moral theses, theological interpretations. The television mosaic forms a hybrid worldview in which religious information is combined with social, cultural, entertainment, and political content. Seriality creates a specific model of religious temporality. Serial programs, especially in religious broadcasting, structure the viewer's spiritual rhythm, forming a cyclicity close to liturgical regularity. Serial periodicity contributes to the formation of a "media ritual" in the form of repeated practices of turning to religious content, which becomes part of everyday life. Discreteness, resulting from the technological capability of spontaneous switching between segments of the television stream, produces a clip-like type of consciousness. In the religious context, this means that believers often interact not with complete theological narratives but with short quotes, sayings, symbolic fragments that create a "mosaic picture" of spirituality. This leads to the formation of a new type of religious reception in which the fragment has autonomous value as a bearer of sacred meaning.

The illusion of naturalness in television communication is one of the key characteristics defining the specificity of television as a media environment.<sup>16</sup> Television consumption occurs in private space, creating a feeling of informality and complete freedom of viewer behavior. The very fact of watching at home models a situation of cognitive comfort: the recipient may adjust the degree of attention, switch channels, reduce the intensity of perception, or combine watching with other activities. This form of "passive participation" produces the impression of natural, effortless communication, where media messages integrate into everyday life without additional effort.

Such a model of interaction with media reality transforms the experience of the mass person: instead of being a participant in events, one becomes their distant observer, gaining visual control over a global panorama. Although the individual remains in an alienated world, media technologies create the illusion of centrality, as if the world exists specifically for the viewer, who seemingly performs a panoramic overview of events while remaining physically passive. This

<sup>15</sup> О. Ю. Павлова. "Візуальна культура та повсякденність доби постмодерну." [Visual culture and everyday life in the postmodern era]. *Культура і сучасність*. 2015. № 2. 30–35.

<sup>16</sup> М. Петрушкевич. "Можливості моделювання релігійної комунікації у мас-медійному середовищі." [Possibilities of modeling religious communication in the mass media environment]. *Українське християнство в цифровому світі: виклики та перспективи*. Острого: Видавництво Національного університету "Острозька академія", 2022. 34.

situation has direct parallels in the sphere of religious communication, particularly during broadcasts of worship services, when the believer “observes” the sacred act, maintaining distance yet experiencing an illusion of participation.

### **Confessional Broadcasting in Ukraine in the Process of Forming Mediatized Models of Religious Communication**

The examination of the dynamics of confessional television broadcasting in the Ukrainian media space requires not only a descriptive analysis but also a religious-studies interpretation of how television channels of various denominations shape specific modes of sacred communication and influence the structuring of the modern believer’s religious self-awareness. Television, as one of the most powerful instruments of mass mediatization, becomes a space where the construction of symbolic worlds occurs, within which religious traditions represent themselves through specific forms of audiovisual semiotics.

Throughout the 2000s–2010s, the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) developed an extensive system of intra-confessional communication, creating television programs, studios, and digital resources that, in its view, were meant to compensate for the insufficiently accurate representation of church-related issues in secular media.<sup>17</sup> This network functioned as an instrument for maintaining confessional identity and establishing an autonomous symbolic space. However, this model proved to have low stability in the context of the Russian–Ukrainian war. The UOC’s public reactions to armed aggression, organizational fragmentation, and the rise of public distrust significantly affected its media infrastructure. As a result, the UOC at the present stage does not possess a nationwide television channel, and most previous television projects have been discontinued or significantly limited. The shift in the informational context was accompanied by the strengthening of state information-security policies and regulatory requirements aimed at preventing external manipulative influences.<sup>18</sup> Under such conditions, the institutionalization of its own television space ceased to meet societal expectations and media-regulation standards. This led to a transformation of the UOC’s communication strategy from centralized television structures to more decentralized digital formats of representation.

<sup>17</sup> Соціальна концепція УПЦ. [Social concept of the UOC]. <https://dobro.church.ua/dokumenti-upc/>

<sup>18</sup> Закон України Про захист конституційного ладу у сфері діяльності релігійних організацій. [Law of Ukraine On the Protection of the Constitutional Order in the Sphere of Activities of Religious Organizations]. *Верховна Рада України*. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3894-20#Text>

The position of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU) regarding the media space forms an open model of religious communication, in which confessional television broadcasting is considered an instrument of catechesis, spiritual support, and public dialogue. In the documents of the OCU, particularly in the 2019 Report of the Primate, emphasis is placed on the need to strengthen the spiritual identity of believers in a post-atheist and mediatized society, where television performs the function of sacred media mediation, ensuring the transmission of coherent theological meanings and countering manipulative informational practices.<sup>19</sup> The OCU's orientation toward social partnership and communication with civil society defines its religious broadcasting as a mechanism of integration into the public sphere and simultaneously an instrument for protecting national and religious identity under conditions of informational challenges. In the context of the Russian–Ukrainian war, the OCU consistently affirms a position of support for Ukrainian statehood, condemnation of aggression, and resistance to disinformation, which points to a well-formed media strategy of the Church.<sup>20</sup> At present, the OCU does not have its own television channel, as its communication strategy is oriented toward digital media as more flexible instruments of religious publicity. Moreover, the establishment of a fully-fledged television channel requires significant institutional and financial resources, which are objectively limited under wartime conditions.

The Roman Catholic Church has developed the most extensive theology of the media among Christian traditions. In the encyclicals of Pope Pius XII “*Miranda Prorsus*” (1957 p.),<sup>21</sup> television appears not as a technical device but as a particular form of spiritual communication capable of shaping new horizons of religious experience. Catholic teaching interprets television as a potential instrument for cultivating moral subjectivity, forming virtues, and fostering spiritual reflection, emphasizing that every informational act carries moral consequences. Thus, television broadcasting is understood as part of a broader ecclesial mission that must correspond to the demands of spiritual authenticity and ethical responsibility. This theology of the media rests on the conviction that visual-communicative technologies can not only convey information but also shape

<sup>19</sup> Доповідь Предстоятеля на Архієрейському Соборі. [The Primate's Report at the Bishops' Council]. *Православна Церква України*. <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/vsi-novyny/dopovid-predstoyatelya-na-arhiyerejskomu-sobori/>

<sup>20</sup> Доповідь Предстоятеля на Архієрейському Соборі 14 липня 2025 р. [The Primate's report at the Bishops' Council on July 14, 2025]. *Православна Церква України*. <https://www.pomisna.info/uk/document-post/dopovid-predstoyatelya-na-arhiyerejskomu-sobori-14-lypnya-2025-r/>

<sup>21</sup> *Miranda Prorsus*. *New Advent*. [https://www.newadvent.org/library/docs\\_pi12mp.htm](https://www.newadvent.org/library/docs_pi12mp.htm)

anthropological modes of perception, creating new forms of inner dialogue between the human being and oneself, the Other, and the transcendent.

Protestant communities, despite the absence of a codified media doctrine, demonstrate exceptional practical effectiveness in the field of religious communication. For them, television is primarily a missionary instrument that allows the proclamation of their teaching not only in the format of preaching but in diverse genre structures (documentaries, personal testimonies, spiritual reflection, family-ethical programs). Protestant media projects are grounded in the paradigm of “active faith,” where religious content becomes a means of personal transformation and inner renewal.<sup>22</sup> Interpreting Protestant media communication in Ukraine, it can be argued that it embodies a model of “existential broadcasting” aimed at transforming the recipient’s inner state and shaping the experience of personal encounter with the Word.

Let us review the specificity of Catholic television broadcasting in Ukraine, where a special place is occupied by the branch of the global network “EWTN” – “*Television of the Eternal Word*,”<sup>23</sup> functioning since 2011. The entry of this channel into the Ukrainian media space marked the emergence of an institutionally coherent religious broadcaster oriented toward a systematic catechetical, spiritual-formational, and cultural-inculturational mission. *EWTN*, founded by Mother Angelica, is viewed globally as an instrument of global sacred communication, where television becomes a means of making the Christian tradition visible in the digital age. This global format was adapted to Ukrainian realities through the efforts of the Catholic Media Center, religious orders, and volunteer communities, transforming the channel into a platform of spiritual service that combines media technological sophistication with pastoral vocation.

The channel’s broadcasting, initially conducted mainly in English and later supplemented with Ukrainian dubbing, targeted a broad audience of various ages. The main corpus of programming represents different models of Catholic spirituality: anthropological-ethical (“*Pure Life*”), biblical-kerygmatic (“*For God So Loved the World*”), mystagogic (“*The Lamb’s Supper*”), family-pastoral (“*Behold the Man*”), musical-catechetical (“*Dana and Friends*”), as well as children’s programs (“*The Good Monk*,” “*We Are Catholics*”).<sup>24</sup> These programs implement a

<sup>22</sup> М. Балаклицький. Українські протестанти і цифрова культура. [Ukrainian Protestants and digital culture]. *Українське християнство в цифровому світі: виклики та перспективи*. Острого: Видавництво Національного університету “Острозька академія”, 2022. 190–191.

<sup>23</sup> Телебачення Віковічного Слова в Україні. [Television of the Eternal Word in Ukraine]. <https://ewtn.org.ua>

<sup>24</sup> Телебачення Віковічного Слова в Україні. [Television of the Eternal Word in Ukraine]. <https://ewtn.org.ua>

multi-level model of religious education, where the television screen functions as a space for spiritual education, prayer, the cultivation of virtues, and engagement with Christian culture.

In both religious and media dimensions, “*Television of the Eternal Word*” forms a holistic model of religious television broadcasting in which the television channel acts as a mediator between traditional catechetical practice and the contemporary digital environment. Its audiovisual nature expands the possibilities of sacred communication, as religious content is presented not only verbally but also through visual-symbolic form, enhancing its impact on the recipient’s spiritual experience. This format fosters the deepening of religious education, the formation of stable conceptions of the Christian tradition, and the creation of conditions for the actualization of spirituality in the everyday media space. In this sense, the channel functions as an instrument of mediatized evangelization, ensuring the accessibility of Catholic teaching to diverse age and social groups and integrating elements of church tradition into contemporary communicative practices.

Since August 2013, “*Zhivе TV*”<sup>25</sup> has been developing in the Ukrainian media space—a social-religious media project of the UGCC, which serves as an instrument of modern sacred communication and as an element of the Church’s presence in digital culture. This format can be viewed as “mediatized mediation” between church tradition and a dynamic informational ecosystem, where audiovisual content performs the functions of both constructing and maintaining religious identity. The use of various communication channels, a web platform, social networks, partner broadcasts, and public screenings demonstrates the Church’s aspiration to integrate sacred discourse into the broader communicative sphere, overcoming the barriers of physical locality and traditional institutional closedness.

In the structure of *Zhivе TV* programming, the defining orientation is toward representing church life through a combination of informational, catechetical, and liturgical formats. Broadcasts of liturgical services, particularly during the pandemic and the full-scale war, shape a special type of distant religious participation. This practice modifies the traditional understanding of sacred participation, opening possibilities for existential involvement in situations where physical presence is impossible. Programs such as “*Open Studio*,” “*Open Conversation*,” “*Zhivе News*,” and the telethon “*The Council Unites All*” create a media space of dialogicality that re-enacts the

<sup>25</sup> Живе телебачення. [Live TV]. <https://zhyve.tv>

principles of ecclesial conciliar thought within digital communication.<sup>26</sup> The interactivity of the channel, emphasized by its leadership, contributes to the formation of horizontal models of religious communication, where the audience becomes not only a consumer but also a co-creator of sacred discourse.

The *Apostol* television studio, established in 2008 in Ivano-Frankivsk, supplements the Greek-Catholic media landscape by producing content that synthesizes religious education, moral-ethical reflection, and socially oriented themes.<sup>27</sup> The studio's programs "*Signs of the Times*," "*Living Faith*," and its documentary films demonstrate an attempt to highlight the relationship between church teaching and contemporary social challenges. The channel's broadcasts acquired special significance during the Revolution of Dignity, the coronavirus pandemic, and the Russian–Ukrainian war, highlighting the ability of religious television to act as an instrument of spiritual mobilization and support in times of crisis.<sup>28</sup> The thematic spectrum of programs covers issues of religious anthropology, Christian ethics, social responsibility, and practices of spiritual self-improvement, reflecting the Church's awareness of the role of media in shaping contemporary religious thought. Owing to the combination of local television broadcasting and digital platforms, the studio's content receives wider distribution, enhancing its influence on the formation of religious culture and the media-religious experience of believers.

The Protestant segment of religious television broadcasting in Ukraine represents an extensive confessional network that, in scale and content diversity, is not inferior to other Christian traditions. At the center of this system is the satellite channel *Nadiya*<sup>29</sup> – the Ukrainian branch of the global *Hope Channel* network, which operates in more than 90 countries and constitutes a transnational space of Protestant media communication. The Ukrainian version of the channel, formed in the early 2000s, gradually evolved into a 24-hour educational-evangelistic resource

<sup>26</sup> Т. М. Пархонюк. Релігійне телебачення в Україні: еволюція та перспективи. [Religious television in Ukraine: evolution and prospects]. *Наукові записки Національного університету "Острозька академія". Серія: Релігієзнавство*. 2016. Вип. 1. 51.

<sup>27</sup> Н. Гадьо. Історія становлення та сучасний стан системи католицьких медій України. [History of the formation and current state of the Catholic media system in Ukraine]. *Вісник Львівського університету. Серія Журналістика*. 2018. Випуск 43. 51.

<sup>28</sup> 10 років "Живого телебачення": проповідь Блаженнішого Святослава у десяту неділю після Зіслання Святого Духа. [10 years of "Live Television": sermon of His Beatitude Sviatoslav on the tenth Sunday after the Descent of the Holy Spirit]. *Синод єпископів Української Греко-Католицької Церкви*. <https://synod.ugcc.ua/data/10-rokiv-zhyvogo-telebachennya-propovid-blazhennishogo-svyatoslava-u-desyatu-nedilyu-pislyya-zislannya-svyatogo-duha-12839/>

<sup>29</sup> Телеканал Надія. [Nadiya TV channel]. <https://tv.hope.ua>

created by a large team of technical specialists, theologians, editors, and volunteers.<sup>30</sup> From a media-religious studies perspective, *Nadiya* functions not only as a broadcasting instrument but also as a platform for the development of contemporary forms of Protestant public theology.

The channel's initial content developed around preaching programs, Bible studios, and catechetical projects aimed at cultivating the audience's spiritual competence, restoring the practice of personal Scripture reading, and fostering the construction of individual religious experience in the media environment. Since 2012, after receiving an official license, *Nadiya* expanded to national-level satellite broadcasting and digital platforms, broadening channels of cultural-religious communication and creating an integrated media space accessible through the website, apps, and partner television networks. Significant milestones included participation in major socio-religious events – broadcasts of Nick Vujicic's speech (2016) and the nationwide Thanksgiving Celebration for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation (2017),<sup>31</sup> which marked the channel's emergence as an instrument of public representation of Protestant tradition.

The programming grid of the *Nadiya* television channel is distinguished by considerable thematic breadth and structural coherence, covering Ukrainian-language content and forming a multidimensional space of confessional media communication. The spiritual-educational programs (“Tak promovlyaye Bibliya,” “Bibliya prodovzhuye hovoryty,” “Svyatylyshche,” “Ranok Nadiyi,” “Bibliya yak vona ye,” “V poshukakh istyny,” “Khlib shchodenniy,” “Proroky hovoryat,” “Prorotstva zbyvayutsya”)<sup>32</sup> perform the function of popular biblical hermeneutics, contributing to the formation of religious competence and supporting the practice of individual spiritual reading. The informational block is represented by the program “Visti nadiyi,” which provides the audience with up-to-date news of confessional life and forms a Protestant view of social dynamics. A significant role is played by children's and youth content (“V hostyakh u Dobryachka,” “Druzhbolandiya,” “Pospilkuyemosya,” “Nastav chas”), which fulfills the tasks of religious socialization and media pedagogy by offering morally oriented behavioral models. Family-oriented programs (“Vykhid poruch,” “Spasenni,” “Vasha dumka,” “Po tu storonu pryhod,” “Ochyma zhinky,” “Insha storona”) integrate Christian ethical values into everyday experience, while

<sup>30</sup> Телеканал “Надія”: як все починалось. [Nadiya TV channel: how it all began]. *Телеканал Надія*. <https://tv.hope.ua/telekanal-nadiia-iak-vse-pochynalos/>

<sup>31</sup> У Києві протестанти України відсвяткували 500-річчя реформації. [Ukrainian Protestants celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in Kyiv]. *TBN Україна*. <https://tbn-ua.org/news/u-kyievi-protestanty-ukrainy-vidsviatkuvaly-500-richchia-reformatsii/>

<sup>32</sup> Телеканал Надія. [Nadiya TV channel]. <https://tv.hope.ua>

creative formats (“Muzychna skrynka,” “Malyuvaky”) reveal the aesthetic dimension of religious culture.

Through the combination of catechetical, social-communicative, and educational content, the channel creates conditions for a deeper assimilation of biblical teaching, immersion into various forms of spiritual experience, and participation in a wide range of Christian social practices. The high production quality and the consistency of programming policy make *Nadiya* one of the most influential and successful religious media resources of contemporary Ukraine, forming its own type of sacred media space and contributing to the strengthening of Protestant religious identity.

The *Novomedia* Association,<sup>33</sup> representing one of the most active Protestant media directions in Ukraine, emerged as an international journalistic community intended to integrate Christian media professionals of various denominations into a unified professional-value space. Founded in 2004, it includes around 500 participants involved in both secular and religious media, and functions as a platform for shaping a modern Christian media culture. Its activity is aimed at developing balanced models of information interaction in which the ethical foundations of the Protestant tradition are combined with the requirements of the contemporary media environment and the needs of social communication.<sup>34</sup>

Within its communicative mission, the Association acts as an intermediary between churches and the media industry, helping to eliminate confrontation between religious institutions and the journalistic environment. This function includes supporting churches in establishing their own information departments, implementing educational programs in media literacy and public relations, consulting church media, and fostering constructive dialogue with secular editorial offices.<sup>35</sup> As a result, religious communities gain the ability to present their values more effectively in the information sphere, while journalists can cover religious issues impartially, avoiding simplifications, stereotypes, and confessional distortions.

The activity of *Novomedia* also has a distinct media-theological dimension. The organization views media as a space for forming moral sensitivity, responsibility for public speech, and the development of Christian communicative ethics. Hence its emphasis on producing audiovisual content aimed at promoting biblical values, as well as on supporting journalists

<sup>33</sup> Асоціація журналістів “Новомедіа”. [Association of Journalists “Novomedia”]. <https://novomedia.ua>

<sup>34</sup> Вплив євангельських християн на медіа та комунікації. [The influence of evangelical Christians on media and communications]. *Поклик*. <https://poklik.org/vplyv-yevangelskyh-hrystyyan-na-media-ta-komunikatsiyi/>

<sup>35</sup> Асоціація журналістів “Новомедіа”. [Association of Journalists “Novomedia”]. <https://novomedia.ua>

working in the confessional segment. The methodological and creative assistance the Association provides to media professionals and church information structures makes it possible to expand the presence of religious communities in the digital environment without losing their identity and spiritual authenticity.

In parallel, the Association maintains active dialogue with state institutions by participating in public councils and discussions of normative acts regulating the media sphere. This interaction aims to prevent the emergence of legal norms that could contradict the ethical principles of Christian traditions or lead to restrictions on the freedom of religious communication. Expanding its social contacts, the organization cooperates with educational institutions, cultural organizations, foundations, and NGOs, fostering the development of responsible media culture and the establishment of Christian moral orientations in the public sphere.

A special place in the work of *Novomedia* belongs to large-scale educational and communicative projects that shape the professional ecosystem of Christian media professionals. Annual conferences and the International Novomedia Forum<sup>36</sup> function as spaces for professional exchange, training, and the development of communication strategies aimed at improving the quality of religious media content. The peculiarity of these events lies in the combination of journalistic skills, theological analysis, and reflection on the contemporary challenges of the information society.

Within the *Novomedia Awards*<sup>37</sup> project, monitoring of publications covering religious topics is carried out, and media professionals demonstrating a high level of professional responsibility in presenting sacred meanings are recognized. The *Christianity Online* project develops new approaches to the digital presence of churches and promotes the development of Internet journalism oriented toward religious issues. Educational courses, including in television production, IT, print media, and PR, create an institutional foundation for forming a generation of media professionals capable of working at the intersection of religious and secular discourse. An important direction of activity is the *Medialand* project, aimed at developing a safe and ethically responsible media environment for children and youth. It combines educational programs, festivals, and meetings that cultivate a culture of responsible information consumption and thoughtful use of digital technologies.

<sup>36</sup> Новомедіа Форум. [Novomedia Forum]. <https://novomediaforum.org/about/>

<sup>37</sup> Novomedia Awards. <https://novomediaforum.org/session/novomedia-awards/>

Confessional television broadcasting within the Protestant tradition is distinguished by a particular structure that combines global transnational media networks, local studios, and institutions operating at the intersection of religious education, cultural adaptation, and social interaction. In this context, the analysis of the “CNL,” “CBN,” and the media initiatives of the *Emmanuel* Association makes it possible to identify their role in constructing the Protestant media space, the specific features of their content, and the mechanisms through which they influence the religious identity and communicative practices of believers.

The *CNL*<sup>38</sup> telecommunication network occupies one of the leading positions in the global confessional television space, as its broadcasting reaches most countries of the world and is duplicated in open access via the Internet. Founded in 2000 by Pastor M. Maksymov, it addresses audiences in Central Asia, North Africa, North and South America, and Europe, forming a supranational informational-religious segment. The media strategy of *CNL* is oriented toward spreading Christian teaching through a format of positive, emotionally accessible, and educational broadcasting that combines elements of spiritual pedagogy, popularizing theology, and socially oriented communication. Its core content includes scientific-educational, catechetical, children’s, and informational programs aimed at strengthening religious identity and fostering morally ethical behavior in viewers.

One of the network’s strategic goals is the development of multilingual broadcasting, which enabled the creation in 2007 of a separate *CNL-Ukraine* editorial office that broadcasts programs in Ukrainian.<sup>39</sup> Among the most well-known programs of this channel are “Slovo Pastora,” “Uroky z zhyttya Martina Lyutera,” “Shlyakh Hospodnya,” “Tvoye zhyttya,” “Podorozh po Bibliyi,” “Syla viry,” “Holos Izrayilyu,” “Holos peremohy,” “Dukhovna zaryadka dlya ditey,” “Zhyttya, spovnene radisty,” “Ruka dopomohy,” and others, which create a wide range of thematic formats from biblical studies to social-psychological support.

In the Ukrainian religious media space, an important place is also occupied by the *CBN* (Christian Broadcasting Network) television company, whose part is the *Emmanuel* Association.<sup>40</sup> Its activity combines charitable, social, and media-educational initiatives aimed at supporting orphans, people with disabilities, and socially vulnerable groups, as well as spreading evangelical values through television and digital platforms. The organization actively develops partnerships

<sup>38</sup> Телеканал CNL Україна. [CNL Ukraine TV channel]. <https://youtv.ua/uk/tv/cnl/>

<sup>39</sup> CNL Україна. [CNL Ukraine]. *Ланет.TV*. <https://lanet.tv/channels/cnl/>

<sup>40</sup> CBN Україна. [CBN Ukraine]. <https://emmanuil.cbn.org>

with religious, civic, educational, and state institutions, enabling it to operate at the intersection of social ministry and religious communication.

The *Emmanuel* television studio is one of the most powerful producers of Christian video content in Ukraine, offering a complex of multimedia formats—the programs “H2O,” “Budynok zhyvykh istoriy,” “Klub Superknyhy,” “Viddzerkalennya,” “Vybyray,” as well as an extensive library of children’s animated series (“Superknyha,” “Litayuchy budynok,” “Pryhody Spanki,” “Ty osoblyvyy,” “Khranyteli istoriyi”).<sup>41</sup> The studio offers informational, musical, educational, and spiritual-pedagogical media products that cover both family and youth audiences, forming a coherent religious-media space.

An important direction of activity is the *Club Life*<sup>42</sup> television project, a multimedia platform of the *Emmanuel* Association oriented toward supporting viewers in the spheres of spiritual growth, family relationships, health, finances, and self-realization. The program has a distinct communicative-psychological format: through a hotline, viewers can receive emotional and consultative support, and through social media they can engage in discussions and thematic communities. Such interactivity strengthens the Protestant media emphasis on personal experience, life testimonies, and the practical application of faith in everyday life.

Overall, the activity of Protestant television channels demonstrates the formation of an extensive Protestant media sphere in Ukraine, combining global networks, local studios, and socially oriented projects. They develop a specific model of sacred communication in which religious content functions not only as a tool of evangelization but also as a means of social support, cultural integration, and the formation of the believer’s spiritual subjectivity in the contemporary media environment.

### **Interaction of Religious Institutions and State Structures in the Field of Media Communication under Contemporary Social Transformations**

In modern Ukrainian society that is under the state of intensive informational transformations and armed aggression, the media sphere has become one of the key fields of interaction between the state, civil society, and religious organizations. The media space increasingly influences the formation of worldview orientations, spiritual and cultural narratives,

<sup>41</sup> CBN Emmanuel. <https://emmanuel.cbn.org>

<sup>42</sup> Клуб Life. [Club Life]. *Youtube*. [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEDojdO\\_f-YbdkM38zgt1FjZyTqIBPzJh](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLEDojdO_f-YbdkM38zgt1FjZyTqIBPzJh)

and social cohesion. Consequently, religious institutions, which traditionally perform functions of moral, spiritual, and communicative mediation, are becoming important actors in information security and public dialogue.

Cooperation between state authorities and religious communities in the media field today is acquiring strategic significance. On one hand, it is aimed at protecting society from destructive informational influences, including religious manipulation, hate speech, and propaganda from an aggressor state; on the other hand, it ensures the rights of believers to freedom of conscience, access to quality spiritual content, and the participation of religious organizations in shaping a healthy media environment.

In this context, interfaith structures, particularly the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations (AUCCRO), act as important partners of state media regulators, as they can consolidate the positions of various religious traditions and ensure representation of the spiritual dimension of social life in the informational space. Such interaction not only promotes the democratization of the communicative field but also strengthens the informational resilience of society, as religious institutions enjoy high legitimacy and significant trust capital among citizens.

The adoption of the Law of Ukraine “On Media”<sup>43</sup> on December 13, 2022, was a key step in harmonizing national audiovisual legislation with European norms and Council of Europe standards. The document was developed taking into account the requirements of the EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive and is intended to reorient the media sphere toward modern communication models that correspond to the level of digital development and the informational challenges of wartime. The law ensures the unification of operating conditions for all types of media, strengthens institutional oversight, and concentrates regulatory powers within a single institution, which is expected to enhance the state’s information security and the quality of the media environment. Its development was carried out by a working group composed of representatives of the regulator, the media industry, and public organizations, with the participation of international experts, ensuring compliance with European approaches and standards of democratic governance in the media sphere.

The “On Media” law replaces a number of outdated regulatory acts (“On Television and Radio Broadcasting,” “On the National Council,” “On the Press,” “On Information Agencies,” etc.)

<sup>43</sup> Закон України “Про медіа”. [Law of Ukraine “On Media”]. *Верховна Рада України*. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2849-20#Text>

and proposes a comprehensive model of legal regulation. At the center of the document are provisions for freedom of expression, transparency and impartiality of media processes, ensuring citizens' access to reliable and diverse information, and establishing pluralism of opinions. The law aims to create a competitive media environment in which the equality of subjects is ensured and the interests of the audience and the state are protected.

A special place in the legislation is devoted to regulating media activity in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The law sets restrictions on the dissemination of information that could be used by the aggressor state for manipulation, including prohibiting the framing of Russian aggression as an internal conflict, spreading materials that incite hatred or support violent calls, and distributing false information about the actions of the aggressor state. These provisions are in effect from the moment a country is recognized as an aggressor and for at least five years after the revocation of that status.

An important component of the law's preparation was the active participation of the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations. The religious community submitted a number of proposals to the draft law, highlighting risks related to potential restrictions on freedom of conscience and the need for clear guarantees of protection of religious rights in the media space. AUCCRO initiated discussions on controversial provisions with the parliamentary committee, emphasizing the importance of a balanced approach between security tasks and ensuring freedom of religious communication.<sup>44</sup>

Deepened cooperation between AUCCRO and the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting became one of the key directions in countering Russian disinformation on religious topics. In March 2023, the National Council appealed to the Council of Churches with a call to publicly condemn manifestations of Russian propaganda, as an interfaith position carries significant weight both domestically and internationally.<sup>45</sup> To systematize cooperation, a memorandum was prepared outlining mechanisms of interaction and directions of joint activity.

<sup>44</sup> Рада розглядатиме законопроект "Про медіа". Чи будуть враховані зауваження представників Церкви? [The Council will consider the draft law "On Media." Will the comments of Church representatives be taken into account?]. *CREDO Україна*. <https://credo.pro/2020/05/264907>

<sup>45</sup> ВРЦіРО та Національна рада з питань телебачення домовилися про спільну системну роботу. [AUCCRO and the National Television Council agreed on joint systematic work]. *Українська Греко-Католицька Церква*. <https://ugcc.ua/data/vrtsiro-ta-natsionalna-rada-z-pytan-telebachennya-domovylysya-pro-spilnu-systemnu-robotu-2461/>

On May 23, 2023, the Chairperson of the National Council, Olga Herasymiuk, and the Chairperson of AUCCRO, Bishop Vyacheslav Horpynchuk of the Ukrainian Lutheran Church, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation, which laid the foundation for joint efforts to counter hate speech, disinformation, and religious manipulation in the media space. The document envisages the joint development of criteria for unacceptable content, participation in drafting recommendations for media, support for programs dedicated to interfaith relations, freedom of conscience, and the spiritual life of society. Significant attention is also paid to developing media literacy in the religious sphere and fostering critical thinking.<sup>46</sup>

Within the framework of the Memorandum, educational and communication activities, seminars, webinars, and training programs dedicated to freedom of conscience, informational hygiene, and ethics in religious reporting are implemented. This contributes to the formation of a responsible media culture, in which religious institutions not only respond to disinformation challenges but also become active agents of informational resilience.

On November 18, 2025, another meeting of AUCCRO with the leadership of the National Council took place, attended by representatives of Ukraine's main confessions and members of the regulator.<sup>47</sup> The central topic of discussion was the need to strengthen communication for more effective implementation of the Memorandum, as well as a critical reflection on the fact that the activities of religious communities are often presented in the media through a narrow spectrum of primarily festive or conflict-oriented topics. Participants emphasized the need for broader representation of interfaith dialogue, chaplaincy, volunteer activity, and other forms of spiritual participation in social life during the war.

The Chairperson of the National Council emphasized that the regulator does not interfere in editorial policies of media but is ready to facilitate direct dialogue between the journalistic community and religious institutions, particularly regarding the prevention of content that may incite hostility or discrimination based on religious, confessional, or worldview grounds. In

<sup>46</sup> Медіарегулятор підписав Меморандум про співпрацю з Всеукраїнською Радою Церков і релігійних організацій. [The media regulator signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations]. *Всеукраїнська Рада Церков і релігійних організацій*. <https://vrciro.org.ua/ua/news/mediaregulyator-pidpisav-memorandum-pro-spivpratsyu-z-vseukrainskoyu-radoyu-tserkov-i-religiynikh-organizatsiy>

<sup>47</sup> Українська релігійна адвокація у світі набирає сили: медіарегулятор і Всеукраїнська рада церков узгодили спільні кроки. [Ukrainian religious advocacy in the world is gaining strength: the media regulator and the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches agreed on joint steps]. *Національна рада України з питань телебачення і радіомовлення*. <https://webportal.nrada.gov.ua/ukrayinska-religijna-advokatsiya-u-sviti-nabyraye-syly-mediaregulyator-i-vseukrayinska-rada-tserkov-uzgodily-spilni-kroky/>

conclusion, the parties agreed to deepen cooperation and operational communication to preserve the informational resilience of society and counter disinformation during the war.

## **Conclusions**

Research on the development of religious communication in the Ukrainian television environment shows that modern mediatization of religiosity forms new models of symbolic interaction, in which audiovisual formats become one of the main channels for constructing spiritual experience and sacred meanings. Television functions as a multi-level communicative system capable of forming alternative modes of perception, supporting emotional-existential engagement, and creating the effect of “media presence,” which transforms traditional forms of religious life. Religious broadcasting of various traditions demonstrates its own theological and communicative strategies, but a common trend is the effort to meaningfully use media as a space for catechesis, spiritual support, social interaction, and public dialogue. The audiovisual format allows religious institutions to reproduce sacred symbolism in a new cultural context, adapt theological meanings to the conditions of digital culture, and expand their audience beyond institutional participation.

Analysis of religious TV channels shows that they not only broadcast theological content but also produce new models of spiritual communication: interactive, educational, family-oriented, children’s, and educational. Therefore, denominational television has become a platform for identity formation, a mechanism for moral guidance, and a resource of support in crisis situations, including war and social transformations. Of special importance are the activities of interfaith and Christian media associations which contribute to the professionalization of religious media projects, the development of journalistic culture, the formation of ethical standards, and the consolidation of religious communities in the media space. Their work demonstrates that the religious media sphere is not merely a collection of TV channels but an institutional ecosystem uniting communication, education, social service, and cultural production. An important factor is also the growing interaction between the religious environment and state structures in the field of information policy and media regulation. Joint initiatives aimed at countering disinformation, developing media literacy, and establishing ethical principles for covering religious topics indicate the formation of a new type of state-confessional communication oriented toward information security and support for the spiritual resilience of society.

**\*The authors confirm that no AI tools were used in the preparation of this article.**

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