

International Conference

RELIGION AND WAR IN UKRAINE

The Political,
the Public, and
the Possible

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Session: Reacting to the Experience of War

1:30PM MST, March 15, 2024

Celebrating Christmas as a political act: Church calendrical reform in Ukraine

Oleg Kyselov, Senior Research Scientist at the H.S. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy of Ukraine's National Academy of Sciences

The paper discusses the problem of Ukrainian churches switching from the Julian to the Gregorian and New Julian Gregorian church calendars, which means moving the celebration of Christmas from January 7 to December 24. The paper's analysis shows that the arguments made by supporters of the transition are predominantly political rather than religious. These arguments justify, first of all, the opposition of Ukrainian society to the Russian one, emphasizing Ukrainians as a part of European nations. The paper also examines the arguments that followed the laws of 2017 and 2023 that added Christmas on December 25 to the list of official state holidays and removed Christmas on January 7 from the same list, respectively. The analysis of public discussions and reactions to the change suggests that the date of Christmas has become more of a political issue than a religious one. Amidst war, religious problems are resolved in the context of national interests and in an instrumentalist way.

Oleg Kyselov is a senior research scientist at the H.S. Skovoroda Institute of Philosophy of Ukraine's National Academy of Sciences. He received his PhD in religious studies from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. His main interests include the sociology of religion, interfaith relations, and the history of religious studies. He is the author of *Fenomen ekumenizmu v suchasnomu khrystyanstvi* (Phenomenon of Ecumenism in Modern Christianity, 2009). He was one of the founders of the NGO Workshop for the Academic Study of Religion. He is the editor-in-chief of the annual journal *Relihieznavchi narysy* (Essays on Religious Studies). He was a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Alabama in the USA in 2021-22 and remains there in the Department of Religious Studies as an Instructor.