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AXIOLOGICAL VOCABULARY OF ORTHODOXY IN UKRAINIAN MEDIA DISCOURSE

The article proposes expanding and deepening the approach to the systematisation of Christian values by analysing their lexical embodiment in the Orthodox media discourse of Ukraine. The starting point is the multidimensional classification of Christian values (by biblical source, spheres of life, theological accents, virtues, social influence and historical traditions), which allows us to move from theological normativity to the description of linguistic markers of evaluation and identity in the mass media space.

The theoretical contribution of the article is to specify the concept of the axiological thesaurus of Orthodoxy as a system of lexical and semantic fields that are regularly activated in Ukrainian church and near-church media texts: deontological (commandment, law, sin, repentance), agape (love, mercy, service), pneumatological (Spirit, grace, fruit of the Spirit), aleteiological (truth, truth, testimony), ecclesiological (unity, conciliarity, autocephaly, canonicity), doxological (prayer, worship, holiness) and the field of peace–justice–defense (peace, justice, aggression, victory, "just peace"). The concept of "value" in the article is not understood as an abstract ethical list but as a linguistic resource for public argumentation that, at the same time, sets the moral framework for events, constructs church/civic belonging, and performs legitimising and polemical functions.

Methodologically, the study combines axiological pragmatics and theories of evaluation, in particular ideas about the systemic organisation of linguistic means of assessment; a mediatization perspective that explains how digital media change the regimes of religious authority and communication; and elements of critical discourse analysis to describe the framework of legitimation and oppositions of "ours/alien". It is shown that in conditions of war and acute inter-church discussions, axiological vocabulary acquires greater density and sensitivity: it can be both a resource for solidarity and pastoral support and a tool for "moral labelling" of the opponent through labels and ideologemes.

Key words: axiological vocabulary, axiological discourse, Orthodoxy, media discourse, values, conciliarity, truth/truth, peace/justice, autocephaly, canonicity.

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АКСІОЛОГІЧНА ЛЕКСИКА ПРАВОСЛАВ'Я В УКРАЇНСЬКОМУ МЕДІАДИСКУРСІ

Стаття пропонує розширення та поглиблення підходу до систематизації християнських цінностей через аналіз їх лексичного втілення у православному медіадискурсі України. Вихідною рамкою є багатовимірна класифікація християнських цінностей (за біблійним джерелом, сферами життя, богословськими акцентами, чеснотами, суспільним впливом та історичними традиціями), що дозволяє переходити від богословської нормативності до опису мовних маркерів оцінювання та ідентичності у масмедійному просторі.

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Теоретичний внесок статті полягає в конкретизації поняття аксіологічного тезауруса православ'я як системи лексико-семантичних полів, які регулярно активуються в українських церковних і навколоцерковних медіатекстах: деонтологічного (заповідь, закон, гріх, покаяння), агапейного (любов, милосердя, служіння), пневматологічного (Дух, благодать, плід Духа), алетейологічного (правда, істина, свідчення), екклезіологічного (єдність, соборність, автокефалія, канонічність), доксологічного (молитва, богослужіння, святість) та поля миру–справедливості–захисту (мир, справедливість, агресія, перемога, «справедливий мир»). Концепт «цінності» в статті розглядається не як абстрактний етичний перелік, а як мовний ресурс публічної аргументації, що водночас задає моральні рамки подій, конструює церковну/громадянську належність і виконує легітимаційно-полемічні функції.

Методологічно дослідження поєднує аксіологічну прагмалінгвістику та теорії оцінювання, зокрема ідеї про системну організацію мовних засобів оцінювання; медіатизаційну перспективу, що пояснює, як цифрові медіа змінюють режими релігійного авторитету та комунікації; елементи критичного дискурс-аналізу для опису рамок легітимації та опозицій «свій/чужий». Показано, що в умовах війни та гострих міжцерковних дискусій аксіологічна лексика набуває підвищеної щільності й чутливості: вона здатна бути як ресурсом солідаризації та пастирської підтримки, так і інструментом «морального маркування» опонента через ярлики та ідеологеми.

Ключові слова: аксіологічна лексика, аксіологічний дискурс, православ'я, медіадискурс, цінності, соборність, істина/правда, мир/справедливість, автокефалія, канонічність.

Introduction. The Ukrainian public space of the last decade is not only a space of political transformations and security crises, but also of intensive value communication, in which religious actors serve as producers of moral frameworks, symbolic classifications, and linguistic interpretations of events. In such an environment, Orthodox churches and their associated information platforms become prominent participants in public debate: they simultaneously explain events in the language of faith, defend institutional legitimacy, and respond to the "media logic" of speed, competition, and polarisation.

The article considers values not as an abstract list, but as a vocabulary of evaluation – words and stable compounds that in media texts serve as moral prescriptions, legitimation, demarcation of «friends/strangers» and mobilisation for action. In a conflict context, they also exacerbate the competition of frames (for example, «peace» as de-escalation vs. «justice/defence» as the right to defence) and increase sensitivity to markers such as «truth», «evil», «aggression», «victory», «just peace».

Methodological Approach. The theoretical basis is provided by "language of evaluation" approaches, which treat evaluation as a systemic resource for argumentation and social interaction, rather than as a mere emotion (Martin & White, 2005). In the media environment, evaluation is reinforced by the logic of news and public competition, and in religious texts by an appeal to sacred authority.

In Ukrainian religious media discourse, it is essential to consider the mechanisms of manipulation: discredit can be built through labels, the substitution of concepts, mythologemes, and polarisation of the "black-and-white" type (Levko, 2018). In such conditions, axiological vocabulary easily turns into a "moral weapon," when words are used to judge and exclude rather than describe.

The perspective of mediatization of religion emphasises that media not only transmit religious content, but also restructure the logic of communication, the visibility of actors, and the formats of authority (Hjarvard, 2016). Ukrainian research shows that the "new media" of Christian denominations (social media, online broadcasts, digital intra-church communication) stimulate new models of public rhetoric (Fylypchuk, 2018). In the digital environment, religious authority becomes more contested and increasingly dependent on competing narratives (Giorgi, 2019).

The article's analytical framework is critical discourse analysis, which focuses on the connections between language, power, and ideology. In conflict topics, it is essential to analyse how frames of legitimation and boundaries of community are created through the oppositions «us/them» (van Dijk, 2015). In Orthodox media discourse, this allows us to describe how terms such as "canonicality", "unity", "conciliarity", and ideologemes such as "Russian world" form a symbolic map of belonging (Levko, 2018).

The normative basis is set by the documents of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Holy and Great Council (Crete, 2016), which offer a "canonical dictionary" of value orientations (love, peace, justice, reconciliation, unity/

conciliarity). Also important is the document "For the Life of the World: Towards a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church" (Ekumenical Patriarchate, 2020), where the anthropological and socio-ethical horizon is systematically outlined (the dignity of the person as the image of God, responsibility for justice and peace as a socially significant «work of transformation»).

The analysis methodology includes three steps: axiological modeling of lexical-semantic fields based on the classification of Christian values (Skladan, 2025); discourse analysis of the framework of legitimation, oppositions "one's own/alien" and argumentative schemes, which explains the variability of the functions of the exact words ("peace", "unity", "canonicality", "truth"); analysis of evaluative markers in the logic of the systemic description of evaluativeness (Martin & White, 2005).

Results. The systematisation of Christian values is fundamentally important because it demonstrates that values are not one-dimensional «moral theses» but form a network of criteria: source of value, scope of application, theological emphasis, virtue, social dimension, and tradition. Within the framework of this classification, deontological values (Decalogue), ethical maxims (Sermon on the Mount), agape (love of God and neighbour) and pneumatological (fruits of the Spirit) are separately distinguished according to the Biblical basis. According to the spheres of life, mystical, normative, communitarian and domestic values are distinguished; according to theological emphasis – ontological (imitation of Christ), teleological (eschatological hope) and ecclesiological (unity of the Church, catholicity). Notably, the classification also introduces «social» blocks of values (pacifist, ecotheological, aleteiological – truth/transparency-oriented) and at the same time emphasises the specificity of Orthodoxy through doxological values (liturgical life, icon veneration) (Skladan, 2025).

Transferring this systematisation to the realm of religious studies media linguistics means that each of the listed blocks can be expanded as a lexical-semantic field, where lexemes act as markers of evaluation, legitimation, and identity.

In Orthodox media discourse, the deontological field is most often activated when events require a moral "code" to distinguish between what is proper/improper. Lexemes such as "commandment," "law," "sin," "repentance," and "responsibility" set the language of prescription and constitute what, in public communication, can be called the "ethical minimum." The biblical basis in the thesaurus serves as a resource for universalisation, when the church word seeks to be heard not only "within" the community but also in the broader society.

In the media dimension, deontological vocabulary has a double effect. On the one hand, it can stabilise the discussion, shifting it from a "political dispute" to the plane of basic moral norms. On the other hand, under conditions of polarisation, it can become a tool of sanction and delegitimisation, mainly when the terms "sin", "treason", and "enemy" are used in the field of political identities. Linguistic studies of manipulative strategies in the interfaith segment show that "moral labelling" is often supported by labels and mythologemes that carry a strong emotional charge and simplify complex realities into black-and-white schemes (Levko, 2018).

The centre of the agape field is the vocabulary of «love», «mercy», «compassion», «service», and «sacrifice»–words that refer to the core of the evangelical ethic of love of neighbour. In the document «For the Life of the World», this horizon is described as a call to loving communion, in which love of God is inseparable from love of neighbour and the world, and Christian action must grow out of this connection (Ekumenical Patriarchate, 2020). Such formulations legitimise a wide range of solidarity-oriented media practices: charity gatherings, volunteer initiatives, and pastoral appeals to support victims.

In media communication, Agape vocabulary often performs a "soft" integrative function, creating a common moral space even across different groups, because mercy and help are less contentious than jurisdictional debates. At the same time, in a situation of war, the agape field itself can be strained by the dilemma between compassion and justice, where the call for mercy must be correlated with the distinction between aggression and sacrifice, with the language of protection and truth, which leads us to another node of the thesaurus (OCU, 2022).

The pneumatological field (Spirit, grace, gift, "fruit of the Spirit") in the systematisation of values is described as the inner-spiritual basis of Christian ethics and the inner harmony of the believer. In media discourse, this field is often activated

in the genre of pastoral speech, where social upheavals are interpreted as tests and resilience is explained not only by psychological resources but also by spiritual support. The high "therapeuticity" of pneumatological vocabulary is evident in crisis communications: it provides a framework for endurance, long-suffering, hope, and turning to prayer. For the analysis of Orthodox media discourse, this means that pneumatological vocabulary serves not only a theological function but also a socio-communicative one–to support, reassure, and give meaning to endurance.

The proposed systematisation separately highlights aleteiological values (ἀλήθεια, orientation on truth, honesty, transparency), related to the biblical prohibition of false testimony and to ethical standards of public communication. For war and information confrontation, this field becomes central: «truth» in media discourse is simultaneously a moral category, a marker of trust, and a resource for legitimising a position.

It is indicative of the OCU's appeals that they use "truth" as an argument for resilience: in the appeal regarding the attack on Ukraine, it is emphasised that "the truth is on our side", and therefore the aggressor will be defeated with God's help and the support of the world. (OCU, 2022) Here, "truth" performs three functions at once: it evaluates the event (aggression is evil), constructs moral superiority ("our side"), and creates a horizon of hope (truth ultimately "wins"). In prayer texts, the combination of "the victory of truth" with "a just peace" transforms the alethiological field into a zone of sacralized political hope: the prayer asks God to "grant victory and a just peace."

At the same time, the aleteiological field also carries risks: in media polemics, the appeal to "truth" can become a "seal of legitimation" that cuts off dialogue. This is why research into professional standards for covering religious topics in wartime is essential. In monitoring Ukrainian and Italian media coverage of conflicts around Orthodox jurisdictions, it is emphasised that Ukrainian media generally strived for balance and objectivity, although violations of standards occurred (Zhelihovska & Gmyria, 2023). This creates an external frame that shapes how church "truths" enter the broader media space.

The ecclesiological field in Ukrainian Orthodox media discourse is among the most contentious, as it is directly related to issues of structure, legitimacy, and "community boundaries." In the systematisation of values, ecclesiological values are described as the unity of the Church, participation in the sacraments, spiritual authority, and conciliarity. The conciliar documents (Kryt, 2016) emphasise that the priority is the proclamation of the unity of the Orthodox Church, and conciliarity determines its organisation and the method of decision-making.

In the media space, the ecclesiological field is expressed through the words "unity", "conciliarity", "locality", "autocephaly", "canonicality", and related terms. Works on cognitive linguistics and rhetoric show that during the public discussion on the granting of the Tomos and autocephaly, it was precisely the church- legal terms that were previously unclear to a broad audience that began to circulate actively in the media and acquired axiological connotations, turning into "axiologemes" and "anti-axiologemes". The assessment of these processes in media texts is primarily based on metaphors (for example, "relationship–war", "decision–treatment/diagnosis", "game", "crime") and on geographical metonymies, when institutions are named after places ("Phanar", "Kremlin", etc.) (Levko, 2018).

In analysing Orthodox media discourse, this means that ecclesiological vocabulary is rarely neutral. It "switches" between two modes. In the first mode (constructive), "unity" and "conciliarity" are positive ideals of church existence. In the second (polemical), the exact words become markers of demarcation: "canonicality" begins to function as a label, and "unity" as a rhetorical argument against an opponent. The mechanisms of such a transition are well consistent with the manipulative techniques described in the studies, primarily the application of labels and the substitution of concepts in interfaith discourse (Levko, 2018).

The specificity of Orthodox discourse is especially evident in the doxological field, which, in the systematisation of values, is described as liturgical life and icon veneration (doxological values of Orthodoxy). In the media space, the doxological field is activated through the words «prayer», «liturgy», «prayer service», «holiness», «sanctity», and «fasting». It is important because it translates social events into the symbolic perspective of «prayer action»: public appeals and news include reports of prayers for peace, for the people, for the end of war; thus, the media become channels of «liturgical visibility».

Significantly, prayer texts published online often combine doxological elements with political and ethical axiologemes. For example, a prayer for Ukraine may contain an appeal to God for "victory" and "just peace," in which the sacred genre directly absorbs terms from socio-political discourse (OCU, 2025). This is an important feature of mediatised religion: traditional genres "come out" and become a form of public moral articulation (Fylypchuk, 2018).

The systematisation of values separately identifies pacifist values (peacemaking, non-violence) as having a biblical basis and also emphasises the social dimension of Christian ethics. In modern conditions of war, this field is becoming one of the most dynamic and polyphonic: "peace" can mean both the desired state of cessation of violence and the risk of "freezing" injustice; "justice" can mean both a moral principle and a political demand for responsibility; "protection" – as the right to defence.

In the official texts of the OCU, a stable connection is traced: "truth – victory – just peace." In the prayer texts, a request for "the victory of truth and just peace" is mentioned. In the OCU's preaching and journalistic materials, the thesis is also stated that "true peace" is connected with God's law and justice, and that "just and lasting peace" is presented as the goal of peacemaking efforts (OCU, 2025).

The UOC texts are often dominated by the vocabulary of "peace" and "cessation of hostilities" in conjunction with "prayer" and sympathy for the suffering of the people. In particular, news reports emphasise prayers "for the cessation of hostilities" and for the "long-suffering Ukrainian people," and also report simultaneous prayers in churches and monasteries "for the establishment of peace" (UOC, 2022).

For axiological analysis, it is important not to "evaluate" these differences, but to describe them as different configurations of the thesaurus. In some genres (addresses during attacks), the configuration "defence–truth–victory–just peace" dominates; in others (liturgical-news reports), it is "prayer–peace–suffering–ending war." Both configurations are rooted in the Christian idea of peace as a gift and a task. However, in the media situation, they perform different social functions: mobilisation for resistance/solidarity or pastoral de-escalation/consolation.

The normative function of axiological vocabulary is manifested when the media text outlines the boundaries of "proper": what is good and evil, permissible and unacceptable. In Orthodox communication, this is done through a direct appeal to the commandments or through the vocabulary of "sin", "repentance", and "responsibility". Documents of the modern Orthodox social ethos emphasise the inseparability of spiritual life and social responsibility, calling for the fight against evil and the establishment of love and justice. In the media format, these guidelines are transformed into normative markers of public position – «protection», «unity», «stability».

The identification function is associated with the construction of a community through lexical markers of belonging. In Orthodox media discourse, church and civic identities are often combined: the defence of the country is described as the defence of the future, and "truth" is presented as the everyday basis of "we". This is especially clearly manifested in the ecclesiological field. The concepts of "unity" and "conciliarity", defined in the conciliar documents as priority principles of church existence, acquire an evaluative dimension in the media and become markers of legitimacy. In discussions around autocephaly, their axiological status is strengthened through cognitive mechanisms that confer symbolic weight (Levko, 2018). At the same time, identification can take a negative form through the opposition and exposure of ideological distortions of conciliarity, which, in the Ukrainian context, are associated with imperial narratives.

The legitimating-polemical function is realised when the value vocabulary is used to justify one's own position and delegitimise the opponent. In interfaith media discourse, this can manifest as labels, mythologemes, and polarised schemes (Levko, 2018). The discourse around the ideology of the «Russian world» is indicative: researchers interpret it as a religious-political construct with imperial semantics (Fomenko, 2018), which contradicts Christian principles (Shkil, 2015) and relies on semantic substitutions of identity (Zborovska, 2022). In church statements, this ideology appears as an anti-value that denies Ukrainian subjectivity and the right to locality. Thus, the axiological vocabulary here acquires a distinct polemical charge, becoming a tool for delineating symbolic boundaries and protecting identity.

Conclusions. The Orthodox media discourse in Ukraine should be considered a space in which Christian values are expressed linguistically – as an axiological vocabulary of evaluation, legitimation, and identity. The methodological basis was the multidimensional systematisation of Christian values, which enabled moving from theological description to a model of an axiological thesaurus–a system of lexical and semantic fields. The deontological, agape, pneumatological, aleteiological, ecclesiological, doxological, and the field of peace–justice–protection are stably activated in the discourse; their normative contour is outlined by the conciliar documents and the message "For the Life of the World". The case analysis has shown three main functions of this vocabulary: normative, identification, and legitimation- polemical. This is consistent with studies of manipulative strategies in religious media discourse and with the transformation of church terms into public "axiologemes".

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