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The figure of bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn in contemporary Polish historiography

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Abstract: *The article analyzes the interpretations of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn in contemporary Polish historiography. Based on the works of leading Polish scholars, it explores the principal approaches to understanding the ideological legacy and socio-ecclesiastical activity of the Stanislaviv bishop. Special attention is given to the issues of Latinization of the Greek Catholic Church, Khomyshyn's polemic against radical forms of Ukrainian nationalism, and his efforts toward interconfessional understanding and Polish-Ukrainian*

reconciliation. The article highlights the growing interest among Polish researchers in the bishop's spiritual and moral heritage as a source of interethnic dialogue and religious renewal. The study concludes that Khomyshyn is perceived in Polish historiography as a symbol of Christian ethics, intellectual courage, and cultural resistance to radicalism.

Keywords: *Hryhorii Khomyshyn, Greek Catholic Church, interwar period, Halychyna, historiography, Second Polish Republic.*

Постать єпископа Григорія Хомишина у сучасній польській історіографії

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Анотація: *Стаття присвячена аналізу інтерпретацій постаті єпископа Григорія Хомишина у сучасній польській історіографії. На основі праць провідних польських дослідників розглянуто основні підходи до осмислення ідейної спадщини та церковно-громадської діяльності єпископа станиславівського. Особливу увагу приділено питанням латинізації Греко-*



католицької церкви, полеміці Хомишина з радикальними формами українського націоналізму, його зусиллям щодо міжконфесійного порозуміння та польсько-українського примирення. Стаття акцентує на зростанні зацікавлення польських науковців духовним і моральним спадком владики як джерелом для міжнаціонального діалогу й релігійного оновлення. У результаті дослідження встановлено, що постать Хомишина у польській історіографії сприймається як символ християнської етики, інтелектуальної відваги та культурного спротиву радикалізму.

Ключові слова: Григорій Хомишин, греко-католицька церква, міжвоєнний період, Галичина, історіографія, II Річ Посполита.

Problem Statement. The figure of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn (1867–1945), one of the most prominent representatives of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in the first half of the 20th century, continues to attract significant scholarly interest both in Ukraine and abroad. In recent years, a notable trend has emerged within contemporary Polish historiography toward reinterpreting his spiritual, social, and ideological legacy. Polish authors have begun to reassess Khomyshyn's contribution to Christian renewal, the improvement of Polish-Ukrainian relations, and his polemics with radical forms of Ukrainian nationalism. These interpretations often extend beyond the realm of ecclesiastical history, engaging with broader themes such as civilizational choices, cultural integration, and European moral values.

Modern Polish researchers increasingly focus on aspects such as Khomyshyn's involvement in liturgical reforms (Latinization), his attempts to foster peaceful coexistence between Catholics of the two rites in the Second Polish Republic, and his critique of the Byzantine heritage and radicalism within the Ukrainian national movement. Additionally, there is growing interest in the

publication of previously unknown sources. Thus, Polish historiography not only reconstructs the life path of the bishop but also offers new frameworks for understanding his spiritual mission.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. Certain aspects of the studied issue have been addressed in the publication by A. Klish and S. Pryidun [3]. However, a comprehensive assessment of the figure of Hryhorii Khomyshyn has not yet been provided.

Identification of Previously Unresolved Aspects of the Broader Problem. Despite the growing scholarly interest in the figure of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn, several aspects of his activity and ideological legacy remain insufficiently explored, particularly within the context of Polish historiography. Chief among these is the need for a deeper analysis of Khomyshyn's civilizational choice – his consistent advocacy for the rapprochement of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church with the Latin tradition, not merely on a liturgical level, but as a broader cultural and value-oriented orientation.

Another area that has received limited attention is his intellectual polemic with the radical currents of Ukrainian nationalism. In Polish studies, this is often mentioned only fragmentarily, without a thorough analysis of Khomyshyn's own writings. Also underexplored is the reception of Khomyshyn's legacy in contemporary Polish ecclesiastical thought, particularly following his beatification in 2001.

There is still a lack of comprehensive scholarly evaluation of his contribution to the development of Polish-Ukrainian understanding, as well as a critical assessment of how Polish researchers – coming from diverse ideological and confessional backgrounds – interpret the figure of the Bishop of Stanyslaviv. It remains a relevant task to compare the Polish perspective on Khomyshyn with that of modern Ukrainian historiography. Such a comparative approach would help to



reveal both points of convergence and divergence in the interpretation of this complex and multifaceted personality.

Formulation of the article's aims (Problem statement). The aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the scholarly approaches within contemporary Polish historiography to the figure of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn as a church leader, thinker, and participant in the socio-political processes of the first half of the 20th century. The article seeks to examine how Polish researchers interpret Khomyshyn's religious beliefs, social activism, and polemical writings in the context of the interwar period – particularly in relation to Latinization, nationalism, and interconfessional understanding.

To achieve this aim, the article sets out the following objectives: to characterize the main thematic areas in which modern Polish historiography examines the activities of Bishop Khomyshyn; to analyze the interpretations of Khomyshyn's key ideas in the works of Polish scholars; to identify the specific features of the Polish academic discourse regarding the contrast between Khomyshyn and Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytskyi; to determine how Polish researchers assess Khomyshyn's contribution to Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation and his opposition to radical nationalism.

Methodological Framework of the Article. The methodological foundation of this article is based on an interdisciplinary approach that combines methods of historical analysis, textual interpretation, historiographical comparison, and elements of intellectual history. Given the subject of the study – the reception of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn in contemporary Polish historiography – the use of the historiographical method is particularly appropriate. This approach allows for tracing the evolution of assessments of Khomyshyn's activity in Polish academic works and identifying the key emphases that dominate current discourse.

To gain a deeper understanding of the content of the analyzed texts, content analysis of publications by Polish authors was employed. This method made it possible to identify key concepts, areas of concern, and value orientations around which the interpretation of the bishop's figure is constructed. In addition, a comparative-historical approach was used to contrast the Polish perspective on Khomyshyn with the Ukrainian historiographical tradition, helping to reveal both similarities and differences in the evaluation of his legacy.

Considering that Khomyshyn is not only a historical but also a moral and religious figure, it was also appropriate to apply the biographical method. This allowed for examining his personality in the context of his life path, spiritual convictions, and public activity. Overall, the chosen methodology ensures a comprehensive, source-based, and conceptually coherent exploration of the topic.

Presentation of the main research material. In contemporary Polish historiography, the figure of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn is examined through the lens of a wide range of issues – from church policy and liturgical identity to the socio-political responsibility of the clergy. This section analyzes the principal interpretations of the bishop's activity and ideological legacy as proposed by Polish scholars over the past decades.

In the works of Maciej Strutyński[13–14], one of the key intra-church conflicts of the interwar period is thoroughly examined – the dispute between advocates of Latinization and proponents of restoring the Eastern rite within the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The author explores the roots of this confrontation. A defining feature of the interwar era, according to Strutyński, was the fact that these liturgical-religious issues extended beyond the ecclesiastical elite, becoming topics of active debate among laypeople and public intellectuals.

Strutyński devotes special attention to the differing positions of bishops, particularly Hryhorii Khomyshyn and Andrey Sheptytsky, who embodied two poles



of ecclesiastical vision. Khomyshyn consistently advocated for strengthening discipline, organizing church life, and aligning more closely with the Roman Catholic tradition, viewing this path as a means to reinforce the Church amid political instability and the threat of radicalism. In contrast, Sheptytsky pursued the restoration of Byzantine identity as a prerequisite for expanding the Uniate movement into Orthodox territories.

In this context, Strutyński insightfully presents Khomyshyn not merely as a church administrator but as the architect of a Western-oriented, more universal model of the Greek Catholic Church – one that sought to overcome the division between national and ecumenical Christianity.

In Adam Kubasik’s article, one of the most radical aspects of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn’s religious and ecclesiastical worldview is analyzed – his uncompromising critique of the Byzantine-Oriental heritage within the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The author draws attention to the deep ideological line along which Khomyshyn consistently advocated not merely for rapprochement with Rome, but for a near-total identification with the Roman Catholic civilizational model. He rejected elements that, in his view, hindered the spiritual development of the Ukrainian people.

Khomyshyn was particularly critical of the Byzantine church structure, which he saw as a source of formalism, ritualism, and spiritual stagnation – conditions he believed provided fertile ground for what he termed “Russian spiritual colonialism.” Kubasik convincingly demonstrates how Khomyshyn linked the spiritual crisis of Ukrainians to the historical adoption of Christianity in its Eastern rather than Western form. According to Khomyshyn, this had failed to initiate a “conscious Catholic faith” and instead led to anarchy, the weakening of spiritual authority, and the stalling of societal development.

In this context, Polish historiography presents Khomyshyn not only as a church reformer but also as a representative of a deeply polarized worldview rooted in Western European values. This interpretation strengthens the view of Khomyshyn as an opponent of the Eastern tradition in its “Russified” form and, at the same time, as a proponent of Church modernization through its maximal alignment with the Western, Latin identity [4].

In another article by Adam Kubasik, the theological and pastoral convictions of Bishop Khomyshyn concerning the essence of faith, the nature of the Church, and the place of God’s Kingdom in Christian life are analyzed. The author emphasizes Khomyshyn’s resolute critique of what he termed “salon Christianity” – a form of religiosity devoid of sacrifice, repentance, and profound spiritual struggle. Such a faith, in his observation, became an aestheticized consumption of sacred symbols that served more as interior decoration than as a means of shaping conscience.

In this context, Khomyshyn stressed the cross as the central element of the Christian calling, and defined the Church not merely as a human institution but as a living organism animated by the Holy Spirit – even despite the moral weaknesses of its members.

A key focus of Kubasik’s analysis is Khomyshyn’s thesis on the civilizational and religious defeat of Ukraine resulting from its adoption of Christianity in its Byzantine form. From this perspective, Ukrainian Christianity – particularly in its Greek Catholic expression – is seen as having failed to attain the fullness of Gospel freedom and consciousness, remaining trapped in ritual formalism and fear of profound conversion. The author underscores that Khomyshyn identified the “true Church of Christ” with the Catholic Church of the West, where, in his view, faith was lived in conscious connection with truth, sacrifice, and authority.

Such an approach in Polish historiography highlights the uniqueness of Khomyshyn as a figure who sought to reform Ukrainian Christianity not merely on

the level of ritual or discipline, but above all through a deep renewal of the spiritual essence of faith [7].

In Adam Kubasik's work *"The Activity of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn in the Latinization of the Greek Catholic Church"*, one of the most controversial aspects of Bishop Khomyshyn's ministry is analyzed – his consistent efforts to promote the Latinization of the Greek Catholic Church. The author outlines both the theoretical foundations and the practical steps undertaken by Khomyshyn to introduce Roman Catholic traditions into liturgical life, such as the Gregorian calendar, strict observance of clerical celibacy, and the incorporation of Latin elements into the liturgy. According to Khomyshyn, these measures aimed not only to deepen the religious life of the faithful but also to affirm unity with the Apostolic See and to prevent Greek Catholics from drifting toward Orthodoxy.

Kubasik contrasts Khomyshyn's views with those of Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, who instead leaned toward a "Byzantine revival" of the rite and sought to harmonize liturgical practices with Orthodox traditions. In this polarization, the author sees not merely an intra-Church struggle over ritual identity but also a deeper civilizational choice between the Latin West and the Orthodox East.

Although the line represented by Sheptytsky ultimately prevailed within the interwar UGCC, Kubasik acknowledges that the regions where Khomyshyn served – particularly in what is now the Ivano-Frankivsk Eparchy – show the highest levels of religious practice among the faithful. This, in the author's view, testifies to the enduring legacy of Khomyshyn's spiritual vision, despite his relative unpopularity among his contemporaries [5].

In Adam Kubasik's article *"Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn's Attitude Toward Ukrainian Nationalism"*, the bishop's response to the formation and radicalization of the Ukrainian nationalist movement at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries is thoroughly examined. The author distinguishes between two levels of Khomyshyn's

critique of nationalism: ideological and moral-theological. Khomyshyn condemned not only the political forms of radicalism but also the very concept of “the nation as the highest value,” which he deemed incompatible with Christian faith. He regarded nationalism as “the worst perversion of the human spirit,” even worse than paganism, because it placed the nation above God.

He perceived a particular danger in attempts to integrate religion – especially the Byzantine tradition – into the political violence promoted by the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). Kubasik emphasizes that Khomyshyn rejected any attempt to use the Church as an instrument of ideological influence; for him, the Church was not a “national institution” but a divine institution, called to shape spiritual culture rather than ethno-political identity.

At the same time, Khomyshyn expressed disappointment that the Ukrainian national awakening was unfolding under the influence of secular or anti-clerical ideas – particularly those associated with the works of Shevchenko, Franko, and Hrushevsky – which, in his view, lacked a Christian foundation. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he believed that genuine love for the nation could exist only within the framework of Catholic morality and obedience to God’s law.

In Polish historiography, this position is interpreted as an effort to keep the Greek Catholic Church out of political radicalization and preserve it as a moral authority within society [6].

In the article by Mieczysław Ryba, a key trait of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn’s ideological profile is highlighted – his resolute pursuit of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, which was grounded not in political compromise but in Christian morality and spiritual responsibility. The author emphasizes that Khomyshyn was one of the few Greek Catholic hierarchs who openly criticized not only Polish assimilationist policies but also radical Ukrainian nationalism.



In his pastoral letters, Khomyshyn consistently exposed what he called the “pagan” nature of nationalist ideology, which he equated with spiritual degradation and a departure from Gospel values. In doing so, Khomyshyn positioned himself in opposition to the intellectual legacy of Dmytro Dontsov, identifying “social Darwinism” as the chief threat to the Christian soul of the Ukrainian people.

Ryba notes that because of his moral-ethical motivation, combined with political realism, Khomyshyn was perceived by the Polish authorities as a partner capable of constructive dialogue. His critique of nationalism extended beyond ideology – it carried a pastoral dimension, calling on the conscience of the people to renounce hatred and embrace responsibility before God.

At the same time, Khomyshyn opposed Polish superiority, condemning arrogance and contempt toward the Ukrainian people – a stance that gives his position particular depth. In Ryba’s interpretation, Polish historiography portrays the bishop as one of the most principled and morally coherent figures of the GCC, who, guided by Christian teaching, sought not merely national compromise but a profound spiritual renewal in the relationship between the two nations [11].

In another work by Mieczysław Ryba, particular attention is given to the reaction of the Greek Catholic Church in Halychyna to the Holodomor as a deliberately engineered humanitarian catastrophe orchestrated by the Kremlin. In this context, Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn emerges as a moral authority who not only condemned the criminal nature of Bolshevik policy but also publicly referred to the USSR as the “kingdom of the Antichrist,” pointing to the systematic extermination of the Church, the clergy, and the very essence of Christian culture. In a pastoral letter, the bishop paints a chilling image of Bolshevik Russia as a “volcano of crimes” that destroys the spiritual foundations of society, directly warning of the danger of moral degeneration for the Ukrainian people if they embraced the Soviet model.

Ryba emphasizes that the experience of the Holodomor served as an additional impetus for Khomyshyn's consistent support of Polish-Ukrainian dialogue as the only realistic alternative to Soviet destruction. Unlike radical nationalists, who often saw the USSR as a lesser enemy compared to Poland, Khomyshyn understood that ongoing conflict between Ukrainians and Poles only played into Moscow's hands. His outspoken criticism of Polish political cynicism – particularly attempts to use the Holodomor as a geopolitical opportunity – further enhances Khomyshyn's moral authority as a spokesman for true Gospel-based justice.

Through Ryba's lens, Polish historiography portrays Khomyshyn as one of the few hierarchs who not only grasped the scale of the tragedy but also drew clear political and moral conclusions: no national strategy can succeed without spiritual unity with one's neighbor [12].

In the article by Joanna Karbarz-Wilińska, a comparative analysis is offered of Bishop Khomyshyn's activities in the context of the two world wars. The author emphasizes that despite shifting political regimes and external threats, Khomyshyn consistently adhered to the principle of combining religious mission with active socio-national engagement. During the First World War – when he was the only acting Greek Catholic bishop in Halychyna – he defended the rights of the Ukrainian population under Russian occupation, introduced calendar and liturgical reforms, and initiated the creation of Christian socio-political organizations as an alternative to national radicalism.

During the Second World War, according to Wilińska, Khomyshyn acted with more caution, focusing primarily on pastoral work, though he continued to uphold the idea of moral responsibility of the clergy for the fate of the people. The author also explores the dramatic circumstances of Khomyshyn's arrests by both Soviet and



Nazi secret services, which ultimately led to his death in a Kyiv prison in December 1945.

A distinctive feature of Karbarz-Wilińska's approach is her effort to interpret Khomyshyn's figure within the tragic experience of the 20th century – as an example of a hierarch who, despite persecution and political turmoil, remained faithful to his religious and civilizational vocation. This interpretation deepens the Polish historiographical understanding of the UGCC's role in shaping the moral character of the Ukrainian elite at the intersection of faith, politics, and historical challenges [1].

In another article by Joanna Karbarz-Wilińska, the concept of mutual religious and interethnic tolerance, developed by Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn, is explored in the context of the political reality of the Second Polish Republic. The author emphasizes that after the First World War, in the wake of collapsing empires and the emergence of new borders, the coexistence of Poles and Ukrainians within a single state generated numerous social, national, and confessional tensions. In this situation, Khomyshyn stands out for his commitment not to exacerbating conflicts but to fostering Christian understanding, which, in his view, had to be based on Gospel principles and shared Catholic values.

Grounded in the ethical teachings of the Catholic Church, Khomyshyn advocated for the rapprochement of the faithful of both rites – Greek and Roman Catholic – not only as a religious aspiration but as a civic goal. The article emphasizes his opposition to the ideology of radical nationalism, which, according to the bishop, led to the breakdown of both moral and social order. Wilińska shows how Khomyshyn sought to guide the Ukrainian clergy toward constructive, “positivist” work – the development of schools, social institutions, and moral education – rather than political confrontation. Polish historiography interprets this

approach as one of the early examples of Christian peacemaking in the complex multiethnic environment of interwar Halychyna [2].

In the works of V. Osadchyi [8–9], the conceptual depth of Bishop Khomyshyn's social and moral teaching is examined, which the author interprets as an attempt at spiritual reflection and reconciliation in the face of the Polish-Ukrainian conflict. Osadchyi stresses that Khomyshyn did not merely call for interethnic reconciliation; he constructed it on a foundation of clear Gospel principles and Catholic ethics. By firmly condemning radical expressions of Ukrainian nationalism, which he called “the worst heresy” for leading the people away from Christ, Khomyshyn expressed what Osadchyi sees as a prophetic vision – one that sought not only the conversion of individuals, but the moral renewal of the entire nation through truth, peace, and spiritual responsibility.

The author emphasizes Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn's cultural and civilizational mission, portraying him as a vocal proponent of Uniate identity, deeply rooted in the Western Catholic tradition. V. Osadchyi pays special attention to the treatise *Two Kingdoms*, in which Khomyshyn contrasts the Kingdom of God's Law with the kingdom of ideological violence, offering a spiritual critique of a secularized and nationalized society. In contemporary Polish historiography, especially in Osadchyi's interpretation, Bishop Khomyshyn emerges as a spiritual thinker who foresaw the moral threats of the 20th century and left a message relevant both for interethnic reconciliation and for Christian self-identification in an age of value crisis.

In his article “*Unknown Manuscript of Blessed Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn: Two Kingdoms*,” [10] Osadchyi analyzes a newly discovered manuscript by Khomyshyn – a significant event in the religious, intellectual, and historical consciousness of both Poland and Ukraine. The author presents the story of the manuscript's discovery and its fate after the Second World War, followed by a

thematic analysis of its contents. Particular attention is given to Khomyshyn's relationship with Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, as well as his views on the status of the Ukrainian population within the Second Polish Republic. Osadchyi depicts Khomyshyn as a thinker whose critique of radical nationalist ideologies was grounded in deep Christian ethics and reflected his aspiration for the spiritual and social renewal of the Ukrainian community.

Of special note is the public resonance of the manuscript's appearance, evidenced by the Polish Sejm's resolution of March 2017, which honored Khomyshyn as a "Prophet of Ukraine" and a symbol of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation. In this context, Khomyshyn is interpreted as a moral authority who called for the preservation of European values, Christian tradition, and interethnic harmony. Such an interpretation highlights not only Polish historiography's historical interest in the legacy of the Greek Catholic bishop but also the contemporary relevance of his ideas, extending beyond church history into the sphere of civilizational and political discourse.

In a publication by Fr. Józef Wulczański [15], a valuable collection of primary source material is presented, offering deeper insight into both the spiritual portrait of Bishop Khomyshyn and his relationship with the Roman Catholic hierarchy – especially with Archbishop Józef Bilczewski of Lviv. Wulczański provides a critical edition of 16 letters preserved in the archives of the Latin Metropolitan Curia in Kraków, covering the period from 1904 to 1922 – a time of heightened interconfessional interaction between Poles and Ukrainians.

The content of the letters reveals Khomyshyn's willingness to cooperate, seek mutual understanding, and pursue institutional coordination between the two branches of the Catholic Church in Eastern Halychyna. Among the main topics addressed are Church-society relations, responses to anti-Uniate press campaigns, parish clergy appointments, and Khomyshyn's personal reflections on the pressures



he faced from segments of the Ukrainian community that opposed his pro-European, pro-Western orientation. Notably, the entire correspondence was conducted in Polish – a fact that underscores not only Khomyshyn's education and fluency but also his openness to interconfessional dialogue within the Catholic world.

In contemporary Polish historiography – particularly in Wulczański's work – this correspondence affirms the image of Khomyshyn as a hierarch who sought to build bridges between the Latin and Byzantine traditions, acting in the spirit of Christian solidarity and European values.

Conclusions. An analysis of Polish historiography over recent decades reveals that the figure of Bishop Hryhorii Khomyshyn has undergone a new conceptual reinterpretation that transcends narrow confessional or regional perspectives. Contemporary Polish scholars represent a range of approaches in which Khomyshyn emerges as a religious reformer, social thinker, moral authority, and a symbol of interconfessional and interethnic dialogue. The historiographical focus has shifted from biographical reconstruction to an analysis of his intellectual legacy, allowing for a deeper understanding of this paradoxical figure – authoritative and resolute, yet deeply spiritual.

Polish academic tradition highlights two principal aspects of Khomyshyn's personality and activity. The first is his consistent ideology of Latinization, interpreted not merely as a liturgical modernization effort but as a deliberate civilizational orientation toward the West – toward unity with Rome and the Western European Catholic tradition. The second is his profound belief in the moral and social mission of the Church as a mediator in resolving conflicts between Poles and Ukrainians. This is especially evident in studies focused on his opposition to radical Ukrainian nationalism and his efforts to educate a new elite grounded in Christian morality, social responsibility, and discipline.

Importantly, Polish historiography does not idealize Khomyshyn, but rather seeks to critically assess his role within the complex confessional, political, and ethnic landscape of his time. Some scholars emphasize the ambivalence with which his views were received among Ukrainians, yet they also underline the consistency of his principles, the prophetic nature of his warnings, and the relevance of his legacy to contemporary Christian dialogue. Thus, in Polish academic thought, Bishop Khomyshyn appears not only as a spiritual leader of the past, but as a bearer of a conceptual vision of the Church, the nation, and the state – a vision that continues to merit deep reflection today.

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