



Betrayal: When the Church Bows to the Empire and Its Rulers

By Taras Dyatlik

NOTE: Amid war and national trauma, many Ukrainian Christians carry a wound deeper than the violence of a foreign aggressor—the heartbreak of betrayal by fellow believers. Taras wrote the following reflection on Mother’s Day, after speaking at a solemn gathering in Sokal, Ukraine, titled “Heart of a Mother – Heart of Ukraine,” which honored the mothers of fallen soldiers.



Taras Dyatlik

When the Church Blesses Bombs

While we stand over fresh graves of our loved ones, while Ukrainian mothers clutch embroidered shirts of fallen heroes as their last physical connection to sons who gave everything for their homeland, many Russian Evangelical pastors continue offering prayers for Putin and thanking him for “protecting” their motherland through the very violence that orphans our children. This betrayal cuts deeper than any physical wound.

These were not strangers to us: these were ministers we shared pulpits with, brothers we broke bread with, leaders whose churches and seminaries we helped build after the Soviet collapse... Now, from these same lips come claims that we are “Nazis,” that Ukraine is merely territory to be reclaimed, that our language and culture have no right to exist.

As I visited today with the seventy grieving mothers and widows at the “Heart of a Mother – Heart of Ukraine” event, holding space for their anguish, I could not help but think of how these women’s tears mean nothing to those who once called us ‘family in Christ’...

This spiritual abandonment multiplies our grief. It is one thing to face a foreign enemy. It is another to witness brothers and sisters in Christ who sang hymns beside you, now bless the bombs and bullets that kill your children, parents, siblings...

When the Church aligns itself with the empire—when it exchanges its prophetic voice for patriotic slogans—it no longer reflects the Body of Christ. It becomes something else entirely. What follows is not unity, but disintegration—a spiritual dismembering of Christ’s body.

This is why confronting the Church’s complicity in state-driven narratives is not a theoretical exercise. It strikes at the heart of a deeper crisis: **when the Body of Christ offers itself in service to earthly empires, cloaked in language about “defending traditional values” or “preserving Christianity,” it betrays its very essence.**

In times of war, theological clarity is not a luxury—it is a necessity. It can be the difference between faithfulness and failure, between light and deep deception. The very soul of the Church is at stake.

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Are Taras Dyatlik’s Words Relevant for North American Evangelicals?

Yes—deeply so. His reflection, born from the sorrow of betrayal within the Russian-Ukrainian Evangelical community, serves as both a powerful message and a prophetic warning for the Church in the West.

Though rooted in Eastern Europe’s wartime context, the core issue Taras raises is universal: the danger of the Church aligning itself with empire, nationalism, or political ideology at the cost of its prophetic and compassionate witness.

In North America, similar patterns are emerging:

- Once-vocal Evangelical support for Ukraine has grown silent as political tides shift.
- Many Christians, choosing not to believe responsibly, are falling prey to Russian disinformation that paints Ukraine as undeserving of help.
- The rise of Christian nationalism mirrors the very “church and empire” alliance that Dyatlik warns against—where national loyalty eclipses Gospel values of truth, mercy, and justice.

His message challenges Western believers to re-examine **where their ultimate allegiance lies:** with Christ’s Kingdom or with partisan politics. Are we shaped more by Scripture or by social media? Do we stand with the suffering—or justify their pain for political convenience?

In short: Taras’s words are not just a reflection of their crisis—they are a test of our integrity.

They challenge us to return to a Christ-centered, courageous faith—one that will not remain silent in the face of injustice, even when speaking out is uncomfortable or costly.

Lloyd Cenaiko
President HART

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