

Trust and Conflict: Relations between Ruthenian Priests and Peasants in 19th-Century Galicia

If a stranger stopped to talk to a Ukrainian villager from Galicia and asked him about his life, he would, after the usual complaints about »landlords and Jews«, certainly hear no less severe reproaches against priests and the priests' exactions.¹

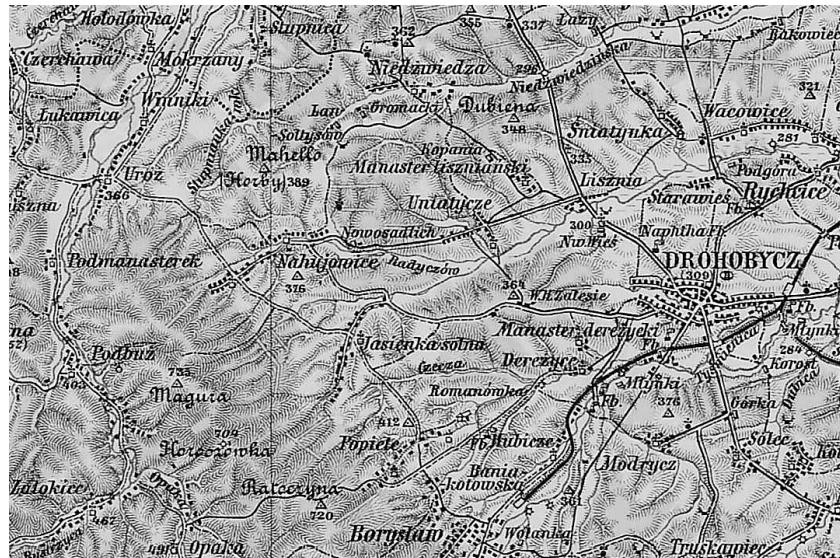
Father Kvintilian hated Korda and Kost Dumiak so intensely that he called them names even during his Sunday sermons. Kvintilian did not hesitate to speak ill of the rest of the congregation either. He felt no pity for peasants, as he believed that they were themselves to blame for their difficulties and poverty: »Who will help them if they have become used to dehumanization since the dawn of time and are not willing to change anything for the better.«² The community was not surprised »that their priest disgraced them during sermons, and pointed a finger at them, using bad and inglorious nicknames, as for them it was not a novelty.«³

1 »Koly khto-nebud' postoronnyi rozhovorytsia z ukrains'kym muzhykom u Halychyni i pochne rozptytuvaty ioho pro zhyttia-buttsia, to, bezperechno, pislia zvychainykh narikan' na »paniv ta zhydiv« pochuie takozh ne menshe tiazhki narikannia na popiv i popivs'ke zdyrstvo.« Ivan Franko, »Popi i ekonomicne polozhennia ukrains'koho narodu v Halychyni,« in *Zibrannia tvoriv u 50 tomakh, Ekonomichni pratsi* (1878–1887), vol. 44, ed. Ivan Franko (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1984), 155–160, here 155.

2 »Khto iim pomozhe, koly vony pryyvky spokonivku do svoho skotiacoho stanu i ne bazhaut' sobi nichoho lipshoho.« Ivan Franko, »Velykyi shum,« in *Zibrannia tvoriv u 50 tomakh, Povisti ta opovidannia* (1904–1913), vol. 22, ed. Ivan Franko (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1979), 208–317, here 264.

3 »Dlia nykh tse ne bula niiaka novyna, shcho iih panotets' han'byt' iih poimenno na propovidiaakh, pokazuije na nykh paltsiamy ta prykladaie do nykh pohani abo i soromni prozvyshcha.« Ibid., 280.

This passage is taken from the novel *Great Uproar* (*Velykyi Shum*) by Ivan Franko, a poet and literary critic of the late 19th and early 20th century, and one of the most prominent Ukrainian writers to this day. Franko based this story, like many others, on the lives of the villagers of Nahuievychi, where he was born. According to literary critics, the heroes of his story were adapted from historical people in Nahuievychi: Franko did not even change the name of Kost Dumiak who served as the headman (*viit*) of the village in the middle of the 19th century. The fictitious priest Korda represents Lev Kordasevych, a priest of the Nahuievychi parish from 1846 to 1852, who became an activist in the Ruthenian national movement. Finally, Kvintilian must be considered to be a fictionalized portrait of Iosyf Levytskyi, the priest of the Nahuievychi parish from 1854 to 1860, and a leader of the Ruthenian national movement.⁴



General map of Central Europe, folio 4149, Bundesamt für Eich- und Vermessungswesen, Vienna 1912. <http://lazarus.elte.hu/hun/digkonyv/topo/200e/41-49.jpg>.

⁴ Stepan Shchurat, »Kameniar i ioho ridne selo,« *Zhovten'* 11 (1966): 52–60, here 56.

Ivan Franko wrote in depth about Nahuievychi, the villagers, and Father Levytskyi. He was the first to use the protocols of the Levytskyi trial, transforming the accounts of peasants from this source into literature. The literary critic Stepan Shchurat (1909–1990), a specialist on Ivan Franko, likewise consulted the protocols and, on the basis of additional research, claimed that Franko was baptized by Levytskyi and heard much about him from his father and fellow villagers, who called him »a rude priest« (*ksiqdz hruby*).⁵ In his article translated as »The Stonecutter and His Native Village« (*Kameniar i ioho ridne selo*), Shchurat describes a number of events that emerged in the trial and provides his own opinion of the priest: »In order to take more money from peasants he complicated every affair, making up different obstacles. He artfully used canon and church laws, and the rulings of the secular authorities.«⁶ While Shchurat, as a literary critic, tried to analyze the protocols, Franko used them as inspiration for his fiction, each in his own way fostering Levytskyi's negative image.

Still, the judgments are very straightforward and leave many questions unanswered, for example, why a priest who played an important role in the Ruthenian national movement would not receive recognition in his own parish. It is therefore my aim in this paper to re-examine the protocols of Levytskyi's trial, to delve into the relations inside the Nahuievychi community and especially to identify the motives of the conflict between the priest and the peasants. In a broader context it will be necessary to look at the transformation of church politics introduced by the Habsburg Empire and, as a consequence, at the changing role of the Greek Catholic clergy in the mid-19th century. Against this background, we will be able to distinguish continuous conflicts between priests and peasants from new ones that appeared after Enlightenment reforms.

Iosyf Levytskyi and the role of priests in Galician peasant communities

Iosyf Levytskyi, born in 1801 in the village of Baranchytsi in Eastern Galicia, was a representative of a new generation of educated clergy.⁷ He studied in the *Barbareum* theological seminary in Vienna that had been founded during the reign of Maria Teresa and Joseph II along with another theological seminary, the

⁵ Ibid., 55. In the protocols *ksiqdz* is used as either Ukrainian or Polish word to indicate a priest, for both Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic clergy.

⁶ »Shchob vytysnuty z selian iaknaibil'she hroshei, kozhnu spravu uskladniuvav, vyhaduvav riznomanitni trudnoshchi. Dlia tsioho khytro vykorystovuvav vsiaki kanonichni i tserkovni zakony, tsyrkuliary svits'koi i dukhovnoi vlady.« Ibid., 54.

⁷ In this article »clergy« is used synonymously with »priesthood« to the inclusion of deacons, priests, and bishops.

Studium Ruthenum in Lviv. After graduation, Levytskyi was a parish priest in the Galician villages of Shklo and then Hrushiv. He had also been teaching in the seminary of Peremyshl, when the Ruthenian language was established in all schools of Eastern Galicia in 1849.⁸

In Ukrainian historiography, the person of Iosyf Levytskyi is closely attached to the Ruthenian national movement. He is depicted as one of its leaders, and one of the priests who supported the movement and struggled to raise the national consciousness of the Ruthenian people. Together with other priests, he tried to convince the Ruthenians that they were a separate nation and at least worthy of cultural autonomy,⁹ if not political independence.¹⁰ These priests considered it to be their duty to gather songs, preserve local folklore, and publish grammars.¹¹ Scholars indeed claim that Iosyf Levytskyi was the author of the first printed grammar of the Ruthenian language in Galicia. He is also known as a writer, teacher, collector of folklore, and important public figure.¹² However, my research has also revealed that he was in fact a complicated figure and far from an entirely positive force in his local community.

Literary critics and historians have often depicted Levytskyi as an ill-tempered person with a sharp tongue.¹³ It is reported that in the Peremyshl seminary he frequently quarreled with other priests on the matters of language, teaching, and national perspective, that he criticized the pastoral letters of the Metropolitan, and that he maintained a negative attitude towards Bishop Hryhoriy Iakhymovych (1792–1863). Due to these conflicts, the bishop ordered Levytskyi to leave the seminary and gave him a parish in Nahuievychi, where he could preach but was away from other priests and the students of the seminary in

8 Ivan Franko, »Do biohrafii Iosyfa Levyts'koho,« *Zoria* 11 (1886): 196; Idem, »Do zhytiepysu Iosyfa Levyts'koho,« *Zoria* 5 (1886): 84.

9 For a discussion of the concept of cultural autonomy see the article by Jana Osterkamp in this volume.

10 Paul Robert Magocsi, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism. Galicia as Ukraine's Piedmont* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 44.

11 Mykhailo Zubryts'kyi, Iurii Kmit, Ivan Kobylets'kyi, Ivan Levyts'kyi, and Ivan Franko, eds., *Materialy do kulturnoi istorii Halyts'koi Rusi XVIII i XIX viku* (L'viv: Drukarnia Naukovoho tovarystva imeni Shevchenka, 1902), 133; Michael Moser, »Iosyf Levyts'kyi iak borets' za kulturu ›rus'koi‹ (ukrains'koi) movy,« *Ukrayina: kulturna spadshchyna, natsional'na svidomist', derzhavnist'* 15 (2006/2007): 447–460, here 447.

12 Dmytro Blazheios'kyi, *Historical shematism of the eparchy of Peremyshl including the apostolic administration of Lemkivshchyna (1828–1939)* (L'viv: Kameniar, 1995), 741.

13 Franko, »Iosyfa Levyts'koho;« Hanna Hrom, *Nahuievychi* (Drohobych: Vidrodzhennia, 2002), 220; Hryhoriy Herbils'kyi, *Peredova suspil'na dumka v Halychyni (30-i – seredyna 40-tykh rr. XIX stolittia)* (Lviv: Vydavnytstvo L'viv'skoho universitetu, 1959), 86.

particular.¹⁴ Iosyf Levytskyi and other Greek Catholic priests were indebted to the Habsburg Empire for their privileged position in society.¹⁵ As a consequence of the imperial reforms of the 19th century, priests became a part of the state administration and a link between the empire's rulers and the common people of Galicia. They turned into guardians of order who controlled the peasants' activities and their attitude towards the empire.¹⁶

In the second half of the 18th century the situation had been very different. Priests often spent time in taverns together with the peasants drinking and fighting. In the times of Ivan Franko, peasants recalled these relations with sayings like »The head of a priest is blessed, respect it, but the buttocks are not, kick them as much as you want«.¹⁷ The Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority tried to dissuade priests from going to taverns, urging them instead to care more for churches, education, and the parish. At that time many churches looked more like stables: chapels were covered with straw and lacked windows and finished floors or ceilings.¹⁸ The new Habsburg authorities supported the fight against this with reforms and education – as was the general tendency during the Enlightenment – which contributed to economic and educational improvements in Galicia.

The Habsburg administration also introduced a code of behavior for priests, according to which they were entrusted with the task of educating their flock to be good Christians and good citizens.¹⁹ They were then expected to perform the

14 Ibid., 220–222; Shchurat, »Kameniar i ioho ridne selo,« 54.

15 Ivan L. Rudnytsky, »The Ukrainians in Galicia under Austrian Rule,« in *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism. Essays on Austrian Galicia*, eds. Andrei S. Markovits and Frank E. Sysyn (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 23–68, here 24–25; Marian Mudryi, »Avstrorussynstvo v Halychyni: sproba okreslennia problem,« *Visnyk L'viv'skoho Universytetu. Seriia istorychna* 35/36 (2000): 571–603, here 573.

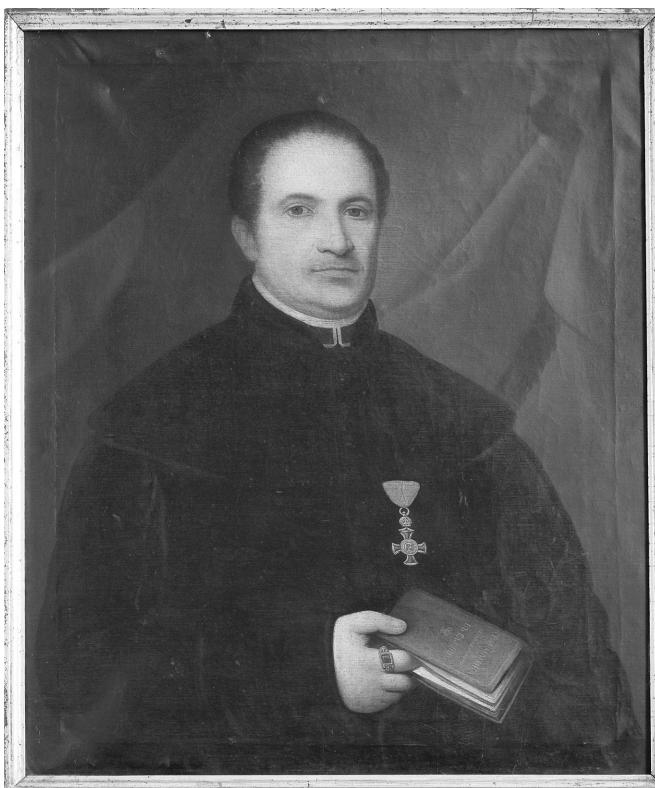
16 Maksym Herasymenko, *Abrarni vidnosyny v Halychyni v period kryzy panshchyz-nianobo hospodarstva* (Kyiv: AN URSR, 1959), 138–139.

17 »U popa holova pos'viachenia, ale s-a ni, to holovu zaviazhy, a v s-u byi shcho si vlyzi.« *Etnohrafichnyi zbirnyk*, vol. 24, part 2: *Halys'ko-ruski narodniy prypovidky*, ed. Ivan Franko (L'viv: Naukove tovarystvo imeni Shevchenka, 1908), 539–544.

18 Melaniia Bordun, »Z zhyttia ukrains'koho dukhovenstva l'viv'skoi ieparkhii v druhyi pol. XVIII v.,« *Zapysky NTSH* 135, no. 13 (1924): 39–90, here 78.

19 John-Paul Himka, »Hreko-katolyts'ka tserkva i natsional'ne vidrodzhennia u Halychyni 1772–1918,« in *Kovcheb: Naukovyi zbirnyk iz tserkovnoi istorii*, vol. 1, eds. Iaroslav Hrytsak and Borys Gudziak (L'viv: Institute for Historical Research of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv and Institute of Church History, 1993), 73–107, here 77; Andrii Zaiarniuk, *Idiomy emansypatsii. »Vyzvol'ni« proekty i halyts'ke selo u seredyni XIX stolittia* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2007), 92.

duties not only of a chaplain, but also of a teacher and a state official.²⁰ At first priests were opposed to the reforms. It seems that they did not want to accept these new administrative tasks, viewing them as new obligations, but they would soon come to appreciate their new power and the connected benefits. Moreover it became hard to draw a line between secular and lay affairs once they received authority of the administration.²¹ After but a few years of accommodation, Ruthenian priests eagerly proclaimed the emperor's patents and district headman's commands to the peasants.²²



Portrait of Iosyf Levytskyi by W. Siffert, 1854 (Muzeum Narodowe Ziemi Przemyskiej, inv. no. MPS-632)

20 Oleh Turii, »Hreko-katolyts'kyi sviazhchenyk v Avstriis'kyi monarkhii seredyny XIX st.: derzhavnyi sluzhbovets' chy dushpastyr?« in *Materialy II Mizhnarodnogo konkursu ukrainistiv: Istorija*, vol. 1, eds. Iaroslav Isaievych and Iaroslav Hrytsak (Lviv: International Association of Ukrainian Studies, 1994), 56–62, here 57–58.

21 Shchurat, »Kameniar i ioho ridne selo,« 54.

22 Herasymenko, *Abrarni vidnosyny v Halychyni*, 149–150.

Some community representatives claimed that priests were taking on too many official activities while neglecting their religious duties. For example, Dumiak, the above-mentioned village headman of Nahuievychi, complained that the pastors spent more time on administration instead of pursuing spiritual matters: »Our priests are so diligent, they piddle their time away like lawyers for no reason.«²³

The interaction of priests and peasants reveals a paradox within the Ruthenian national movement. Although they were united as one nation with a common religion and common language, a great abyss remained between the leaders and the common people. Often the priests' better schooling and their administrative activities put them at a distance from the peasants and caused misunderstandings. The priests wanted to reeducate the people but did not support any public initiative towards a greater participation of peasants in community leadership. They often despised the rural community for its »barbarity« and lack of education, and opposed the peasants' folklore as superstitious practice and belief.²⁴ The peasants who felt disrespected by this developed, in turn, a distanced attitude towards the priests. They respected priests as educated and intelligent people but they rejected their absolute power.²⁵ Once priests began to believe in their common ethnicity with the Ruthenian peasantry and their religious unity, they started to speak up on behalf of the several million people of the Ruthenian nation. This position of primacy, however, also faced the resistance of many peasants.²⁶

In his 19th century memoirs, the priest Philimon Tarnavskyi describes the tensions between the clergy and peasants: »When new priests from the Seminary came to the village, they were educated and had higher demands. That is why the people did not become accustomed to them quickly, did not like them, and called them ›German priests.‹«²⁷ We can only guess what the author meant by

23 »Taki to nashi dushpastyri zapopadlyvi, ony zaimaiutsia durnytsiamy, nache advokaty, bez niiakoi osnovy.« Fondy muzeiu imeni Ivana Franka u m. L'vovi/ Collection of the Ivan Franko Museum in Lviv (henceforth IFM), file (sprava) 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva proty Iosyfa Levyts'koho (1801–1860), Parokha sela Nahuievychi, letter 2, no. 538/32.

24 Herasymenko, *Abrarni vidnosny v Halychyni*, 150; Oleh Kryzhanivs'kyi and Serhii Plokhy, *Istoriia tserkvy ta relihiinoi dumky v Ukraini*, vol. 3. (Kyiv: Lybid', 1994), 250; Stanisław Nabywaniec, »Recepcja reform kościelnych cesarza Józefa II w greckokatolickiej diecezji przemyskiej,« in *Polska-Ukraina 1000 lat sąsiedztwa*, vol. 3, ed. Stanisław Stępień (Przemyśl: Poludniowo-Wschodni Instytut Naukowy, 1996), 127–165, here 165.

25 Herasymenko, *Abrarni vidnosny v Halychyni*, 150.

26 Himka, »Hreko-katolys'ka tserkva,« 82–83.

27 »Koly prishly novi sviazhchennyky z Dukhovnoji Seminarii, to vony vzhe maly vyshchu osvitu i bil'shi vymohy, tak shcho narid ne skoro do nykh pryyyk, ne

high demands. In any case, his account gives us an idea of the changes in the relations between peasants and priests caused by Habsburg reforms. Based on the example of the village of Nahuievychi, I challenge Tarnavskyi's position by looking into the demands outlined in the protocols of the trial against Iosyf Levytskyi.

The protocols of the trial against Iosyf Levytskyi

The trial against Iosyf Levytskyi took place from February 23 to April 20, 1858, as documented on 943 pages of protocol accusations, justifications, and summaries.²⁸ It dealt with conflicts that had mainly occurred in the village of Nahuievychi, situated near the town of Drohobych, an important urban center of Galicia.²⁹ The villagers accused the priest of 17 disciplinary transgressions, including excessive fees, refusing to bury people, publicly insulting peasants, intervening in public affairs, and disgracing high church authorities before the people.³⁰

The first to report Iosyf Levytskyi to the authorities was a villager by the name of Fedio Hlynka, involving an incident in 1856, when a pig owned by Hlynka was found in the fields of Levytskyi and taken by the priest to his household. The priest refused to give it back to the peasant, and when the animal died a few days later, he did not compensate him for the loss, thus refusing to comply with a court ruling. Later when Hlynka's father died, the priest refused to bury the body. Numerous insults followed from both sides.³¹

Stephan Shchurat has suggested that the appeal of Fedio Hlynka was disregarded at first as the consistory refused to take personal complaints into consideration.³² The case only gained public momentum on August 9, 1857 when 37 residents of Nahuievychi sued the priest in the consistory of Peremyshl with regard to 17 disciplinary transgressions. This was the first case lodged by Nahuievychi villagers against a priest.³³

At first glance it would appear that the trial was mainly caused by Levytskyi's arrogant behavior. As mentioned above, the priest was very demanding, some-

duzhe ikh liubyv i nazyvav ikh »nimetskymy ksiandzamy«. Philimon Tarnavskyi, *Spohady. Rodynna khronika Tarnavskykh iak prychynok istorii tserkovnykh, sviashchennys'kykh, pobutovykh, ekonomichnykh i politychnykh vidnosyn u Halychyni v druhyi polovyni XIX st. i v pershyi dekadi XX st.* (Toronto: Dobra knyzhka, 1981), 35.

28 Shchurat, »Kameniar i ioho ridne selo,« 53.

29 Hrom, *Nahuievychi*, 13.

30 IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, protocol A, 5–6.

31 Ibid., General description, p. 169 (letter 1–2 of the Drohobych court case).

32 Shchurat, »Kameniar i ioho ridne selo,« 59.

33 IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, protocol A/28.

times rude, and dwelled on the social differences that existed between him and the peasants. The peasants were not willing to abide by his behavior any longer and decided to take Levytskyi to court. During the trial, however, other vital conflicts would also emerge.

A conflict over fees emerges most clearly from the protocols, and is mentioned in nine of 17 disciplinary transgressions. The economic situation indeed seems to have been difficult for both the priest and the peasants. Differences of religion and morality also played a role in the conflict between Levytskyi and the parish. These differences are vital to the understanding of the rural society and the interpretation of the interactions that took place in the community. There were, furthermore, clashes between Levytskyi and individual people, including Dumiak and Kmitsikeych. This reveals a struggle for dominance both within the secular administration and within the church hierarchy. Kost Dumiak was the village headman and representative of the secular authorities in Nahuievychi. Iurii Kmitsikeych was a priest in the village of Hai and the dean of Mokriany, who represented the church authorities in the district, which included the village of Nahuievychi.

In this paper I concentrate on three main lines of conflict: 1) fees and other forms of extortion; 2) differences in education and moral views; and 3) the struggle for control over the peasants. Although these issues are frequently intertwined in the protocols, I separate them here in order to provide an understanding of the needs of the rural society of the time and the context this created for the national movement in Galicia.

Economic background of the conflict

When he became a priest in Nahuievychi, he tripled fees and forced peasants to work on his fields without payment, to provide him with wood, to plant fruit trees in his garden, and to bring him hens, eggs and fish.³⁴

The trial against Iosyf Levytskyi highlights the problems caused by the substantial fees introduced by the priest in Nahuievychi. The peasants complained extensively about different kinds of extortion. During the trial they testified that »the priest wanted to extract money from each godparent to baptize children [...], to procure payment for each singer in the christening ceremony [...], demanded money from women to bless them after childbirth [...], forced

34 »Stavshy nahuievys'kym parokhom, vin vidrazu zh u troie pidvyshchyy oplaty za tserkovni posluhy, vymahav vid selian, shchob vony bezplatno praciuvaly v niho na poli, zavozly iomu drova, zasadzuvaly v ioho sadu fruktovi dereva, nosyly kurei, iaitsia, rybu [...].« Shchurat, »Kameniar i ioho ridne selo,« 54 (based on peasants' accusations during the trial against Iosyf Levytskyi).

payment for the blessing of Easter baskets«.³⁵ The villagers thus voiced their dissatisfaction with the requirement that they pay for each and every service.

In his defense, Iosyf Levytskyi argued that he did not want anything more than he deserved. He said that he only took money for services in amounts equal to the high prices he had had to pay for food and supplies. According to him, he had acted within the framework of the law, had taken what he had been due, receiving only some additional gifts from peasants.³⁶ He also explained that he had an income from services and a field, but he also needed to take care of the church, which reduced his personal fortune.³⁷ Levytskyi complained that the peasants »were making him a beggar« and could not imagine his real situation. For example, he testified in court that the peasants had run him into debt in the course of the previous year, as they had not supplied him with as many eggs as they had to for the Easter service.³⁸

The case against Levytskyi reflects a general tendency: The Greek Catholic clergy in Galicia earned their living mostly from payments, both monetary and in form of natural products. Priests received land and salaries in return for their services. Pastoral perquisites (*jura stolae*) constituted their main source of income, mainly for performing church duties as baptizing, wedding ceremonies, funerals, and home blessings. These practices had been established by Joseph II on July 1, 1785, during the period of serfdom, and the payment rate had not changed since that time. Therefore, it did not meet the needs of the priests after serfdom was abolished, especially if one considers that most Greek Catholic priests had families. Priests therefore became more demanding about fees, which made the rural population unhappy. Both church and secular authorities received numerous complaints about priests from the peasants and lower middle class.³⁹

The peasants, however, often refused to pay. Some of them simply did not have the means; others opposed any fee increases on principle. This practice had severe consequences for the priests' incomes, which they then tried to obtain by force, and very forceful words were indeed used in the protocols. Levytskyi did not deny that he had taken money or payment in kind from peasants. The core

35 »Pry spravuvanni tainy khreshchennia vymusyv vid kozhnoho khresnoho bat'ka hroshi [...], kazav tserkovnym spivakam pry nahodi odnykh khrestyn zaplatyty [...], vymusyv vid kozhnoi zhinky po porodi za blahoslovennia [...], vymusyv vzhliadno vid kozhnoho sils'koho dvora za posviachennia velykodnikh pasok.« IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystyplinarnoho slidstva, letter 15.

36 Ibid., letter 23.

37 Ibid., letter 6, protocol a.

38 Ibid., letter 23, protocol e. § 22, p. 321.

39 Oleh Turii, *Hreko-katolys'ka tserkva v suspil'no-politychnomu zhytti Halychyny 1848–1867*, Ph.D. thesis, Ivan Franko National University Lviv, 1994, 39–41.

problem was that, according to the peasants, he had acted in a very aggressive way and thereby had provoked confrontation.

The above-mentioned complaint of peasants also states that Iosyf Levytskyi had not only been demanding money for himself, but also for singers who had helped during the ceremony. Consequently he was not exclusively taking care of his own interests but also sought fair payment for others. Further in the protocols, Levytskyi emphasized that he did not understand how peasants could even suggest that there should be an assistant priest in the village to assist Levytskyi if he did not earn enough to make a living himself.⁴⁰

At another level, the trial mirrored the ramifications of imperial church politics in the local sphere: Levytskyi, representing the new type of educated priest, believed that he had to have better living conditions than the peasants. In contrast, the peasants were not ready to accept this change as they were used to priests who belonged to their social milieu, who ate the same kind of food, wore the same kinds of clothes, and shared the same social interests.

Perceptions of morality and religion

Iosyf Levytskyi thought of the peasants as »arrogant people«, and their complaints were for him all no more than an exhibition of a lack of religiosity, ignorance, and naivety. He believed that the peasants needed a strict priest, and that the lax preaching of his predecessors had led only to a decline in morals and faith:⁴¹

Many villagers because of their godlessness, disbelief, and hardness of hearts have not gone to confession in years [...]. And the youth is so dedicated to pagan beliefs that it is afraid to study Christian Catholicism and does not want to come for catechesis on Sunday and holidays.⁴²

Later he continued: »The landlords of Nahuievychi have not been going to church in years, dying without the sacraments, they rarely come to confession [...], what can I say – idlers.«⁴³ For him, the peasants were hopeless infidels, who could not accept God's teaching.

40 IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystyplinarnoho slidstva, letter 22.

41 Ibid., letter 27.

42 »Mnoho hospodariv po prychyni bezbozhnosti, neviry i zatverdilikh serts', ne spovidaisia tsilimy rokamy, ne khodiat' do tserkvy [...] Vkritsy zovsim zaned-bana molodizh pryv'iazana do pohanstva boit'sia khristiiansko-katolys'koi nauky, ne khoche znaty pro katekhizatsiui v nedil'ni i sviatochni dny.« Ibid., letter 21.

43 »Rokamy ne khodiat' hospodari Nahuievych do tserkvy, umyraut' bez pryniat-tia sviatykh tayn, ridko prykhotiat' do spovidy [...], nema dumky – ledari.« Ibid., letter 26.

Ioannes Chaikovskyi, the priest from Iasenytia Silna, a village not far from Nahuievychi, was of the same opinion. He described peasants as impudent people who needed »a vocal and strict leader.«⁴⁴ Taking Levytskyi's side, he claimed that he was just the right priest for the peasants of Nahuievychi. Most of the peasants did not agree with such a conclusion as they were disgusted by Levytskyi's behaviour. At the same time the official church was opposed to the physical and moral coercion that had been common in earlier centuries.⁴⁵ One very vivid example of Levytskyi's attitude to the peasants can be seen in the penance that he imposed on two villagers. The trial protocols indicate that he ordered them to lie down in the form of a cross during a church service.⁴⁶ Levytskyi himself claimed that this was a good way to punish sinners: »It [the punishment] is allowed, and sinners can either accept this atonement or not [...] there is no other way to frighten barbaric people away from sins.«⁴⁷

The villagers found this form of penance to be very shameful. One of them refused to perform it, but described it during the trial.⁴⁸ Another peasant complained:

We do not hear any good words and we are treated like wild animals; that is why most of our villagers, especially children, are not admitted to Easter confession. As a result of such a behaviour the people are in moral decline. Our children have quit going to Sunday school because Iosyf Levytskyi threatens them with beating.⁴⁹

The peasants also accused Levytskyi of not carrying out his duties thoroughly and of not fulfilling them according to church prescriptions.⁵⁰ However, the peasants' understanding of the prescriptions was often confused with their own particular beliefs. For example, Fedio Klymko, the father of five children, complained that he had to light a candle three nights in succession because Levytskyi did not baptize his child when the newborn was brought to the church

44 Ibid., protocol a, § 25, p. 121.

45 Mykhailo Zubryts'kyi, »Prychynky do istorii rus'koho dukhovenstva v Halychyni vid 1820 do 1853 r.,« *Zapysky NTSH* 88, no. 2 (1909): 118–150, here 143.

46 IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, General description, p. 169 (letter 12, § 26).

47 »Tse dozvoleno, a hrishnyky mozhut' na tse pohodytys' abo ni. A iak pohodylys, to oboviazani tse vykonuvaty. Bo dla neotesanykh liudei nema inshoho sposobu vidstrashyty ikh vid hrihiv.« Ibid. (letter 16).

48 Ibid.

49 »My ne chuiemo nikoly dobroho slova, i z namy obkhodiatsia iak z dykymy zviriamy, z tsieii prychyny bil'sha chast' nashykh meshkantsiv a po bil'shi chasty ditei ne dopuskaiestia do sviatoi velykodnyoi spovidy. – Tomu cherez taku povedinku ie zdychinnia mizh hromadianamy. Nashi dity pokynuly v tserkvi katekhyzatsiu nauky pro khristians'ku viru, bo pan parokh Iosyf Levyts'kyi hrozyt im, shcho zviazhe ikh, hrozyt' poboiamy.« Ibid. (letter 28).

50 IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, letter 2, no. 538/32.

on the Monday before Ascension Day.⁵¹ This complaint suggests that the peasant was attempting to protect the child from evil before the baptism. In addition, he blamed Levytskyi for having given his son the rather unusual and ridiculous christening name Hermanovych: »The matter of my concern is that the priest has given the newborn such an odd name that I don't even know what to call my child now.«⁵²

The conflict between the priest and the peasants was further aggravated by another matter. The peasants accused Levytskyi of having refused to deliver a sermon on the harmfulness of witchcraft in accordance with the suggestion of village headman Dumiak, who had in fact asked the priest to specifically mention the case of Olena Levych, whom the villagers believed to be a witch. According to the protocols, Levytskyi had refused to give a sermon saying only: »I am not near her house so I do not know who is visiting her and what they are doing there.«⁵³ Iurii Kmitsikevych, who led the trial, assumed that the priest did not want to accuse Olena Levych only because Dumiak, whom he disliked, had demanded support from him.⁵⁴

The matter of witchcraft was very important for the peasants of Nahuievychi because they generally believed in witches and other supernatural creatures, though in an ambivalent way. In times of despair, they either used their help or blamed them for misfortunes.⁵⁵ An article by Ivan Franko, »*Upyri* burnt in Nahuievychi village in 1831«, describes the plague of the same year. Although Franko fictionalizes events and characters, he paints a vivid picture of the villagers' great fear of *upyri* – vampires or ghouls who in Slavonic mythology are half-human and half-demon. The peasants could therefore not be persuaded of the injustice of their beliefs by any priest or authority.⁵⁶

The tense relations between priests and villagers was further aggravated by their gap in education. The peasants often did not even understand the prayers or doctrines. They had to learn them by heart but could not in fact say what they were about. The priests' reactions to this varied widely. Most of them contented themselves with the peasants' poor knowledge of religion. For example, the priest Iurii Kmitsikevych wrote that Marysia, the daughter of Ivan Kizhakovych,

51 Ibid., protocol e, § 5, p. 311.

52 »Zhaluiusia i na to, shcho Otets' tak moiу dytynu nazvav, shcho ne znaiu iak ii teper klykati.« Ibid.

53 »Pry iei khati ne sydzhu, ne vydzhu kto tam khodyt' i shcho ona zi svoimi hist'my robyt'.« Ibid., protocol ee, § 8, p. 339.

54 IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystyplinarnoho slidstva, General description, p. 169 (letter 1, protocol ee).

55 Bordun, »Z zhyttia ukrains'koho dukhovenstva,« 78.

56 Franko, Ivan. »Sozhzeniie upyrei v sele Nahuievichakh v 1831 h.,« *Kievs'kaia staryna* 29, no. 4 (1890): 101–120, here 111–114.

»showed knowledge of everyday prayers during the exam and is prepared for confession although she forgets some words and misspells others.«⁵⁷

While Iosyf Levytskyi does not appear in the court files to be very demanding of the peasants, the protocols do in fact document another problem: He did not miss any opportunity to mock the peasants' ignorance, and it was this humiliation in particular that led to the severe conflict. Other priests accepted the peasants' lack of education more easily or were at least able to guard their tongues.

Struggle for domination

Iosyf Levytskyi was shaped by the new educational system and administrational reform brought about by the Habsburg Empire. His involvement in secular affairs led to further escalation in the conflict with village headman Kost Dumiak. The question of hierarchy arose which was interpreted differently by the two sides. Dumiak believed in the legitimacy of his own power and claimed that a cleric should not intrude upon administrative affairs. By contrast, Levytskyi was convinced that he was chosen by God and the Empire to protect his community and to reign over it. Such antagonism and tensions regarding status find resonance in the saying: »Ever since the world has existed, priest and *viit* cannot be friends.«⁵⁸

Dumiak was one of the few literate people around in his rural society. After 15 years of service in the army he joined at the age of 20, he returned home as a sergeant major of some education. He could therefore understand the juridical side of the conflict better than the rest of the community, and once he became a rural headman he was able to defend his community's interests and his own.⁵⁹ Dumiak appealed to the court and demanded a new priest for the villagers of Nahuievychi. He emphasized that this was a most urgent matter and announced that the villagers would seek help with »higher and the highest« authorities if the appeal were not taken into consideration.⁶⁰ The village headman thus often appeared to be the leading rebel among the peasants.⁶¹

57 »Po provedenomu z neiu ekzameni pokazalosia, shcho ona deiaki slova shchodennoi molytvu opustyla, a deiaki nenalezhyty vyskazuvala, odnak ie sposibna spovidatysia.« IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, letter 2b.

58 »Vid koly svit svitom, ne tantsiuav shche pip z viitom.« Volodymyr S. Plaviuk, ed., *Prypovidky abo ukrayins'ko-narodnia filosofia*, vol. 1 (Edmonton: Association of Ukrainian pioneers in Alberta, 1998), 250.

59 Hrom, *Nahuievychi*, 107.

60 IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, letter 29.

61 Iurii Kmit, »Z sils'kykh vidnosyn u Halychyni v ser. XIX v.« *Zapysky NTSH* 54/4 (1903): 1–8, here 7.

Levytskyi acknowledged Dumiak's influence on the village and defamed him as an immoral person who provided a negative example to others. By contrast, peasant witnesses in the trial admired Dumiak, who, according to them, had dared to stand up to the priest with his harsh and colorful sayings.⁶² Levytskyi in turn demanded the suspension of the village headman from service. Apart from the personal insult, he blamed him of having shown disrespect to the religion and having frightened those villagers who supported the priest.⁶³ In this context it is worth mentioning that Vasyl Dumiak, the churchwarden (*palamar*) in Nahuievychi and a brother of the village headman, supported Levytskyi.

Another conflict arose between Iosyf Levytskyi and church dean Iurii Kmitsikevych, who led the investigation. The court documents indicate that they were rivals from earlier times and had no sympathy for each other.⁶⁴ This acknowledgement complicates the case, but it also provides insight into the relations between the two priests. Kmitsikevych seemed to be very displeased with Levytskyi's behavior, describing him as an immoral, rude, and high-handed priest who did not care about the spiritual state of his worshippers and who was interested only in his own financial gain. He even portrayed him as a mentally unstable person with an evil heart, who rejoiced in the misfortune of others, saying things such as: »During the last proceedings the priest [Levytskyi] turned into a madman and showed a display of anger that is not appropriate for a cleric, especially for a priest.«⁶⁵

During the trial the dean repeatedly stressed how Levytskyi spoke ill of the bishop, which compelled Kmitsikevych to replace a number of bad words in the protocols with more appropriate language.⁶⁶ However, the document is still full of statements by Levytskyi such as »I am not some pushover, is the bishop going to beat me with a whip or something?«⁶⁷ and »I am playing with the bishop as with a ball.«⁶⁸

62 E.g.: »Ja takiego księdza za włosy z błota wyciągał, i mnie taki ksiądz w ręce całował.« (The protocols are written in Cyrillic, although the language is Polish) IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, Drohobych court case, letter 3.

63 Ibid., letter 4.

64 Ibid., letters 3 and 7.

65 »Pry spysuvanniu tsioho ostannioho protokolu parokh formal'no pereminyvsia na furiata i pokazav taku afektsiu hnivu i zlobnosti, tak shcho tse ne lytsiuvalo osobi dukhovnyi a shche menshe parokhovi.« Ibid., letters 10–11.

66 Ibid., letter 9, § 19.

67 »A ia shcho smarkatyi, iepyskop bude mene tripachkoui byty, chy shcho« IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, General description, p. 169 (letter 12, § 26).

68 »Ia tak hraiu sobi z iepyskopom iak miachem.« IFM, file 1783: Protokoly dystsyplinarnoho slidstva, letter 10, § 20.

During the trial, Levytskyi for his part accused Kmitsikevych of immorality, ascribing to him rancor, low cunning, mendaciousness, and even marital infidelity. He wrote a letter to the ecclesiastical consistory, accusing Kmitsikevych of a number of violations of his pastoral responsibilities. Levytskyi pointed out that the dean liked to travel on business, thus neglecting his parish, and noted that Kmitsikevych had personal enmity towards him and therefore depicted him in an unfavorable light. According to Levytskyi, this enmity was caused by the fact that he had accused Kmitsikevych in the past of abusing his wife and of marital infidelity with a Jewish woman.⁶⁹

Taking into account the conflict between the dean and the priest, the bishop of Peremyshl entrusted Vasyl Haponovych, an investigator from Drohobych, to look into and confirm the case against Levytskyi. In light of the recent events, however, he deemed the conclusions drawn by the dean as too harsh, and Levytskyi remained in his post in Nahuievychi. Now finding himself in an advantageous position, the priest filed a reprimand against his fellow villagers to the district court, and on August 12, 1858, Fedio Hlynka was sentenced to a month's arrest, Nastia Didych to 14 days, and Anton Rurak and Maria Klymko to 8 days each as those who had taken the most active positions against Levytskyi in court.⁷⁰

The fact that the priest remained in office after the trial, even though he had insulted the bishop during the investigation, indicates that church authorities, and presumably secular authorities as well, were reluctant to acknowledge any forthright criticism of the priesthood before the common people. Criticism of the clergy was in fact strongly censored and examined for expressions that were considered offensive, harmful, or dangerous. Both church and imperial authorities alike were afraid that the criticism of priests could lead to criticism of religious traditions that contradicted the basic principles of political rule and the administrative position of the clergy in the empire.⁷¹

The village community and the priest continued to argue even after Levytskyi returned to Nahuievychi. Within two years new conflicts had occurred, and seemingly for petty reasons. Headman Dumiak accused Levytskyi of using snuff during services, and stole his tobacco pouch, put it into an envelope, and sent it to the Supreme Ecclesiastical Authority. As a result, the priest was first to be sent away for six weeks of retreat, but managed to persuade Bishop Iakhymovych to

69 Ibid., letter 7, p. 52.

70 Shchurat, »Kameniar i ioho ridne selo,« 53.

71 Himka, John-Paul, *Galician Villagers and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies University of Alberta, 1988), 136–137.

allow him to return to Nahuievychi, and he did. Shortly thereafter, in 1860, however, Levytskyi died.⁷²

Conclusion

With the establishment of Habsburg enlightened absolutism in Galicia, the Greek Catholic clergy began to enjoy the role of a new elite. Having more opportunities to acquire a good education, the social status of priests improved. This created a stronger division between priests and the common people. Clergy became part of officialdom, a link between the empire and the rural population that fostered increased control over peasants, and priests assumed an important role in social leadership and education. This, however, often led to them abusing their power and treating the peasants as inferiors. They were more ready to turn people into obedient laity than to promote their independent development. This became the main area of conflict between peasants and clergy. As shown in the case of Iosyf Levytskyi, peasants were even ready to take priests to court when quarrels escalated.

Following the lines of conflict in the trial against Iosyf Levytskyi, a variety of themes emerge, from economic matters to differences in the interpretation of religion and the struggle for political dominance. Finance in fact remained the most irksome problem for the villagers: While the priest viewed his perquisites as a regular payment for his services, the villagers saw them as a type of extortion. In terms of local power, Levytskyi's main rival was Dumiak, the village headman, who had both the power given him by the imperial administration and the opportunity to unite people and to speak in the name of all villagers in opposition to the priest.

Regarding religion and morality, the trial also shows how the perceptions of the peasants and Levytskyi differed. Due to their lack of education, peasants often adhered to their common local beliefs and did not understand the priest's demands for change. Levytskyi on his part was not one to seek a compromise with the villagers. He focused greatly on the educational gap between himself and the peasants while other priests were more reconciliatory in that regard. His considerable temper and rude behavior, moreover, only exacerbated the conflict with Dumiak and Kmitsikevych. With all the means available to him, Levytskyi strove to prove that he was right to take on a leading position in the community.

The trial presents a very vivid picture of a mid-19th century rural community in Galicia. It demonstrates what it meant for a priest not only to be a pastor and

72 Ibid., 220–221.

leader but to live alongside the people of his parish as well. The trial also exhibits the main conflicts and quarrels in Nahuievychi, as well as in many other Galician villages of the time. The analysis of such events is crucial to our understanding of the Ruthenian movement in the second half of the 19th century.

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