

- 1:628–31 (Golitsyns), 2:71–3 (Dolgorukovs); Ia. Grot, *Zhizn' Derzhavina* (St Petersburg, 1883; reprint Moscow, 1997), 657–60.
- 36 Typical of such works are B.T. Titlinov, *Gavriil Petrov, Mitropolit novgorodskii i sanktpeterburgskii* (Petrograd, 1916); Igor Smolitsch, *Russisches Mönchtum. Entstehung, Entwicklung, und Wesen 988–1917* (Würzburg, 1953); and the extensive literature on the Masons, such as A.N. Pypin, *Russkoe masonstvo. XVIII vek i pervaiia chetvert' XIX veka* (Petrograd, 1916); Vernadskii, *Russkoe masonstvo*. Surveys of gentry culture usually ignore Orthodoxy: for example, N.D. Chechulin, *Russkoe provintsial'noe obshchestvo XVIII veka* (St Petersburg, 1889); or Iu.M. Lotman, *Besedy o russkoi kul'ture. Byt i traditsii russkogo dvorianstva XVIII-nachala XIX veka* (Moscow, 1994).
- 37 O.V. Kirichenko, 'O blagochestii russkikh dvorian XVIII veka,' *Pravoslavie i russkaia narodnaia kul'tura* 3, (Moscow, 1994), 168–79; Lavrov, *Koldovstvo*, 294–309.
- 38 Mitropolit Evgenii Bolkhovitinov, 'Opisanie Kievo-Pecherskoi Lavry,' in *Vybrani pratsi z istorii Kyieva*, by Mytropolyt Ievhenii Bolkhovitinov (Kiev, 1995), 325, 330–3; Russkaia gosudarstvennaia biblioteka, Moscow, f. 304/ II (Trinity Monastery, Supplementary Library), MS 346 ff. 108 (Matveev), 112 (Countess Tolstaia), 333v (Princess Gagarina), available at <http://stsl.ru>. The manuscript dates from the late eighteenth century (ff. 1–342) with additions (ff. 342v–75) for the years 1793–1802. The role of aristocratic women seems to be new and needs investigation. The difference between Trinity and the Caves Monastery may be the result of different sources, and both need a modern study with a more detailed analysis of the Trinity *sinodik* than provided here.
- 39 Runkevich, *Lavra*, 841, 855, 871–3.
- 40 Weber, *Das Veränderte Rußland*, 2:310–11. Weber's personal observations were to a great extent limited to the capitals.
- 41 Levin, 'Supplicatory Prayers,' 98.

Letters from Heaven: An Encounter between the 'National Movement' and 'Popular Culture'

ANDRIY ZAYARNYUK

Listy z Nieba sypią się co roku. I są tacy co czytają. A tam wszystko jest, aż szumi, posłuchaj tylko, Duwyd, zadumaj się. Groźba nad światem ... Ja skoro tylko posłucham piśma, to w tej chwileczce poznam czy to z Nieba, czy nie. Mnie nikt nie oszuka, Książd, pan, żyd czy diak. (Letters from heaven drop every year and there are those who read them. And everything there is so clear. Duwyd, contemplate it, menace hung above the world ... In the very minute I hear the letter, I recognize whether it is from heaven or not. No one can cheat me: priest, landlord, Jew, or cantor.)

Stanislaw Vincenz, *Listy z Nieba*

The Polemics around a Small Brochure

The 'letters from heaven' or 'heavenly letters' were first brought to the attention of the Ukrainian educated public in Galicia in 1877, when Bilous, a publisher of popular books in Kolomyia, printed a fourteen-page pamphlet called *Lyst iz' iavlenyi* (A Letter of Revelation). Bilous was severely attacked by national-populist-oriented members of the Ukrainian clergy for printing the letters. An article signed by several 'progressive' priests makes the presumptive declaration: 'We must say: (1) that no one in heaven wrote or writes letters; (2) that neither the patriarch of Jerusalem nor Mr Bilous ever received any such letters from heaven because all letters are delivered by the postal service which does not extend to heaven.'¹

According to enemies of the publication, the letters which Bilous published were sold for a few gulden, although the most comprehensive register of Galician Ruthenian publications gives the original

publisher's price as six kreuzers.² Critics mentioned that in his defence Bilous said that the letters had also been published in France and Poland, so he was merely following in the steps of other nations.³

Discussion of the issue in a popular periodical was preceded by an attack on the publication by the leader of the national-populist camp, Volodymyr Barvins'kyi, who stated that after some tiresome efforts they had finally managed to get 'an original document of the Ruthenian-Galician obscuration of the people.' For quite some time, rumours had been spreading that people were flocking to Kolomyia and paying 40 kreuzers for a certain 'letter,' which was only sold in special cases for 20 kreuzers. Finally, the national-populists had got their hands on a copy of this publication.

Barvins'kyi ridiculed its appearance and the context of its publication, both of which were very much in keeping with the mores and style of the 'Old Ruthenian' camp. He calculated that three editions of the letter, at least 10,000 copies each, even if sold for only 20 kreuzers each, amounted to 6,000 gulden, which 'poor people' had paid 'for the most topsy-turvy exploitation of their darkness and unclear faith.' He characterized the publication as a 'mixture of extreme stupidity and shameless profanation' and expressed surprise that church authorities (Rev. Mykhailo Malynovs'kyi in particular) had not discerned the anti-Catholic motifs in the pamphlet as they eagerly found them in national-populist publications. Concluding, Barvins'kyi addressed himself to the prosecutor's office and admonished it not to ignore such an abuse of religion in the press.⁴

In the course of this discussion it appears that letters similar in their content to the one published by Bilous were widely known across Galicia. A peasant who had copied such letters for money as a child wrote a response to the national populists' article, criticizing the letter and offering a recollection:

Then I saw this letter in Iakiv Palyvoda's possession. He was an assistant in Hlyboke. He had got it from a nearby cantor. The letter was not printed but written in Cyrillic. I rushed to copy the letter, not only for myself but for others as well. I confess, though I am ashamed of it now, that people paid me for such copying. I firmly believed that the letter had fallen somehow from heaven to earth.⁵

What is striking about this confession is not the peasant's trust in the letter, but rather the fact that he was now ashamed of it.

The Old Ruthenian camp tried to defend Bilous without arguing for the authenticity of the letters. One 'townsman' responded with an article appearing in *Russkaia Rada*, a Russophile popular newspaper:

I must answer that God's letter did not begin circulating in the Christian world today but has been circulating for a few hundred years and that Mr Bilous at the demand of many people reprinted God's letter in the Ruthenian language so that our people could read the letter in their own language instead of German or Polish.

The letter teaches people everything that is good, encourages piety and morality, and warns against drunkenness and various wicked deeds, and if the sorcerer-correspondents of *Pys'mo z Prosvity* lived according to these teachings, they would not be as lost as they are now but would have reached the heavenly kingdom and would have obtained forgiveness for their sins, which they certainly possess in abundance, because they reject and dishonour even God's letter. Do not be misled by God's letter sorcerer-correspondents, but read it every day and live according to its instructions and God will forgive you yet.⁶

It seems obvious that this article was written either by Bilous himself or by a priest who sympathized with him but could not defend the apocrypha publicly as a priest and therefore disguised himself as a townsman. The author's knowledge of the background of the 'letters from heaven' proves that he was no mere townsman. Most probably the author of this article's justification of the pamphlet coincided with Bilous's own reasoning (although in the case of the publisher, commercial considerations were also very important). Justifying the brochure on moral grounds was consistent with the traditional clerical attitude towards the apocrypha that were circulating among the peasantry: they 'were not approved officially by the church, although they were usually readily tolerated.'⁷

Two decades passed after the polemics surrounding Bilous's publication of the letters. That the letters were still circulating widely among the Galician peasantry is indicated in an article written in 1895 by Mykhailo Verbyts'kyi. It starts with a reminder that God's only true 'letter' is the Bible, although another kind of 'God's letter' is circulating in both Ruthenian and Polish in Galicia among the unenlightened people. He quotes from the letter and concludes that everybody could easily see that it was stupidly written by someone who knew neither 'our Ruthenian speech nor the Holy Bible.'⁸

Verbyts'kyi provides us with a description of the external appearance of the 'letters from heaven': 'On a big, thick sheet of paper, there is a drawing of a dove holding a sealed letter in its beak on which the words 'God's letter' are written.' Rev. Verbyts'kyi suggests that the letters were written by *psaltyrnyky* or *lirnyky* (beggars who played the *lira* or occasionally read from the psalter over the dead in order to make money). He speculates that cantors were also possible creators of the letter. (It should be noted that cantors in Galicia created a peculiar, humorous discourse from the sacral language of Church Slavonic and the vernacular,⁹ making them potential writers of any kind of text that mixed the sacred and profane.) Verbyts'kyi also makes devastating comments about the reading public of the letters: 'All such tales are believed mostly by totally uneducated people, primarily women. On hearing of such letters they do everything to obtain them regardless of how much money it might cost – in order to guard their homes against any mishap.'¹⁰ Verbyts'kyi cites widely from the letter, almost retelling it, providing us with a valuable copy of the letter as it circulated in the 1890s.

Mykhailo Verbyts'kyi was most likely unaware of the previous polemics surrounding the letters or of the previous publications of them. He describes the letters as popular in Lemkivshchyna where he lived and worked as a parish priest. Lemkivshchyna is a mountainous region, the westernmost part of the Ukrainian territory in Galicia, and considered to be a backward region even for such a backward province as Galicia. Verbyts'kyi's geography brings the connotation of backwardness to the letter. Gender associations (women as the letters' audience) serve the same purpose. Although unaware of the discussion from 1877–8, Verbyts'kyi deals with the letters much as the previous critics had. Despite the serious threats that the letters posed to the critics' authority, they all try to ridicule them with criticism couched in a mixture of anger and irony, which presents the letters as something not worthy of lengthy discussion, as mere superstition in which educated people could not possibly believe.

A Genealogy of the Letters from Heaven

The letters that caused these harsh polemics had a long history. The origins of the letters can be found in the early medieval period – from at least the sixth century. They were mentioned for the first time in the

Visigoths' kingdom. They then penetrated the North and became popular among the populations of Charlemagne's empire, Ireland, England, and Iceland. The first letters stressed the observance of Sunday, and this remained central in all their descendants.¹¹ Robert Priebsch ascribes the origin of the letters to the activities of a sect of sabbatarians, while A. Veselovskii finds the letters' origins in popular superstitions surrounding holidays and the personalizing of Sunday and Saturday.¹² Similar letters periodically appeared in Western Europe throughout the medieval period.

For Eastern Europe, the appearance of the letters in the flagellants' movement that spread throughout Europe in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries was especially important. Various millenarian apocalyptic texts employed a notion of a heavenly letter that included the motif of the observance of holidays. The motif was very strong despite the fact that the main stress in these letters was laid upon the second coming of Christ and the religious fervour expected from the people.¹³ Veselovskii argues that the flagellants' movement introduced to the letter the motif of celebrating Friday, as well as the episode of the Mother of God interceding with Christ on behalf of mankind.¹⁴ Despite the fact that there are no testimonies about similar movements in the territory of contemporary Ukraine, flagellants' processions are known to have touched upon Polish lands and other neighbouring countries. Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi has argued that Western Ukraine, on the periphery of the millenarian movements of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, was receptive to all kinds of apocalyptic literature, that this was when the letters were introduced in Rus', and that from Western Ukraine the letters spread through the lands of the Eastern Slavs.¹⁵ This hypothesis is hard to substantiate because of the absence of adequate evidence.

According to one of the classifications, the letter in Rus' is known to have circulated in two editions. The difference between these editions lies in the story of the origin of the letters. The older version points to Rome and has a Western origin, while the later Bulgarian version known from Church Slavonic manuscripts points to Jerusalem.¹⁶ Aleksei Sobolevskii was the first to differentiate between these versions in his collection of translations circulating in Muscovite Rus' from the fourteenth to seventeenth centuries. In this collection one copy of the letter, which points to Rome, is included among the borrowings from Polish literature, while another referring to Jerusalem is placed among the

borrowings from the southern tradition.¹⁷ The Ukrainian ethnographer Mykola Sumtsov was of the opinion that the Ukrainian letters were different from the Russian ones because the former stressed only Sunday, merely mentioning Friday and Wednesday, and did not mention the events from the Old Testament that were supposed to have occurred on Sunday. According to Sumtsov, the Ukrainian letters clearly belong to the western tradition.¹⁸

But in fact there is no exact correspondence between certain editions of the letter and ethnographic territory. Further, despite the fact that the southern edition of the letter was not known in the Ukrainian territory, there are copies of the western edition from Russian territories from as early as the sixteenth century.¹⁹ To make matters even more complicated, in addition to different editions of the same letter from heaven, there are also the so-called second and the third epistles from heaven, which, despite the fact they are also letters written by God and sent from heaven, have a much different content. The eighteenth-century Russian copies of the heavenly letters were also compiled on the basis of the first edition, pointing to Rome. These copies closely resemble the copy written by the chronicler Iakym Ierlych in 1660 in Polish, which is often interpreted as an example of Polish influence. In fact, a reference to Rome does not automatically imply this letter was a Polish creation because, as Ivan Franko showed, Iakym Ierlych's letter in fact was a translation from Ruthenian.²⁰

Ierlych's account is very important for the genealogy of the Galician letters from heaven for several reasons. Textually, of all the copies from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this one is closest to the nineteenth-century Galician letters. In Ierlych's account, the heavenly letter is combined with the 'Dream of the Mother of God.' The letter from heaven had figured prominently in flagellants' processions of 1349, the 'Dream of the Mother of God' in 1399. This combination appeared prevalent in Ukraine and Russia and, according to Hrushevs'kyi, was one of the combinations created in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Different countries accepted different combinations of the heavenly letter with other apocrypha. Often together with yet another apocrypha 'On Twelve Fridays,' the letter and the dream became very popular in Eastern Europe. According to Hrushevs'kyi, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all three apocrypha underwent changes, mostly stylistically but sometimes even in their content. This was done to connect all three popular apocrypha with one idea and make them closer to each other.²¹

The Galician Manuscripts

The largest collection of Ukrainian manuscripts of the letters was collected and published by Ivan Franko. Although arguing for the Ruthenian origin of Ierlych's text, in the case of the Galician manuscripts, he argues that the Galician Ukrainian manuscripts from the nineteenth century were not produced in the Ruthenian tradition as were texts written in various religious books in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries but rather were translated from popular Polish manuscripts. He cites two almost identical Polish manuscripts from different parts of western Galicia: one from the beginning of the nineteenth century and another written circa 1870, stating that the Ukrainian popular tradition in nineteenth-century Galicia drew from these manuscripts.²²

The first of this new type of letters in Franko's collection is a manuscript from Uhniv written on 7 December 1861 by Viktor Bilyk (Uhniv manuscript). It is the first of an outstanding collection of nineteenth-century manuscripts containing the letter from heaven. The second manuscript is from the Bachka region (contemporary Vojvodina) and was found by the famous Ukrainian ethnographer Volodymyr Hnatiuk in the possession of Mykhailo Turians'kyi. This manuscript contains the letter combined with the 'Dream of the Mother of God.' A further two almost identical manuscripts contain the most popular variant of the heavenly letter as it circulated in nineteenth-century Galicia. The first was found by Ivan Franko in the village of Iaikivtsi, Zhydachiv district (Iaikivtsi manuscript), while the second was sent to Franko by his peasant friend Fed' Derhalo from Zavaliv, Stryi district (Zavaliv manuscript). Of these two, the Iaikivtsi manuscript was copied together with the 'Dream of the Mother of God.' There is also a manuscript from the village of Berlyn, Brody district, probably given to Franko by the ethnographer Osyp Rozdol's'kyi, who did a great deal of fieldwork in that village. The final Franko manuscript is from the village of Stratyn, Rohatyn district. It was written on 6 July 1867 for Ivan Kashchuk and his wife Iavdokha. Teodor Derlytsia sent it to Franko from the house of Iavdokha, who had by that time become a widow. Unlike the other Ukrainian manuscripts from the nineteenth century in Franko's collection, this one was written not in Cyrillic but in Latin script. This letter hung on the wall under a glass cover and was venerated by a peasant family as an icon.²³ We also know that Franko had seen other copies of the letter, which he did not include in his collection of published apocrypha. One such letter without an ending was sent to him by Father

Mykhailo Zubryts'kyi from the village of Mshanets' in the Stare Misto (Staryi Sambir) district.²⁴ Manuscripts in the collection are thus from different regions of Galicia and prove that the letters were read and spread all over the province.

The content of these letters, if we ignore minor differences in detail, is almost identical. These versions are all shorter than the older Cyrillic version from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. All the manuscripts present the first edition of the heavenly letter. The letter falls down to earth at the Mount of Olives in 'British' land. The most probable hypothesis is that 'British' (*Brytans'ka*) is a corrupted version of the word 'Bethany' (*Vyfyans'ka*), and dates back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. According to another story, the letter was available to everyone who wished to read it. The letter hung between earth and heaven and no one could get it but Pope Leo, who later sent it to his brother, the king. The king (*korol'*) stands here for Karl, who, in the medieval tradition, was supposed to have been the brother of Leo. The pope sent it to his brother in order to help the king against his enemies (this stresses the magical power of the letter). The Stratyn manuscript calls the king to whom the pope has sent the letter *Brosł'awski*, an adjective which does not make any sense, and is probably a corruption of the Polish word *Boleslaw*, the name of the king mentioned in Polish copies of the letter. One of the Polish manuscripts cited by Franko characterizes the king as *Braxiewiecki*, the meaning of which is also unknown.

The letter cited in the manuscripts forbids any work on Sunday and Saturday after vespers and commands people to attend church. If people behave according to the commandments of the letter, then God will give them 'an early rain at a suitable time, the land will produce plentiful harvests, your sons and daughters will multiply from the east to the west, peace, quietude, and agreement will reign over your land, the smallest fear will not attack you, and everything you wish for yourself I shall give you' (Uhniv manuscript).

Disobedience of the orders in the letter, on the other hand, would result in internal strife and unrest: tsar would fight tsar, lord would fight lord, mother would fight daughter, daughter would fight mother, husband would fight son, etc. Hatred would be sown among the people, and this would only be the first warning. If the people did not correct their behaviour, a second wave of punishments would follow, this time directed against the means of subsistence. These would include locusts, tornadoes, unbearable heat, and so on. Those who did not trust the

letter would be cursed and those who kept and copied it would have all their sins remitted. The letter would save a house from fire and help pregnant women to deliver their children.

The Bachka manuscript added to Christ's orders the injunctions not to offer false testimony, not to be proud, and 'to honour father, mother, and older people.' The Iaikovtsi manuscript admonished people not to forget death and the Last Judgment. Among the tools mentioned in the second wave of punishment are fear and a 'flaming weapon' (*ohnystoie oruzhie*). The Iaikovtsi manuscript concludes by stating that 'those who have these words with them and honour them in their houses will emerge victorious over their enemies and after death will be given the beauty of my heavenly kingdom and will live with my angels forever' and that when such people die, 'I myself [Jesus Christ] and the venerated Theotokos, my mother, and the angels will take their spirit to the heavenly kingdom forever.'

Two Letters and Their Scribe

Two manuscripts from the 1850s held in the Manuscript Division of the Vasyl' Stefanyk Library in L'viv contain heavenly letters in Polish and Ukrainian. The Ukrainian copy is written in Latin script. These manuscripts are interesting because they can be placed in context of the biography and other writings of their scribe. In this section, I will provide a short account of that context and then compare these letters with the one cited earlier and criticized by Mykhailo Verbyts'kyi.

The manuscripts from the 1850s containing the heavenly letter were written down by Teodor Stasiv Kostraba, a cantor, community scribe, and unofficial teacher in the village of Iasynovets'. His life is known to us from his autobiography. He was born on 13 February 1828, in the village of Hrabovets', circle Kalush. In 1842, Kostraba began working as a cantor in the village of his birth. From 1843 to 1847, he worked as a cantor for Rev. Iosyf Klipunovs'kyi in the villages of Kniazhovs'ke, Ianovets', and Iasynovets'. On 27 May 1848, he was enlisted in the Austrian infantry and participated in sixteen face-to-face encounters with the Hungarian insurgents. His army service continued until 1856, after which Kostraba settled down in the village of Iasynovets'.

While serving in the army, Kostraba visited almost all the lands of the Austrian Empire as well as Romania. There he learned to speak, read, and write in Hungarian, Czech, Romanian Jewish (Yiddish), and a little in Turkish and Italian. He knew German, Polish, and Ruthenian even

before enlisting in the army. After his return, he lived in Iasynovets', where he died in 1881.²⁵ At the time that he wrote down these letters, Kostraba was active in the temperance movement, taking an oath as early as 1856 not to drink vodka for seven years. It is hard to say how his military service is connected with the fact that he copied the letters. We know that the letter spread among German soldiers during every major war in the nineteenth century: from wars following from the French revolution to the German expedition to China to suppress the Boxer uprising.²⁶

From other sources we know that Teodor Kostraba was a member of the Kachkovskii society, a Russophile organization dedicated to the enlightenment of the peasants. A local priest, Father Kunyts'kyi, reported Kostraba's death to the central executive of the Kachkovskii society in 1881 in the following words: 'Our society has not lost anything with his death because he was an unsure man and his bribery did a lot of damage during elections. He was a very clever agitator and twice conspired so that another candidate won in our [electoral] district.'²⁷ Kostraba's manuscripts, as well as a short autobiography, contain a significant collection of temperance poems and plays, mostly in Polish.²⁸ The letters themselves (in the Ukrainian copy combined with a copy of the Theotokos's dream and a description of the twelve Fridays) are followed by the statutes of the Sobriety Brotherhood.

All the letters from heaven provide an account of their origin. According to the Polish copy of the letter, Pope Leo sent this letter to King Boleslaw. While it was hanging on the Mount of Olives near the icon of Archangel Michael, the letter was available to everyone who wanted to read or copy it. Those who read it had one hundred days of remission. According to the Ukrainian letter, Pope Leo sent these words to his brother (without mentioning the name Boleslaw) to help him against the enemies of all Christendom. While mentioning the Mount of Olives and the icon of Archangel Michael, this letter places the event in 'British' land. In Mykhailo Verbyts'kyi's letter, the icon is the same but the mountain is Tabor.

The next part of the letter is devoted to a description of its power. This was already mentioned in the historical part of the letter: one hundred (in some copies, one thousand) days of remission and the power to help the king against his enemies. Then the letter states that all those carrying the letter need not fear, for neither fire, water, nor Satanic magic will harm them. In the Ukrainian text, it is neither fire nor iron (fire standing for natural disasters and iron for human mischief). Fur-

ther, the Verbyts'kyi text mentions pregnant women, a motif that is also common in other copies of the letter. The letter promises pregnant women who carry the letter painless childbirth and happiness to their children who will gain 'favour from God and honour from people.' Men are promised victory over all their material and spiritual enemies.

In order to invoke the power of the letter and use it against their enemies, people were supposed to make the sign of the cross and repeat the following words:

O Lord Jesus Christ [in the Ukrainian text – Jesus Christ with me], protect me from diabolical danger, sanctify me against everything evil, defend, O Lord, my spirit and my body; in you I am placing all my hopes because you protect me day and night and at the time of my death, Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit. Defend me from the devil's cunning, from enemies known and unknown, and help me, Lord Jesus Christ, through the spilling of your blood, which is holy for us, which from your side you wished to spill to save our souls. (VR LNB, f. 3, spr. 726/9, a. 2)

After this prayer comes the text of the letter itself. It starts with the statement: 'I, Jesus Christ, have written this letter in my own hand.' The rest is also written in the first person, i.e., Jesus Christ. After reminding people that he has redeemed them with his own blood, he forbids, by his own divinity, any work on Sunday and any digging in the soil for food. Instead people must go to church, to contemplate and listen to the service and prayers. If they do not live according to the Father's orders and the teaching of this letter, then Jesus will punish them with terrible thunder, lightning, and flashes of fire, with epidemics, bloody war, and endless catastrophes. He will set king against king, lord against lord, city against city, neighbour against neighbour, and so on. He says:

And I will draw out my sword and there will be a disturbance and spilling of blood among you ... You will run from each other, your work and your estate will turn to nothing, your cattle will be eaten by wild beasts, you will die for nothing, and not a trace will be left of you. (VR LNB, f. 3, spr. 726/9, a. 4, 8)

If people hear this reminder and do not mend their errant ways, worse punishments will follow: the harvest will be destroyed, land will turn to iron, and there will be a great famine. If after these punishments anyone should still be left and should not want to correct his or her

behaviour, then according to the commands of the letter unknown blackbirds will be sent; they will attack people and the people will not be able to defend themselves against them. The punishment will be endless. In Verbyts'kyi's letter, hunger, war, and floods will come first, followed by civil war and the blackbirds.

The Ukrainian copy of the letter also includes benefits for people if they behave according to its instructions:

I will give you timely early and late rain, the land will produce plentiful harvests ... Your sons and daughters will multiply from the east of the earth to the west, peace and quiet will reign over your land, you will live as though in a restful sleep – without fearing anyone. I will give health and salvation to your souls and many years of life, and everything you will wish from me, I will hear your voice in prayer, and then I will give you everything you wish. (VR LNB, f. 3, spr. 726/9, a. 7)

Once more Jesus reminds people to finish all work on Saturday and to honour his Mother. If it were not for the praying of the Mother of God, he says, you would have died a long time ago because of your anger and your sins. The Ukrainian variant also orders its readers to honour the saints who always pray for them before God's majesty. Then the Ukrainian text repeats the motif about the Mother of God praying for the peasants. If not for this prayer, people would have been executed for their lawlessness (*bezzakonnia*) a long time ago. The letter orders people to reflect every Sunday in church 'on their sins, remembering death and the Last Judgment, listening to the Gospel and to the prayers, and with diligence to the orders of my Father (VR LNB, f.3, spr. 726/9, a. 7).' These admonishments are also to be found in Verbyts'kyi's letter, which also says not to work on Saturday after vespers in honour of the Mother of God (Saturday has been considered the day of the Mother of God ever since the Middle Ages). These orders include 'not to swear by my blood and my members, not to testify falsely, and to honour my Father and my Mother (VR LNB, f.3, spr. 726/9, a. 5, 7).'

The next part of the letter concerns its distribution. Those who have the letter in their house should pass it from one house to another to be read and copied. Those who behave according to the letter, even if they have as many sins as there are stars in the sky, grass in the ground, leaves on the trees, and sand in the sea, will be forgiven. All those who carry the letter with them, granting it due honour and behaving according to its precepts, will enjoy God's favour and people's friendship.

They will not die without confession and the Holy Sacrament. Upon their death, God and his Mother, together with the angels, will guide them to the heavenly kingdom. Verbyts'kyi's letter also includes some threats: 'Whoever does not believe in this letter will be cursed and will not have any joy here on earth ... And whoever possesses this letter but does not show it to anyone else will be dismissed from my kingdom.'²⁹

The Polish copy of the letter established its origin by noting that it had been rewritten in 1776, and sent from Rome to the Franciscan fathers in Kraków for the use of religious people. Instead of this, the Ukrainian copy has the addition about the Mother of God's dream, which is absent not only in this Polish copy but also in the Polish copies published by Ivan Franko. The Ukrainian text says that the Mother of God slept on the Mount of Olives and had a dream – Jesus Christ caught and tied, placed in front of Annas and Caiaphas, whipped, crowned with a wreath made of thorns, crucified, and speared in the ribs. Blood poured from Christ's wounds, and the holy body fell down like bark from the tree. According to Jesus Christ, everything she described really happened to him, and Jesus Christ, his Mother, and the angels would take those who kept this dream with them straight to heaven after their death. There is also a text on observing a fast for twelve Fridays. It stresses that men should not have sexual relations with their wives on these days because a child conceived on these Fridays would be born a monster.

Galician Cyrillic Publications of the Letter

Bilous's publishing house in Kolomyia printed at least four editions of the *Lyst iz'iaolenyi*: in 1877, 1878, 1879, and 1881. It seems that the editions from 1878 and 1879 were just reprints of the original 1877 edition. I was unable to find Bilous's original edition of the 'Letter of Revelation' and therefore consulted the corrected edition from the year 1881. This letter is published in the form of a small pamphlet. There is a cross and words of Christian greeting: 'Blessed be our God now and forever. Amen.' on the title page. Before the beginning of the text on the third page is another picture of two angels who hold in their hands 'God's Letter,' below which we see a small human figure praying on its knees.

According to this text, the letter contains 'Godly teachings' (*pobozhnii nauky*). The opening is the same as in the nineteenth-century Galician manuscripts – the letter appeared on the Mount of Olives in the land of

Jerusalem before the icon of Archangel Michael. However, it is interesting that the name of the mountain is *Ileons'ka*, a word coined from Church Slavonic, instead of *Olyvna*, as in the manuscript versions of the letter. The editor of the letter, an Old Ruthenian, obviously did not like the word *Olyvna* because of its similarity with the Polish *Oliwna*, although *Olyvna* became the norm in contemporary Ukrainian. Instead of the pope, the patriarch of Jerusalem is mentioned, who rewrote the letter to 'his brother tsar to preserve him from his enemies' – and this was apparently another attempt to modify the 'pro-Western' folk version according to Orthodox tradition. Those who pay attention to the letter and copy it are promised God's favour. The letter functions as a kind of magic amulet: 'Neither fire nor water nor thunder, nor any evil thing will be able to harm the house in which this letter is kept, and where people live according to its precepts.' The order to observe Sunday as a holiday is retained. The letter commands people to honour the Mother of God, to attend church, 'and especially to avoid drunkenness.'³⁰

If people observe the letter's teachings, then there will be the benefits mentioned in the manuscripts connected with good weather for agricultural production. If not, then there will be punishment in the form of thunder, lightning, clouds, and tornadoes, a war of all against all, bloodshed, a 'terrible flaming weapon,' and fear. The land will not produce, and there will be no rain. If after this punishment people are not subdued, then the blackbirds that peck out human eyes, together with diseases, snakes, and locusts, will come. Those who keep the letter with them will not die without the Holy Sacraments, and the Mother of God, together with the angels, will be present at their death.

Besides anti-Western modifications two major changes may be seen when one compares this text with that of the letter known in the popular tradition. The first is the above-cited passage on drunkenness that is connected with the observance of Sunday. The only time a similar motif appears in the previous Galician tradition is in Franko's Drohobych manuscript dating back to the eighteenth century. That copy of the letter orders people 'not to drink or eat of your own free will with the Jews.'³¹ It is worth noting that in Bilous's publication the passage on temperance is not accompanied by any anti-Semitic sentiment. Another change to the traditional texts is the passage which emphasizes the power of Christian life instead of the power of the letter: 'whoever tries to live according to God's commandments, even if they have as many sins as there are stars in the sky, sand in the sea, grass in the ground, leaves on the trees, all their sins will be forgiven.'³²

After the main text, there are some prayers, a list of important fasts,

and psalms: 90 (a prayer for delivery from the national adversary, which was also sometimes used as a magic amulet) and 120 (an exile's prayer for deliverance from enemies). It is obvious that this part has been substituted for the 'Dream of the Mother of God' and the sermon (*Slovo*) on twelve Fridays. The motifs of the prayer and the days of abstinence are preserved but apocryphal texts are replaced with orthodox religious texts. The last page of the pamphlet contains a picture of the three-barred cross. Around the cross are the words: 'Repent: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand' and 'And be not drunk with wine, wherein is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit' (Eph. 5:18).

Given the polemics mentioned at the beginning of this essay, it would seem logical not to expect a Ukrainian edition of this letter. But this is not the case. There is such an edition, although without an exact date. This letter coincides with the text cited by Franko and dated 1903.³³ No connection with the Ukrainian national movement is declared, but it did come from a publishing house of Ukrainian orientation and the language of the brochure is closer to literary Ukrainian. This pamphlet bears the title 'God's Letter,' and was printed by the publishing house of Ivan Bednars'kyi. The editor uses the pseudonym Ivan the Traveller (*Podorozhnyi*), but who lies behind this pseudonym is difficult to establish.³⁴ Franko commented on this letter that among the whole range of published letters 'which were usually clumsy remakes of the older manuscript versions, [I] chose this one; this is an example of modern preaching grafted onto the old apocryphal outline.'³⁵

There are significant differences between the publications of Bilous and Bednars'kyi, however. The cover of Bednars'kyi's pamphlet features a picture of a Western (Gothic) entrance to a chancel with a Christian greeting – Glory to Jesus Christ. On the second page, the picture from Bilous's letter is reprinted, but the human figure is enlarged and more clearly engraved. The outline of the old text is so dispersed, altered, and sprinkled with quotations from the Bible that it is hard to discern the stress on the observance of Sunday as a day of rest. For example, the passage on the magical properties of the letter now reads as follows:

Whoever carries God's teaching in his heart [the older text refers to carrying the material letter], rereads this letter often, keeps it in his house as a most precious jewel, and lives together with all his family according to it, he is worthy of God's grace, and God will give him what he wishes for; God guarantees this in the nineteenth psalm with the words: 'Grant thee according to thy heart, and fulfil all thy desire.'³⁶

Also, there are revivalist passages in Bednars'kyi's text, which could be considered a reprise of motifs from the flagellants' movement and are inconsistent with the letters functioning as part of folk culture. For example: 'Wake up from your sinful dream, O man, and look at your wounded Saviour, look at his head wounded with the thorns and invoke pity in your heart.'³⁷

Concerning the passage that orders people to celebrate Sunday, Bednars'kyi's letter commands people to abstain from 'hard [!] work,' from sinful festivities, and to observe the teachings. Proper religious behaviour in this text requires the believer to contemplate his sins and to take the Holy Sacrament. The order to honour parents and older people, which can be found in the Bachka manuscript, is transformed into the notion of obedience to authority: 'I order you to honour your parents, your spiritual and secular superiors, to love them, to listen to them, and to pray for them, and then you can hope for guidance and blessing in this life and eternal happiness in the next.'³⁸ In the same tone, another passage says, 'Do not stretch out your hands for another's property.'

The quotation from the Bible on drunkenness that Bilous placed on the back cover of his pamphlet (Eph. 5:18) is placed here in the text and followed by the words: 'And now in quite a few villages we can say after the Holy Prophet that our 'slaves subdued us,' and you, owners and landlords of the land of your ancestors, have become slaves!'³⁹ The words were obviously aimed at Jews, although Jews are not mentioned. Concerning drunkenness, Bednars'kyi's letter says: 'Avoid any impurity, all shameless thoughts and urges, i.e., everything of which you will later be ashamed.' The notion of shame never appeared in the manuscript containing the Galician versions.

This proves that while Bilous's letter was still compatible with folk tradition and did not interfere with it radically, the new letter presented a decisive break from it. This letter from God belongs to a genre of religious and moral writings that proliferated at the turn to the twentieth century in the context of a particular Greek Catholic revivalism, rather than to the genre of the heavenly letter. The manuscript that was presented by the ethnographer Volodymyr Hnatiuk to the Library of the Shevchenko Scientific Society proves that Bilous's letter unlike Bednars'kyi's was easily incorporated into the older folk tradition.⁴⁰

This is, probably, the latest known manuscript version of the letter that circulated among the Galician peasantry, and it bears a strong trace

of Bilous's editions. This copy of the letter is written in the form of a book with eleven pages. The title page says 'God's Letter,' and the words are framed by wavy squares. This form contrasts strikingly with the form of one sheet of paper as was the case with the Strutyn and Verbyts'kyi manuscripts. The last page is an exact copy of the last page of Bilous's edition.

Like both published versions of the letter Hnatiuk's manuscript begins with 'In the name of Father+and Son+and Holy Spirit+. Amen.' This letter also contains 'Godly teachings.' The patriarch of Jerusalem and his brother, the tsar, are the heroes of the story of the letter's origin. Even the mountain on which the letter appeared is called *Ieleons'ka* not *Olyvna*. The rest of the text repeats almost to a word Bilous's printed version. It says, 'Whoever carries this letter or observes it carefully, or copies it, will enjoy God's grace. Everyone who lives according to God's commandments will be rewarded with eternal salvation. In all homes in which this letter is kept ... there will be neither fire, nor water, nor thunder, nor lightning.'

It is interesting that despite the fact that the manuscript follows the version of the letter printed by Bilous, it still includes 'The Dream of the Mother of God' and the text on the twelve Fridays instead of the official prayers and fasts of Bilous's pamphlet. The text about the dream of the Mother of God is a classical variant without any significant differences. It is followed by a prayer and explanation of the benefits connected with observing the fast scrupulously on these Fridays. To each Friday corresponds one of the following benefits: one will not die unexpectedly, one will not be impoverished, one will be saved, one will know the time of one's own death, one will not suffer serious illness, one will be pleasantly surprised on the next holiday, one will not die in mortal sin, one will be protected from enemies, one will never be poor while working and fasting properly, one will see the Mother of God before one's death, one will see Jesus before one's death, and one's spirit will be accepted by God into the heavenly kingdom.

Letters from Heaven as Peasant Tactics of the Old Regime

Intellectuals studying the heavenly letters obviously did not take the nineteenth-century manuscripts and printed versions circulating among the peasantry seriously. One of the first authors to investigate the heavenly letter wrote:

The epistle in a remade German folk version known under the title *der Braker Himmelsbrief* represents the extreme extent of the genre's decay. It circulates in the form of a manuscript and printed copies, and its meaning has definitely diminished to that of an amulet; it is a compilation of magical formulas among which the original meaning of the epistle disappears almost totally.⁴¹

This was the view of those interested in the epistle as a literary text from the Middle Ages. They despised the shortened and simplified texts of the peasant manuscripts as senseless imitation.

Because of the strong populist orientation of the Ukrainian movement, the attitude of Ukrainian ethnographers and historians could not be as dismissive. Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi pointed out that the manuscripts from the seventh to nineteenth centuries were characterized 'by an almost complete coincidence with only secondary differences.'⁴² In his view, early modern literature incorporated the moral side of the letter, while 'the people' borrowed the magical: 'This call for moral revival unexpectedly became a fetish against thieves and fires and a warding talisman for pregnant women. Thus the connection between two apocrypha [the letter and the dream] – the order to observe Sunday and Friday, and the sermon of penance – were missed.'⁴³

As the most interpretive among all Ukrainian scholars of the letters, Hrushevs'kyi tries to place them in a social context. However, while defining the letters as the 'people's second Gospel,' he stresses the formalization of the text of the letters in folk culture, placing them among the so-called *heortology* or celebrations of certain days.⁴⁴ An imitation of the Jewish tradition, this formalizing tendency was connected with the spread of Christianity among the popular masses.⁴⁵ In spite of the fact that most of his evidence is from the nineteenth century, Hrushevs'kyi discusses the letters as oral popular creations of the thirteenth to seventeenth centuries. Having influenced early modern high literature, the letters in the context of folk culture became mere magical amulets.

Hrushevs'kyi's conclusions are based on the works of Franko and Sumtsov, both of whom showed that the letters, as well as other apocrypha, were closely connected to folk culture. Both tried to show the richness of Ukrainian culture and thus contributed to the creation of the image of a homogenous Ukrainian culture. The works of Sumtsov and Franko on Ukrainian apocrypha had different emphases. While Sumtsov was trying to create the picture of a folk culture that was clearly delin-

eated territorially and constituted the basis for a separate national Ukrainian culture (in spite of the fact that he was forced to call this territory South Russia), Franko was concerned with the continuity of this culture, tracing the tradition of Ukrainian literature from the Middle Ages.

These different emphases of Franko's and Sumtsov's works together with their attempts to use letters for the support of their arguments resulted in many tensions and contradictions. Sumtsov stresses the way the apocrypha were tolerated in Ukrainian (or South Russian) society in the early modern period, in striking contrast with the concern for 'evil-doing books' in Muscovite Rus'.⁴⁶ Franko, on the other hand, stresses the similarities between Galician Ukraine and Central Russia, although, in his opinion, unlike in the latter, in the former 'love of the old apocrypha did not call for religious dissent and doubts, but was simply a part of the old cultural and literary tradition; and as such had a significant impact on the formation of the popular worldview.'⁴⁷

As mentioned previously, Franko saw a break between the early modern and the nineteenth-century letters, which, in his opinion, had been translated from Polish copies. Unlike Franko, Sumtsov thought that the role of literary tradition should not be overestimated:

Some motifs sown in the soil of South Russia's scholastic literature did not result in the sprouting of folk poetry; other motifs, partly through the mediation of that literature, but mostly independently of it, penetrated the people to their very depths, were included in the general framework of the people's world view and were developed into songs under the influence of local regional life and local peasant psychology.⁴⁸

These opinions disclose the attitude of the ethnographers to folk culture. Considering folk culture as something necessary to study and valuable to the development of a new national culture, they could not approach it in terms of practice or even in terms of the functions it performed in peasant society. Although the folk tradition was officially proclaimed to occupy a central place in the national tradition and national culture, it was at the same time considered archaic, an odd curiosity that would eventually disappear. On the one hand, the folk tradition was presented as rich and of great value. It was the basis of fundamental distinctions between nations and testimony to the existence of the Ukrainian nation. On the other hand, it did not fit the needs of modern society. The ethnographers were looking for the essence of a

national folk culture, which was supposed to be the source of its distinctiveness in a world naturally divided into separate homogenous cultures. Folk culture was interesting only as far as it helped to establish boundaries between ethnic communities that had to be transformed into national borders.

It is interesting that Franko does not mention the nineteenth-century letters in his numerous social studies of peasant life. Instead he introduces them in the context of the apocryphal literature of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. In short, even for the age of positivism, Peter Burke's observation on the discovery of popular culture by the Romantics, 'in which the ancient, the distant and the popular were all equated,'⁴⁹ is still applicable. But in the Ukrainian case, 'popular' does not appear in opposition to 'high' or 'learned.' Ukrainian ethnographers do not talk about popular but about people's (*narodna*) culture, which, because of the semantic polyvalence of the noun *narod* and the adjective *narodnyi*, can be easily bridged with national. Culture is seen as an enclosed system, and a canon of the people's culture was being created from which all the contesting and inconvenient elements were carefully sifted and excluded.

The first question that comes to mind – why exactly was this kind of apocrypha so popular? – is often avoided. Sumtsov asserts that the main reason for the letters' popularity lies in the Ukrainian national character – the letters were especially close to Ukrainian folklore with its cult of Sunday as the personification of holiday leisure: 'Little Russian [i.e. Ukrainian] popular legends about Sunday are satisfactorily explained by the epistle on Sunday or the heavenly letter and, besides that, are based on the etymological meaning of the word Sunday (*Nedelia*) – from the words 'not to work' (*ne delat*').⁵⁰ The weaknesses of these explanations do not diminish the contributions of Franko and Sumtsov to our understanding of the letters as a phenomenon of popular culture, but they reveal the knowledge frame in which these contributions were made.

If Franko showed that the letters from heaven were the most popular text circulating among the Ukrainian peasantry in Galicia, Sumtsov showed that the letters from heaven did not exist separately from oral culture. An example of the influence of the letter from heaven on folklore is the song 'Winnow, girls' (*Viite divon'ky*) from Galicia, written down by Holovats'kyi and considered by Sumtsov to be one of the best examples of folk poetry. In this song, the punishment for those breaking the holiness of Sunday and Friday is waiting at the Last Judgment.⁵¹ For

Sumtsov, this is an example of how many religio-mythical and church-apocryphal motifs could be closely and organically united by the creativity of the folk spirit. Not only the letter but also the text of the 'Dream of the Mother of God' was intimately connected with oral culture. From a different source we know that it circulated in the Sambir region in the form of a prayer, which ended with the words: 'And whoever recites the prayer and carries it with him will never have a nightmare.'⁵² But, as Sumtsov is interested only in the aesthetic aspect of such a confluence between the letters and the oral tradition, for him this shows only the richness of folk culture.

The letters were the most popular manuscript text circulating among the would-be Ukrainian part of the Galician peasantry, but not the only one. Manuscript collections of other apocrypha, religious songs, and prayers were frequently met as well. And in this respect Galician peasants were not unique – at the end of the nineteenth century similar manuscripts circulated among other Slavic peasants of East-Central Europe.⁵³ Paradoxically, this wide circulation is the reason why only a few of them are now to be found. According to Hnatiuk, old manuscripts of religious songs in the peasants' own handwriting were very popular in the nineteenth century but they changed hands frequently and quickly wore out.⁵⁴ In the case of the letters, they were often not only kept in the house but worn on the body. Tymotei Zaiats, a sectarian-rationalist from Russian-ruled Ukraine, recalls: 'And he who keeps the "Dream of the Holy Mother of God" with him will find all his sins forgiven, even if he has as many sins as there are grains of sand in the sea or leaves on the trees; and I carried the "dream" with me even when I went to steal.'⁵⁵ Some manuscripts of the dream even had traces of the human body on them. From the manuscript copies we have it becomes clear that the letters from heaven were not only the most popular manuscripts among peasants, but that they also did very well in competition with print culture, outliving, for example, religious songs, which soon were replaced by printed and officially approved versions.

First of all, for the peasants the letters were an accessible text. All peasants had seen and were familiar with the Gospel. It was a book used in the liturgy, but it was inaccessible to them:

There were cases when peasants for tens of miles attended one church and asked that the Gospel be read over the head of its holder. There would be nothing wrong with the reading itself were it not for the fact that after a certain time when another Gospel was acquired, the people demanded

that the old book be read. What mattered was not the Word of God but the book.⁵⁶

Because of its inaccessibility, they did not call it 'the Book,' as English country folk did. The text itself was considered an attribute of God. There is the example of a popular prayer, where books are closely associated with the apostles and preaching, and God is quoted as saying: 'O Peter and O Paul, do not feel pity for my sufferings! Take a golden stick and golden book, go into God's world, teach the people.'⁵⁷ The proverb 'He read to him as from a book,' meaning to tell the whole truth about a person,⁵⁸ reflects the same attitude and shows the inaccessibility of print to the peasant. There was also a custom in the Staryi Sambir district in Galicia that when someone intended to build a house, he would go to a priest and have him consult the Gospel to find out whether or not the place was clean. The priest would ask the farmer to open the Gospel and looking at the text would tell him what would happen.⁵⁹

The account of reading from the Bible shows that the practice of divination in Ukraine differed from that in Western Europe in that the Ukrainian peasants not only did not read the biblical text on which the prediction was based, but did not even hear it read by the priest. What they had was just an interpretation of the text by the priest, who was the sole authority on the Bible in the village and very often had sole access to the printed sacral text. His monopolistic access to the Bible was one of the sources of his power. But the inaccessibility of the text led the peasants to find another text they could use. Printed texts in general did not fit this purpose well. The peasants believed that there were wonder-working books, books 'that can call forth the evil spirit but they were not allowed to fall into the hands of simple people, while those who have knowledge will not be harmed by them.'⁶⁰ Apparently, these books were out of their reach. In the absence of printed texts when even the Bible was not accessible to the peasantry, manuscripts became the central form of text the peasants knew about. The fact that the letters circulated as manuscripts also becomes significant in this light.

The letters were, first of all, a channel for the peasants to communicate with absolute truth that they established outside regular channels controlled exclusively by the church. The letters were their Bible, a substitute for the real one, to which they had no direct access. The letters were, exactly like the Bible, the words of God himself. The relation of the letters to the Bible was similar to the relation between the

golden charters, which circulated among the peasantry in the Russian Empire, and the original documents on the emancipation of the serfs in Russia: 'The peasant Articles were everything the manifesto and statutes were not – easy to read, easy to understand, short, and very appealing to the peasants.'⁶¹ In peasant society at that time, God's authorship of the letters meant that they expressed the views of the highest authority.

It seems that the letters proved the world view of the peasants to be first and foremost Christian. Despite flights of imagination, the basic structures of the letter more or less corresponded to certain parts of Christian teaching appropriated by the peasants. The images the letter presents to the minds of its readers are Christian. The Mount of Olives is the centre around which a Christian history was constructed in the letters. According to biblical tradition, the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem began from this mount. It was also the site of Christ's eschatological discourse (Mt. 24:3, Mk 13:3); it witnessed his agony and arrest, and his ascension to heaven. In the letters, this mountain is the site of Christ's written eschatological discourse and the place where his Mother foresees his sufferings. It is only in Verbyts'kyi's letter that another mountain is mentioned as the site of the letter's appearance – Mount Tabor, which is the place suggested as the site of the Transfiguration.

But Christianity was also a hegemonic ideology and as such used by the peasants out of necessity. The letters not only expressed eternal truth; they were also highly contemporary writings, the medium of everyday communication with God despite the fact that the date of the appearance of the letters was sometimes located at a distance of a century or two from the actual date on which they were copied. God was intervening, responding to the events on earth, and the letters stressed that communication had been established between earth and heaven. The link was accessible to everyone. The pope and the tsar received it first, but both of them were detached from the clergy or the local authority of the landlord. The Mother of God was praying for the peasants, and they had a much better chance of being saved. The peasants were aware of the importance of communication – for example, Hutsuls (Galician mountaineers) believed that the Roman pope received letters from God every Sunday.⁶² Thus the peasants had access to the same kind of text as the pope had. The letters served as 'news' for the countryside (if we accept that the only difference between rumours and news is the fact that the latter is adjudicated and spread by a single commonly recognized authority).

The only reference Mykhailo Verbyts'kyi made to the quoted text of the letter is the claim that the sins of those who observe, read, and spread the letters will be forgiven. Verbyts'kyi observes: 'Sins can only be repented in confession through the sincere sorrow of the sinner, and no letters can offer remission of sins. Merely from this fragment it is clear that the letter was written by an uneducated person and, maybe, even in a state of inebriation.'⁶³ It is clear that Verbyts'kyi's anger resulted from what he perceived as an attempt by the letter to appropriate part of the church's authority, which was also the basis of his own authority in the village. The letters diminished the power of officials, priests, and other educated people and provided an opportunity for illiterate people to possess a text of their own. They could keep this text, know it by heart, and 'read' it without necessarily being literate.

The text was even used in anticlerical agitation. In 1900, Rev. Bachyns'kyi in Ripchytzi, in the Drohobych district, complained that Illiarji Harbins'kyi, the son of a priest from Volia Iakubova, who had been involved in radical agitation during the so-called Dobrivliany conspiracy in 1886, had used the form of a letter from heaven during his agitation among the parishioners 'so that it will work more successfully among people and in which blasphemy, agitation against church orders and authorities, hatred of my person, and extreme radicalism in general are clearly seen.'⁶⁴

Omelian Ohonovs'kyi notes that the reason for the popularity of these apocrypha is the fact that they were written in a language close to the vernacular.⁶⁵ However, it seems that the clear style of the sentences and the accessible construction of the text was even more important to the letter's accessibility. The text of the letter is a typical myth-centred one that organizes and orders the world, explains the world of the reader, and prescribes adequate behaviour that is good in any situation. The conceptualization of time in the letters can be described in Walter Benjamin's terms, paraphrased by Benedict Anderson as 'simultaneity of past and future in an instantaneous present.'⁶⁶

At the same time, the text has eschatological tendencies. The order of things is threatened, which is why behaviour becomes so important. According to Yuri Lotman, eschatological discourse constitutes the first break with ritual and signals the appearance of narrative.⁶⁷ The narrative of the letter is clearly built on a set of oppositions between good and evil through which the letter legitimizes itself. The letter is not totally directed at supporting the status quo; rather it stresses the sinfulness of the contemporary world and the necessity of regeneration. The

text of the letter becomes a text arming the peasantry with knowledge and power.

What Sumtsov saw as a national trait of the Ukrainian copies of the letter – their short form and laconic expression – was, in fact, a trait of the letter's popular origins, a connection to the culture of resistance.⁶⁸ The stress on the observance of Sunday can be seen as a classical example of peasant resistance. It was directed against the extraction of peasant labour and claimed that the peasants also had the right to leisure. (Perhaps it is not at all accidental that the aftermath of the abolition of serfdom in 1848 was characterized by the refusal to work on landlords' estates even for pay, which was later presented as the first peasant strike in Galicia).⁶⁹ These peasant tactics not only countered and were dangerous to the old system in which peasant labour was extracted by direct force and the monopoly on knowledge officially preserved. I would argue that even more important is the fact that potentially the letters were even more dangerous to the discourse of 'modernity.'

New and Old Discourse – Rejection, Substitution, and Mimicry

The way ethnographers and historians have approached the letters is comparable to the reactions of the populist priests, the correspondents of *Pys'mo z Prosvity*, Volodymyr Barvins'kyi and Mykhailo Verbyts'kyi. Both interventions represent scholarly and publicist ways of denying the viability of the letters by attempting to make them an anachronism. They did not try to interpret the letters. The letters were senseless and destined to die out. The authors presented the culture of the letters as apolitical because it did not coincide with their notion of representational politics. They refused to consider the letters as containing knowledge because that did not coincide with their ideas about rational knowledge.

It is not a coincidence that after describing the letters, the ethnographers forgot about them for almost a century, and the letters disappeared from discussions of traditional folk culture. The letters did not fit the images of traditional culture created by ethnographers who were trying to legitimize a homogeneous national culture. Their traditional culture was one that preserved the national character in purity, preventing it from being sullied by interaction with cosmopolitan high culture while waiting for the national high culture of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to be developed on its basis. The letters were an interna-

tional phenomenon, and no clear line could be drawn between Ukrainian, on the one side, and Polish and Russian popular culture, on the other. The letters belonged to Christian folklore while the most precious part of folk culture was considered to be pre-Christian. The letters were texts while the folk culture was supposed to be exclusively oral.

The attack on the letters in the Ukrainian press was inaugurated by Volodymyr Barvins'kyi, the leading national-populist enlightener of the 1870s. Those who attacked the letter in the Ukrainian popular press were priests and, at the same time, promoters of a new discourse in the countryside. They were nationalists, but they were also a new kind of priest, those who wanted to see their authority in the community based not on the traditional status of the clerical estate but on their superior spirituality, education and ethics. While maintaining the link between knowledge and power, these new priests claimed to possess a new kind of knowledge and new values. The letter posed a threat to these new values even more than to the values of the old regime. Under the old regime, the priests as well as the landlords had tolerated the letters, probably, because despite their being part of the peasant culture of resistance, the letters did not threaten the foundations of the dominant order. Rather, the letters accepted and thus to some extent supported the basic categories of the old regime. It is not an accident that, despite being a member of the Kachkovskii society, Teodor Kostraba, one of the letters' scribes, worked against prominent Ruthenian politicians and was an enemy of the local priest. Kostraba represents the older type of peasant activist, whose authority was based not on formal institutions, organizations, and education but on personal experience, self-education, and community recognition. And the letters were associated precisely with this type of peasant politics.

The new discourse could not tolerate the letters the way the old regime had. The letters used a set of geographical coordinates for identification that were different from those set by modern discourse. The centres of their world were the Mount of Olives, Rome, or Jerusalem; and these were much more important than, for example, Kyiv. God, the pope, and the tsar were the source of authority, not the will of the people. The notion of time in the letters was resolutely different from the one preached by the national movement. The time of the letters is the time of Christian history, but even the events of that history are transformed into a regular exchange of holidays and weekdays. Time was a circle in which sacral and profane periods alternated, and even unusual events like the intervention of God were woven into that

cycle. This notion of time was deeply foreign to two central notions of modern discourse: linear time as progress and time as money. Therefore, it is not strange that the new discourse did not only try to reject the letters but did not discuss them too much, presenting them as already dead.

At the same time, publications of the letters show that the interaction between new and old discourse was much more complicated and not limited to simple rejection. Printed remakes of the letters that appeared on the margins of modern projects exploited the old form of the letter from heaven. It substituted for the letter a new form of religious discourse, one that did not conflict with the secular ideas the national movement preached. The differences between Bilous's and Bednars'kyi's editions of the letter also point to differences between the two orientations or two national movements that developed among Galician Ukrainians. Bilous's party (Russophiles) was not as modern as the Ukrainian party was. Whereas the Russophiles could not discern what was wrong with publishing the letter as it circulated among the peasantry if the letter taught only good old Christian morals, Ukrainian national-populists saw in such toleration a threat to their project of creating a modern Ukrainian nation.

Despite this incompatibility, or because of it, the letters could not be simply rejected by the modern national movement. Their historical legacy lay in the tactics of the simple people. It is possible to discern the legacy of the letters from heaven in the cultural production associated with the national movement. The national movement made wide use of the old attitudes of the peasantry towards texts, introducing new texts, popular newspapers, and books. Brevity, vernacularity, and straightforwardness characterized popular publications. While rejecting one characteristic of the letters' discourse, namely the images they articulated, the modernizers accepted another characteristic of that discourse, namely its particular form of narration.

The attitude of the peasants towards the popular press was not very different from their attitude towards the letters. According to Franko:

People waited for *Bat'kivshchyna* [considered to be the best of the Ukrainian popular newspapers in Galicia] in whole communities far outside the village, waiting for the messenger from the post office who delivered the issues. On Sundays at cemeteries near the church, literate peasants read the newspaper to whole communities that hung on the words, news, and advice that sounded strange to them, and they forgot about food and rest. The paper's word was holy ...⁷⁰

Such reading still had something heretical to it. The books forbidden by the church and read by Czech peasants were read in the same way: 'Here it is the written text that contains absolute truth and produces truth in its readers, legitimizing their spiritual and individual freedom of choice.'⁷¹ This particular way of reading its production was appreciated by the national movement despite the fact that it was based on the peasants' earlier attitudes towards texts.

New religious newspapers clearly copied, consciously or unconsciously, the form of the letters from heaven. Apparently, the newspaper *Misionar'* (The Missionary) did it consciously. An issue of the newspaper was called a 'letter' (*lyst*) not a 'number' (*chyslo*). The paper claimed to have a supernatural power, although it is unclear whether that power was attributed to its content or to the physical letter itself:

Wherever the missionary letters appeared and encountered good, pious hearts, they set souls aflame with the love of God and religious fervour, pious life flourished while sinning and immorality were curtailed ... But evil people and wicked souls were angered by this divine grace. – Our letters were set on fire, shredded by hand, stamped into the mud – but nothing could harm them because God's grace was with us.⁷²

To confirm its magical power, *Misionar'* readily printed letters from readers who thanked the paper for wonderful cures. Such borrowing was not invented in the nineteenth century. In the eighteenth century the Catholic Church in Bohemia used a similar strategy to fight Protestant publications: 'Catholic works must take the place of the sequestered volumes, works imitating as closely as possible the form and structure of the ones that circulated in Bohemia from Zittau, Leipzig, or Halle.'⁷³

Printed production in late nineteenth-century Galicia was too often judged in terms of truth and falsehood. Not only church but also state authorities and political movements presented the production of their adversaries as false. A newspaper supporting a political opponent was called 'false' as late as 1907.⁷⁴ The rhetorical style of the letters and parallels between national and religious authority were widespread: 'Glory be to Jesus Christ! The sound of the angelic trumpet spreads nicely and pleasantly over our people and awakens them to the light so that they may open their eyes after a long dream and see the sun of truth and their own salvation.'⁷⁵ The employment of this particular

religious rhetoric can help to explain the popularity of newspapers that were of no practical use to peasants.

The use of rhetoric shows that the narrative form was not the only discursive figure borrowed from the letters. Besides the form, the order of the narrative present in the text of the letter was used and developed. The geography of the letters was replaced by a new one. Ukrainian secular history in popular newspapers took the place of biblical history, and the narrative of Ukrainian history was placed in the territory of the would-be Ukrainian nation. The introduction of Kyiv in the press and popular books instead of Christian centres ended with the appearance of Kyiv as the centre of a new imagined space even in the texts of Christmas carols published by a press of Russophile orientation.⁷⁶

Similarly, the new discourse played with the old notions of time present in the letter. In the memoirs of Jan Słomka, a Polish Galician peasant activist, the description of a clock he had bought and brought to the village occupies an important place in his description of changes connected with modernization.⁷⁷ The new notion of time was developed in two directions – linear progressive time as opposed to cyclical and eschatological, and time divided into equal units comparable with productivity of work as opposed to the holy days and weekdays connected with the needs of traditional agriculture.⁷⁸

Unlike Ukrainian national populists, the Russophiles could not develop a clear understanding of the problem. The stress on holidays was very strong in their discourse. Sometimes it was connected with capitalist sentiments: 'A shoemaker made boots on Sunday, and then drank until he fell under a table on Monday. To this one traveller answered: "You stole Sunday from God, and today the devil stole Monday from you."' But more often there was a stress on Ruthenian holidays, which were mobilized in the political struggle against the administration and against Poles and Jews who often did not show enough respect for the holidays that were celebrated according to the Julian calendar;⁷⁹ and it did not matter that peasants themselves often broke with the division between the sacral and profane from earlier times.⁸⁰ But what was good enough as a means of everyday resistance in the national conflict looked laughable when used as a means of explanation in the wider world. For example, it was argued in the Russophile press that the source of all the order and wealth in England was the strict observance of Sunday, when all trade stopped and all the theatres were closed.⁸¹ In this case, paying attention to appearances, the press linked this order and wealth with

the traditional observance of holy days, while missing the crucial intervention of the English state in policing the population and maintaining this 'public order.' The way the Russophile camp constructed their discourse was suitable for the first stage of penetrating the Galician countryside (i.e., in the 1870s), but it did not stand a chance of becoming a modern ideology.

The Ukrainian-oriented nationalists, on the other hand, took a decisive step in stating clearly the need for a new understanding of time. The time of the Ukrainian national-populist newspaper *Bat'kivshchyna* was the time of progress: 'No! We go further, and it is life, its needs, that force us onwards towards progress. Your fathers and mothers were illiterate ... You have become different from your parents.'⁸² This article made the peasants feel the need for change. The history in this article is the history of inevitable political change – 1848–1860–1867. This linearity and increasing intensity was used to underline the importance of the peasants' own time span. An illustrated Ukrainian calendar noted the following important events from the recent past: the abolition of serfdom – sixty-three years ago, the establishing of *Narodna Torhoviia* (People's Trade) – twenty-seven years ago, the establishing of the *Dnister* insurance company – nineteen years ago, the 'bloody' elections – fourteen years ago, the first peasant strike – eight years ago.⁸³ Thus, new calendars connected the higher level of linear (i.e., historical) time, world and national history, with individual life. But the eschatological mood of this new calendar is also obvious – the events lead to something important and promise that justice on earth will be renewed. The time of progress, of the approach of the national state, is not a sequence of sacral and profane periods. It is the capitalist (Fordist) time of equal units, which measure work productivity. The first issue of the new economic newspaper proclaimed: 'Time is money.'⁸⁴ The construction of this narrative is similar to that of the letters: if you live according to these rules about time, you will be rewarded in the future.

On a more general level, other parallels can be found between the letters from heaven and the new discourse. The basic apparatus of persuasion in the letters was developed on the basis of simple oppositions. These oppositions aimed at persuading the peasantry that one system of behaviour was better than another, providing a register of possible gains if the rules were obeyed by the peasants and of possible losses if they misbehaved. Similar modes of opposition and codes of behaviour can be found in numerous popular newspapers and books.

Political injustice replaced old individual sins in the search for an

explanation for poor living conditions. The traditional explanation was: 'Earlier, when we sinned less, the potato crops were larger, but now heaven's grace has changed.'⁸⁵ In that case, sin most often involved the breaking of sacral time. Such was an explanation for the famine of 1846, the last of the premodern crises to afflict the Galician economy, which gave way to capitalist ones.⁸⁶ Now it was said: 'Many people have noted the various disasters which fell like curses on the people as a result of the still functioning election ordination with all its fraud and robberies.'⁸⁷ Political change became a panacea for all the disasters afflicting the Galician villages: 'From disease, hail, storm, and ... from the mayor-'oinker,' save us, O Lord!'⁸⁸ In the case of misbehaviour and disobeying the rules, the Ukrainian nation was threatened, and life outside this nation was unimaginable. Thus the racial discourse of the modern nation-state appears, in which the nation-state takes the place of the promised heavenly kingdom on earth.

Instead of a Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to mention two other stories in which the motif of peasant attitudes towards a sacral text containing an absolute truth plays a key role. In 1863, Polish noble insurgents tried to spread the golden charter among the peasantry of Right-Bank Ukraine. The charter promised the peasantry democratic reforms and land, but the peasantry did not react to the letter despite the fact that it was written in golden letters.⁸⁹ Sources show that the uprising had different versions of the charter – an alternative version stressed freedom and fighting⁹⁰ – but none worked.

Soviet editions of Ukrainian folk tales often include the tale of the golden charter. The story is as follows: while peasants are digging a well for their landlord, they do not reach water but dig up a golden charter. They are unable to read it because they are illiterate and have to ask the landlords to read it to them. The landlords laugh while reading the charter and relate that the charter says that people are born unequal and that some must work for others. The peasants do not believe this, and the landlords get angry. The peasants flee and in a magical way, the charter once again falls into their hands. They then ask officials and are told that the charter states that every authority is from God. The peasants do not believe this either, and the story repeats. The third category of literate people who are able to read the charter are priests, who say that those who cry on earth will be rewarded in heaven. The peasants again do not

find this story credible. Then they meet Lenin, who tells them to learn how to read and to read the charter themselves. They learn to read, overthrow the tsar, and find that there was only one word in the charter – *communism*.⁹¹ This tale seems to be fake, as so many others in official Soviet folklore. Both stories are about movements and peasants to whom my story about the letters from heaven does not apply.

In the Great War, many German soldiers used to carry letters from heaven, which were supposed to help them to survive.⁹² The Great War being the first form of 'industrial killing' was also the last premodern war. It was the last war that could be described in the words with which Teodor Kostraba described the war of 1859: 'Our Kaiser proclaimed war on another Kaiser.' We do not know whether the Ukrainian soldiers in the Habsburg army carried letters from heaven; most likely those who enrolled in the Legion of the Ukrainian *Sich* Riflemen (the regiment formed by nationally conscious Ukrainian volunteers) would not have carried them.

The letters from heaven did not disappear. To remain as a tactical device, they had to modify their form and change their content. Industrial society witnessed the appearance of chain letters and postindustrial society the appearance of chain e-mails. But these belong to twentieth-century history, while this article deals with the nineteenth.

NOTES

I would like to thank Ostop Sereda, who showed me articles from *Pys'mo z Prosvity* and thus attracted my attention to this topic.

- 1 *Pys'mo z Prosvity*, 1878, no. 5, 50.
- 2 Compare *Pys'mo z Prosvity*, 1878, no. 5, 50–1, with Ivan Levitskii, *Galitsko-russkaia bibliografiia XIX-go stoletia s uvzgladnieniem izdaniï poiavivshikhsia v Ugorshchinie i Bukovinie (1801–1886)* (1888; reprint, Vaduz, 1963), 2:316.
- 3 *Pys'mo z Prosvity*, 1878, no. 5, 50–1.
- 4 [Volodymyr Barvins'kyi], 'Lyst z neba. (Prychynok do istorii temnoty v Halychyni),' *Pravda* 10, no. 24 (1877): 947–8.
- 5 I. Sh. z Khmelivky, 'Pys'mo z Bohorodchans'koho,' *Pys'mo z Prosvity*, 1878, no. 6, 57–8.
- 6 Mirianyn iz Uhnova, 'Nadoslane. Do koldunov dopysuiuchykh do slavnoho "Pys'ma iz Prosvity,"' *Russkaia Rada* 8, 16 February 1878, no. 4, 36.
- 7 Jean Baudouin de Courtenay, 'Z sennykh widziadeł ludskości,' *Zapysky*

- Naukovoho Tovarystva imeni Shevchenka* (henceforth *Zapysky NTSh*) 116 (1913): 245–9.
- 8 Mykhailo Verbytskii, 'O lystakh Bozhykh,' *Poslannyk*, 1895, no. 5, 4–5.
- 9 Ivan Verkhrats'kyi, 'Z diakivs'koi literatury,' *Zapysky NTSh* 113 (1913): 147.
- 10 Verbytskii, 'O lystakh Bozhykh.'
- 11 Robert Priebsch, *Letters from Heaven on the Observance of the Lord's Day* (Oxford, 1936).
- 12 Ibid.; Aleksandr Veselovskii, 'Opyty po istorii razvitiia khristianskoi legendy,' *Zhurnal ministerstva narodnogo prosveshcheniia*, 1876, no. 3, 51–68.
- 13 Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (New York, 1970) (revised and expanded edition, 1957), 62, 94–5, 119–20, 129–30, 131, 134, 146, 230.
- 14 Veselovskii, 'Opyty po istorii razvitiia khristianskoi legendy,' 82–3.
- 15 Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, *Istoriia ukrains'koi literatury*, vol. 4, book 2 (Kyiv, 1994), 224.
- 16 M.A. Salmina, 'Epistolii Iisusa Khrista o nedele,' in *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti Drevnei Rusi*, ed. Dmitrii Likhachev, vyp. 1: (XI – pervaiia polovina XIV v.) (Leningrad, 1987), 123–4.
- 17 Aleksei Sobolevskii, *Perevodnaia literatura Moskovskoi Rusi XIV–XVII vekov. Bibliograficheskie materialy* (St Petersburg, 1903), 252, 378–9.
- 18 Nikolai Sumtsov, *Ocherki istorii tuzhno-russkikh apokrificheskikh skazanii i pesen'* (Kyiv, 1888), 118–19.
- 19 Nikolai Tikhonravov, ed. and comp., *Pamiatniki starinnoi russkoi literatury* (Moscow, 1863), 2:314–22.
- 20 Ivan Franko, *Apokryfy i legendy z ukrains'kykh rukopysiv. Apokryfy eskhatolohichni*, *Pamiatnyky ukrains'ko-rus'koi movy i literatury*, vol. 4 (Lviv, 1906), xxxviii.
- 21 Mykhailo Hrushevs'kyi, *Istoriia ukrains'koi literatury*, vol. 5, book 1 (Kyiv, 1994), 55.
- 22 Franko, *Apokryfy i legendy*, xxxviii–xxxix, 67–9.
- 23 Ibid., 67–80, 455–7.
- 24 Viddil rukopysiv Instytutu Literatury imeni Tarasa Shevchenka (Kyiv), fond 3, sprava 1608, s. 53.
- 25 This data is from the autobiographical notes by Teodor Kostraba in Viddil rukopysiv L'vivs'koi naukovoï biblioteky imeni Vasylia Stefanyka (hereafter referred to as VR LNB), fond 1, sprava 726/5.
- 26 Rudolf Stübe, *Der Himmelsbrief: Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Religionsgeschichte* (Tübingen, 1918), 1–5.
- 27 Tsentral'nyi Derzhavnyi Istorychnyi Arkhiv Ukrainy u L'vovi, fond 182, opys 1, sprava 5, arkush 1.

- 28 VR LNB, fond 1, sprava 726/5, arkush 26; also fond 1, sprava 726/7.
- 29 Verbytskii, 'O lystakh Bozhykh,' *Poslannyk*, 1895, no. 5, 5.
- 30 *Lyst iz'iaolenyi* (Kolomyia, 1881), 5.
- 31 Franko, *Apokryfy i legendy*, 63.
- 32 *Lyst iz'iaolenyi*, 7.
- 33 Franko, *Apokryfy i legendy*, 75–9.
- 34 The entries for the pseudonym 'Podorozhnyi' in Oleksii Dei, *Slovnnyk ukrains'kykh psevdonimiv ta kryptonimiv* (Kyiv, 1969) do not help to establish the authorship of this publication.
- 35 Franko, *Apokryfy i legendy*, 75.
- 36 *Lyst Bozhii* (Lviv), 4.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 6.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 40 VR LNB, fond 1, sprava 444/5.
- 41 Veselovskii, 'Opyty po istorii razvittia khristianskoi legendy,' 106.
- 42 Hrushevs'kyi, *Istoriia ukrains'koi literatury*, vol. 5, book 1, 56.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 57.
- 44 *Ibid.*, 224.
- 45 *Ibid.*, vol. 4, book 2, 220.
- 46 Sumtsov, *Ocherki istorii iuzhno-russkikh apokrificheskikh skazanii i pesen'*, 9.
- 47 Franko, *Apokryfy i legendy*, xiv.
- 48 Sumtsov, *Ocherki istorii iuzhno-russkikh apokrificheskikh skazanii i pesen'*, 57.
- 49 Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York, 1978), 10.
- 50 Sumtsov, *Ocherki istorii iuzhno-russkikh apokrificheskikh skazanii i pesen'*, 123.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 12–17.
- 52 Iurii Kmit, 'Narodni "patsiri,"' *Litopys Boikivshchyny* 11 (1939), 37.
- 53 De Courtenay, 'Z sennykh widziadel' ludskości,' *Zapysky NTS* 116 (1913): 245–9.
- 54 Volodymyr Hnatiuk, 'Kil'ka dukhovnykh virshiv,' *Zapysky NTS* 56 (1903): 26.
- 55 Timotei Zaiats, 'Zapiski,' *Golos minuvshogo* 1, no. 8 (1913): 158–9.
- 56 Hirniak, 'Z hir,' *Narodna Chasopys'*, 1 April 1891, no. 64, 2.
- 57 'Pidhirska molytva abo iak moliat'sia nashi seliany pry kintsy 19-ho stolittia,' *Narodna Chasopys'*, 4 April 1897, no. 17, 1–2.
- 58 Ivan Franko, 'Halyts'ko-rus'ki narodni prypovidky,' *Etnohrafichnyi Zbirnyk*, vol. 28 (1910): 309, 458.
- 59 Mykhailo Zubryts'kyi, 'Nechyste mistse,' *Zhytie i Slovo* 4 (1895): 360.
- 60 Ivan Franko, 'Liudovi viruvannia na Pidhiriu,' *Etnohrafichnyi Zbirnyk* 5 (1898): 192.

- 61 Thomas M. Barrett, 'Good News Comes to a Russian Village: The Peasant Articles of Kharkov and the Emancipation of the Serfs,' *Peasant Studies* 17, no. 1 (1989): 32.
- 62 Franko, 'Liudovi viruvannia na Pidhiriu,' 197.
- 63 Verbytskii, 'O lystakh Bozhykh,' 4.
- 64 TsDIAUL, f. 146, op. 4, spr. 2503, 5.
- 65 Cited in Sumtsov, *Ocherki istorii iuzhno-russkikh apokrificheskikh skazanii i pesen'*, 10.
- 66 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 1991), 24.
- 67 Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN, 1990), 153, 158.
- 68 Sumtsov, *Ocherki istorii iuzhno-russkikh apokrificheskikh skazanii i pesen'*, 117.
- 69 Ivan Krevets'kyi, *Agrarni straiky i boikoty u Skhidnii Halychyni v 1848–49 rr. (Do istorii borot'by za suspil'no-ekonomichne vyzvolennia ukrains'kykh selians'kykh mas u Skhidnii Halychyni)* (Lviv, 1906).
- 70 Cited in Arkadii Zhyvotko, *Istoriia ukrains'koi presy* (Munich, 1989–90), 105.
- 71 Marie-Elisabeth Ducreux, 'Reading unto Death: Books and Readers in Eighteenth-Century Bohemia,' in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Roger Chartier (Princeton, 1989), 204.
- 72 'Druhii milion,' *Misionar'*, 1900, no. 9–10.
- 73 Ducreux, 'Reading unto Death,' 201.
- 74 'Peredvyborchyi rukh,' *Dilo*, 30 April 1907, no. 88, 2.
- 75 'Z Luzhka Dil'noho, v Drohobyt'skim poviti,' *Narodna Chasopys'*, 20 March 1895, no. 53, 2.
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- 77 Jan Słomka, *Pamiętniki włościanina. Od pańszczyzny do dni dzisiejszych*, 2nd ed. (Kraków, 1929), 29–30.
- 78 A typical example of the importance of the division of time into sacral and profane in the daily life of the peasantry can be found in Mykhailo Zubryts'kyi, 'Tisni roky,' *Zapysky NTS* 26 (1898): 3.
- 79 'Vit Drohobycha,' *Ruskoie Slovo*, 1890, no. 8, or 'Iz Sambora,' *Ruskoie Slovo*, 1904, no. 34.
- 80 'Iz Nyzhankovets' v liutom,' *Vistnyk*, 1859, no. 12.
- 81 S. Boiko, 'Pys'mo z Boikivshchyny do chesnykh hazdiv,' *Ruskaia Rada*, 1872, no. 3.
- 82 'My khochemo rozumnoho postupu,' *Bat'kivshchyna*, 1891, no. 9, 53.
- 83 *Khliborob. Iliustrovanyi kaliendar dlia ruskykh selian*, 1911.
- 84 'Chas to hroshy,' *Golos Truda*, 1909, no. 1.
- 85 Fedor Dosinchuk, 'Pys'mo ot Deliatyna,' *Ruskaia Rada*, 1872, no. 21.

- 86 See the song about potatoes in Zubryts'kyi, 'Tisni roky,' 3 – 'People, you did not know how to respect potatoes / when it was the biggest holiday you went to dig out them / you were cleaning them before the Morning Stars showed, you were cleaning / you did not know that I would like to die / you were grating during the biggest holiday.'
- 87 'Narodni vicha i manifestatsii,' *Dilo*, 1905, no. 282.
- 88 Hromadianyn, 'Trushovychi,' *Selians'ka Rada*, 1907, no. 16.
- 89 Franciszek Rawita-Gawroński, *Rok 1863 na Rusi. Ukraina, Wołyń, Podolie* (Lviv, 1903), 72, 222.
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For the Beauty of God's House: Notes on Icon Vestments and Decorations in the Ruthenian Church

SOPHIA SENYK

Any historic description of the interior of churches in Rus',¹ any list of the furnishings and precious objects of a church invariably mentions necklaces, pendants, rings, and similar ornaments on icons. The custom of decorating sacred images is common to many religions. In Christianity it is known both in the Catholic West and in the Orthodox East. The practice is ancient, with roots in the earliest centuries. Theodoret of Cyrus in the fifth century writes about the cult of martyrs in churches erected over their relics. People come to pray for health, for children, for a safe trip, asking the martyrs to offer their prayers to God. Those who have the opportunity, he adds, return with an expression of their thanks, leaving *ex votos* to testify to their cures: images in the form of eyes, of feet, of hands, in gold or in wood, according to the person's means.² As the use of sacred images in churches became diffused, the same practice of leaving offerings was applied to them

In the Catholic West this practice reached its apogee in the baroque period; it has declined in the twentieth century, especially after Vatican II. In Greece icons decorated with offerings from the faithful can still be seen in practically every church.

In Rus' the custom of decorating icons was known from the beginning of Christianization and remained popular ever since. Time, and especially the upheavals of the twentieth century, have swept away historic examples, some of them preserved in their original locations for centuries. This study, based chiefly on written sources, does not set out to give an exhaustive treatment of the subject, only to point out its diffusion and meaning. I have sought to collect examples primarily from Ruthenian lands, but limiting my study to these might lead to false conclusions, so I also cite Russian examples. I wish to emphasize