

Tomasz Wiślicz

# Earning Heavenly Salvation

Peasant Religion in Lesser Poland.  
Mid-Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries



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The book offers a comprehensive model of religious culture of peasants of the Lesser Poland in the early modern times. Its principal research topic is the influence of religion on the life and attitudes of peasants during the religious and social transformations that resulted from the Tridentine reform of the Catholic Church from the peak of the Reformation movements in Poland to the Enlightenment reforms and the fall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. As the book focuses on an illiterate group, its issues concern primarily the so-called external religiosity of peasants as a group, discussing its social, communal, and economic aspects, as well as its impact on the formation of social ethics and individual morals, beliefs, and folk rituals.

### The Author

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## Earning Heavenly Salvation

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. A peasant religion, or popular religion?

Peasant religion in Lesser Poland (*Małopolska*): this phrase refers to a specific research problem in the field of research into the history of religious culture, named popular (or folk) religion. As a subject of historical studies, it gained considerable popularity in the 1970s and 1980s, primarily in France and, somewhat later, in English-speaking countries.<sup>1</sup> Fundamental to this concept was the opposition between popular religion and what can be termed ‘religion of the elite(s)’. Viewed from this perspective, the early modern period seemed particularly interesting, especially in relation to the religious transitions in France.<sup>2</sup> Based on the example of France, Philippe Ariès developed an explanatory model whereby the opposition between popular and elitist religion turned, in the early modern period, into an open conflict, with the religious elites proactively striving to subdue the opposition with use of any and all methods available.<sup>3</sup>

Insofar as the period in question can indeed be perceived as one of confrontation between the discernible religious models, a sharp contradistinction of the everyday piety of common people on the one hand, and the social elite on the other, would definitely be an oversimplification. Several religious cultural phenomena characteristic of the age were shared by society as a whole, and even the strictest elites were identifiably influenced by ‘popular’ religiosity.

Contradicting popular and *official* religion is a more legitimate concept. It is based on differentiation between the way religion was experienced by the faithful in general and the ideal model of piety propagated by the elite. In such an approach, popular religion becomes a *sui generis* subculture of the institutional religion. This is how Stefan Czarnowski, the pioneer of Polish historical sociology, first defined the phenomenon. Considering the religious culture of

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1 The origins of popular religion research in France have recently been discussed in D. Julia, ‘“Un faiseur d’embarras.” Les historiens et les débats autour de la culture et de la religion populaires (1960–1980),’ *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, Vol. 176, 2016, pp. 119–36; N. Balzamo, ‘Religion populaire,’ in O. Christin (ed.), *Dictionnaire de concepts nomades en sciences humaines*, Vol. 2, Paris 2016, pp. 257–71.

2 R. Briggs, *Communities of Belief. Cultural and Social Tensions in Early Modern France*, Oxford 1989.

3 P. Ariès, ‘Religion populaire et réformes religieuses,’ in *Religion populaire et réforme liturgique*, Paris 1975, pp. 88–9.

rural people, he investigated “the degree to which, and the way in which, one of the social strata absorbed the teachings proposed by the Church; in what ways it adopted them to the essential aspects of its own material and spiritual life; what representations it associated with the names of persons and things appearing in the cult; what its character of piety is, and what the manifestations of such piety are.”<sup>4</sup> Later, Polish religious sociology formalised and extended the catalogue of questions concerning religiosity by adding the dimensions referred to as experiential; that is, based on man’s direct knowledge and experiences; ideological, emphasising doctrine and beliefs; and intellectual, exploring religion’s impact on the perception of the world; ritualistic/community-related; and, consequentially, embracing the secular effects of experiences, beliefs, practices, and religious knowledge, on man.<sup>5</sup> Following this research tradition, I have decided to embark on studying the ways in which man assumes an attitude towards religion and experiences it intellectually and spiritually, and what the direct consequences of this attitude are for the social, cultural, and personal life of individuals and social groups.

However, to what extent has the popular religion become a useful explanatory concept in the research on the early modern period that has been developing for several decades now? Despite the initially enthusiastic attitude, the most interesting historical studies published in the 1990s attest to a growing distance among scholars towards the idea. In his study on sixteenth-century English popular religion, published in 1998, Christopher Marsh admits that he uses the term “with any great sense of enthusiasm, but for want of something more satisfactory,” and gives it a social (below the gentry on the social ladder), rather than qualitative, meaning.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Polish scholars exploring the problem seek a conceptualisation which would extend to a more diverse social base for the research: apart from the ‘common people’ or folk, residents of small towns and even poorer nobility would have been included; however, an exact definition at this point is impossible. The interpretation proposed by Stanisław Litak is

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4 S. Czarnowski, ‘Kultura religijna wiejskiego ludu polskiego,’ in Czarnowski, *Dziela*, Warsaw 1956, Vol. I, p. 88.

5 W. Piwowarski, ‘Teoretyczne i metodologiczne założenia badań nad religijnością,’ in W. Piwowarski and W. Zdaniewicz (eds.), *Z badań nad religijnością polską. Studia i materiały*, Poznań-Warsaw 1986, pp. 65–8.

6 C. Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England. Holding Their Peace*, Basingstoke and London 1998.

characteristic: having completely given up on the term ‘popular religion,’ he uses the phrase ‘religion of lower social strata’ instead.<sup>7</sup>

For the research discussed in this book, of primary importance was the concept of Keith Luria, who termed the object of his study, describing the religiosity of the Diocese of Grenoble inhabitants, *village religion*. To his mind, this notion is more detailed as, for one thing, it clearly detaches the phenomenon in question from an elitist, and universal (official) religion, whilst in parallel emphasising the fact that religion in the countryside fulfilled its potential primarily in its community dimension, within a structured rural community.<sup>8</sup>

A similar assumption may also be made for the study of the religion of the peasantry in Lesser Poland in the early modern period. The community factor is clearly visible, realised by the *gromada*, which is the basic peasant territorial and social unit. Thus, *gromada* is the central ‘character’ of my considerations of the social aspect of peasant religion (chapter 2). Nonetheless, the rural community’s position in relation to the Church was much weaker in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and far less confrontational, compared to the situation in the mountainous regions of France. Apart from the community elements in religion, the considerations follow the attempt below to generalise individual experiences and demonstrate the internal diversity of religious culture within the village. Hence, my assumption that *peasant religion* is a more suitable description here as it refers to the religious culture of a specified social group; namely, the peasants of Lesser Poland between the middle of the sixteenth and the end of the eighteenth centuries. This phenomenon coincides, to a possibly considerable extent, with what has been termed ‘popular religion,’ but is not identical with it. However, this study does at times refer to ‘popular religion,’ so that broader conditions and determinants of the religious model among rural residents can be indicated.

As the object of these considerations is an essentially illiterate group, which is true for the generality of early modern peasantry in Polish rural areas, the issues of religious experience and intellectual effects of subjecting oneself to religion virtually elude the research owing to a lack of sources. Consequently, the subject-matter of this study primarily focuses on the ways in which religion informed the social and economic life of peasants, their morality and beliefs – altogether, the

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7 S. Litak, ‘Ze studiów nad religijnością niższych warstw społecznych w Rzeczypospolitej w XVIII wieku,’ *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, Yr. 40, 1996, No. 1, p. 163.

8 K. Luria, *Territories of Grace. Cultural change in the Seventeenth-Century Diocese of Grenoble*, Berkeley 1991, p. 18.

sphere which can be described as ‘external religiosity,’ particularly in its ritual, ideological, and consequential aspects.

Polish historical research on the religion and religiousness of the masses has developed a tradition and can boast significant achievements. Mediaevalist scholars have devoted considerable attention to pagan beliefs and their relics in folk culture.<sup>9</sup> Since the 1970s, valuable studies on the popular reception of Christianity in mediaeval Poland have been published, notably those penned by Aleksander Gieysztor,<sup>10</sup> Aleksandra Witkowska,<sup>11</sup> Jerzy Kłoczowski,<sup>12</sup> Stanisław Bylina,<sup>13</sup> Krzysztof Bracha,<sup>14</sup> and others.<sup>15</sup>

Popular forms of piety have also become the object of study for historians specialising in the early modern period. While it is the morals and mores of the nobility and the Sarmatian model of Catholicism that enjoy the greatest interest among authors, reflections on the religiosity of the plebeian strata can be found in many comprehensive studies exploring these topics.<sup>16</sup> However, only

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- 9 Cf., among others, A. Brückner, *Mitologia polska. Studium porównawcze*, Warsaw 1924; H. Łowmiański, *Religia Słowian i jej upadek*, Warsaw 1979; A. Gieysztor, *Mitologia Słowian*, Warsaw 1982.
- 10 A. Gieysztor, ‘La religion populaire en Pologne et en Bohême. Xe–XVe siècles,’ in J. Delumeau (ed.), *Histoire vécue du peuple chrétien*, Toulouse 1979, Vol. 1, pp. 315–34; Gieysztor, ‘La religiosité populaire en Pologne et en Bohême medievales,’ *Les Cahiers Franco-Polonais*, Vol. 5, 1981, pp. 89–102.
- 11 A. Witkowska, *Kulty pątnicze piętnastowiecznego Krakowa*, Lublin 1984.
- 12 J. Kłoczowski, *Europa słowiańska w XIV-XV w.*, Warsaw 1984; Kłoczowski, ‘Chryścianizacja elit i mas w Europie środkowowschodniej XV w.,” in Kłoczowski, *Chrześcijaństwo i historia*, Krakow 1990, pp. 145–68.
- 13 Cf., among others, S. Bylina, ‘Człowiek i zaświaty. Wizje kar pośmiertnych w Polsce średniowiecznej,’ Warsaw 1992; Bylina, ‘Wiara i pobożność zbiorowa,’ in B. Geremek (ed.), *Kultura Polski średniowiecznej XIV-XV w.*, Warsaw 1997, pp. 403–50; Bylina, *Kultura ludowa Polski i Słowiańszczyzny średniowiecznej*, Warsaw 1999; Bylina, *Religijność późnego średniowiecza. Chrześcijaństwo a kultura tradycyjna w Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej w XIV-XV wieku*, Warsaw 2008 (English translation: *Religiousness in the Late Middle Ages. Christianity and Traditional Culture in Central and Eastern Europe in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*, trans. by A. Shannon, Berlin 2019).
- 14 K. Bracha, *Teolog, diabeł i zabobony. Świadectwo traktatu Mikołaja Magni z Jawora De superstitionibus (1405 r.)*, Warsaw 1999.
- 15 Of the most recent studies, the one concerning late-mediaeval Lithuania deserves mention: D. Baronas and S.C. Rowell, *The Conversion of Lithuania: From Pagan Barbarians to Late Medieval Christians*, Vilnius 2015.
- 16 See, e.g. M. Bogucka, *Staropolskie obyczaje w XVI-XVII wieku*, Warsaw 1994; K. Górski, *Zarys dziejów duchowości w Polsce*, Krakow 1986; Z. Kuchowicz, *Obyczaje staropolskie XVII-XVIII wieku*, Łódź 1975; Kuchowicz, *Człowiek polskiego baroku*, Łódź 1992;

a few monographic studies of the issue of interest herein exceed the length of a scientific article. Among the most important of these is Waław Urban's pioneering study on the influence of the Reformation on Lesser Poland's sixteenth-century peasants,<sup>17</sup> along with the articles by Hieronim Wyczawski,<sup>18</sup> Tadeusz Śliwa,<sup>19</sup> and Stanisław Litak,<sup>20</sup> and books by Piotr Wawrzeniuk<sup>21</sup> and Sławomir Zabraniak<sup>22</sup> making use of ecclesiastical visitation (i.e. inspection) records. In addition, it is worth mentioning Czesław Hernas's considerations, heavily drawing upon literary history,<sup>23</sup> the studies by Jan Kracik<sup>24</sup> and Marian Aleksandrowicz,<sup>25</sup> based on extensive source queries, and Jerzy Józef Kopeć's interesting considerations of the popular forms of the cult of Our Lady.<sup>26</sup> The classical studies of Jan

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- J. Tazbir, *Rzeczpospolita i świat. Studia z dziejów kultury XVII wieku*, Warsaw 1971; Tazbir, *Arianie i katolicy*, Warsaw 1972; Tazbir, *Świat panów Pasków*, Łódź 1986.
- 17 W. Urban, *Chłopi wobec reformacji w Małopolsce w drugiej połowie XVI wieku*, Krakow 1959.
- 18 H. Wyczawski, 'Studia nad wewnętrznymi dziejami kościelnymi w Małopolsce na schyłku XVI wieku,' *Prawo Kanoniczne*, Vol. 7, 1964, Nos. 1–2, pp. 45–126; Nos. 3–4, pp. 21–116.
- 19 T. Śliwa, 'Stan religijno-moralny wiernych diecezji przemyskiej w połowie XVI w.,' *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Yr. 11, 1964, No. 4, pp. 135–55.
- 20 S. Litak, 'Z zagadnień kultury religijnej ludności w diecezji płockiej w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku,' *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 34, 1986, No. 2, pp. 333–8; Litak, 'Ze studiów nad religijnością niższych warstw społecznych ...,' pp. 163–73.
- 21 P. Wawrzeniuk, *Confessional Civilising in Ukraine. The Bishop Iosyf Shumliansky and the Introduction of Reforms in the Diocese of Lviv 1668–1708*, Södertörn 2005.
- 22 S. Zabraniak, *Stan duchowieństwa a religijność w archidiakonatach: kaliskim, uniejowskim i wieluńskim (1660–1763)*, Rzeszów 2010.
- 23 C. Hernas, *W kalinowym lesie*, Warsaw 1965, Vol. 1.
- 24 J. Kracik, 'Praktyki religijno-magiczne na Górze Witosławskiej w czasie epidemii 1708 roku,' *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Vol. 22, 1975, No. 4, pp. 149–158; J. Kracik, 'Duszpasterstwo parafialne w dekanacie Nowa Góra w pierwszej połowie XVIII wieku,' *Studia Kościelno-Historyczne*, Vol. II, Lublin 1977; Kracik, 'Duchowe niedostatki wsi beskidzkiej w przeddzień utworzenia parafii – Spytkowice 1758,' *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 60, 1983, pp. 169–91.
- 25 M. Aleksandrowicz, 'Z badań nad dziejami religijności wiernych na przykładzie archidiakonatu gnieźnieńskiego w początku XVIII w.,' *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 24, 1976, No. 2, pp. 5–34.
- 26 See, e.g. J. J. Kopeć, 'Polskie zwyczaje maryjne i praktyki religijne w XVI w.,' *Częstochowskie Studia Teologiczne*, Vol. 9–10, 1981–2, pp. 101–69; J. J. Kopeć, 'Współczesna maryjność polska i jej związki z modelami religijności w XV i XVI w.,' *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Yr. 30, 1983, Np. 6, pp. 125–44.

S. Bystron<sup>27</sup> and Bohdan Baranowski,<sup>28</sup> at the intersection of history and ethnography, form a separate category.

The historians exploring the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have tended to leave the issue of common people's religious culture to ethnologists or sociologists; hence, the high value of historian Daniel Olszewski's studies dealing with religiosity in Polish society at the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>29</sup> The methodological reflection proposed by this author can also be helpful to scholars exploring the earlier periods.

## 2. Chronological framework and geographical aspects. Records and other sources explored

The chronological framework of this study, the mid-sixteenth to late eighteenth century, embraces the age which can be referred to as the early modern period in the Polish countryside. The limits of this period are somewhat vague; its beginning, marked as above, is only indicative. The period may be regarded as the symbolic end of mediaeval Catholicism. From the European perspective, this end was marked by the Council of Trent (1545–63); in Poland, the Council's resolutions were adopted by the king and the Senate in 1564, and by the provincial synod in 1577. From the standpoint of Lesser Poland, the middle of the sixteenth century was a peak period of the Reformation, which meant the zero point for the renewal of the Catholic Church. Lastly, in the history of Polish peasantry, the age in question marks the conclusion of the legislative process leading to the emergence of the second serfdom system in the villages. All of these events, however momentous, probably passed completely unnoticed in the rural areas; their influence was based on lengthy historical processes rather than radical change.

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27 J. S. Bystron, *Dzieje obyczajów w dawnej Polsce. Wiek XVI-XVII*, Vol. 1–2, Warsaw 1932–4; J. S. Bystron, *Kultura ludowa*, Warsaw 1936.

28 See, e.g. B. Baranowski, *Kultura ludowa XVII i XVIII wieku na ziemiach Polski Środkowej*, Łódź 1971. Studies by this author should be approached with considerable caution as recent research has challenged not only the proposed conclusions but also the reliability of their source-base; cf. M. Pilaszek, 'Procesy czarownic w Polsce w XVI-XVIII w. Nowe aspekty. Na marginesie pracy B. Baranowskiego,' *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, Vol. 42, 1998, pp. 82, fn. 4.

29 See, among others, D. Olszewski, *Polska kultura religijna na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Warsaw 1996.



The upper limit of the chronology adopted in this study, namely the end of the eighteenth century, is likewise indicative and driven by practical aspects. The end of the eighteenth century saw the withering of the rural court registers, which were the basic source for this study. Whereas some of them did survive until the mid-nineteenth century, they had meanwhile been heavily metamorphosed owing to the bureaucratic practices introduced by the Austrian authorities (Habsburg Austria participated from 1772 in the partitions of Poland, seizing most of Lesser Poland's territory). Moreover, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries mark a symbolic border between Old Polish and nineteenth-century religiousness. The latter took shape in a non-existent Poland, this having been combined with accelerated civilizational transition in the country's rural areas, marked by the abolition of serfdom and enfranchisement of peasants, increasing literacy, and raising the national consciousness. The turn of the nineteenth century cannot obviously be treated as a marked caesura, because no sudden change ever occurred in the transition of folk religious culture. The transformations occurred slowly with no discernibly clear turning points.

The study's geographic range encompasses the region of Lesser Poland that basically corresponds with the areas of the then-Voivodeships of Krakow, Sandomierz, Lublin, and the western end of the Ruthenian Voivodeship (approximately the counties [*powiats*] of Sanok and Przemyśl); or, in terms of the Church's territorial division, the Diocese of Krakow and the western deaconates of the Bishopric of Przemyśl.<sup>30</sup> It is this particular area, especially its southern part, from which the vast majority of rural court registers dating to the Old Polish period and known to modern scholars come.

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30 For a detailed discussion of these regions through the prism of the parochial network and ecclesiastical sources, see B. Szady, *Kościół i społeczeństwo Małopolski w II połowie XVIII wieku. Materiały źródłowe*, Vol. 1: *Ludność i organizacja diecezji krakowskiej*, Lublin 2010; G. Klebowicz, *Organizacja parafialna diecezji przemyskiej obrządku łacińskiego w XIV-XVI wieku*, Lublin 2013. A basic study in early modern geography of Poland is M. Słoń (ed.), *Historical Atlas of Poland in the 2nd Half of the 16th Century: Voivodeships of Cracow, Sandomierz, Lublin, Sieradz, Łęczyca, Rawa, Płock and Mazovia*, Frankfurt am Main 2014. The present study quotes dozens of names of villages, some of them hardly featuring on modern maps. When trying to find them, we recommend that the reader uses the scientific aids compiled at the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences [IH PAN], openly accessible online: B. Szady, *Religions and Confessions in the Polish Crown in the 2nd Half of the 18th Century*, <http://www.atlasfontium.pl/index.php?article=wyznaniowa>; and, *Corona Regni Poloniae. Map at a scale of 1:250 000*, <http://www.atlasfontium.pl/index.php?article=corona>.

The thus-described and defined Lesser Poland territory was populated by rural people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. The core group was obviously formed of Polish-speaking peasants of the Roman Catholic religion. The east and the southern borderland of the territory under discussion was populated by the Ruthenian people of the Eastern rite, namely the Orthodox Christians, and, since the Union of Brest (1596), also the Uniate believers (the Diocese of Przemyśl, which encompassed most of the area in question, joined the Union only in 1691). Dispersed villages, particularly in the region of Rzeszów, were populated by descendants of the colonists from the German countries. They were Roman Catholic believers but long preserved their language and cultural distinctiveness. For most of the German colonies in this region, the 1620s was a critical period: the destructive Tatar invasions resulted in a change in their ethnic composition, which in turn was reflected in the alteration of the language used in documents of village communities: Polish replaced German (and the previously occasional Latin).

Despite the ethnic, and even confessional, distinctions, this study encompasses the peasantry of Małopolska in its generality. Such an insight into the aggregate constituent groups is legitimate, owing to their estate (i.e. class) unity in the social system of Poland-Lithuania. Discerning the peasants by ethnicity or nationality in a period when no ethnic/national awareness had yet evolved, seems illegitimate. The denominational division between the Western and Eastern rite did not play a primary role in the rural conditions either; after the Union of Brest, it became less distinct.

How unclear the ethnic and religious distinctions were among Lesser Poland's peasants is shown by a decree issued in 1775 by a certain Ignacy Dulski, owner of the Ruthenian village of Krasna near Krosno, instructing the local Uniate church's *parokh* (parish priest) to use the Polish language "in teaching the Rosary, the God's Commandments and the Catechism in every-Sunday teaching and at every festive day, as the people of this place cannot understand a thing whilst Ruthenian is spoken."<sup>31</sup> Among the dwellers of another village, Wola Żarczycka, were peasants of Ruthenian, Masurian (i.e. from Masovia region), and German backgrounds, and even of Tatar or Swedish origin, which never prevented them from forming a

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31 Krasna, p. 209 [1774].

[NOTE: To simplify the notes, the frequently cited sources (including all rural court registers) are marked with cryptonyms referring in most cases to the geographic origin of the piece of information concerned (see the list of codewords on p. 251; the dates put in square brackets are the yearly dates to which the information refers.]

cohesive and concordant community.<sup>32</sup> Such relationships were observable across the region. Nonetheless, in the early modern era, the region of Lesser Poland housed a common peasant culture that was internally diverse but clearly distinct as well.

Rural court registers form the basic source used in this study. This choice calls for an explanation. The history of religiosity, as is the case with any phenomenon related to human mentality, ought to be investigated in a twofold manner. Firstly, by searching for personal utterances by members of the community under consideration, regarding their own beliefs, thoughts and reflections; they can subsequently be used as a sort of substitute of a sociological questionnaire. Secondly, by observing individual and group behaviours in daily life and in extraordinary situations: thereby, material is gained regarding the actual and real, rather than merely declarative, patterns of conduct and hierarchies of values. The image reconstructed with the use of these two methods can subsequently be confronted with and compared against the vision of external observers contemporary to the object of study.

As for Polish peasants of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, they formed an essentially illiterate group, and thus no direct testimony of reflection on religious subjects has come down to us. To hear the voice of the 'big mute,' we have to refer to cases where, for one reason or another, taking down an illiterate person's oral testimony was a must. Typically, such situations took place at court. Court records and trial testimonies are virtually the only sources for research into the period between the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries, containing recorded first-person-singular utterances of peasants, even if edited by the scribe. Religion was almost never directly the subject of such declarations; otherwise, the sincerity of religion-related declarations made by those brought to justice would have been dubious. Religious threads would usually have been touched upon in passing, which makes such statements informative and enables conclusions to be drawn regarding the actual beliefs or convictions of the declarant or deposer.

The judicial decisions of the rural jury (more literarily, the 'bench') may also be regarded in terms of statements made by exponents of the peasant stratum. Despite the decisive role of the village owner in the activities of such juries, the rulings of rural courts referred to the resource of ideas of their judges and expressed, to a significant extent, the peasant system of values.<sup>33</sup>

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32 J. Półciwiatek, 'Nieznana księga sądowa wiejska Woli Żarczyckiej (1578–1722)', *Rocznik Naukowo-Dydaktyczny WSP w Rzeszowie. Nauki Humanistyczne*, 1969, No. 4 (6), p. 242.

33 Cf. the observations in A. Wyczański, 'Kto sądził na wsi małopolskiej w XVI wieku? – sondaż na przykładzie wsi Wary,' in E. Dubas-Urwanowicz and J. Urwanowicz (eds.),

Moreover, an analysis of the court transcripts enables to observe human conduct and behaviours in extreme situations and in everyday life realities. The testimonies, not infrequently meticulous, described details too obvious to be recorded in any other circumstances. Non-disputable cases show, for a change, how interpersonal relationships functioned in no-conflict conditions. With the many advantages of use of rural court registers as the basic sources for peasant religious culture, it can be added that they are virtually the only written documents from the period before the Partitions of Poland-Lithuania (1772–95) which can be, at least in part, considered as the product of the intellectual activity of the peasants.

The collection of rural court registers used in this study refers to more than 120 demesnes or single villages, situated mainly in the southern part of Lesser Poland. For comparison, unique rural registers from other regions of Poland-Lithuania have been used, including from Greater Poland, Chełmno Land, and Masovia. Apart from Lesser Poland, the custom of keeping court registers in the countryside did not take root on a larger scale.<sup>34</sup>

Nevertheless, even as far as Lesser Poland is concerned, research based on this particular type of source meets problems related to the condition of the surviving archival material. Registers produced in rural areas are dispersed today in archives or library collections; in some cases, volumes of records originally produced in one village are kept in different cities. Several registers that survived until the early twentieth century are now lost, or were destroyed before ever being seen by scholars. Some of the rural files are only known from copies today. As a result, the number of fonds of court registers from a single village that would encompass the entire period under our study, which is approximately 250 years, is quite scarce.<sup>35</sup>

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*Miasto, region, społeczeństwo. Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Andrzejowi Wyrobiszowi w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę Jego urodzin*, Białystok 1992, p. 216.

34 On the reasons behind the uneven distribution of rural court registers, see S. Grodziski, 'Księgi sądowe wiejskie (zasięg terytorialny i geneza)', *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne*, Vol. 12, 1960, No. 1, p. 137; L. Łysiak, 'W sprawie genezy ksiąg sądowych wiejskich', *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne*, Vol. 14, 1962, No. 2, pp. 183–5.

35 An extensive catalogue of all the rural court registers from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries, preceded by a detailed description of this type of source records, has been published as a separate volume: T. Wiślicz, *Katalog małopolskich ksiąg sądowych wiejskich z XV-XVIII w.*, Warsaw 2007; its re-edition is currently being prepared in the form of an online database.

The value of individual rural court registers as historical sources is diverse. Their content varies depending on the competencies of the court at which they were kept, local legal and administrative customs, and the record-keeping style. The evolution of the registers' content in time is the most evident aspect, however. The earliest entries were made in Latin (and in German in some villages); a monotonously repeated form was dominant; the records, summary in form, almost entirely concerned trading in land. Around the mid-sixteenth century, Polish appeared in the registers alongside Latin, while the records remained greatly formalised. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Polish language squeezed out Latin almost entirely, whereas the scribes gradually gained the courage to describe individual cases in a less formalised way. This period is the most useful as it regards studying the religious culture of peasants and other aspects of their mentality.

The value of rural court registers as sources is limited for formal reasons.<sup>36</sup> Firstly, most of the information obtained from them concerns well-off peasants, the *kmiećs* ('full' farmers) and *zagrodniks* (smallholders), who were peasants with little land, who had to hire themselves out to feed their families. It was these who had their estate bestowals, pre-marriage contracts, last wills, etc., entered in these registers. The rural poor (i.e. cottagers, tenants, servants etc.) appear mainly in the context of penal/criminal cases. Secondly, the character of the source has a bearing on the type of information obtainable to us about religion. For example, the multiplicity of property-related cases focuses one's attention on the economic aspect of religion; the criminal cases offer a picture of breaking the Decalogue, rather than observing it. Thirdly, the fact that rural scribes were often individuals associated with the Church – an under-clerk, organist, or even the parson himself – may have caused excessive devotionality of the recording formulas against the actual needs and requirements of the village community. Fourthly, the relatively casual character of the records entered in the registers does not render the village's legal life in its entirety, particularly in the longer run. This causes that any of the statistical assessments may be subject to considerable error. In contrast, unique incidents entered in the registers, such as brutal rapes, incest, and so on, may be extremely important, for it is beneficial to observe the

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36 Cf. A. Vetulani, 'Wartość badawcza ksiąg sądowych wiejskich,' in *VIII Powszechny Zjazd Historyków Polskich w Krakowie, 14–17 IX 1958. Historia państwa i prawa*, Warsaw 1959, Vol. 7, pp. 99–114; also, see J. Łosowski, *Dokumentacja w życiu chłopów w okresie staropolskim. Studium z dziejów kultury*, Lublin 2013.

rural jury's and the *gromada*'s response to events exceeding the limits of daily experience.

A source complementary to the rural court registers were reports on ecclesiastical visitations in Lesser Poland, with a focus on the parishes within which the villages were situated and for which extant court records have been preserved. The use of these sources in researching the religious life of the faithful has already established a tradition and methodology.<sup>37</sup> A weak point of the visitation records as a useful source is the fact that, apart from the rich statistical material, they primarily provide information on neglects, abuses, and offences. The inspecting bishops mainly paid attention to how the church functioned, and what its income and inventory were. Only "internal visitations" were meant to partly concern the parishioners and pastoral problems, but their usual focus was the parson himself and his moral attitude.

Rural churches were usually treated superficially by the inspectors; only in some special cases do the reports devote more attention to them. The state of preservation of such sources is relatively good. One may acquaint oneself with the Krakow Bishopric's visitation files kept from 1565 onwards, initially every dozen-or-so years, and since mid-eighteenth century with increasing frequency. For the Diocese of Przemyśl, the earliest extant reports date to the year 1646, but it is only for the eighteenth century that files of regular inspections, available to us today, were kept.

In addition, for the needs of the subject-matter under discussion, other court sources have been used, primarily including registers of criminal cases dealt with by courts of Lesser Poland's towns, to which peasants accused of serious offences or crimes were taken. Additionally, the files of certain small towns and selected municipal registers in which records concerning peasants, or even entered by peasants, can be found. Further, normative documents issued by the Church (synodal constitutions) and by estate owners (rural statutes) have been made use of. Relevant information has moreover been sought in the period's devotional prints, *miracula* collections, local chronicles, notes by rural parsons, and in Old Polish belles-lettres.

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37 For a discussion of the sources of this sort in the context of Polish archival collections, see A. Hamryszczak, 'Canonical visitations as a historical source,' *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne*, Vol. 105, 2016, pp. 53–62; cf. S. Litak, 'Akta wizytacyjne parafii z XVI-XVIII wieku jako źródło historyczne,' *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL*, Yr. 5, 1962, No. 3, pp. 41–58.

As a rule, this study makes no use of ethnographic sources, which otherwise have been referred to in research into Old Polish popular culture. In my opinion, the methodological problems connected to their use might prevail over the potential advantages. The information collected by the ethnologists and folklorists dates to the nineteenth century at the earliest, and is difficult to credibly refer to a more distant past. The peasantry stratum was nothing of a coagulated archaic community never touched upon by any of the historical changes. Not only did the seventeenth-century peasants not wear the “Krakow folk costume,” but they did think otherwise than their great grandsons in the time of the ‘peasant-mania’ characteristic of the Young Poland artistic/literary movement in the late nineteenth century. The fact that their cultural conservatism was bigger than that of the other social groups does not authorise ahistorical approaches. This study sets as an objective for itself to show a certain fragment of peasant culture in the historical perspective, and therefore it can, without significant loss, put aside ethnographical sources.

A historical description of the phenomenon such as the religiosity of a defined social group of the past may only be in the form of the proposition of a model. My findings are, precisely, the proposition of a comprehensive view of the religious culture of Lesser Poland’s peasantry in the early modern period. In constructing the model, I have endeavoured to make possibly full use of the sources and theoretical reflections of the researchers of the popular religion in a historical perspective; its final shape, however, had to be adapted to the potential and limitations offered by the source material. The point-of-departure for the research was a very practical questionnaire once developed by Urszula Borkowska for use in her research on Jan Długosz, the illustrious fifteenth-century clergyman and historian, on inspiration from Gabriel Le Bras’s sociological research.<sup>38</sup> I have used this questionnaire to elaborate my own catalogue of questions, so that it corresponded with the specific character of the community under consideration; this, however, usually implied a reduced scope and simplification of the questions asked. Several research problems I have posed have been left unanswered in any case; this is mainly true for the issues of emotionally experiencing faith and the religious worldview. Moreover, in certain other cases, the material collected has only enabled hypothetical considerations or presumptions with no possibility of verification; hence the multiplicity of question marks in the study. Thus, one has to be aware that, in spite of the endeavours to make the proposed

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38 U. Borkowska, ‘Badania pojęć i postaw religijno-moralnych w oparciu o źródła historyczne,’ *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 22, 1974, No. 2, pp. 5–11.

model a possibly exact reconstruction of early mediaeval peasant religiosity and religiousness, it remains an interpretative proposition aimed at understanding the major characteristic features of early modern peasant religion.

The study is divided into five chapters. The first one shows the historical context of the transformations of peasant religion in the early modern time and discusses the basic drivers behind religious culture in the rural areas and the dynamism of the process. Hence, chapter 1 describes the peasant religion from the standpoint of social and religious changes in the early modern period. The other sections refer to the question of the continuity of the model of rural religious culture, focusing on its stable characteristics. To be specific, chapter 2 discusses the religion as an element of the system of social organisation of the rural environment, whereas chapter 3 discusses its importance for the economic life of the peasants. In chapter 4, the religiosity of peasants is shown through the prism of religious motivation of moral principles. Lastly, chapter 5 discusses the role of folk practices and unorthodox concepts in the religious culture of early modern countryside.

The first version of this study was compiled as part of the research programme of the Tadeusz Manteuffel Institute of History of the Polish Academy of Sciences [IH PAN], as a doctoral thesis written under the tutelage of Professor Maria Bogucka. I am indebted for all the support and assistance received from the reviewers, not all of whom are still alive – to name Stanisław Bylina and Stanisław Litak – along with my colleagues from IH PAN's Department of Modern Studies who proposed their remarks on an ongoing basis, as the study was in progress.

### 3. Postscript

This book was originally published in Polish 20 years before its English translation. My research emerged from a methodological fascination with the studies of the classical authors associated with the *Annales* school in the 1970s and 1980s and their, mainly Anglo-Saxon, continuators in later years. The present study can be regarded as the first summary of my research. Once published, my reflection on popular religion continued, and I devoted myself to developing my research along two directions. Firstly, I broadened the social scope of my interests, extending my reflection on the penetration and interaction of peasant and provincial (small-town) religion and the religiousness of the clergy and petty nobility, and orienting myself towards thinking over and reworking the concept of popular religion. The other strand was research on the individual and personal religious experiences of so-called common people, including regular parishioners and folk mystics and visionaries.



In preparing the study for its English translation, I have decided not to modify its original version or extend it by including the results of my later studies carried out with use of different research methods. The idea was to preserve the coherence and homogeneity of the model of early modern peasant religion proposed almost 20 years ago, which has so far successfully been tested as an interpretative proposition. The model has not ceased to inspire further research among Polish scholars and their Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Lithuanian counterparts. Although 20 years younger, the present English version essentially reflects the original one.



# I. THE FRAMEWORK OF EARLY MODERN PEASANT RELIGION

## 1. The mediaeval legacy and Reformation influences

The late Middle Ages are regarded as a period when the masses in Poland were actually Christianised, in point of fact. A network of parishes developed across the ethnically Polish territory dense enough to encourage fairly regular participation in the religious cult among most of the rural people. The layout of the parish church network that took shape at that time in Lesser Poland – the area called *Małopolska* in Polish – proved to be the country's most efficient structure, apart from the mountain areas, and remained virtually unchanged until the Partitions. Resulting from the ameliorated territorial structure of the Church, the problem of provincial paganism, to which a portion of rural dwellers yielded, was finally tackled successfully. Participation in the Christian cult became a mass phenomenon by the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries, and the Church's activities in rural areas could refocus on perfecting the religiosity and religious life of the faithful. The simple Christian was now tasked not only with observing fasting and abstaining from work on holy days, but also knowing how to say the three basic prayers, attending processions, confessing and communing, reciting the Hail Mary at the sound of a bell, and so on. Since the parish church was now more accessible, attending religious feasts and ceremonies on a regular basis became required. The faithful were subjected to Christian teaching via a variety of means, including sermons, ecclesial iconography, confessing sins, and the parish school system.

In the late mediaeval period, the broad masses of people were in general certainly a Christian population. However, their religion was syncretic: the Christian cult was unrestrainedly blended with traditional magical techniques, and the religious rituals were interspersed with folk rites. Nevertheless, this was not a transitory form between 'the old' and 'the new' – the pagan holdovers versus Christian devotion. Competitive against the latter were the living practices that unceasingly reappeared and evolved: unorthodox rather than pagan. This fact had already been noticed by fifteenth-century theologians, notably Stanisław of Skarbimierz, who appreciated the dynamic character of the common people's errors and superstitions.<sup>39</sup>

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39 S. Bylina, *Kultura ludowa ...*, pp. 61–2.

The increasingly widespread participation in the religious cult implied an increased role of certain elements that were popular in official devotion. The Elevation was made the central point of the holy mass, for the folk piety sought a source of special graces in observation of the Host. The strife for direct contact with the sacrum aroused a need for miracles and supernatural intervention, and inspired reverence for holy relics and pictures. The Marian cult, which referred to a simple man's pool of experience, was gaining popularity. Folk religiousness was also marked by prayers whose effect was believed to be automatic (as with spells or conjurations), numerous blessings, and periodic masses.<sup>40</sup>

Thus, Polish peasants in the late Middle Ages were Christians, but not extrinsically so. Although theologians continually associated the rural religiosity primarily with superstitions and errors, the dissemination of religious practices, and even the traces of profound piety of the rural people, in line with the devotional currents of the period, are certainly not to be missed.

It is a common conviction that the Reformation heavily undermined the achievements of the late mediaeval Church in the countryside. The religious upheaval accompanying the change, profanations of parish churches, and relaxed discipline among the clergy, are prevalently regarded as responsible for a regression in peasant religiosity and partial de-Christianisation in rural areas. This was allegedly manifested by a religious indifferentism among the peasantry, with pagan threads recurring locally.<sup>41</sup> According to testimony left by a Reformed observer, the sixteenth-century peasants "prefer going to the woods, rather than to a church, when called by the bell, and if they are going to the church, then at the cemetery they will spend their time on talking, the others reposing; this is the form of service they practice. And, if they have been in the church, and whoever of them is then asked what is it that he has learned, he will readily respond, 'Why, am I a priest?'"<sup>42</sup>

The Catholic Church visitators in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries sketched an appalling image of religious knowledge among rural parishioners. Too many of them apparently did not know how to cross themselves, say the Lord's Prayer, or go to confession; only some of them reportedly

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40 Among the best comprehensive studies of popular religion in the late Middle Ages, mention is deserved of those by S. Bylina, primarily, *Wiara i pobożność zbiorowa ...*, pp. 403–50.

41 See, e.g., A. Brandowski, *Świątobliwy kapłan Feliks Durewicz*, Poznań 1880, pp. 27–9.

42 Quoted after W. Sobieski, *Nienawiść wyznaniowa tłumów za rządów Zygmunta III*, Warsaw 1902, pp. 76–7.

knew the Decalogue and the Evangelical Counsels (the Commandments of the Church); there was no point asking about the other rudiments of the faith.<sup>43</sup>

This disheartening picture of religious neglect in the rural areas was so perceived by the Counter-Reformation clergy partly because of the ambitions exhibited by the post-Tridentine Church. Rather than restoring the pre-Reformation state of affairs, its objective was to establish completely new standards of Catholicism, as a remedy against the disarray and slackness prevalent in the then-recent period, but also against the weaknesses of the late mediaeval Church. The ideal vision of popular piety and religiousness, which was used as a gauge in assessing the reality, imposed much severer requirements than before. Therefore, the visitors' reports on instances of negligence had more to do with the intentions of the Counter-Reformation Church than to the losses actually borne in the overwhelming religious confusion. In fact, the regress seems not to have been as thorough as the ecclesial sources described it. Given the point of departure: popular Christianity – doctrinally penurious, syncretic, and still fresh at the time, we find that the Catholicism in the countryside came out of the Reformation period unscathed.

In his search for traces of Reformation influence upon the peasants in Lesser Poland in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Waclaw Urban had to conclude that, except for some isolated villages in the Silesian borderland, the rural people remained Catholic in their generality. Nothing was ever heard about a folk Reformation movement; moreover, even in the estates of heterodox noblemen, the serfs did not follow the confessional path of their lords. The efforts made by those property owners to take advantage of the alleged religious indifference of the serfs and attract them into their own new faith failed: it was with an almost unexampled stubbornness that the villagers stood by Catholicism. This did not follow from some mature religious-self-awareness among those common people, but rather from their attachment to the traditional forms of rite. In the late 1550s, in Piaski Luterskie near Lublin, a Reformed noblewoman named Barbara Orzechowska was reported to have had the demolished church site flooded with water, as Catholic serfs gathered there incessantly.<sup>44</sup> In spite of the bans imposed, the peasants from the estates of Reformed noblemen stealthily slipped into the

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43 'Acta seu decreta et statuta synodalia Wladislaviensis dioecesis MDCXXXIV die XVI. Martii,' in *Statuta synodalia dioecesis Wladislaviensis et Pomeraniae*, ed. by Z. Chodyński, Varsaviae 1890, pp. 201–2.

44 L. Zalewski, *Ze stosunków wyznaniowych w lubelskiem*, Lublin 1931, p. 6; Zalewski, *Z epoki renesansu i baroku na Lubelszczyźnie*, Lublin 1949, pp. 128–9.

Catholic church active in the vicinity, or contacted the Jesuit missions.<sup>45</sup> In the eastern boundary of Lesser Poland, the peasants accepted sacraments from the Ruthenian Orthodox priests in case they had no access to Catholic clergymen locally.<sup>46</sup>

Occasionally, with no active church available in the area, the pious folk spontaneously created ‘miraculous sites,’ where they endeavoured to continue their Catholic ceremonial, in simplified forms. When the parish church in Męcina in the Land of Stary Sącz was taken over by the Arians (Polish Brethren) in 1565, the religious life of the Catholic locals probably moved to a ‘living water’ spring in the woods near the locality of Miczaki – a well-informed guess based on the fact that the local Protestants banned the gatherings that took place there and finally ravaged the sanctuary.<sup>47</sup> Similarly, in the locality of Okulice, in a parish of Cerekiew near Bochnia, a certain Rupniewski, who was a Protestant, used force to prevent the folk cult in the area, concentrated around a statue. However, the destruction of the statue caused that miraculous site to increase in popularity considerably, with a filial church of Cerekiew finally being built there.<sup>48</sup>

Although the devotion practiced at miraculous sites was far from orthodox, it was certainly Catholic in character (some folk sanctuaries that developed in the religious turmoil later turned into official cult sites). To an extent, this proved to be a measure of firmness of the faith of the masses: even without being supervised by the clergy, the people voluntarily rendered their para-religious rituals Catholic.

## 2. Counter-Reformation in the countryside: the participation of peasants in religious cult

Nevertheless, in the late sixteenth century the religion of Lesser Poland’s rural people was continuously mediaeval. The first attempt at applying the Trent decrees with popular masses was made through visitations and legislative initiatives by Cardinal Jerzy Radziwiłł, the bishop of the Diocese of Krakow in 1591–1600. He ordered that meticulous visitations be carried out to provide a description of the current condition of the parishes in his Diocese, with any shortcomings and needs expressed by the faithful that needed to be addressed. Radziwiłł’s activity

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45 W. Urban, op. cit., pp. 150–3, 247; also, cf. W. Sobieski, *Nienawiść wyznaniowa ...*, p. 78.

46 W. Urban, op. cit., p. 156.

47 AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, p. 110.

48 W. Urban, op. cit., p. 254; AKMK, AVCap. 10, fol. 229–32.

was mostly focused on disciplining the clergy: an adequate standard of parish clergymen was to play the key role in the post-Tridentine renewal.<sup>49</sup>

The Krakow bishop who succeeded Radziwiłł, Bernard Maciejowski, has gone down in the history of the Catholic reform in Poland primarily as the author of a famous pastoral letter to the parish clergy. It was, in fact, a compendium on pastoral and priestly work. Known colloquially as Maciejowski's Pastoral Letter (*Pastoralna Maciejowskiego*), the letter was an extremely practical and synthetic collection of recommendations and legal provisions meant to render the addressees better acquainted with the Council-of-Trent decrees, with a focus on the specific local conditions and particular legislation. The letter was issued in 1601 and disseminated together with the Krakow synod statutes. Its popularity went beyond the limits of the bishopric: in 1609, it was appended to a body of the statutes of the Provincial Synod of Piotrków (1607), the assembly Maciejowski had presided as the Archbishop of Gniezno. In 1628, the full text of *Pastoralna* was included in the provincial statutes of Archbishop Jan Wężyk, with a recommendation for the parish clergy to observe these instructions, under threat of God's displeasure and episcopal punishments. Since then, numerous editions of Maciejowski's Pastoral Letter added shape to the post-Tridentine reform across the dioceses of Poland.<sup>50</sup>

*Reformationes generales ad clerum et populum dioecesis Cracoviensis pertinentes*, publicised at a 1621 synod in Krakow by Bishop Marcin Szyszkowski, became another important document that contributed to the post-Tridentine reform in Lesser Poland.<sup>51</sup> It was an extensive collection of regulations in the form of a

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49 F. Machay, *Działalność duszpasterska kardynała Radziwiłła biskupa krakowskiego (1591–1600)*, Krakow 1936, pp. 18–28, 52–4.

50 J. Fijałek, 'Pastoralna ks. Bernarda Maciejowskiego w redakcji z r. 1601 i korekturze rzymskiej z r. 1608, zatwierdzona przez papieża Urbana VIII w r. 1629. Z historii recepcji prawa trydenckiego w kościele polskim,' in *Pamiętnik IV Powszechnego Zjazdu Historyków Polskich w Poznaniu 6–8 XII 1925*, Lwów 1925, section IV, pp. 1–2, 10; S. Nasiorowski, "List pasterski" kard. Bernarda Maciejowskiego, Lublin 1992, pp. 53–9, 114–18. In the Przemyśl Diocese, the *Pastoralna* was probably introduced pursuant to the statutes of the diocesan synod of 1612. The resolution was renewed at a synod held in 1621; the full text of the Maciejowski Pastoral Letter was added to the printed collection of the synod's constitutions. See J. Sawicki, *Synody diecezji przemyskiej obrządku łacińskiego i ich statuty*, ser. 'Concilia Poloniae. Źródła i studia krytyczne,' Vol. 8, Wrocław 1957, pp. 80, 195–6.

51 *Reformationes generales ad clerum et populum dioecesis Cracoviensis pertinentes*. Ab [...] Martino Szyszkowski [...] episcopo Crac. [...] in synodo dioecesana sancitae et promulgatae, Cracoviae [1621].

reformative decree issued to the diocese's clergy and faithful; its legal force was grounded upon the synodal constitution. As to its content, the *Reformationes* rendered even more detailed the principles that were propagated earlier on by Bishop Maciejowski's *Pastoralna*. With the regulations of the Council of Trent as a point of departure, Bishop Szyszkowski's provisions strictly regulated religious life and administrative issues in the Diocese of Krakow.

However, the quality of the popular masses' religiousness never became a focus of intense interest among the ecclesial hierarchs during the reform period. It was assumed that the problem would solve itself once the parish clergy were provided with appropriate intellectual and material status. The requirements of the Counter-Reformation Church concerning rural parishioners were limited to regularity of the cult and developing a command of the rudiments of religious knowledge. The guidelines regarding the activities of the parsons among the simple folk were quite vague, and usually merely reproduced a handful of recommendations related to education and supervision over the parishioners' orthodoxy. The Church seems to have been satisfied with superficial but regular practices, as far as the peasantry was concerned; this, in turn, provided conditions for strengthening a model of vulgarised and routine piety in the countryside.

In order to enable the country folk to systematically participate in religious life, they had to have access to a parish church. However, between the end of the sixteenth century and the end of the eighteenth century, the number of parishes within Polish dioceses did not increase, and even decreased in some areas. While the number of parishes remained stable in the Krakow bishopric area, accessibility to churches did improve in Lesser Poland. This was due to the reclamation of a number of temples that had been abandoned or taken over by Protestants. In the latter half of the sixteenth century, the Krakow Diocese had one parish church per more-or-less 60 sq. km. (or 1,320 residents), but the churches were very irregularly distributed. A parish in the province (voivodeship) of Krakow covered an area of 40.7 sq. km. on average, whereas in the province of Sandomierz, the mean area was 68.8 sq. km. The figure for the Lublin voivodeship was as high as 134.3 sq. km.<sup>52</sup> The area a parish church would have to handle in the Krakow bishopric was, however, not too large: as late as in 1937, the average area of a parish

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52 S. Litak, 'Zagadnienie parafii w XVI–XVII wieku,' *Znak*, 1965, Nos. 137–138, pp. 1529–35. These amounts remained essentially unaltered until the decline of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. As of 1772, the average parish in the Voivodeship of Krakow covered an area of 49 sq. km, the respective figures for the regions of Sandomierz and Lublin being 65 sq. km. and 126 sq. km.; see Litak, *Kościół łaciński w Rzeczypospolitej około 1772 roku. Struktury administracyjne*, Lublin 1996, p. 64.



in the Płock or Podlasie diocese, both in the densely inhabited and predominantly rural regions to the north from Krakow Diocese, was, again, approx. 60 sq. km.<sup>53</sup> Added to this should be the fast-growing number of monastic churches, which took over some functions from parish churches<sup>54</sup>, and a network of public chapels and filial churches that complemented the otherwise sparse network of parishes in eastern part of Lesser Poland.<sup>55</sup>

Given such conditions, a majority of local peasants had an objective opportunity to repeatedly attend masses and other services; they only had to be disposed to do so. The encouragements to listen to the mass on a regular basis, repeated from the pulpit, were often supported by the administrative apparatus – an obvious situation in ecclesiastical estates, which were administrated by clergymen.<sup>56</sup> However, secular proprietors and leaseholders also bound their serfs, in the statutes they issued for the villages they owned and governed, to attend the holy mass regularly.<sup>57</sup> The incentive was probably not a nobleman's imperative for the mission of propagating the post-Tridentine reforms in rural areas; it seems rather unrelated to their piousness. In 1602, a certain Mrs Pieniążkowa, a Calvinist proprietor of Gorlice, went as far as forcing her subjects to attend Catholic masses if they did not want to go to a Protestant church.<sup>58</sup> The Roman Catholic noblemen put an onus upon their Ruthenian serfs to visit the local Orthodox or Uniate churches on a regular basis.<sup>59</sup> Regular participation in any form of religious cult was simply regarded as contributing to the serf's obedience.<sup>60</sup>

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53 A. Stanowski, 'Diecezje i parafie polskie w XIX i XX wieku,' *Znak*, 1965, Nos. 137–138, p. 1624.

54 In the Diocese of Krakow, the number of such monastic or cloister churches more than doubled between the late sixteenth and the second half of the eighteenth centuries; see S. Litak, *Zagadnienie parafii ...*, p. 1535.

55 For example, in the Diocese of Przemyśl in 1772, one parish church had to serve an area of 103 sq. km, on average; including filial churches and public chapels, the average goes down to 67 sq. km, however. See Litak, *Kościół łaciński ...*, p. 45.

56 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*, wyd. B. Ulanowski, SPPP, Vols. 11–12, Krakow 1921, Nos. 3915 [1679] and 3921 [1702]; *Ordynacje i ustawy wiejskie z archiwów metropolitalnego i kapitulnego w Krakowie z lat 1451–1689*, ed. by S. Kuraś, Kraków 1960, Nos. 65 [1598], 69 [1600], 76 [1604], 99 [1647].

57 See, e.g., Głębowice, fol. 2 [1670]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 4161 [1729], 4162 [1736], 4194 [1776].

58 W. Urban, op. cit., p. 167.

59 Klimkówka demesne, No. 1163 [1702].

60 Cf. Krzyżownicy and Proszów, p. 5 [1602].

Those who shunned going to church were at times threatened by the civil authorities with being 'punished severely' (in rather general terms)<sup>61</sup>; usually, though, a specified financial penalty was imposed of normally from one<sup>62</sup> to six grosz,<sup>63</sup> but at times a fine of up to three marks (*grzywnas*) was charged.<sup>64</sup> The most frequent charge was a pound of wax, the material customarily used to pay pecuniary penalties to the Church.<sup>65</sup> It can therefore be supposed that the fine for failing to attend a service was ultimately received by the priest or the churchwardens.

The statutes did not usually specify who ought to have been in charge of supervising church attendance. Cardinal Jerzy Radziwiłł's ordinances for the burghers and peasants of the parishes of Kielce, Iłża, and Bodzentyn, dated 1598, provided for the appointment of special officials, called *punctatores*, who were tasked with writing down the names of those not attending and handing over the list to the starost so he could punish the disobedient.<sup>66</sup> According to the statute for the villages of Świlcza and Woliczka, from around 1628 the attendance at services was to be overseen by the *dziesiętniki*; that is, rural lower-level officials administering ten peasant households each, active in some larger villages in Lesser Poland.<sup>67</sup> Church attendance was controlled in different ways, depending on the estate, and there were no overall rules of how to tackle the task. For a comparison, according to a *wilkierz* (a set of regulations enacted by the feudal lord) for the demesne of Łąkorz in the Voivodeship of Chełmno in 1692, oversight was to be exercised by the church organist in exchange for one grosz out of the ten-groszy penalty imposed on those evading the duty.<sup>68</sup>

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61 Łącko, No. 599 [1702]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3921 [1702]; also, cf. Kalisz, p. 488 [1693].

62 *Ordynacje i ustawy wiejskie ...*, No. 69 [1600].

63 'Polskie ustawy wiejskie XV–XVIII w.', ed. by S. Kutrzeba, A. Mańkowski, *Archiwum Komisji Prawniczej*, Vol. 11, Krakow 1938, p. 196 [1696]; *Ordynacje i ustawy wiejskie ...*, No. 99 [1647]; Pieskowa Skała, p. 57 [1627]; see also, Kalisz, p. 356 [1647].

64 Klimkówka demesne, No. 1163 [1702].

65 *Ordynacje i ustawy wiejskie ...*, No. 65 [1598]; Klimkówka demesne, No. 126 [1617]; Łącko, No. 544 [1670]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3915 [1679], 4114 [1618], 4177 [1756].

66 *Ordynacje i ustawy wiejskie ...*, No. 65 [1598].

67 *Ustawa dla wsi Świlczy i Woliczki z roku ok. 1628*, ed. by A. Kamiński and F. Kotula, Rzeszów 1948, p. 2; also, cf.: Kalisz, p. 356 [1647], where the aldermen were charged with the task.

68 *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 174 [1692].

Relative to the frequency with which attendance appeared in rural statutes, traces of actual coercion applied by the local authorities or the estate administration are scarce. A certain Procop Piotr of Kasina was punished in 1636 with 12 lashes, because “neither he himself, nor any one of his house was in the church on All Saints Day.”<sup>69</sup> The severity of this punishment may suggest that recurrence or persistent avoidance of the obligation might have been the case, as was certainly the case with another perpetrator, a miller from Wysoka called Jakub Kochan, who provocatively missed several services in a row.<sup>70</sup> Minor instances and punishing ‘ordinary’ failures to appear at a mass probably remained unrecorded, and thus the scale of this phenomenon is difficult to estimate.

However, common and regular participation in parochial services was illusory; this is attested also by certain normative texts. A *Przestroga* [“Admonition,” a type of *wilkierz*] for the village of Głębowice, from 1670, instructed that the serfs were supposed to appear at Sunday and holy-day masses, “as many of them as possibly can be.”<sup>71</sup> It was impossible that the dwellers of a village left their homesteads to go to the church all at the same time. The duty primarily concerned householder farmers. They were supposed to appear at church on each feast-day, together with “their home servants redundant [at that moment].”<sup>72</sup> Some statutes from other areas of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth offer a more realistic approach. A 1626 *wilkierz* for the small town of Czarz in Chełmno Land demanded that the householder and his wife appeared in church alternately.<sup>73</sup> A similar solution was assumed in the statute for the village of Ostrów, propriety of the city of Kalisz in Greater Poland, issued in 1647.<sup>74</sup> In the Braślau district (*powiat*) in the northern part of Lithuania, the presence of at least one person from each cottage was regarded as satisfactory.<sup>75</sup>

In Lesser Poland, however, even if not all the peasants attended the masses on each feast-day, they at least endeavoured to do so; in any case, participation in a church service every Sunday was part of the folk custom.<sup>76</sup> No records have been found which attest to any considerable negligence in this respect; even those who

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69 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3186 [1636].

70 Wysoka B, fol. 61–2 [1765].

71 Głębowice, fol. 2 [1670].

72 Krzyżownicy and Proszów, p. 5 [1602]; similarly, *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 340 [1756]; see also, ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 335 [1757].

73 ‘Wilkierz miasteczka Czarza,’ ed. by A. Mańkowski, *Zapiski TNT*, Vol. 11, 1938, p. 54.

74 Kalisz, p. 356 [1647].

75 S. Litak, ‘Ze studiów nad religijnością niższych warstw społecznych ...,’ pp. 164–5.

76 J. Kracik, ‘Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...,’ p. 235.

dwelled in places far from their parish church did their best to attend services, even if they had to set off from home a day before.<sup>77</sup>

Usually, no serious objections were voiced as far as the way simple parishioners behaved at church was concerned. On the contrary, their behaviour was regarded as clearly synonymous with appropriate and worthy conduct. As instructed by a 1628 rural statute, “whilst at the court, behave like at a mass in the church: remain standing before the office, rather than seated; remove your cap; proceed thyself one at-a-time, no shouting, talking, prattling, or dissention ever commit, what so ever.”<sup>78</sup> Inebriation of those participating in masses was the major problem, however. The clergy often accused the peasants of visiting the church under the influence of alcohol, which prevented them from maintaining dignity appropriate for the service.<sup>79</sup> Such charges ought however to be considered in the context of everyday life in Poland-Lithuania. In 1749, nobleman Józef Garlicki declared that there was nothing reprehensible in the behaviour of the parishioners from the village of Iwkowa, which were accused by the local priest of being permanently intoxicated during the mass: “I attended the service several times at the Iwkowa church, and on holy days as well as on week-days the people behaved themselves tacitly. I never saw them drunken.”<sup>80</sup>

There were accusations based on the fact that peasants used the opportunity of religious ceremonies to meet their acquaintances and socialise. For young people church celebrations offered a good opportunity to establish interpersonal relations, and to introduce themselves or show off to the opposite sex. Hence the ‘patters and trysts’ at the adjacent cemetery, or even inside the church, during the mass, which could have been interpreted as indifference towards God.<sup>81</sup> In one folk song, written in the eighteenth century, a young girl confesses:

Kiedy ja pójdę do kościoła poznać tam obrazy, raz spojrzę na ołtarz, na chłopców dwa razy. <sup>82</sup>	I shall go to the church, admire the pictures nice: I'll glance at the altar once, and at the boys, twice.
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77 J. Kracik, ‘Duchowe niedostatki wsi beskidzkiej ...’, p. 173.

78 *Ustawa dla wsi Świlczy i Woliczki...*, p. 10.

79 Cf., e.g. BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 12<sup>v</sup>, 52<sup>v</sup>, 73; see also, ASD, Vol. 2, p. 174 [1744].

80 BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 42<sup>v</sup>.

81 For example, Wysoka A, pp. 53–4 [1708].

82 C. Hernas, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 129.

The faithful essentially participated in the holy mass in a passive manner. The collator from Marcin Nowakowski's *Koleśda duchowna* described the peasant parishioners thus: "there's little use of them in the church: some sleeping, others pushing themselves into the pews, causing all the foul-smell."<sup>83</sup> However, the holy mass must have been a somewhat magical ceremony, in the perception of peasant churchgoers. From what was said from the pulpit, they could only hear some general statements: "What is it that the Mass is composed of? Essentially, of three parts; that is, the Offertory, the Consecration, and the Communion; it is composed of the Epistle, the Gospel, various prayers, and ceremonies, kneeling, kissing, standing, and incensation," as the Rev. Benedykt Chmielowski instructed his parishioners.<sup>84</sup> The focus was on the adoration moments. The observation of the Host during the Elevation was willingly seen as a source of multiple graces for the flesh and the soul: this motif had remained unchanged since the late Middle Ages. The clergymen usually recommended to their simple parishioners to pray the Rosary or the canonical hours during the service, until the Consecration. From that point onwards, they were expected to actually join the celebration through attentively watching the priest's gestures.<sup>85</sup> As we can infer today, peasants did indeed participate in the holy mass in such a way. There are no individual testimonies to support this inference; records confirming this supposition can be identified casually. For example, in 1749 a witness testifying in the case of a peasant accused of defiling a church when drunk described his behaviour at the service thus: ". . . but I could see Piotr Pyszno once when he had drunk a little, and staggered, but he made no noise in the church, he was just saying his prayers"<sup>86</sup> That was, possibly, an alibi.

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw a symbolic interpretation of the liturgy, inspired by the 'Eucharistic exercises' promoted by the Jesuits since the sixteenth century, gradually penetrating into provincial parishes of Lesser Poland. The exercises consisted in a division of the mass into twenty-four periods corresponding with the history of the Passion of Christ. The believer's task was to ruminate on the relevant episode of the Passion during each of the specified fragments of the Liturgy. This method notably deepened lay people's

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83 M. Nowakowski, *Koleśda duchowna parafianom od Pasterzów dla wygody wszystkich od jednego sprawiona*, Krakow 1753, p. 299.

84 BJ, ms 7079, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>.

85 Cf. L. Châtellier, *The religion of the Poor. Rural Missions in Europe and the Formation of Modern Catholicism, c. 1500–1800*, Cambridge 1997, p. 179.

86 BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 52<sup>v</sup>.

participation in the service, but certainly required some intellectual sophistication.<sup>87</sup> Rev. Benedykt Chmielowski encouraged his parishioners in Firlejów to ponder the Passion episodes during the mass<sup>88</sup>. Nonetheless, it does not seem probable that illiterate Polish folk could have mastered the technique.

Along with repeating the prayers, singing was another popular method to involve the common people in the service. However, it was only towards the end of the seventeenth century that holy-mass songs; that is, liturgy-related songs, began appearing in Poland, but the custom of singing canonical hours, litanies, psalms, and so on, before or after the mass, had been introduced earlier.<sup>89</sup> Rev. Stanisław Brzeżański, the Dean of Dunajów and devoted shepherd of simple folk, perceived group singing by the congregation of songs specially composed for the purpose as a remedy against their rather their poor religious knowledge.<sup>90</sup> Bishop Marcin Szyszkowski ordained in 1621 that the custom be introduced in all the parishes of the Krakow Diocese of the poor singing the *Bogurodzica* before high mass: he decided that the song, comprising a compendium of Catholic doctrine, would help simple people gain a command of this doctrine and stoke religiosity in them.<sup>91</sup> The practice probably became customary with parish churches beyond the Krakow bishopric as well. A hundred years later, *Bogurodzica* was seemingly sung by the indigent in most of the churches of the Przemyśl Diocese, which can be guessed based on the fact that only few parish priests had to be reminded of this by the visitators.<sup>92</sup>

### 3. Counter-Reformation in the countryside: the teaching and the sacraments

When appearing at church for a mass, the believer was also supposed to listen to the sermon. The post-Tridentine Church regarded sermons as one of the most

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87 L. Châtellier, op. cit., p. 179; J. de Viguierie, *La dévotion populaire à la messe dans la France des XVII<sup>e</sup> et XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles*, in *Histoire de la messe. XVII<sup>e</sup>–XIX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, Angers 1980, p. 18.

88 BJ, ms 7079, fol. 26<sup>v</sup>; also, see J. Kracik, 'Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...', p. 236.

89 T. Sinka, 'Polska pieśń w liturgii (od pocz. XIV w.)', *Nasza Przyszłość*, Vol. 60, 1983, pp. 263–4; also, see Z. Wit, 'Pieśń nabożna w potrydenckich procesjonacjach i rytuałach polskich', *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Yr. 21, 1974, fasc. 6, pp. 118–19.

90 S. Brzeżański, *Owczarnia w dzikim polu [...] to jest katechyzm polski z przyczyn w informacyi wyrażonych pieśniami wydany*, Lwów 1717, fol. A3.

91 *Reformationes generales* ..., p. 100.

92 AAPrz ms 156, pp. 525, 529.

important means of religious teaching. Cardinal Bernard Maciejowski's pastoral letter bound parsons (and, possibly, curates) to deliver sermons on Sundays and holy days all the year round. The level of homiletics was expected to be aligned with the age, knowledge and potential of the listeners; irrelevant scholastics, doubtful stories, jokes, and oratorical flamboyance were to be avoided, as was admonishing named individuals. Those of the clergy who would have found it problematic to meet these conditions should rather read out a homily from the postil compiled by the Rev. Jakub Wujek, or one of the sermons from the Rev. Piotr Skarga's collection.<sup>93</sup> Similar principles for homiletics targeted at simple folk was recommended, in parallel, by the synodal legislation of other Polish dioceses.<sup>94</sup>

Preachers taking advantage of the 'ready-to-use' sermon collections did not have to read out the relevant homily word for word. The postils were certainly a strong source of inspiration for the parish clergy and we may assume that the sermons heard by rural parishioners usually recalled, more or less, the popular printed homilies. Based on Jan Kracik's research, we can infer that parsons had rather common access to at least one printed postil each: publications of this sort ranked amongst the most popular items in parochial and private book collections used by clergymen in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The works by Jakub Wujek enjoyed the highest popularity; they were later on joined by those by Szymon Starowolski. A wealth of such publications was available – a diversity that was reflected in the parish clergy's libraries.<sup>95</sup>

Nonetheless, the style of preaching gradually began a shift to catechising. At a 1668 congregation of the Nowa Góra decanate, the parsons were instructed that a half of the sermon delivered at the mass should deal with teaching the basics of

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93 'Epistola pastoralis ad Parochos Dioecesis Cracovien. Bernardus Maciejowski, Dei gratia Episcopus Cracovien. Dux Severien,' in *Constitutiones Synodii Dioecesanæ Cracoviensis, celebratae Anno Domini M. DC. I, X. Kal. Iunii, Cracoviae 1601*, pp. 34–6 (chap. [8]: 'De praedicatione Verbi Dei'). This first edition of Bernard Maciejowski's *Pastoral letter* is a rare print, while it has been reedited a number of times in the later period (including the twentieth century, see J. Kurczewski, *Biskupstwo wileńskie*, Wilno 1912, pp. 387–422); hence, when quoting the *Pastoralna*, I refer to the title of the chapter along with the number of the page in the 1601 edition. For a detailed discussion of the content of the *Pastoral letter*, see S. Nasiorowski, op. cit.

94 W. Rubin, 'Lud w polskim ustawodawstwie synodalnym do rozbiorów Polski,' in *Sacrum Poloniae Millennium*, Vol. 2, Rzym 1955, p. 138.

95 J. Kracik, 'Biblioteki parafialne a prywatne księgozbiory duchowieństwa. Dekanat Nowa Góra w XVII–XVIII w.,' *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne*, Vol. 32, 1976, pp. 261–3.

the faith. In the eighteenth century, regular preaching was practiced essentially on solemn feast days, while recapitulation of the rudiments of faith was the focus on ordinary Sundays.<sup>96</sup>

There were obviously parsons who pointed to individuals and stigmatised them, “crying out to the people, may you be smote by thunder-strikes, may you be grabbed by devils and may they enter into you,”<sup>97</sup> and the like curses; some entirely neglected the preaching of the Word. Visitation records tell us that such cases were isolated, though. If the Rev. Hugo Kołłątaj was to be trusted, in his youth in the 1760s: “it was incomparably less probable that a good sermon could be heard at the parish. . . . What occurred the most frequently at the parish was hearing the Gospel falling [on the given day] being read out, and whenever the priest became implicated in explaining it, his argument proved to be entirely insensible, or filled with vexing remarks not only without the craft but without the unction as otherwise required for Teaching of this kind.”<sup>98</sup> This opinion is not completely fair. Sermons preached by rural clergy were certainly not very sophisticated intellectually or in terms of style; they might have been superficial and simplifying, but being of such a sort, they could more efficiently appeal to simple minds.<sup>99</sup> Preaching in countryside areas was not about delivering quality pulpit eloquence: its role was, instead, to offer the parishioners regular contact with verbally communicated religious contents.<sup>100</sup>

Sunday catechesis fulfilled a similar function. The ecclesial authorities in the Krakow Diocese repeated their instruction that the faithful folk be taught the basic prayers and principles of faith on a weekly basis, from at least the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>101</sup> However, it was impossible to introduce a regular and mass catechisation before the Reformation wave came out of the parish

96 J. Kracik, ‘Katolicka indoktrynacja doby saskiej w parafiach zachodniej Małopolski,’ *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Yr. 20, 1973, fasc. 6, p. 17.

97 BO, ms 11714; p. 904.

98 H. Kołłątaj, ‘Pamiętnik o stanie Kościoła polskiego katolickiego i o wszystkich innych wyznaniach w Polsce,’ in H. Kołłątaj, *Stan oświecenia w Polsce w ostatnich latach panowania Augusta III (1750–1764)*, Wrocław 1953, p. 233.

99 J. Kracik, ‘Katolicka indoktrynacja . . .,’ p. 34.

100 On the evolution of parish preaching during the Enlightenment, see S. Witecki, ‘Theory and Practice of Parochial Preaching in the late 18th-century Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth,’ *Slověne*, 2017, fasc. 2, pp. 598–621.

101 See, e.g. ‘Przepisy archidiacona krakowskiego Bartłomieja Gądkowskiego (1546–1548),’ ed. by P. David, *Collectanea Theologica*, Yr. 14, 1933, fasc. 1–2, p. 257; F. Machay, op. cit., p. 55.



churches. The custom became commonplace within the diocese in the second decade of the seventeenth century, as far as it can be inferred from a 1625 account on the condition of the diocese, then run by Bishop Marcin Szyszkowski, who described himself as a success in this field.<sup>102</sup> Thereafter and as late as the following century, visitors had at times to remind the parsons in countryside churches of their duty to conduct the Sunday catechesis.<sup>103</sup>

The syllabus of such teaching was reduced to a minimum; it corresponded with the Church's basic requirements as far as common people's religious knowledge was concerned. These included the ability to cross oneself and say the basic prayers: the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary, and the Apostles' Creed, and knowledge of the Decalogue and the Evangelical Counsels, and general rules of confession.<sup>104</sup> Catechising sessions were held immediately after a Sunday or holy day mass. The parson or curate repeated the prayers together with the congregation, supported by students of the parish school; after the recitation, he occasionally discussed one of his problems more closely.<sup>105</sup>

While the task of the Sunday catechesis was, in theory, to refresh the churchgoers' knowledge, it essentially functioned as the only religious training peasants received. The parish school system had a limited reach, although the post-Tridentine renewal saw schools as a mass instrument enabling the faithful to master the basics of religious knowledge at a young age. Cardinal Maciejowski's pastoral letter set the tasks for them in this way.<sup>106</sup> Characteristically, many a statute for villages within the Church estates defined sending children to school as obligatory. A 1647 ordinance for the Muszyna demesne emphasises the religious character of school education: "they shall bring their children to schools

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102 'Relacje o stanie diecezji krakowskiej 1615–1765', ed. by W. Müller, in *Materiały źródłowe do dziejów Kościoła w Polsce*, Vol. 7, Lublin 1978, p. 46.

103 AKMK, AVCap. 46, pp. 107, 216; AVCap. 49, p. 2, AVCap. 61, pp. 677, 845, 1086, and passim, AAPrz, ms 160, fol. 309<sup>v</sup>, 328<sup>v</sup>, 366<sup>v</sup>, 372, and passim.

104 *Constitutiones synodii dioecesanæ Cracoviensis celebratæ anno Domini M. DC. I, X. Kal. iunii*, p. 5; *Synodus dioecesanæ, ab Illustriſſimo et Reverendiſſimo Domino, Domino Casimiro a Łubna Łubienski, [...] Episcopo Cracoviensi [...] celebrata, Cracoviæ, [...] anno Domini MDCCXI, Cracoviæ 1711*, pp. 4–5; also, cf. 'Wilkierz dla wsi klasztoru oliwskiego z 1616 r.', in *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 68.

105 E. Ziarniewicz, 'Udział uczniów polskich szkół parafialnych w liturgii od XVI do XVIII w.', in *Studia Liturgiczne*, Vol. 6, Lublin 1990, p. 44.

106 *Epistola pastoralis ...*, p. 33, (chap. [7]: *De Scholaribus et Scholarum Magistris*).

to be taught there, so that they may practice the learning of divine devotion and study their prayer.”<sup>107</sup>

The beginning of the seventeenth century did indeed see in Lesser Poland a heyday of parochial education, at least in statistical terms. Whereas in 1577 only 30.6 % churches within the Diocese of Krakow had schools affiliated to them, the proportion for 1618 was 78.9 %.<sup>108</sup> As many as 82 % of rural parishes in the Diocese of Przemyśl had schools (91 out of the total of 111) in the seventeenth century.<sup>109</sup> These shares decreased towards the end of seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, quite severely in the Krakow Diocese, down to a mere 21.0 % in 1727<sup>110</sup> but not as dramatically in the rural parishes of the Przemyśl Diocese, dropping to 72 % in 1720–8.<sup>111</sup> The peak seventeenth-century number of parish schools was never reinstated until the Partitions.

Even in the years of blooming parochial schools and the educational system, only a small percentage of peasant children actually attended school.<sup>112</sup> The numbers of rural schoolchildren were always very low, e.g. there were just two schoolboys in Iwonicz in 1745, and only one in Gać in 1646.<sup>113</sup> According to the visitators in the Przemyśl Diocese, there was not a single student in Świlcza in 1720, although the school building was in a good condition.<sup>114</sup> The parishioners in the village of Królik were ordered, by a post-visitation decree issued by Przemyśl Bishop Jan-Krzysztof Szembek in 1722, under the penalty of flogging, that at least two boys be sent to school every year; to no avail, though: “*sed omnia sine effectu.*”<sup>115</sup> Usually, however, a few students (approx. five) would attend a rural school, mostly the sons of the more affluent peasants.<sup>116</sup> It was only from the mid-eighteenth century onwards that some schools in the Krakow Diocese

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107 *Ordynacje i ustawy wiejskie ...*, No. 99 [1647]; cf. *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, pp. 74 [1616] and 345–6 [1756].

108 A. Zapart, *Szkolnictwo parafialne w archidiecezji krakowskiej od XVI do XVIII wieku*, Lublin 1983, p. 94.

109 H. Błażkiewicz, ‘Szkolnictwo parafialne w diecezji przemyskiej w latach 1636–1757 w świetle wizytacji biskupich,’ *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 46, 1976, p. 167.

110 A. Zapart, op. cit., p. 103.

111 H. Błażkiewicz, op. cit., p. 171.

112 A. Zapart, op. cit., p. 263.

113 H. Błażkiewicz, op. cit., p. 191.

114 *Ibid.*, p. 173.

115 *Ibid.*, p. 177.

116 B. Brzęczek, ‘Szkolnictwo parafialne w diecezji przemyskiej w latach 1740–1760 w świetle wizytacji biskupa W. H. Sierakowskiego,’ *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Yr. 21, 1974, fasc. 4, p. 160.

began accepting girls as well, and then only in a very small number of parishes.<sup>117</sup> School remained a place for boys, especially that its basic task was, essentially, to educate altar-boys for the local church.

The quality of teaching in rural schools left a great deal to be desired. As a standard, the requirements came down to mastering the catechism in its simplified version and developing the custom of regular participation in the cult.<sup>118</sup> In a 1721 visitation decree, the Przemyśl suffragan bishop Michał Piechowski thus summarised the syllabus of rural parochial schools: “knowledge of the basics of the alphabet and of the formation of words; then, the method of reading and servicing the priest during the Holy Mass. And this is the cardinal and utmost degree of school, the ultimate objective being to live a good life.”<sup>119</sup>

However, the rudimentary religious education of peasant children fell primarily on the parents. Ideally, the responsible fathers of peasant families were supposed to gather their children and servants every morning and every evening to say the basic prayers together.<sup>120</sup> The *Examination of the subjects and the servants* recommended to confessors by the Chełm synod of 1694 covered the responsibility of the husbandmen for the religious life of their children and subordinates in three out of a total of five paragraphs. The confessors were expected to inquire of the peasants: “2. Whether they have the servantry and tell them to go to church on every Sunday and every feast day. 3. Whether they teach their children the prayers, the Commandments of God, and when they come of age, whether they give them a teaching for the confession. 4. They ought to admonish the husbandmen that, having awoken and then woken their servantry, and kneeled together with them in front of a rood-tree or an image of the Most Holy Virgin, they thank God the Lord for his benefactions and request that he bless them in the labours which they should turn to his glory. For which [purpose] they ought to say three Lord’s Prayers, three Angelic Salutations, and one

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117 K. Różańska, *Szkolnictwo parafialne w prepozyturze kieleckiej od XVI do XVIII w., Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Yr. 21, 1974, fasc. 4, p. 173; A. Zapart, op. cit., p. 256. Also, cf. S. Olczak, ‘Uczęszczanie dziewcząt do szkół parafialnych w wielkopolskiej części diecezji poznańskiej w XVIII wieku,’ *Summarium. Sprawozdania TN KUL*, Yr. 21, 1974, No. 1, pp. 34–8.

118 J. Kowalik, *Szkolnictwo parafialne w archidiecezji sandomierskiej od XVI do XVIII wieku*, Lublin 1983, pp. 102, 107–8.

119 Cyt. za: H. Błażkiewicz, op. cit., p. 193.

120 H. Wyczałowski, ‘Studia nad wewnętrznymi dziejami kościelnymi ...,’ Nos. 3–4, p. 87; also, cf. J. Związek, ‘Życie religijne i społeczne ludu wiejskiego w świetle nauk o. Andrzeja Gołdonowskiego (zm. 1660),’ *Studia Claromontana*, Vol. 6, 1985, pp. 214–15.

I Believe in God (Apostles' Creed), to the honour and glory of the Most Holy Trinity; having done which, they ought to go do to their labours."<sup>121</sup>

Recommendations of this sort were at times made part of the rural legislation. The 1628 statute for the villages of Świlcza and Woliczka bound every husbandman: "to be capable of nurturing his entire servantry, from the smallest herdsman to the tallest, teaching them the prayers and the Commandments of God. *Item*, so that he solemnly goes to church with his entire servantry on Sundays and holy days."<sup>122</sup> The statute for Ptaszkowa from 1736 ordained that the peasants: "send their children to church, and give them punishment, so they may learn the fear of God, for which God the Lord shall always bless [them all]."<sup>123</sup>

The conviction that a person gains the basic religious education in the bosom of his or her family was shared by the peasants of Lesser Poland. Introducing the child into a spiritual and ritual life was regarded as one of the parents' main duties towards their children. On bequeathing his arable land to his adoptive nephew, Sebastyan Pyczel of Golcowa emphasised (probably in order to prove that the succession was legally valid) that he had brought up and educated the nephew from an early age, as if he were his own son, namely: "I first of all gave him the exercise in the holy Catholic faith."<sup>124</sup>

With all its proven efficiency, the system of teaching the basics of religious knowledge at home still carried certain risks. When saying her Hail Mary, a female parishioner of Rev. Stanisław Brzeżański "would say, 'and blessed be the fruit of thy holy womb Jesus Christ the Son of God Holy Spirit,' and when at this point I told her to withhold the Holy Ghost, explaining to her that this be against the holy Catholic faith, . . . she was not willing to listen, and when I explained to her that this was a heresy; that now, hearing an interdiction from the priest, and thou wiltst to renounce thy error not, she said renounce shalt I not, for this is what my mother hath taught me, why should I not believe or say thus? Is it not the old people who say thus?"<sup>125</sup> In a similar way the exemplary simpleton penitent from Marcin Nowakowski's *Kolęda duchowna* explained himself to

121 J. Sawicki, *Synody diecezji chełmskiej obrządku łacińskiego z XVI-XVIII wieku i ich statuty*, ser. 'Concilia Poloniae. Źródła i studia krytyczne,' Vol. 9, Wrocław 1957, pp. 210–11.

122 *Ustawa dla wsi Świlczy i Woliczki ...*, p. 2.

123 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4162 [1736]; also, cf. 'Trzy wilkierze wiejskie,' ed. by S. Kujot, *Fontes TNT*, Vol. 5, 1901, p. 226 [1749]; *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, pp. 180 [1692], 259 [1733], 345–6 [1756].

124 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4313 [1759]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 1, pp. 155–6 [1722].

125 S. Brzeżański, op. cit., fol. F3<sup>v</sup>.

his confessor about the errors he made in crossing formula (“For ‘tis how my Mommie hath taught me this!”).<sup>126</sup>

To prevent such situations from happening, the religious knowledge of adult parishioners needed to be controlled from time to time, and any errors rectified. Such testing took place on a regular basis as part of the Easter confession. Before actually confessing his or her sins, the penitent was supposed to recite the basic prayers at the confessional.<sup>127</sup> Whether this procedure was rigorously employed by all the parsons does not need to be established; in any case, it would have extended the confession time substantially in the busy Easter period.<sup>128</sup>

The actual control of a person’s command of the religious rudiments took place perhaps only on the occasion of the Christian rites of passage. It was compulsory for the cleric to test, e.g. marriage candidates and refuse them consent to marry if they did not prove to be appropriately knowledgeable. This possibly efficient means of persuasion made people refresh (or learn) the basics of their faith;<sup>129</sup> and considering an individual’s life, the opportunity was unique.

The Church’s requirements regarding command of Christian teachings among simple parishioners were not excessive. The onus was placed on memorising the basic prayers and religious formulas, without necessarily actually understanding them.<sup>130</sup> A quite attempt to explain the catechism to the peasants is seen in the 1616 *wilkierz* for the villages belonging to the Oliwa monastery: the serfs “shall diligently endeavour that the common prayer; that is, the Lord’s Prayer, the Angelic Salutation, the I Believe in God, the ten of the commandments of God and of the Christian Church be learnt by them **by rote, at the very least** [emphasis by T. W.]”<sup>131</sup> It was no different in Lesser Poland: the ambition of the local clergy was confined to making folk learn the devotional formulas, a goal

126 M. Nowakowski, *Koleśa duchowna ...*, p. 554.

127 H. Wyczawski, ‘Studia nad wewnętrznymi dziejami kościelnymi ...’, Nos. 3–4, p. 87; H. Wyczawski, *Augustiańska parafia w Radomyślu nad Sanem*, Warsaw 1964, p. 54; J. Ataman, *W. H. Sierakowski i jego rządy w diecezji przemyskiej*, Warsaw 1936, p. 159.

128 Cf. G. Teretius, *Confessio et instructio idiotae sive modus excipiendi confessiones sacramentales rusticorum, puerorum in peccatis inveteratorum; ac ignorantium profectum in vita Christiana*, Krakow 1655, p. 20.

129 *Synodus dioecesana, ab [...] Casimiro Łubienski [1711] ...*, pp. 33–4; AKMK, AVCap. 61, pp. 687, 777, 845 and passim; also, cf. M. Bednarz, ‘Jezuici a religijność polska 1564–1964’, *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 20, 1964, p. 166; S. Tymosz, ‘Sprawy dotyczące dyscypliny sakramentalnej na synodzie lwowskim z 1765 roku’, in *Historia et Ius*, Lublin 1998.

130 J. Kracik, ‘Katolicka indoktrynacja ...’, p. 14.

131 *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 68 [1616].

that was in fact achieved by the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>132</sup> This achievement was significant given that on the verge of the post-Tridentine reform of the Church in Poland, the diocesan synods complained that among the common people, many did not know how to cross themselves or say prayers, with only few being able to recite the Ten Commandments or the precepts of the Church.<sup>133</sup> This opinion was rather exaggerated, and can possibly be seen as echoing the new formal standards instituted at the time concerning Catholic devotion. Due to these, the religious knowledge of the common folk did indeed increase significantly over several generations, inasmuch that the memorisation of the body of basic prayers and formulas became commonplace. Thus, the formal requirements of the Tridentine reform were satisfied.

However, a closer look at the religious knowledge of the common people shows that the ability to recite the formulas did not directly translate into a more profound religiosity. Usually, the phrases were repeated mechanically with no effort to try to understand what they might actually mean. This attitude was at odds with the one of the goals of the post-Tridentine Church, which emphasised the need to popularise the basic prayers and formulas, identifying their immense role in the religious education of the faithful. The prayers and phrases were meant to function as a sort of compendium of the basic knowledge on the faith, their content providing the minimum information and guideline for a person to earn his or her salvation. From the standpoint of simple parishioners, though, their meaning or importance was not founded upon the content they were meant to convey but on their placement within the space of the religious cult. Viewed thus, it was the skill to reproduce proficiently them rather than comprehend their meaning that mattered. This impression was reinforced by the requirements posed by the parochial clergy who controlled the knowledge of entire formulas rather than demanding their exegesis, even to a minimal degree. In the mid-eighteenth century, a certain priest residing near Bochnia attentively listened to the formulas uttered by those under his charge and found that their resemblance to the original versions rested on the way they sounded. To give some examples, when crossing themselves, some of those parishioners would say “In the name not the Father” [*I nie Ojca*] instead of ‘*W imię Ojca*’]; in the Lord’s Prayer, some would say, “Our Father’s, whose ace in heavens, hollowed thee thy name, thy king’s dome come . . . as be forgiv’n those to rest mass against us” [*Ojca nas który sie w niebiesie w świec się i nie Twoje, przydź królosko . . . jako odpuszczony*

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132 J. Kracik, ‘Katolicka indoktrynacja . . .’, p. 19.

133 W. Rubin, op. cit., p. 136.

*naszym inowajców*’ instead of ‘*Ojczy nasz któryś jest w niebiesiech, święć się imię Twoje, przyjdź królestwo . . . jako i my odpuszczamy naszym winowajcom*’]; in the Apostles’ Creed, some would say ‘*wstąpił do biesa*’ (‘He assented into high fiend’) and not ‘He ascended into Heaven’ (*wstąpił na niebiosy*).<sup>134</sup> A similar phenomenon was spotted by nobleman Ignacy Dulski, who in a statute for his village of Krasna (1775) obliged the local Uniate priest to teach on each Sunday: “the prayers, the commandments of God and the catechism, and this in Polish, because the people in here can understand nothing in Ruthenian and they only say their prayers with strange words which are not to be comprehended by themselves or anyone else.”<sup>135</sup> Certainly, it was not primarily the language barrier, otherwise not such a vital factor in the case of Polish and Ruthenian, that had brought about the situation. Rather than that, the prayers were memorised as specific sequences of words and sounds whose meaning could remain concealed for those who prayed. Primarily, the prayers were of value in their entirety: the main objective was to be able to repeat them at the prescribed frequency, venue and time. Attention was given mostly to the fluency of declamation (or possible stammering), the actual meaning of the prayer remaining less important.

Internal missions were one of the characteristic means of shaping the religion of the common masses in the early modern period. The most strenuous missionary effort was undertaken in Poland by the Jesuits. Their first missions began as early as the 1580s in Lesser Poland.<sup>136</sup> The Order of Missionaries, established to fulfil this very purpose and proving extremely successful in their operations in France, was brought over to Poland in 1653, but recorded their activities only from the 1670s onwards.<sup>137</sup> With the Order of Reformed Friars Minor joining the trend, the middle of the eighteenth century saw animated missionary activity.<sup>138</sup>

In Poland, the missions among the common people focused on teaching the catechism: this was the expected point of departure, given the inefficiency of the prevalent education system and omissions or neglect by the priests.<sup>139</sup> The first

134 H. Wyczawski, ‘*Studia nad wewnętrznymi dziejami kościelnymi . . .*’, Nos. 3–4, p. 88, fn. 58; also, cf. the observations made by S. Brzeżański, in op. cit., fol. A2.

135 Krasna, p. 209 [1775].

136 W. Urban, op. cit., p. 240.

137 F. Śmidoda, ‘*Misje ludowe dawnej polskiej prowincji Zgromadzenia XX. Misjonarzy, Roczniki Obydwóch Zgromadzeń św. Wincentego à Paulo*, Vol. 41, 1938, p. 72; *Księga pamiątkowa trzechsetlecia zgromadzenia księży misjonarzy (1625 – 17/IV – 1925)*, Krakow 1925, p. 169.

138 A. B. Sroka, *Prawo i życie polskich reformatów. W 350 rocznicę powstania 1623–1973*, Krakow 1975, p. 208.

139 M. Bednarz, op. cit., pp. 165–6.

Jesuit missions in the sixteenth century had at times to employ means characteristic of those used in very recently Christianised areas. On visiting villages, monks would select the more gifted locals and teach them the prayers *Our Father*, *Hail Mary*, and *I Believe in God*, so that they could convey them to the others in their community.<sup>140</sup> The missionaries moreover urged the faithful to receive the Sacraments of Confession and Communion.<sup>141</sup> In the religious life of a local community, the mission was a period of intensified catechesis and devotional practices. A mission would usually take a few weeks (usually three or four) and, we can assume, impressed the rural parishioners greatly.

The ad-hoc success of the missions carried out in the west of Europe was turned to good account by repeating the project on a regular basis, which led to a solidification of Christian attitudes and knowledge. In Poland, however, the missions were essentially a one-off push with no follow-up. As estimated by Jerzy Flaga, missionary activity extended to a mere 23 % of the parishes in the Krakow Diocese in the first half of the eighteenth century. The mission was a unique event, encountered once in a parishioner's lifetime. That the missions in Lesser Poland were interventional is further proved by the fact that they were most frequently targeted at residents of the vast parishes in the mountain region, covering the areas where negligence proved severe, e.g. in the Deanery of Nowy Targ in the Krakow Diocese.<sup>142</sup> The latter half of the eighteenth century saw a considerable increase in the frequency of the missions. For example, in the late 1760s the Lesser Poland Province of the Society of Jesus conducted an average of approximately 350 missions annually. However, a majority among them were short, so-called minor, missions organised during Church festivities.<sup>143</sup>

The obligatory confession in the Easter period was the common method of exercising supervision over parishioners' religiosity, particularly in moral terms. The custom languished around the middle of the sixteenth century in Poland-Lithuania Commonwealth, as Easter Communion decreased in popularity, but

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140 K. Drzymala, 'Praca jezuitów nad ludnością wiejską w pierwszym stuleciu osiedlenia się zakonu w Rzeczypospolitej,' *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 20, 1964, p. 60; S. Załęski, *Jezuici w Polsce*, Vol. III, Part 2: 1700–1773, Lwów 1902, pp. 910–11.

141 J. Flaga, *Działalność duszpasterska zakonów w drugiej połowie XVIII w. 1767–1772*, Lublin 1986, p. 271.

142 J. Flaga, 'Geografia misji ludowych w diecezji krakowskiej w pierwszej połowie XVIII wieku w świetle tabel bpa A. S. Załuskiego,' *Analecta Cracoviensia*, Vol. 17, 1985, pp. 438–9.

143 J. Flaga, 'Jezuickie misje ludowe w latach 1754–1770 w świetle liczb,' *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 29, 1981, fasc. 2, p. 176.



was restored soon afterwards by Counter-Reformers, not infrequently to the enthusiasm amongst the faithful.<sup>144</sup> The pragmatics of celebrating the sacrament were subject to meticulous regulation, which was externally epitomised by the construction of confessionals and ceasing the habit of hearing confessions *turmatim*; that is, in a collective manner.<sup>145</sup>

The receiving of the Sacrament of Penance was controlled during ecclesial visitations: those avoiding the duty were subject to excommunication. To oversee its observance, parish churches used the registers listing their parishioners and distributed confession slips which were to be returned to the parson before Easter. Those who had to confess to an unknown priest were supposed to produce the appropriate certificate before receiving the Holy Communion in their parish church (in fact, parochial coercion functioned in this respect, although the papal revisers crossed out the related record from Bishop Maciejowski's *Pastoralna*).<sup>146</sup>

By means of confession, the clergy could shape the moral attitudes of their faithful in compliance with the Christian model. The aforementioned *Examination of the subjects and the servants* demonstrates that no attempts were actually made to incite a deepened ethical sensitivity among peasants. The topics of this confessional pattern oscillated between obedience, labour, and family duties. Moral education of the peasantry through Penance seems at times to have assumed quite abrupt forms. In the mid-eighteenth century, a parson from Wojakowa requested Marcin Szaniawski, the parson of Iwkowa, that he 'take the confession' of a local mill-girl who reportedly had bought a stolen strand of beads. So as she came to the parsonage to make an appointment with Rev. Szaniawski for confession, "having drawn a desert-boot from underneath the bed," the priest "said to her that 'the sole of this boot is superior to you,' and did not want to hear her confession."<sup>147</sup> Such refusal was much severer for a peasant parishioner than the most poignant forms of repentance, for it prevented receiving the Easter Holy Communion, a religious act of great symbolic significance in the folk culture.

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144 H. Dobiosz, 'Częstotliwość przystępowania do sakramentu pokuty w Polsce do wydania Rytułu Piotrkowskiego (1631);' in *Studia Liturgiczne*, Vol. 6, Lublin 1990, pp. 82–4; M. Bednarz, op. cit., p. 157.

145 *Epistola pastoralis* ..., p. 44, (chap. [13]: *De poenitentia*); T. Długosz, 'Sprawy liturgiczne w XVI w. w diecezji krakowskiej,' *Ruch Biblijny i Liturgiczny*, Vol. 4, 1951, p. 305; also, cf. AKMK, AVCap. 31, fol. 15, 19, 33 and passim.

146 H. Dobiosz, op. cit., pp. 104–5.

147 BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 9<sup>r</sup> and 69.

The religious life of the faithful was to be rendered more profound through the promotion of the Sacraments of Confirmation and Unction, which were almost completely abandoned during the sixteenth century.<sup>148</sup> In the period before Trent, confirmation built a kinship among the confirmed, which in small local communities could make it extremely difficult to choose a spouse. The Council of Trent confined the kinship relationship only to the confirming individual and the confirmed one, his or her parents and witnesses.<sup>149</sup> Nevertheless, receiving this particular sacrament in Poland before the Partitions never ceased to be unique, all the more so that its popularity directly depended on the bishop's pastoral activity.<sup>150</sup> In rural parishes, confirmation was administered completely casually, regardless of the sequenced order in religious life. For example, Krakow suffragan bishop Franciszek Potkański, upon consecrating a church in the newly erected parish of Spytkowice, confirmed 1,646 parishioners (out of a total of 1,700) in 1766. Apart from this parish, it must also have been the first common confirmation in a few decades for the parishes of Raba and Jordanów, to which the village of Spytkowice previously belonged.<sup>151</sup>

Unction was making an unhurried comeback as well. The main issue was the popular conviction that the sick who had received his or her last rites had no more possibility of being healed.<sup>152</sup> Similar fears, although to a lesser degree, accompanied the viaticum. Such a superstition posed a serious pastoral issue over the entire period in question. Clergymen endeavoured to eradicate it by resorting to gentle persuasion<sup>153</sup> as well as resolute pressure: the Tęczynek provost, Rev. Świątecki, postponed by several days the funeral of a deceased person who had

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148 L. Boratyński, *Najdawniejsze relacje biskupów o stanie dyecezyi (relationes status ecclesiarum) z archiwum kongregacji del concilio w Rzymie*, Krakow 1916, p. 17.

149 Z. Wit, 'Liturgia sakramentu bierzmowania w Polsce do recepcji reformy trydenckiej,' in *Studia z dziejów liturgii w Polsce*, Vol. 2, Lublin 1976, p. 614.

150 Cf. E. Janicka, 'Praktyki religijne w archidiecezji lubelskiej w XVIII w.,' *Summariusum. Sprawozdania TN KUL*, Yr. 14, 1963–4, p. 215.

151 J. Kracik, 'Duchowe niedostatki wsi beskidzkiej ...,' p. 189.

152 M. Mikołajczyk, 'Dzieje liturgii sakramentu chorych w Polsce do Rytułu Piotrkowskiego (1631),' in *Studia z dziejów liturgii w Polsce*, Vol. 2, p. 284.

153 *Święta przysługa starających się o zbawienie dusz ludzkich kapłanów, tak naturalną jako też gwałtowną ze świata zchodzących niegdyś śmiercią oświadczona*, Kalisz 1759, p. 60; 'Instrukcja WW. Im. XX. Wizytatorom diecezji krakowskiej dana roku 1781,' in BO, ms 1444, p. 42.

left it to the last minute to receive the Extreme Unction, thereby exposing himself or herself to the peril of passing away without spiritual preparation.<sup>154</sup>

#### 4. Early modern religious culture and peasant religion

In parallel with imbuing the principles of Christianity in common people, various forms of devotion characteristic of the early modern age penetrated into rural areas. The process was not at all unilateral. Rural religious culture exerted an enormous impact upon the Old Polish popular religion, even affecting the piety of social elites. However, the forms of devotion accepted by peasants developed in a strict correlation with the religious culture of the time, so it cannot be determined which of their specific elements were the original contribution of the rural environment.

Such is the case, e.g. with the Marian cult, which in the Commonwealth of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries cut across both social classes and geographical divides. The figure of the Virgin played an immensely important part in the religious ideas of people at that time. Mary was regarded as the major supernatural Advocate and Mediatrix/intercessor in humans' contacts with God, of whom particular gracefulness, mercifulness and goodwill was expected, and efficiency in action, for "there is no way whatsoever to propitiate the Divine majesty, save for through the intercession of the Holiest Mother."<sup>155</sup> She was imagined extremely vividly, almost familiarly. Although, as Janusz Tazbir argued, "the God of Poles was the merciful Christ, rather than a fierce Jehovah,"<sup>156</sup> the unswerving trustfulness in the Virgin's aid was critical to suppression of mundane and transcendent fears in people at that time. The cult of Mary was connected with the cyclic farm-and-household calendar and the traditional family rituals and observances; it moreover invaded magical practices.<sup>157</sup>

The worship of the Virgin Mary specific to Poland seems to have been closely connected with rural agrarian culture.<sup>158</sup> The cult, intensified from the late sixteenth century, made an imprint on the religious practices of peasantry. The trend manifested itself in a multiplication of Marian devotions, worshipping the images of the Virgin, and pilgrimages. The Marian cult penetrated multiple aspects of peasant life. As an example, the formula of blessing when transmitting

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154 J. Kracik, 'Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...', pp. 233–4.

155 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4004 [1742].

156 J. Tazbir, *Świat panów Pasków ...*, pp. 109.

157 J. J. Kopeć, 'Polskie zwyczaje maryjne ...', pp. 112–16, 132–3.

158 Cf. *ibid.*, p. 117.

arable land to an alien user was modified: the customary adjuration of Jesus the Lord was complemented by that of the Most Holy Virgin.<sup>159</sup> The last wills compiled by peasants began commonly referring to the Virgin's support. A unique case in point, which demonstrates the intensity of the cult of Mary in the countryside, is the testament of a certain Regina Turzyna (1745), in which the testatrix, instead of (typically) offering her soul to God and a request to Mary for intercession, gave her soul directly to the Holiest Virgin.<sup>160</sup>

The cult of the Lord's saints played an inferior role in the countryside, incommensurable to its significance in the post-Tridentine church.<sup>161</sup> Polish Catholics attached a markedly lesser importance to local patrons compared to the faithful in western Europe. In addition, the cult of 'departmental' saints, deemed responsible for the specified domains of human life, was connected in Poland mostly with urban, rather than rural, culture. The catalogue of saints who enjoyed real popularity in the countryside included not more than 15 key figures related to the stories told in the Gospel (Saint Joseph, St John the Baptist and St Peter) or to the state cult (St Adalbert and St Stanislaus). Consequently, the list of names given to peasants at the Holy Baptism ceremony was very short indeed.

During the Counter-Reformation, the clergy evidently endeavoured to familiarise the common people with the patrons of parish churches. Either the emphasis was not strong enough, however, or this particular form of religiosity did not align well with peasant piety. Of the villages researched in this respect, only in one did people's last wills request support from the patron of a parish church: in the 1720s, the custom was popularised in Markowa to summon help from St Dorothy.<sup>162</sup> Rather than real devotion by the locals for this particular saint, this apparently testifies to the zealous endeavours of the local parson who might have assisted in writing down the last will. Peasants' testaments no more frequently summoned the namesake patron saint; the earliest such records also date to the 1720s.<sup>163</sup> The spiritual needs potentially addressed by the cult of the

159 For example, Świątoniowa, p. 41 [1718].

160 K. Dobrowolski, *Włościańskie rozporządzenia ostatniej woli na Podhalu w XVII i XVIII w. Studia i materiały*, Krakow 1933, No. 26 [1745].

161 Cf. S. Czarnowski, op. cit., pp. 95–6. B. Baranowski's argument that the belief in saints was so important in folk religiousness of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that signs of polytheism are identifiable in it is groundless; see B. Baranowski, *Kultura ludowa XVII i XVIII wieku ...*, p. 182.

162 Markowa, pp. 756 [1728], 810 [1724], 833 [1752], and 845 [1752].

163 Bielcza, fol. 220 [1721], 224 [1723]; Albigowa, Vol. 3, p. 9 [1734]; Kąkolówka, Vol. 2, p. 7 [1757]; Wysoka A, p. 263 [1777].

saints seem to have been satisfied in the rural areas of Lesser Poland by the diverse forms of worship of the Virgin.

As remarked earlier, peasant religion in the early modern time did not develop in isolation from the devotion of Polish society as a whole. Hence, a variety of other factors shaping the piety and religiosity of peasants, ones that were not intrinsically rural, need also to be mentioned. To give an example, the impact of solemn festivities was not to be underestimated. Such holy days or seasons mobilised the faithful to undertake their religious obligations which otherwise tended to be neglected in everyday practice. Jubilee and indulgence celebrations, consecrations of temples, erection ceremonies of confraternities, and even bishops' visits would attract crowds to churches, arouse devotion, and encourage reflection and the examination of conscience.<sup>164</sup> We may at times gain an impression that popular religious life fulfilled its potential along the cycle of extraordinary and boisterous celebrations rather than through attending regular parochial services.<sup>165</sup>

Furthermore, pilgrimages to sanctuaries, primarily Marian ones, were an element in Old-Polish religiosity that was common to all the social strata<sup>166</sup>. For example, in localities situated within a radius of up to 50 km from Częstochowa, those residents who failed to join an annual pilgrimage to Częstochowa's Jasna Góra sanctuary encountered condemnation quite similar to that imposed in the event of a failure to go to the Easter confession.<sup>167</sup>

No less important than great nationwide shrines in the religious life of the peasant masses were small local sanctuaries: as many as 60 of them appeared in the piedmont region of the Krakow Diocese in the middle of the eighteenth

164 Ołpiny B, fol. 1 [1651]; A. Komoniewski, *Chronografia albo Dziejopis Żywiecki*, ed. by S. Grodziski, I. Dwornicka, Żywiec 1987, pp. 251 [1692], 525–6 [1720].

165 Cf. S. Litak, 'Ze studiów nad religijnością niższych warstw społecznych ...', p. 167.

166 On the development of the network of pilgrimage sanctuaries in Poland in the post-Tridentine period, see: F. Mróz, 'Geneza i funkcjonowanie sanktuariów Pańskich w Polsce w okresie odnowy potrydenckiej (XVI-XVIII w.)', *Peregrinus Cracoviensis*, Vol. 21, 2010, pp. 15–42. For an exhaustive catalogue of Marian sanctuaries in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth along with a bibliography of devotional prints dedicated to them up to the end of the eighteenth century, see A. Witkowska, J. Nastalska-Wiśnicka, *Ku ozdobie i obronie Rzeczypospolitej. Maryjne miejsca święte w drukach staropolskich*, Lublin 2013.

167 A. Witkowska, 'Kult jasnogórski w formach pątniczych do połowy XVII w.', *Studia Claromontana*, Vol. 5, 1984, p. 165; for basic information about this sanctuary, see: R. Maniura, *Pilgrimage to Images in the Fifteenth Century: The Origins of the Cult of Our Lady of Częstochowa*, Woodbridge 2004.

century.<sup>168</sup> Some of them were created by ambitious parsons as a means of enhancing the effects of their pastoral efforts. However, a cult of this sort would often be initiated by the people and what it needed was systematisation.<sup>169</sup> Pilgrimages to local sanctuaries, located close enough to enable the pilgrim to return home on the same day, played a considerable role in the social and religious life of country folk. For example, the sanctuary in Stara Wieś was frequented by processions of peasants from nearby villages during the cattle plague in 1752. On 9 December, votive offerings were brought by the dwellers of Blizne, those of Jasienica three days later, and thereafter the residents of Domaradz, Przysietnica, and Dydnia (all situated less than ten kilometres from Stara Wieś).<sup>170</sup>

The cult of sanctuaries shaped the peasants' individual piety as well. A certain Józef Jankisz from Bestwina halted in the mid-eighteenth century in the Krakow district of Kazimierz and excused himself of his vagabondage, saying that "as I fell sick in the winter, I offered myself to Lord Jesus of Mogiła [near Krakow], going whereto, I have now come to the calvary [probably in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska] and sought advice from a Bernardine friar of that place that I wanted to confess but have offered myself in my sickness to Jesus the Lord of Mogiła, to which words the priest replied to me, where you have offered yourself, there must you go, and thus I went there."<sup>171</sup> In 1669, a man named Jan Chwostek, attacked by wolves in a forest near Krosno, offered himself to the Holiest Virgin of Rzeszów and was almost immediately: "released from the beasts," and then made a pilgrimage to the miraculous image.<sup>172</sup>

'Calvaries' (trails of the Passion of Christ modelled on the Calvary outside Jerusalem) also became popular among the peasant population in the seventeenth century. Derived from the elitist practice of spiritual journey to the Holy

168 'Wizerunki łaskami słynące w sanktuariach karpaccich w granicach diecezji krakowskiej na podstawie Tabel Załuskiego (1748–1749),' ed. by I. Sołjan, in *Przestrzeń i sacrum. Geografia kultury religijnej w Polsce i jej przemiany w okresie od XVII do XX w. na przykładzie ośrodków kultu i migracji pielgrzymkowych*, Krakow 1995, pp. 305–9.

169 W. Szczebak, 'Zapomniane sanktuaria w diecezji tarnowskiej,' *Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne*, Vol. 9, 1983, p. 467.

170 W. Mrowiński, *Cudowny obraz Matki Boskiej Starowiejskiej w Ziemi Sanockiej*, Krakow 1895, p. 87; on the influence of the Rychwałd sanctuary, cf. A. Zwiercan, 'Powstanie kultu obrazu Matki Boskiej Rychwałdzkiej (1644–1772),' *Nasza Przyszłość*, Vol. 37, 1972, p. 115.

171 ANK, Akta m. Kazimierza, K-270, p. 216 [c. 1755].

172 Z. Błędowski, *Słodki owoc drzewa gruszkowego [...] i cuda świadczone od obrazu Matki Boskiej na gruszcze zjawionego, a w kościele rzeszowskim Ojców Bernardynów będącego zebrane*, Lwów 1765, fol. [c]<sup>v</sup>.

Land, the calvaries became popular destinations and sites of pilgrimage. Two calvaries functioned in Lesser Poland: the Zebrzydowska Calvary (set up in 1600, developed until 1641 and then expanded until the mid-eighteenth century; today, it is in the town of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska) and the Paclawska Calvary (Kalwaria Paclawska, founded in 1665).<sup>173</sup>

Peasant religion was also influenced in the early modern period by religious confraternities which were set up in increasing numbers in countryside parishes, beginning in the early seventeenth century. They promulgated intensive personal piety and helped mobilise the faithful. The importance of these confraternities to the peasant population will be discussed at more length in section II.2.

It is problematic to specify how religious art, assumedly one of the weapons of the Counter-Reformation, influenced the peasants. Churches in the rural areas of Lesser Poland were mostly wooden and usually very modest in their décor. However, some parish churches were sumptuous foundations representing a considerable artistic value. Peasants moreover visited monastic temples and parish churches in towns. There are no surviving records which attest to the influence of iconographic elements of the churches on the religious attitude among the peasantry. While it is known that they appreciated the aesthetic value of church interiors, it remains unknown whether such admiration informed their devotion in any essential way.

The period in question was additionally marked by penetration into the countryside of elements of material religious culture designed for private use, such as rosaries, scapulars and medallions.<sup>174</sup> The mass manufacture of holy images on paper made them available to peasants, and thus new religious motifs were introduced to huts. A 1666 posthumous inventory of the reeve (*wójt*) of Nowa Wieś near Krakow listed, among other items, “eight pictures: of the Holiest Virgin in the Scapular, one; the second, of the Częstochowa Virgin; the third, with the Infant; [the others including] of St Stephen, Saint Ignatius, St Stanislaus Kostka,

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173 J. J. Kopeć, *Droga krzyżowa. Dzieje nabożeństwa i antologia współczesnych tekstów*, Poznań 1985, pp. 49–54.

174 Albeit during excavations at the site of a former church cemetery in the village of Maniowy (in use between the end of the sixteenth and late eighteenth centuries), personal objects of cult were only found with 4 % of the interred. Such proportion does not reflect the actual popularity of such objects, as aptly pointed out by the researcher, for pendants of the like sort were usually passed from one generation to the next; cf. B. Chudzińska, *Dewocjonalia z nowożytnego cmentarza we wsi Maniowy na Podhalu*, Krakow 1998, pp. 10, 48.

St Barbara,” etc.<sup>175</sup> As we can infer from the story of the first custodian of the miraculous place near Krasnobród, the possessed Jakub Ruszczyk, even poor villagers could afford, in the middle of the seventeenth century, some cheap saint effigies. One of the pictures Jakub used to deck a pine tree devoted to the Virgin became an object of cult afterwards.<sup>176</sup> There were peasants who could afford painted pictures, as testified by the orders placed with professional painters.<sup>177</sup> In the areas influenced by Eastern Christianity, religious iconography probably appeared in home interiors earlier, and its role was more significant, according to Orthodox forms of piety.

Prayer books first appeared in the villages of Lesser Poland in the latter half of the eighteenth century.<sup>178</sup> Peasants were not the projected target group as far as popular religious literature is concerned. However, the characteristic piety of devotional prints had a considerable impact on peasants via church pulpits. Such publications were read by rural parsons who used them in compiling their sermons. As can be learned from Rev. Benedykt Chmielowski’s pastoral conspectuses, his parishioners could learn, e.g. that during his Passion, Christ “spilled 118,225 bloody drops from his forehead; ... whilst flogged, he took upon himself 6,666 lashings; ... hit with feist at the face 20 [times], on the shins 32 times; ... of the thorn[s] of the crown, five penetrated into the brains, of which three remained in the head until He was dead ... When He was put onto the cross at the Calvary, and nailed onto the cross there, then they spat phlegm onto Christ’s body 73 [times], and before them the body was spat upon 100 [times]. Of the bruises, he sustained 1,199. His nose was tweaked 20 times, his beard 78. ... He was hit on the neck 25 times, and dragged on the ground by the hair 27 times.” The aggregate number of wounds incurred by Jesus was 5,475, of which 19 would have been mortal, “had He not been supported by His divineness.”<sup>179</sup> Such bookish and questionable pieces of information reaching the peasants’ ears were categorised as ‘preposterous fables,’ against which preachers were warned

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175 Nowa Wieś, Vol. 3, p. 170 [1666]; also, see *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3831 [1754]; Andrychów, Vol. 2, p. 189 [1785]; cf. ASD, Vol. 3, fol. 14<sup>v</sup> [1747], 44 [1749], 55 [1750], 270<sup>v</sup> [1756]; and elsewhere.

176 J. Majewski, *Pustynia w Raj zamieniona*, Lublin 1753, p. 39.

177 Staszkówka, fol. 106 [1722]; cf. Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 229 [1765], W. Kowalski, *“Do zmartwychwstania swego za pewnym wodzem Kristusem...” Staropolskie inskrypcje północno-zachodniej Małopolski*, Kielce 2004, p. 142.

178 See, e.g., Rajbrot, p. 115 [1768].

179 BJ, ms 7079, fol. 11<sup>v</sup>–12.



by the synodal constitutions. Messages like those contributed, however, to the religious climate of the time, and shaped the elitist and popular religiousness.

It can be presumed that teaching at the pulpit also propagated the idea among the peasants of *vanitas*, channelling their thoughts towards the problems of evanescence and death, in a fashion that appealed to their intellectual capacity. This was apparent, e.g. in the gradually intensifying preference for baroque-style eschatology reflected in the introductory sections of peasants' last wills. The dry phrase "I do give my body off to earth, for it to be interred" was turned into entrusting one's body to 'vermin' or 'rot'/putridity.<sup>180</sup> Attention was increasingly paid to the transience of human life and the Last Judgement, as attested by Jan Zych's will of 1780: "... since the Lord, upon leading us unto this wan world by his verdict, resolved that every one who is born be deceased afterwards, ... it must needs that I move forth to eternity, along a path such that there be no return, other than to the horrible Judgement of the Lord: there shall I await all of ye."<sup>181</sup> The style of testament records heavily depended on the scribe, but the scribe generally had to follow the testator's taste. That peasants attached more attention to the eschatological questions is also attested to by the tendency to multiply religious legacies to the benefit of the parish church (such bequests could have been directly influenced by the local parson) and other churches, depending on the donator's personal choice.<sup>182</sup> It has to be remarked, however, that expiatory sentiments and eschatological fears were normally not very strong among Polish peasants. When Szymon Czaśnikowic, a pious pilgrim from Lublin who flagellated himself in public while singing godly songs aloud, the reeve of Żywiec, Andrzej Komoniecki, wrote: "looking upon whom, the people marvelled; some ascribing [his behaviour] to his pioussness, others, to his foolery."<sup>183</sup>

The question may be asked whether a Catholic self-awareness and identity developed among peasants in Lesser Poland between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. There are actually no credible records to support a 'yes' to this. What is known is that peasants tended in the sixteenth century to sneak out from the demesnes of the reformed noblemen to Catholic churches in order to

180 K. Dobrowolski, *Włościańskie rozporządzenia ostatniej woli*. . . , No. 23 [1742]; Łącko, No. 936 [1786].

181 Zawada, Vol. 3, p. 10 [1780].

182 For example, Rogi, fol. 285<sup>v</sup> [1590]; Świniarsko, p. 230 [1653]; Jadowniki B, p. 497 [1664]; Albigowa, Vol. 1, pp. 30–1 [1685]; K. Dobrowolski, *Włościańskie rozporządzenia ostatniej woli*. . . , No. 31 [1749]; Andrychów, Vol. 2, p. 27 [1752]; Czarna, p. 483 [1774]; also, cf. Kalisz, pp. 48–9 [1583].

183 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , pp. 342–3 [1710].

receive the Sacraments, but this was rather an effect of their traditional religious attitude than conscious Catholicism. In the later period, declarations of faith written down in some of the last wills left by peasants clearly emphasised the testator's denomination. To give an example, the 1751 will of Wojciech Pelc from Czarna stated: "I do confess, at first, that I was born into the holy Catholic faith, and educated in this same holy faith from my youth years, and now that I still am sound of my reason and mind, ... condemning all the heresies, schisms and other apostasies, with their congregations, I do confess all the *concilia* that have been provided and confirmed by the holy Roman Church, and also confessing all the sacraments and articles of the holy faith, and believing in these, it is in this same holy Catholic Roman faith that I do will and desire to descend from this world."<sup>184</sup> However, such declarations seem rather factitious; if that particular man did utter such phrases, he would have repeated them with alacrity after the priest on a visit to his house with viaticum.

Religious identity among peasants was fostered by the cultural borderland situation where the religious differentiation essentially coincided with ethnic differentiation: such was the case in the north and west of Poland.<sup>185</sup> The distribution of confessional relationships in the western boundaries of Lesser Poland was much more complicated though, and gave no direct impulse for the emergence of a confessional awareness.

The seeds of ethnic differentiation combined with the confessional aspect, which might have led to the peasants' self-identification with Roman Catholicism, are traceable on the Ruthenian borderland in the eastern part of Lesser Poland. However, any like distinctions were not clear, because, from a certain moment onwards, "albeit of the Ruthenian faith, an Uniate [i.e. after the Union of Brest in 1596] is a Catholic as well as we be;"<sup>186</sup> moreover, the language barrier was not overly burdensome. Examples of a peculiar instability regarding denomination and rite are quite numerous. Rev. Piotr-Aleksander Zaborski, the parish priest of Częstoborowice, wrote as much of his parishioners (in a diary of his pastoral efforts dating to the 1690s): "when the presbytery was quite often void owing to frequent replacements of the parsons, the people became accustomed to visiting the Ruthenian popes about their marriages, and so even now, when you [i.e. as a priest] demand that he give for the wedding what is due, he will

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184 Czarna, p. 470 [1751]; also, cf. Świlcza, pp. 70–1 [1684]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 175 [1748].

185 See, e.g., ASD, Vol. 9, fol. 122–5 [1759].

186 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4206 [1776].

readily reply: 'Then I shall find my way to elsewhere, and there I shall be given a cheaper service.' Where shouldst thou petition a pop [i.e. an Orthodox priest] for this; and again, how to complain against the peasant, should he have gotten married by a pop?'<sup>187</sup>

This does not mean that the peasants in Lesser Poland were indifferent to Confession; they most probably did not consider religion, or the denomination, as the primary criterion characteristic of a human being. Their Catholicism, whether Roman or Ruthenian, was anchored in tradition, custom or habit, and conformism, rather than reflection, conviction, or conscious identification.

Influenced by various factors and drivers, the peasant religion gradually turned Counter-Reformative, also describable as 'baroque.' The ideal model of such piety was 'modern,' given the realities of the time: it followed the norms determined by the Council of Trent, whilst also keeping pace with the trends and needs of its time. However, its development in Polish rural areas was restricted by obstacles. In spite of a relatively dense network of parishes in Lesser Poland, the distance to the church still prevented some rural parishioners from participating in the cult on a regular basis. For example, to get to the nearest churches from Spytkowice, a large village in the Beskidy mountain area, a person had to walk five or ten kilometres before 1758. The dwellers of Spytkowice who wanted to attend a Sunday service in Jordanów had to arrive in that town by Saturday evening: setting off at daybreak, they would have reached the church when the high mass was already over. The church in Podwilk was closer, but this village belonged to Hungary and to another Church province.<sup>188</sup> On the Ruthenian borderland, where the network of Roman Catholic parishes was much less dense, those faithful who lived far from a church would, at best, visit private chapels where no sermons, catechisation or confession were offered.<sup>189</sup>

Not only was the accessibility of parish churches problematic, but also the standard of divine service performed in them. Some provincial temples did not perform the cult on a regular basis. Rural parishes, poorly endowed as they were, were occasionally treated by clergymen as an extra source of income, where the maximum profit could be extracted for the minimum effort.<sup>190</sup> Those who did not combine the benefices had, again, no incentive to perform their pastoral

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187 BK, ms 1735, fol. 18<sup>v</sup>; cf. Z. Budzyński, *Ludność pogranicza polsko-ruskiego w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku*, Przemysł-Rzeszów 1993, Vol. 1, pp. 373–8.

188 J. Kracik, 'Duchowe niedostatki wsi beskidzkiej ...', p. 173.

189 J. Ataman, op. cit., p. 37.

190 See, e.g., ANK, Księgi Grodzkie Bieckie 32, p. 803 [1598].

duties diligently. As a visitor noted in respect of the parson of Husów, Tomasz Kruczkowski: “never would he have a holy mass falling on a Saturday or the other common days [i.e. weekdays], and indeed doth he some times ride on holy days to the other churches and request a pope to replace him.”<sup>191</sup>

Despite the theoretically binding precept telling parish priests to reside in their respective parishes,<sup>192</sup> the ecclesial hierarchs were not as ambitious in this respect. When for some reason a parson could not stay with his church, a permanent replacement arranged for him was normally deemed satisfactory. Parish priests had to pay out of their own pocket to have a vicar or curate employed, which implied diminished revenue for the parish; hence, it was in the parson's interest to use the services of the fewest possible helpers, preferably of the lowest financial expectations. Such a situation had an adverse impact on the quality of low-tier parish clergy.<sup>193</sup> In some cases, parsons had to be judicially forced to maintain a vicar at all.<sup>194</sup>

Rural clergy, curates as well as parsons, were not members of the Church's strict elite. They did not normally hold academic titles, or lose themselves in pastoral work. Instead, they were frequently no strangers to ‘virtues’ such as drunkenness, rowdiness, avarice, and dissoluteness. Of course, the image of parish clergymen given based on visitation records is contorted, as is characteristic of sources of this kind, which tend to focus on inadequacies, errors and misbehaviours.<sup>195</sup> On the other hand, it should not be assumed that the parish clergy in the countryside were ill-willed. A definite majority of those men were

191 BC, ms 2147, p. 97; cf. AAPrz, ms 171, fol. 162.

192 *Epistola pastoralis ...*, p. 31, (chap. [5]: *De residentia Parochorum*).

193 J. Kracik, *Vix venerabiles. Z dziejów społecznych niższego kleru parafialnego w archidiakonacie krakowskim*, Kraków 1982, pp. 120–128 and *passim*.

194 Wola Żarczycka, No. 16 [1618] (also, M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka. Streszczona kronika kościelna*, Jasło 1878, pp. 28–30); TsDIAUL, f. 48/1, Vol. 9, No. 3 [1682]; Olszówka, fol. 54 [c. 1738].

195 Research into parish clergy has been pursued by, among others: M. Aleksandrowicz, ‘Duchowieństwo parafialne archidiakonatu gnieźnieńskiego na pocz. XVIII w.’, *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 22, 1974, fasc. 2, pp. 61–100; J. Kracik, *Vix venerabiles ...*; J. Pałyga, ‘Duchowieństwo parafialne dekanatu kazimierskiego w XVII i XVIII wieku’, *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 14, 1966, fasc. 2, pp. 16–42; A. Mączak, ‘*Parochorum errores*. Reforma kleru parafialnego na Pomorzu Gdańskim w końcu XVI w.’, in J. Dowiat (ed.), *Polska w świecie. Szkice z dziejów kultury polskiej*, Warsaw 1972, pp. 251–65; F. Stopniak, ‘Duchowni w parafiach archidiakonatu lubelskiego w okresie kontrreformacji’, *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 7, 1958, fasc. 2, pp. 257–88.

neither good nor evil, but rather nondescript, reflecting the qualitative average of their time. The pastoral efforts of rural clergymen, even if unsatisfactory in the perception of their inspectors, did render the peasants acquainted, even if to some degree, the Counter-Reformation type of piousness and religiosity. For most of the peasant community, the local parson was the only link to the predominant religious culture; it depended greatly upon him which of its elements were picked up and taken on. A priest who resided in a parish for several years contributed his own devotional customs and habits, inclinations and tastes to the religious attitudes and practices of his wards. Hence, the devotion-related particularisms appearing between the villages, down to the level of basic religious knowledge.<sup>196</sup>

A limited mobility of peasants meant that micro-scale instances of negligence, such as a long-term vacancy in the parish church, could lead to tragic results. The most glaring such case comes from a locality named Pogorzela, near to the town of Borek in Greater Poland. Between 1591 and 1608 the local peasants, barred from the Catholic religion owing to an interdiction issued by the Protestant proprietor of the estate, began organising their own, half-pagan, 'services' in the forest.<sup>197</sup> In Częstoborowice, a locality in Lublin Land, the years of neglect of the manning of the parish church led to the locals burying their dead "in the fields, by the statues." Rev. Piotr-Aleksander Zaborski endeavoured in the 1670s to eradicate the custom by offering free-of-charge burials in a cemetery; despite this, "as they were wont before, not to the cemetery did they lead but into the field, towards the statue, the reason of this being given that the parents, the relatives, or the uncles lay thereat."<sup>198</sup>

A serious barrier to propagating the baroque piety among peasants was posed by the distance between a village and its nearest urban hub. The stimuli impacting the religiousness of those dwelling in settlements outside Krakow (the parishes of some of them were based in the city) differed from those prevalent in the sub-montane areas where the only nearby temple was a ramshackle small wooden church with a vacant priest's post. Otherwise, the distance between the village and a monastery or cloister mattered. Monastic churches offered their faithful sumptuous rites and a variety of 'optional' methods of devotion, not to

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196 Cf. the opinion of Rev. Hugo Kołłątaj whereby "having moved from one parish to another, one noted that he had not learned almost any thing, and this due to the differences and vagaries in the teaching;" cf. H. Kołłątaj, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

197 A. Brandowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 27–29.

198 BK, ms 1735, fol. 18<sup>v</sup>.

be practiced in an indigent parish church. They also provided some freedom of choice regarding the means of satisfying individual religious needs.

## 5. Religious attitudes among the peasantry

The new, baroque type of piety did not evenly extend to all rural residents. Circles emerged inside the peasant community, which tended to adopt the elements of Counter-Reformation religiosity more quickly; such circles transmitted the devotion methods propagated by the Church at the time, or popular among the higher strata, deeper down into the rural community. The size and social composition of such circles probably remained more or less stable. Their influence meant that the proportion of those locals who were inclined to achieve the standard of piousness set by those leading groups tended to increase.

The most affluent husbandmen formed the ‘frontrunner’ team in such village circles that absorbed the patterns of baroque religiosity more quickly. Those men played the main part in the social functioning of their community, and thus hegemonized the village’s religious life. It was this particular group that was the most visible at the church and during devotional celebrations. Their chairmanship was customarily implied or even warranted by the law at times. In Wysoka in 1708, the village court, inspired by the local parson Jan Beuza, passed a decree to define the sequence in which the peasants were to form the procession: “1mo [*primo*], reeve, with the aldermen, or anyone of the court-men, in accord with the sequence. 2do [*secundo*], the peasant cluster [*gromada*, here: all the husbandmen] and the weaver one. 3tio [*tertio*], the male servants of both the herds, farm-hands. 4to [*quarto*], following the farm-hands shall be herds-men and cattle-men. 5to [*quinto*], husbandwomen of both the clusters. 6to [*sexto*], finally, all the maidens.”<sup>199</sup> Religious life offered numerous opportunities to emphasise a person’s social position. To show off primacy at church celebrations required frequenting the church regularly, with no possibility to sneak away surreptitiously before the service came to an end. Prestige could moreover be displayed by religious confraternities, which appeared in the countryside in increasing numbers; membership of such a body called for intensified devotional practices.

The fairly affluent peasants could also afford to make a small foundation for the church, by establishing a so-called ‘church cow’ bequest<sup>200</sup> or funding the Hours of the Virgin.<sup>201</sup> They could also afford to make valuable donations to

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199 Wysoka A, p. 53 [1708].

200 For example, AAPrz, ms 160, fol. 267<sup>v</sup>; Bestwina, pp. 55–6 [1781].

201 Golcowa, Vol. 2, p. 263 [1696].

furnish the temple's interior, on quite a frequent basis.<sup>202</sup> They also obtained for themselves more sumptuous (and thus more expensive) settings for festive events such as marriages and funerals. They requested more masses for the souls of their own and their relatives, whereas the parsons found it profitable to solicit their last-will bequests for the benefit of the church. Affluent peasants tended to adapt to the early modern forms of religiousness more quickly. It was mainly in their cottages that holy pictures and roods – and, later, the first prayer books – could be seen.<sup>203</sup>

In some cases, the rural elite could even aspire to be hosts of the church. A custom developed locally of the reeve of the village keeping the church keys; the post of churchwarden (*vitricus*), usually held by 'respected parishioners,' was even more important in this respect.<sup>204</sup> They supervised the church's cashbox and were admitted to administer the parish's finances, and took care of the administrative and material aspects of the cult's organisation. For these reasons, they stayed in permanent touch with the parish priest or the vicar, and were more deeply involved in the life of the church.

Most of the schoolboys attending parish schools were sons of well-to-do peasants, for only rich peasants could afford to have their children temporarily idle.<sup>205</sup> Thus, their descendants had an opportunity to learn at a young age the basics of catechism and the alphabet, as well as devotional singing and altar service. It happened occasionally that such education was followed up and a peasant's son recognised the vocation to become a clergyman.<sup>206</sup> Priests and monks of peasant descent were mostly descendants of the rural elite: sons of reeves, millers, and so on. The vocation might, to a degree, attest to a religious climate prevailing in their family home; otherwise, such clergymen probably exerted a positive impact on the piety of their relatives.

Finally, it has to be borne in mind that the rural social structure drove the burden of responsibility for the religious attitude and practices of the homedwellers, servants and farmhands to rest on the husbandmen. Thus, they were obliged to set an example. Intense religiosity somehow helped them maintain

202 AAPrz, ms 160, fol. 301; Staszkówka, fol. 106 [1722].

203 For example, Nowa Wieś, Vol. 3, p. 169 [1666]; Andrychów, Vol. 2, p. 247 [1791].

204 Named *vitricus* or *provisor ecclesiae* in Latin, the position was referred to in Polish as *wytrykusz* (pl., *wytrykusze*), *witrykus* (pl., *witrykusi* or *witrykusy*), or *witryk* (pl. *witrycy*).

205 B. Brzęczek, op. cit., p. 160.

206 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7055 [1665]; Rogi, fol. 624 [1751]; Łukawiec, p. 155 [1756]; Wysoka A, pp. 231–5 [1766] and 249 [1762].

their authority among their subordinates, but was primarily one of the crucial aspects of the husbandman's benchmark attitude.

Nevertheless, those who adopted the patterns of Counter-Reformation religiosity more quickly were not exclusively the better-off farmers. Peasants who were less wealthy could also be found among them; although they could not enjoy comparably good social or material conditions to cherish their intense piety, their devotional sensitivity was outstanding. Such essentially individual cases occurred here and there.

Indigent inmates of parish hospitals formed another group that adopted a model of intense piety. Countryside asylums did not normally offer shelter to casual individuals. Most of them were 'retired' long-term dwellers of the village, well rooted in the local community. In exchange for board and lodging with the parish church, they were supposed to practice the cult intensively by attending the holy mass on a daily basis, receiving the Communion often, and so on. Above all, however, their piousness owed much to the fact that, as opposed to the other villagers, they had time to give themselves over to regular devotion, which was of course expected of them.

The models of Counter-Reformation religiosity that penetrated into the countryside came cross the internal limitations of peasant culture which did not foster personal piety. The devotion of individuals depended on the binding pattern related to their social position, age, and sex.<sup>207</sup> The rural youth, for that matter, but especially males, approached church ceremonies reservedly in principle, and confined themselves to attending them at the necessary prescribed minimum; religious rituals most importantly provided young people with opportunities to socialise.<sup>208</sup> Mature people with established social positions demonstrated their piety by fulfilling the model of 'good parishioner'; the females proved more zealous, to be sure. The parson of Nienaszów near Żmigród explained in 1763 why he held Sunday processions only rarely: "I have not learned how to walk alone with all those women" whilst their husbands "are all dispersed all over the area: some to the fair, others to fetch their shingles, others still to fetch their timber-planks."<sup>209</sup> Other models of religiosity were binding on old men, widows, servants, and so forth. It thus followed that an individual's religiosity was in a

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207 Cf. S. Czarnowski, op. cit., p. 104.

208 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia* . . . , p. 304 [1706]; BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 65<sup>v</sup>.

209 J. Kracik, *Vix venerabiles* ..., p. 102, fn. 10; also, cf. M. Nowakowski, *Wety duchowne albo rozmowy Księdza perswadującego zgodę małżonkom źle żyjącym, do Kolędy przydane*, (supplement to M. Nowakowski, *Kolęda Duchowna* ...), fol. [a3].



sense a conformist attitude: rural people generally sought how to adapt to their respective model, according to the position they occupied in the rural community. The change that took place in the peasants' religiousness in the early modern time was founded upon these models being transformed into intensified practices and more profound belief. Thus, the progress in question followed, and indeed stemmed from an alteration in the social model.

Despite this prevalent image, testimonies of intensified personal piety in peasants living in Lesser Poland might be identifiable. The last wills of some individuals, standing out against others like records produced in the same village, permeated with religious phraseology, may to a degree serve as evidence.<sup>210</sup> The peasants pronouncing their last instructions were obviously not the authors of the devotional introductions. Significantly, however, some peasants most probably sought to set their message in a formula that would be more pious than the standard one, which comprised religious phrases as well. Bequests warranted to the church at a value exceeding the habitual one, or simply going beyond common sense, seem to have been no less meaningful.<sup>211</sup>

Observance of fasting and Lent may also be helpful in searching for traces of individual piety or devotion among peasants. The peasantry of Poland usually attached considerable attention to this particular practice,<sup>212</sup> although not always for devotional reasons. Quite characteristic were attempts to cause damage to someone by forcing him or her to eat a non-fasting meal on a fasting day; e.g. a certain Katarzyna Prawda living near Krakow fed her old mother-in-law "in pique with sour-cream, and poured with boiling water."<sup>213</sup> It happened that Polish Catholics would not fast when it was compulsory to do so, but did fast instead when the Church did not tell them it was obligatorily, leaving it to the faithful (and their devotion) to decide.<sup>214</sup> It can thus be inferred that the practice to some extent became independent of oversight by the priests, but it does not prove personal devoutness, rather a deficiency in the observance of the cult. However, there are recorded instances of an individual's particular abstinence was, rather evidently, incentivised by his or her personal choice. One example was a man named Horka, of Gołuchów in the demesne of Sucha. During Lent in 1750, he happened to cause a brawl at a local inn. The reason was that he

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210 For example, Świlcza, pp. 70–1 [1684]; Olszówka, fol. 18<sup>v</sup>–20 [1695]; Albigowa, Vol. 3, pp. 9–12 [1734].

211 See, e.g., Stara Wieś Górna, p. 24 [1801].

212 A. Kraśnicki, 'Posty w dawnej Polsce,' *Przegląd Teologiczny*, Vol. 12, 1931, p. 351.

213 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7187 [1756].

214 F. Machay, op. cit., p. 54; cf. M. Nowakowski, *Kolęda duchowna ...*, p. 128.

refrained on those days from alcohol; his peers did not appreciate his attitude and suspected him of dislike towards them instead.<sup>215</sup>

Other extant records attest to instances of individual piety as well, one of them being the self-appraisal of a woman called Anna Markowa, who was suspected of witchcraft. She boasted about saying her rosary every day and teaching the others the practice.<sup>216</sup> A deepened religiosity is also traceable in those peasants who for whatever personal reasons confessed outside the Easter period, or attended 'optional' services at their parish church.

One more peculiarity is the visions of rural mystics, which were apparently strongly inspired by ecclesial teaching. An interesting case in point is the journey to the afterlife made in May 1720 by a certain Jakub Kubaczyna *vel* Szatława, a parson's serf from Cięcina, who happened to have: "fallen asleep in the midst of the field. Upon searching, he was found and awoken with desperate effort. And what he said was that he had been in delight, as he could see the people he knew and who had already been deceased, doing penances and in various clarities and in torments, and here, those who are living in the world, of what merit and punishment they be should they relent not. Which is what he quoth before the people and admonished many, complaining that he had been awoken and so the revelation was interrupted."<sup>217</sup>

The personal piety of the peasants was stimulated by a variety of external circumstances. A religiously lukewarm person might have turned religiously bigoted because of a misadventure, illness, or natural disaster. In the time of raging epidemics, peasants sought refuge, en masse, under the protection of miraculous effigies, made pilgrimages to local sanctuaries, and intensified their participation in the services celebrated by their parish church.<sup>218</sup> Another important stimulus behind the peasants' personal religiosity was strong experiences occurring in one's life, such as miraculous recovery of a dying child<sup>219</sup> or the death of a spouse.

Generally improving religious knowledge in the countryside in this period, combined with a gradual penetration of intense Counter-Reformation piety, did not extend to all peasants. There were still such, here and there, whose religiosity was, apparently, overtly incompilant with the postulated standard. Persons who for whatever reason proved unable to master the rudiments of religious

215 Sucha demesne, p. 20 [1750].

216 ANK, Dep., ms 6, p. 132 [1644].

217 A. Komonicki, *Chronografia* . . . , p. 524 [1720]; also, cf. *ibid.*, p. 508 [1718].

218 See, e.g., M. Bednarz, *op. cit.*, p. 195; J. Kracik, 'Praktyki religijno-magiczne na Górze Witosławskiej ...', pp. 149–58.

219 BC, ms 3432, p. 14.

knowledge could potentially have been met in any village. One example is the village of Węgra, in Masovia, where “none of the simple men would have proved incapable of knowing the decorous wisdom of Christ, save for one amongst them who, owing to a natural obtuseness of his nous, and even more so, to stupidity by nature, can barely grasp which *necessitate medii sunt praecepta* but would forget this very soon.”<sup>220</sup>

There were also those who did not adapt to the requirements of the religious culture, in spite of no objective obstacles arising. All sorts of or decadent, riotous, and downright immoral characters were among them. One was Józef Szerpka, who on Candlemas Day would not cease making music, drinking and dancing at his home; on top of that, he was shooting his pistol.<sup>221</sup> Wojciech Tynor was another such case: this man, in turn, “led a bad life with Zofia Kozinionka, ... burdened her, and transgressed the commandment of God.” Living a sinner’s life, he manifestly began avoiding the church. As it turned out in the course of an inquisition, “he could not say well the basic prayers and went to the Easter confession not, and publicly fled from the church, thereby causing severe umbrage.”<sup>222</sup>

Those who overtly spoke against religion formed another, specific group. Apart from mere blasphemers,<sup>223</sup> there appeared individuals having their own, eccentric, religious views; such views could be deemed heretical, although such persons had no contact with any of the dissident movements whatsoever. Rev. Stanisław Brzeżański recollects the history of a parishioner of a peasant or plebeian descent who “believed that by no means should he ever rise from the dead, this be so because he shall putrefy, and he did die in this, and nobody learnt about this until after his death, for when alive, his home-steaders had protected him against trouble (for the sake of his sore stubbornness in the thing).”<sup>224</sup>

One more such case was Franciszek Koczay of Grodzisko near Przeworsk, a man who persistently avoided uttering the name of Jesus. He was eventually

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220 *Materiały do dziejów ziemi płockiej*, Vol. 7: *Dekanat janowski i przasnyski*, ed. by M. M. Grzybowski, Płock 1995, p. 137.

221 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4275 [1750]; also, cf. Tylicz B, pp. 161–2 [1773].

222 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4286 [1776].

223 One example is Wojciech Korwek, living near Nowogród in Masovia, who “on his way from the tavern quoth, despite the Passion of God: ‘if a God thou be, why art thou seated hereat, speak now what ye might tell;’” after R. Żukowski, *Bartnictwo w zagajnicy łomżyńskiej w okresie od XVI do poł. XIX w.*, Białystok 1965, pp. 87–8 [1703]; cf., APL, Akta Miasta Lublina 201, fol. 196<sup>v</sup>–7<sup>v</sup> [1699].

224 S. Brzeżański, op. cit., fol. G<sup>v</sup>.

caught and put in the municipal jail in Jarosław, where Jesuit friars made vain attempts to convert him. Finally, in 1746 he was burnt at stake by a judgement of the town court, which recognised him as a heretic.<sup>225</sup> Koczay's case suggests that mental disorders might have played a role with some blasphemers of peasant descent. In all probability, this was the case with the son of Krzysztof Szperka (a relative of the aforementioned Józef) who stole the pipes from the positive organ in the church in Zagórzany "and built for himself at his father's house, upon the porch, a sort-of-church, where he played on those pipes and celebrated a service, and did not have his father ban him from so doing and, yea, allowing him such a blasphemy."<sup>226</sup>

All such peasants who glaringly stood out against the religious culture typical of the countryside classed themselves outside the limits of their village's community, or were pushed outside the community, as was the case with persons using traditional magic practices, marginalised as they were in the early modern period. It can thus be accepted that the gradual adoption of the Counter-Reformation models of devotion and piety was a standard practice in the villages of Lesser Poland.

Nevertheless, in spite of the changes that took place in peasant religion during the early modern period, the fundamental pattern of comprehending the world in religious terms remained fairly steady. The following chapters discuss the relevant aspects of this pattern, and the observable changes occurring in them in the period concerned.

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225 J. Ataman, op. cit., pp. 281–2; also, see AAPrz, ms 169, fol. 133 [1744].

226 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4274 [1750].

## II. THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF PEASANT RELIGION

### 1. The village community as a religious unit and ceremonial community

Religion had an important role in the organisation of the rural community in early modern Lesser Poland, forming the ceremonial and ideological foundation of the functioning of the sedentary peasant community. The rules of its functioning, rooted in religion, were extended to those who joined village life on a temporary or casual basis: seasonal workers, beggars, and vagabonds. Clearly, the phenomenon affected to the highest degree the husbandmen, cottagers and tenants who co-formed the village community (referred to as *gromada* in Polish) as a social unit. The system of reciprocal dependencies ultimately subjected the village's entire social structure to a pattern embedded in the religious comprehension of the world.

The ideal model of rural community had it that the husbandmen represented their families and household; and, consequently, bore multidimensional responsibility for them. In parallel, the village community's members were reciprocally responsible for one another and for the entire community, which in fact extended to any member of their class who stayed within the area of the village. Such self-control by the rural community, combined with group responsibility most practically ensured the observance of order and justice in the populated rural area, with no need for any other agent to intervene from the outside. On the other hand, describing the role of the community's internal system of reciprocal dependencies and responsibilities in terms of a policing function would be an inadmissible simplification. Although sustaining the system was usually in the village owner's interest,<sup>227</sup> it would not be fair to accept that the system had been superimposed by them in a utilitarian way. As a matter of fact, what we see here is a phenomenon well rooted, at least locally, in the peasant culture of the early modern era. The origins of this system, the influences to which it was exposed, and a detailed description of its various aspects ought to be dealt with

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227 'Usually,' since the arrangement on certain occasions could work against the lord's interests: e.g. it could have facilitated the self-organisation of rebelling peasants and intensified group solidarity in the case of less severe feuds.

in a separate study. The following analysis seeks instead to explore the religious thread of the system, seen against the general landscape of social relationships in a village.

The conviction that a *gromada* constituted a religious unity is the most emphatic expression of the belief in collective responsibility of the village in the eschatological dimension. God's punishment falling on the sinners when still living in this world offered a practical explanation of the miseries and cataclysms that affected not only local communities but even entire countries. Early modern preachers willingly resorted to the threat of God's wrath when castigating the dissemination of sin. The spread of misdemeanours was said to infect the entire community with sin, which provided sound grounds for applying group responsibility by God with respect to entire nations. The threat was even more real for small, closed rural communities whose existence depended on the good yield and crop failure cycle. The sins implying the Lord's punishment took a concrete shape in the countryside environment: the perpetrators were easy to detect, or identify, whereas prevention was the local self-government's task.

Village owners willingly resorted to such arguments when issuing their rural statutes to bind the village communities to observe the Decalogue principles, so that offence against God that would imply His wrath and punishment could be prevented.<sup>228</sup> These arguments were not unfamiliar to their subjects. A number of decrees passed by rural courts contain the like reasons for the judgment; some comprise detailed descriptions of the temporal punishments expected by the lay judges. In 1744, in the demesne of Łącko, fornication between relatives was considered "a sin so terrible, through which punishment of the Lord could have been brought upon this hamlet, such as failure in crops, flood, fires, &c."<sup>229</sup> Interestingly, the collective nature of punishments expected to be imposed by God was subject to gradation depending on the burden of culpability, as was the case with collective responsibility before the law or the lord. In less severe cases, only one homestead might have been affected;<sup>230</sup> in more severe cases, the whole village, or even demesne, was exposed.<sup>231</sup> The distribution of statutory collective

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228 Łącko, No. 599 [1702]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3921 [1702]; also, see 'Instruktarz Jaworowski z 1765 r.', in *Polskie instruktarze ekonomiczne z końca XVII i z XVIII wieku*, ed. by S. Pawlik, Kraków 1915, p. 8; 'Wilkierz wsi szlacheckiej Sadłuki z r. 1739,' ed. by Z. Guldon, *Zapiski Historyczne*, Vol. 28, 1963, fasc. 1, p. 76.

229 For example, Łącko, No. 845 [1744]; also, see *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4991 [1681]; Wysoka B, fol. 49 [1756].

230 For example, Łącko, No. 844 [1744].

231 For example, Jazowsko, Nos. 140 [1739], 203 [1748].

responsibility was quite similar, according to legal custom. The husbandmen were punished for inappropriate behaviour by their servants; in separate criminal offences, or crimes against the manor, redress, warrants and church penance was expected from the entire community.<sup>232</sup> Finally, in the case of larger rebellions, the lord's anger fell on the entire demesne, implying in some extreme cases military pacification of the defiant territory. The collective responsibility before the lord, the court-of-law and, primarily, God was not merely an idea: it was a thoroughly real rule whose operation could be experienced hands-on by every peasant.<sup>233</sup>

Fear of God's intervention because of group responsibility meant that the rural community ejected individuals whose sins might have brought misfortune. The methods used on such occasions was the humiliating procedure of expulsion (the culprit was accompanied by lit torches and thus 'candled out' (*wyświecić*) of the village/community) or forced to sell their property and move 'abroad.' Oddly enough, a number of a community's requests to eject cumbersome individuals ended in a refusal by the court. Undoubtedly, it was the owner or leaseholder of the village that had a decisive say in such decisions: discharging the in-community tensions at the expense of a diminished workforce was not always regarded as profitable. Mainly offenders against the Decalogue were expelled: adulterers of either sex,<sup>234</sup> thieves,<sup>235</sup> blasphemers,<sup>236</sup> and witches.<sup>237</sup> It occasionally happened that an individual whose guilt was not proved was forced to leave the village because the sin of which he or she was accused, albeit unproven, inclined the community to cleanse itself of unreliable elements before God. This is how some cases of arson<sup>238</sup> or witchcraft<sup>239</sup> were dealt with. This form of expulsion from the village was, in any case, much less severe than the 'candling out:' the convict was

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232 For example, Łącko, No. 255 [1578]; Piątkowa, p. 36 [1681]; Odrzechowa, fol. 6<sup>v</sup> [1723]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3963 [1728].

233 Cf. M. Mikołajczyk, *Przestępstwo i kara w prawie miast Polski południowej XVI-XVIII wieku*, Katowice 1998, p. 134.

234 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 2800 [1602], 3390 [1670], 3414 and 3417 [1680], 3928 [1702]; Jazowsko, No. 28 [1685]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 370 [1757].

235 Popów, p. 22 [1607]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 2801 [1602], 4677 [1706], 7503 [1775]; Sucha castle, p. 190 [1719]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 273<sup>v</sup>-274 [1756].

236 ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 358-9<sup>v</sup> [1757].

237 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 2801 [1602]; Iwkowa, No. 284 [1602].

238 Brzozowa, fol. 226<sup>v</sup> [1652].

239 ASD, Vol. 1, pp. 271, 284-5 [1724].

given time to have his/her property sold and pack up; also, the humiliating and distressing ritual setting was not employed.

Obviously, apart from staying the wrath of God, removing offenders from the village had a practical importance. Societies and communities primarily eradicate perpetrators in their fight against crime. Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, the villages of Lesser Poland had no right to employ executioners (the period's most popular means of punishment) and no possibility to have convicted individuals kept for long in prison. Expulsion became of necessity the most efficient measure of getting rid of individuals who harmed or upset the social order. It is however impossible to assess whether it was the practical or the religious aspect that came to the fore as far as expulsions were concerned; the two factors overlapped and complemented each other. Devotional arguments prevailed in the verbal layer, in any case. For example, a female fornicator (of unknown name) from the landed property of Strzeszyce was expelled in 1702 "from thiz same serfdom as a black sheepe that infected the others."<sup>240</sup> A certain Marcyanna Wawrozczonka was in 1757 ordered to get out of the village "so that she be not a further occasion, incentive for the offence of God the Lord, debauchery and ribaldry, as well as reluctance, discord and argument, thereby, betwixt the married-ones."<sup>241</sup>

Exclusion from the village community was a penalising measure of a broader significance. It was applied to criminals and offenders as well as to all those who opposed or acted against the community comprehended in religious terms. Concord amidst the *gromada's* members was an ultimate good in terms of the community's social life. While an ideal state was, naturally, difficult to attain and maintain, the view was apparently common that the objective ought to be sought. This conviction was reinforced by the religious incentive supplied by preachers. In the event that someone drastically broke the principle of good coexistence, instigated quarrels and strife, failed to fulfil the requirements of his or her position in the community – as happened to Łukasz Szebienski of Ołpiny in 1640 – he or she had to take into account that he or she would some day be excluded from the *gromada*.<sup>242</sup>

Religious dissenters glaringly opposed the community's religious unity. Such incidents were extremely rare in the countryside; instances of dissidents seeking the right to participate in village life are hardly known. Village communities

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240 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3928 [1702].

241 ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 370 [1757].

242 Ołpiny A, o. 35 [1640]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 358–359<sup>v</sup> [1757].



tended to officially exclude dissenters in faith; e.g. a misbeliever's son was denied his mother's inheritance in Kasina in 1647.<sup>243</sup>

Being a religious community, a *gromada* was also a ceremonial community. The attachment to the outer framing of the cult in the religious practice of the period, as emphasised by a number of scholars, was no less characteristic of peasants than it was of other social estates. In the first place, being a Christian meant participating in Church rituals and celebrations, which by their nature were communal or community-oriented. Participation in these rituals and celebrations reconfirmed the individual's membership in his/her community; on the other hand, group participation in the liturgy and Church feasts consolidated the *gromada* as a social unit and provided it with a religious sanction.

The building of a *gromada* as a ceremonial community was moreover heavily informed by the Church's administrative policy with respect to the faithful. Imposed from the above, the ceremonial unity of the parish strengthened and, to an extent, coincided with the ceremonial commonality of the *gromada*. The phenomenon was so strong that parish laws binding the faithful with their parish church were the easiest to enforce in the rural environment. The isolation of villages and the binding of peasants to the land, coupled with a no-competition situation, also had relevance. Peasants residing in suburban villages were the only ones who could participate in services held at monastic shrines without the investment expense of cost and labour. Those dwelling in parishes remote from larger cities undertook trips to other churches only as part of pilgrimages, jubilee celebrations and the like.

In its top-down moulding of ceremonial unity of parishes, the Church made use of extraordinary religious events. The widest-ranging such action was the 1755 election of St Dismas as the second patron (after St Valentine) of the Diocese of Przemyśl, carried out by Bishop Waław Hieronim Sierakowski. The ceremony was preceded by an episcopal pastoral letter that bound the local faithful to elect the patron in a singular fashion. Local self-governments were to be involved; specifically, their task was to implement the election according to the pattern adopted by the diocesan authorities.<sup>244</sup> Following the bishop's instruction, 20 May 1755 saw the entire community of the village of Kosina, numbering 315 persons, unanimously elect, 'by secret votes,' Saint Dismas as patron for themselves and the whole diocese. Bishop Sierakowski was afterwards requested to forward a supplication to Pope Benedict XIV "for a decree of

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243 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3311 [1647].

244 BC, ms 2072, pp. 27–31.

confirmation and approbation.<sup>245</sup> The sealed election deed was to be sent to the local dean. Other villages in the diocese probably saw similar celebrations take place. In Kosina, however, the resolution was inserted in the court registers and the community's aldermen signed it.<sup>246</sup> Characteristic of the design to elect St Dismas as the patron of the Przemyśl Diocese is that the task to shape the diocesan and parochial community in the peasant environment was imposed on the village communities. For the *gromadas*, the ceremony, which called for taking a unanimous and explicit stance in respect of the supernatural guardian of the community, must have been an obvious corroboration of its ceremonial unity.

The identification of the ceremonial functions of the parish and village community was primarily evident in villages that had parish churches: it was on those sites that the strongest emotional bonds evolved. The inhabitants of these villages appropriated their local churches mentally, especially when the parish was small and an individual community prevailed, in terms of numbers, among the parishioners. However, even where no such single community played a role in the parish's life (as, for instance, in extensive parishes that had their seats in towns), it did constitute a ceremonial unit, even if to a lesser degree: its members attended the parish church together and participated together in transition rites such as baptisms weddings.

The proportion between the coerced and voluntary attachment to one's parish church depended on various local factors, and any generalisation in this respect ought to be cautious. Responsibility – primarily financial – for the condition of the church building and the activity connected with it was, to some extent, imposed on the parishioners and enforced by the priest. On the other hand, the Church observably tended to be perceived as a common good and, in fact, the parishioners' pride.

However, it was not only the church building about which the *gromada* cared: the community tried to extend their custody to the religious activity related to it. These attempts are all the more commendable that the Catholic Church had in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries no official or institutional paths of supervising secular parishioners over cultic celebration and the performance of worship. Hence, the information we have on this topic today refers to situations that caused exacerbated conflicts calling for the intervention of a visitor or

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245 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7033 [1755].

246 Probably by marking a cross. The original copy of the village register of Kosina is presently deemed lost; B. Ulanowski, who published a portion of the records, provides no guideline in this respect. Cf. also TsDIAUL, f. 21/1, Vol. 1, fol. 36 [1755].

ecclesiastical (or, at times, secular) court. In any case, any such piece of information indicates what sort of problems in the religious activity of parish churches might have aroused resolute counteraction from the peasant community.

Parishioners most often resisted when their parish priest neglected his pastoral duties. Apparently, peasants found instances of negligence in religious care of moribund peasants the most outraging. Almost all the extant lists of parsons' trespasses described such misdemeanours extensively and in detail. Another vital, though less frequently occurring, charge was the retarded baptism of a child who died without receiving the sacrament. The community responded strongly also in irregular or negligent celebrations of liturgy. Peasant parishioners felt the most severely annoyed when Sunday services were abandoned and Masses requested for the deceased defaulted.

There are testimonies dating to the latter half of the eighteenth century which suggested that peasants controlled the course of church services and condemned the priests' deviations caused by inattention. For example, the specification of trespasses by the parson of Husów, the Rev. Tomasz Kruczkowski (dated 1768), tells us that a delegation of parishioners testified that: "this same parson of ours, oftentimes, without having slept it off, acceded to the altar drunken, and thereby he happened at times to foresake the Offertory, and at times the Consecration and the Elevation of the calyx, on regarding which the people gathered to attend the service reviled and grumbled."<sup>247</sup> By that time, the peasant faithful must have had an opinion formed about the correctness or appropriateness of sermons, and would disfavour any negligence in this respect, as is testified by a remark (in a list of issues) against Stanisław Kostka Podgórski, the parish priest of Poręba Wielka: "he would never give a sermon to build the people up but, instead, always with admonishing the listeners, calling at the people, may thunderstorms hit you, may devils catch you all and enter into you; I shall refrain from recollecting the other things, for I am ashamed."<sup>248</sup>

Another and quite frequent reason for a conflict with the parson was him overcharging the fees in excess of what was customary. The community would be particularly outraged at attempts to extort profits through ostentatious refusals to deliver the ministrations. Abuses in a parson's financial policies also aroused protest from the peasants: the *gromada* would consider squander, neglected décor in the church or inappropriate administration of income to be damaging to 'their' church.

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247 BC, ms 2147, p. 96.

248 BO, ms 11714, p. 904; also, cf. AAPrz, ms 167, fol. 89.

The priest's private life was also subject to the community's appraisal. Peasants generally seemed to be less strict than the Church hierarchies concerning ecclesiastics abusing alcohol and breaking celibacy. Countryside people were rather indulgent of the occasional drunkenness of their parson, or for his maintenance of a euphemistically called 'housekeeper' at the parsonage. Unrestrained drinking that affected the performance quality of the priest's duties met with rebuke from the flock, however. Priests' sexual behaviour that went beyond the rural standard of secular morality was also condemned.<sup>249</sup>

Struggling against all such instances of abuse or negligence was for the peasants a means of ensuring appropriate religious care for themselves and a ceremonial framework for their lives. As such transgressions affected the entire village community, the *gromada* acted as a party to the dispute, using in most cases a representative to this end, either the reeve, aldermen, or churchwardens.

The easiest way to exert pressure on the parish priest was to inform visitors of his behaviour. Inspections in the Dioceses of Krakow and Przemyśl extended in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to each single parish every ten years on average, although longer intervals occurred at times, particularly in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The second half of the latter saw increasingly frequent and regular visitations. One of the tasks for a visitor to tackle was to form an opinion on the parson's priestly efforts and conduct. Prominent members of the village community were questioned to this end. This gave the peasants an opportunity to complain about their priest's abuses and shortcomings. The priest might face admonition from the ecclesiastical inspector, or even be summoned to appear at the ecclesiastical court.<sup>250</sup>

A community could also address the owner/leaseholder of the estate, who was usually the patron of the parish church.<sup>251</sup> This path was certainly quite practical when it came to financial abuse. However, some noblemen felt obliged to care for the religious life of their serfs as well, and thus pastoral neglects were their area of concern. The aspects of support yielded by noblemen to *gromadas* in their

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249 For example, AAPrz, ms 155, fol. 212; BC, ms 2147, pp. 96–7.

250 Ibid.; and BPAU/PAN, ms 1236, fol. 67–68<sup>v</sup>; also, see the verdict of the Krakow consistory imposing on the Rev. Andrzej Budzyński, parson of Mszana, the duty to maintain a curate at the filial church in Olszówka (entered in the rural court register of Olszówka): Olszówka, fol. 54–54<sup>r</sup> [1738–41]; and the trial of the *gromada* of Wilamowice vs. the parson Rev. Tadeusz Smolikiewicz held before the consistory in 1769: J. Latosiński, *Monografia miasteczka Wilamowic*, Krakow 1910, p. 84.

251 BO, ms 11714, pp. 895–900, 903–5.

conflicts with parsons are traceable in the protestations inserted in the registers of castle courts (i.e. courts of first instance for nobles).<sup>252</sup>

Actions brought against the priest by way in official proceedings would rarely seemed to lead to him being deprived of his parish, but could indeed make his life extensively miserable. The Rev. Marcin Nowakowski described the case of a rural parson who came into conflict with his parishioners immediately after he took his office. The community's elders "held council between one another how to dispose of this priest. Some said it was a lost cause, for there was no sense complaining about him, and the others said: 'let us stand all together, let us be of one mind, it is unlikely that ten dogs could not tear up a single hare.' And so during all these years, they contrived against the priest what ever they could, and blathered what ever before the lords that a miser, inhumane he be, etc., and this to the alien people, and to the spiritual sovereigns. And although the priest was never punished, for his conduct was in accord with his obligation, they never the less harmed him greatly as they spoiled the affect amongst all the parishioners, and so even the children hardly listened to him, made criticisms of whatever kind they wanted in the field, did not return the interests-due, etc. Of which he having complained never could receive justice, for all the elders, aldermen, stood up against the priest, and thus this one priest, facing many advanced [in age] and aldermen, was not being trusted, what that priest hath suffered would not be encompassed by an entire book."<sup>253</sup>

In addition, there were some rather unclear although essentially official opportunities for the village community to directly influence their parson. These took the form of a sort of *pacta conventa*, written down and initialled by the clergyman in order to regulate certain spheres of religious life or, simply, contacts between the village and the parish priest. In 1787, the *gromada* of Rajbrot incited Rev. Józef Kozielski, on his taking the office of parson, to sign a document binding him not to damage the church, to observe the customary amounts of fees charged for funeral and wedding ceremonies, to apply the local measure in calculating the *meszne* (in Latin, the *missalia*, a tax due to the parish for celebrating masses at church), and to celebrate services at an early hour on festive days.<sup>254</sup> An agreement concluded in 1802 between the parson of Rzyki and the local community refers, in its entirety, to the observance of moral standards in

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252 ANK, Biec. Castr. 32, p. 803 [1598]; Biec. Castr. 171, p. 1472 [1624]; also, see AGAD, Księgi Grodzkie Wieluńskie, Relacje 49B, fol. 17<sup>v</sup>–18<sup>r</sup> [1693].

253 M. Nowakowski, *Kolęda duchowna ...*, pp. 324–6.

254 Rajbrot, miscellaneous records II, file a, No. 3 [1787].

the priest's private life.<sup>255</sup> However, such documents are unique and we cannot deduce based on them what the rationale behind such agreements was.

The above-quoted agreements, or arrangements, from the late eighteenth/early nineteenth centuries seem to have been the last holdovers of some older, perhaps rather popular, practice. During a conflict in the late 1740s between the community of the village of Iwkowa with the parson, Rev. Marcin Szaniawski, the village elders reminded him that "under the old reeves of Iwkowa, it some times happened that the elders would not give a parson the keys to the church, until those ones submitted [i.e. vouched] to them as [i.e. that] they should not extract higher fees and taxes above the rights that they have." Rev. Szaniawski managed to take his office without making such declaration, and it was purportedly due to this fact that parishioners: "taking revenge, out of rage, they make various arguments with him, saying, had we known that this priest, the parson, was to come, then we would have dealt with him other wise."<sup>256</sup> Perhaps the wave of feuds for the 'Mass-tax' (*meszne*), which swept through the submontane areas in the middle of the eighteenth century, had resulted from an emancipation of rural parsons from the influence of the village communities. Before then, priests apparently did not refrain from such arrangements with their parishioners. An understanding was entered in 1638 in the court register of Lubatówka whereby "the Rev. parson promised with his virtuous chaplain's word that those cottagers who have since time immemorial been giving six grosz each, that he shall receive from them six groszy each also, until he be deceased."<sup>257</sup> It however seems that the custom of making an arrangement with the parishioners before taking his local church office was always rather limited in extent. However, it was different in Orthodox and Uniate parishes, where the peasants bargained, as a standard, with their priest over the fees as the latter endeavoured to become the local pope.<sup>258</sup>

In their conflicts with parsons, peasants took advantage not only of official paths. There occurred cases of collective breakage of the parochial constraint as the entire village community began going to another, nearby church.<sup>259</sup> Such actions were, in most cases, taken by *gromadas* in villages other than the seats of

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255 M. Putek, *Miłościwe pany i krnąbrne chłopcy włościany*, Warsaw 1969, p. 440.

256 BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 13, 63<sup>v</sup>.

257 Lubatówka, fol. 298 [1638].

258 J. Półciwiatek, *Z badań nad rolą gospodarczo-społeczną plebanii na wsi pańszczyźnianej Ziemi Przemyskiej i Sanockiej w XVI-XIX wieku*, Rzeszów 1974, p. 122; see, e.g. BO, ms 5724, pp. 644-6 [1758].

259 For example, AAPrz, ms 167, fol. 196; Cf. also ASD, Vol. 1, p. 602 [1735]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3161 [1634].

parish churches, as their ceremonial community was not as strongly associated with the concrete temple, and so they thus found it easier to abandon the services of one parish in favour of another. Such self-willed 'removals' were obviously not admitted and thus required determination and civil courage, but above all they were conditional upon the concordant action of the entire group. There was no room for contestation in the rural environment, unless someone risked being thrown out of the community. After all, forming a ceremonial community was a constitutive trait of the collectively of *gromada*.

Having entered into a dispute with the parson, the community might have been placed under an interdict. This particular measure was employed, e.g. by the parish priest of Wola Żarczycka in the local conflict over the *meszne* tax against the communities of Jeżowe and Pysznica at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Interestingly, the residents of Jeżowe remained in this situation for at least nine years.<sup>260</sup> Paradoxically, the interdict imposed on the whole of the *gromada* strengthened it as a ceremonial community. The cursed peasants formed a consolidated group that faced the problem of organising their ritual life on their own, whereas participation by the entire social unit alleviated the discomfort of the interdict.

The village community's care about their parish church's religious activities was in no way limited to developing a successful relationship with the parson. Ensuring an appropriate course of church ceremonies also depended, albeit to a lesser degree, on lower-tier ecclesiastical personnel. The task to keep the latter disciplined rested mainly on the parish priest, but the *gromada* had in some cases to be involved in this business so as to give it its appropriate gravity, as for example in Rajbrot, where a gravedigger, who also served as the sacristan, was sentenced to flogging for failing to meet his obligations.<sup>261</sup>

A *gromada*'s ceremonial community also manifested itself in a sense of religious obligation regarding its individual members. This was particularly evident concerning the dead. On the verge of their death, testators called the community members to pray for his or her soul,<sup>262</sup> which was not merely a set phrase: the entire village community normally joined funeral ceremonies<sup>263</sup> and masses for

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260 M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka ...*, pp. 77–9.

261 Rajbrot, p. 129 [1798].

262 For example, Torki, p. 385 [1668]; Albigowa, Vol. 3, p. 9 [1734].

263 The obligation to appear at the neighbour's funeral has even been decreed in the *wilkierz* issued by the Frombork Chapter for the village of Gietrzwałd (before 1639); see *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 129. However, none of the known statutes in Lesser Poland would contain such a record, since such code of conduct was customary.

the souls of the deceased. In case an inheritor delayed in paying for the appropriate ceremonies, the rural court would instruct him or her to meet his or her obligations and assign a specified amount to this end.<sup>264</sup> Additionally, when it came to resolving disputable matters related to inheritance, the jury would consider which party funded the funeral and the mass.<sup>265</sup> When necessary, the villagers' community provided funding for burials of indigent neighbours, thereby striving to ensure all of its members had an appropriate ceremonial status.<sup>266</sup>

Thus, the community described as *gromada* was something more than merely a legal-administrative unit: it played an important role in the resource of religious concepts and the ideas of its members. Certain aspects of the community's religious life resembled the devotional activity of craftsmen's guilds operating in urban areas, which was most clearly visible in the *gromada*'s ceremonial functions. The resemblance becomes even stronger when taking into account that *gromada* is describable as a community of people sharing the same job.

## 2. Religious confraternities in rural areas

Religious confraternities were a particular manifestation of group religiosity among peasants. Despite quite a considerable number of monographic and contributory studies on these organisations, their role and scope of activity in the countryside remain virtually unknown. In the Middle Ages, confraternities were formed mainly in Polish urban hubs.<sup>267</sup> The sixteenth century saw an unprecedented dissemination of occupational confraternities of farmers (*confraternitates agricularum*). While almost nothing is known about the activities of these organisations, they were characteristically set up in small towns in association with parish churches. According to Jerzy Flaga, it was not burghers dealing with farming or tillage but peasants from the villages belonging to the given parish who joined the confraternities. In Michów, once a town (today a village) in the Lublin area, the local *agricularum* confraternity was in fact composed of two organisations extending to two nearby villages. The confraternity in Siedlce was even described as a '*contubernium agricularum villanorum*,' which

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264 For example, Barycz, Vol. 1, fol. 353<sup>v</sup>; Vol. 2, fol. 2–2<sup>v</sup> [1643]. Also, cf. Nowogród, Vol. 4, p. 29 [1720]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7260 [1782].

265 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3948 [1726] and 7490 [1755].

266 Limanowa A, p. 93 [1621].

267 E. Wiśniowski, 'Bractwa religijne na ziemiach polskich w średniowieczu,' *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 17, 1969, fasc. 2, p. 58.



invites a presupposition that the farmers' confraternities were close in character to mediaeval artisanal confraternities, strictly associated with guilds<sup>268</sup> or formed after their model. This is possibly testified to by the *confraternitas agricularum* of Sienne, Deanery of Solec, which was established around the time the locality was granted municipal rights.<sup>269</sup>

Confraternities of farmers also appeared in countryside areas, albeit to a limited extent. In the Archdeanery of Lublin, six parishes had such an organisation in the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century. This accounted for 25 % of the parishes housing any confraternity but only 7 % of all the parishes in the archdeanery.<sup>270</sup> Thus, their existence was an exception rather than a rule. In his analysis of the files related to a 1565 visitation of the Diocese of Krakow by Bishop Filip Padniewski, Waclaw Urban finds that most of the *confraternitates agricularum* had by that time undergone a thorough collapse.<sup>271</sup> In any case, they disappeared without trace at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Among other religious confraternities operating in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the rural parishes of the Dioceses of Krakow and Przemyśl, none could boast a birth date earlier than the very end of the sixteenth century, as was the case with a very few of them. Hence, it can be accepted that rural confraternities emerged in environments which were 'pristine' in this respect, being a novelty related to the post-Tridentine renewal trend in the Church. This fact heavily affected their character. Such organisations set up in Lesser Poland's rural areas were Counter-Reformation-oriented, as if by definition. Compared to those dating back to the mediaeval period, this meant a stricter subordination to the Church authorities, and more of a religious than a social bias. The Catholic orders and convents, which propagated their cults and methods or practices of devotion, played an important part in the organisation of such post-Tridentine confraternities.

The first religious confraternity in a rural parish in the Diocese of Przemyśl was set up in 1601 in Błażowa, a large village resembling a small town and dominated by artisans. When Bishop Waclaw Hieronim Sierakowski was in Office, in 1743–57, as many as 44 confraternities functioned, affiliated to 41 of the 116

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268 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 60–61.

269 For more on farmers' confraternities, see J. Flaga, 'Bractwa religijne w archidiakonacie lubelskim do początku XVII w.', *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 21, 1973, fasc. 2, pp. 166–7.

270 Based on a table compiled by J. Flaga in 'Bractwa religijne . . .', pp. 153–4.

271 W. Urban, *op. cit.*, p. 251.

existing rural parish churches; thus, roughly in every third countryside parish.<sup>272</sup> However, some 60 % of these organisations were only established in the eighteenth century. Around 20 % of rural confraternities appeared in the first half of the seventeenth century, another such rate in its second half. While 1650–89 saw only two such organisations come into existence, the 1690s was marked by a significant growth in their number.<sup>273</sup>

The Deanery of Kazimierz in the Krakow Diocese, as investigated by Emilia Piekarz, had confraternities existing with 40 % of rural parish churches as of 1748.<sup>274</sup> In the Archdeanery of Lublin as a whole, confraternities were established by 1755 in almost half of the countryside parishes; without the confraternities dating to the sixteenth century, which went into decline early in the following century, the proportion drops to 40 % (23 organisations in 20 parishes, out of 51 rural parishes in total). As with the Przemyśl Diocese, most of them – as many as 52 % – emerged in the eighteenth century (before 1755), only 9 % in the first half of the seventeenth century, and 39 % in its latter half.<sup>275</sup> For comparison, in the Diocese of Płock more than 40 % of rural parishes also had a confraternity active in the years 1773–5.<sup>276</sup>

The research done up to now has demonstrated that religious confraternities appeared in countryside areas fairly commonly, existing in about 40 % of rural parishes. In addition, the participation of peasants in the activities of the confraternities operating in towns, larger and smaller, remains completely unknown,<sup>277</sup>

272 H. Borcz, 'Bractwa religijne w kościołach parafialnych diecezji przemyskiej w okresie potrydenckim,' *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Yr. 28, 1981, fasc. 4, p. 87. (Cf. J. Ataman's remark that in Bishop W. H. Sierakowski's time there was almost no parish without a confraternity in the Diocese of Przemyśl: J. Ataman, *op. cit.*, p. 38). H. Borcz's calculations show that confraternities only existed then in 46 % of all functioning parishes, whether urban or rural.

273 The chronology of the appearance of religious confraternities in the rural parishes of the Diocese of Przemyśl is based on the tables in H. Borcz, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–82.

274 E. Piekarz, 'Struktura organizacyjna parafii w dekanacie kazimierskim w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku,' *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 14, 1966, fasc. 2, pp. 88–9.

275 Based on the table compiled by J. Flaga in 'Bractwa religijne w archidiakonacie lubelskim do końca XVIII wieku. Chronologia i terytorialne rozmieszczenie,' *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne*, Vol. 42, 1981, pp. 302–27; also, see J. Flaga, 'Bractwa religijne w archidiakonacie lubelskim do końca XVIII w.,' *Biuletyn Lubelskiego TN*, Vol. 25, 1983, No. 1, p. 74.

276 J. Flaga, 'Bractwa i przejawy ich życia religijnego w 2 połowie XVIII wieku na przykładzie diecezji płockiej,' *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 24, fasc. 2, 1976, p. 38.

277 As aforementioned, specialised confraternities of farmers in urban parishes faded out early in the seventeenth century.

while in some Deaneries urban parishes accounted for more than half of all the parishes. Such was the case with the Deaneries of Łuków, Parczew and Solec in the Diocese of Krakow, as well as in the Deaneries of Tarnogród and Nowe Miasto in the Diocese of Przemyśl. However, religious confraternities in countryside areas became characteristic only of the eighteenth century. No such organisation was known in the late sixteenth century, and they were still a rarity in the seventeenth century.

Another issue was whether such organisations, assuming they existed, were actually active. Visitation records usually reported on the rural parishes too generally to attempt a reliable assessment. In certain cases, it seems obvious that a confraternity mentioned at just one visit either collapsed later or never actually developed. Those confraternities which reappear in a series of records, over dozens of years, presumably pursued their activities successfully. There were a number of intermediate stages of development between these two extremes, rarely reflected in the historical records. A Saint Joseph confraternity with several dozen years of tradition was mentioned in 1748 for the parish of Mucharz. The organisation had its money-box and 'functionary' individuals, but no confraternal gatherings were held: the organisation's income could not even cover the light and other expenses on its patron saint's feast day.<sup>278</sup>

The activity of a confraternity depended to a significant extent on the personality of the parish priest. Parsons who devoted themselves to their work and were sensitive to the spiritual needs of their parishioners could overcome various problems, including financial.<sup>279</sup> The organisations in question enjoyed broader interest among the faithful, in most cases, a few years after their establishment and during severe hardships, such as plagues.

Hence, it was one of the parson's tasks to bolster the religious exaltation of the brethren and sisters under normal conditions. In case the confraternity languished, it could have been activated by a solemn renewal, and thus it regained its ability to attract the faithful for some time.<sup>280</sup> It can be surmised that confraternities recorded as existing in inspection protocols were actually operational,

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278 S. Heumann, *Wiadomość o parafii i kościele parafialnym w Mucharzu, w dekanacie suskim, diecezji krakowskiej*, Krakow 1899, p. 87.

279 For how the parson of Jadowniki endowed St Anne's chapel, see *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4904 [1639].

280 J. Flaga, 'Rekrutacja do bractw religijnych w XVII i XVIII wieku na przykładzie archidiaconatu lubelskiego', *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 35, fasc. 2, 1987, pp. 105–6; H. Ruciński, 'Bractwo literackie w Koprzywnicy jako obraz struktury społecznej miasteczka w latach 1694–1795', *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 65, 1974, fasc. 2, p. 267.

although subject to fluctuations or even temporary hibernation. Finally, at the end of the eighteenth century, confraternities affiliated to countryside parish churches shared the fate of all their counterparts. In southern Lesser Poland, which was seized by Austria as part of the First Partition of Poland-Lithuania, the organisations were abolished by Emperor Joseph II in 1783; the idea was to replace them with a single charitable association (*allgemeine Versorgungsfond*). Bishop Michał Poniąkowski, the administrator of the northern part of the Krakow Diocese, which remained in Poland, carried out a similar idea in 1784, subordinating the existing devotional confraternities to the new “Confraternities of Mercy” which were meant to be developed in every parish within the area. The transition was not consistent and was never completed; as a result, the activities of the religious confraternities was efficiently disorganised in the entire region.<sup>281</sup>

A definite majority of confraternities existing in Poland between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries were devoted to, and named after, the Virgin Mary.<sup>282</sup> In the countryside, Rosary confraternities, existing since the late sixteenth century, were the most popular. In the Diocese of Przemyśl, such confraternities amounted to 40 % of all confraternities set up in rural parishes in early modern period. In contrast, their peers devoted to the Holy Trinity, which did not appear before the early eighteenth century, accounted for less than 15 %. Ten percent of the confraternities were devoted to Saint Anne in the first half of the seventeenth century, and to the Scapular mostly in the second half of the seventeenth century.<sup>283</sup> The proportions have been found to have been similar for the Archdeanery of Lublin in the Diocese of Krakow,<sup>284</sup> as well as for the Diocese of Płock in the Masovia region.<sup>285</sup>

Thus, the names borne by the rural confraternities are perceptibly homogenised and the same is true, in fact, for their urban peers. The most popular name, the Rosary, reappears throughout the period under study and is predominant in number. Numerous ‘St Anne’ confraternities were set up in the countryside in the first half of the seventeenth century, including the earliest three rural confraternities in the Przemyśl Diocese, in the localities of Błażowa, Łukowa, and Dydnia.<sup>286</sup> The second half of the seventeenth century saw the appearance in

281 S. Litak, ‘Bractwa religijne w Polsce przedrozbiorowej, XIII-XVIII wiek. Rozwój i problematyka,’ *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 88, 1997, fasc. 3–4, p. 520.

282 *Ibid.*, pp. 518–19.

283 Based on the tables in H. Borcz, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

284 J. Flaga, ‘Bractwa religijne ...’ (*Biuletyn Lubelskiego TN*), p. 76.

285 J. Flaga, ‘Bractwa i przejawy ...’, p. 39.

286 H. Borcz, *op. cit.*, pp. 79–80.

village parishes of confraternities dedicated to the Scapular;<sup>287</sup> the invocation grew less popular in the following century, with more and more ‘Holy Trinity’ names appearing in parallel. Confraternities bearing unique invocations were extremely rare in rural areas. The most original known examples of this kind include the ‘St Augustine’s Belt’ confraternity, set up in 1733 in Krzemienica, and the one named after St Onuphrius, which was due to appear in Łąka near Rzeszów, in 1741, but apparently never developed.<sup>288</sup> Such organisations were typically associated with their related church’s invocation and thus can be deemed to have been attempts at mobilising the cult of the parish’s patron.<sup>289</sup> The other name used uniquely in this context was Saint Isidore. The cult of this particular saint, recognised by Janusz Tazbir as a widely advertised custodian of farmers, was essentially quite limited.<sup>290</sup> There was not a single church or shrine dedicated to Isidore in the Dioceses of Krakow and Przemyśl: in fact, only two temples bore his name in the entire Poland-Lithuania. Similarly, confraternities of St Isidore were quite rare; as far as Lesser Poland is concerned, one such body existed in

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287 Cf. D. Panek, ‘Dzieje bractwa szkaplerza świętego przy kościele oo. karmelitów w Krakowie na Piasku do końca XVII w.’, *Roczniki Teologiczno-Kanoniczne*, Yr. 10, 1963, fasc. 3, p. 43.

288 W. Puchalski, *Drobne dzieje Łąki*, Krakow 1892, pp. 76–7.

289 For example, Fr Piotr Paweł Gawlikowski, the parson of the parish church of St Mary Magdalene in Zalas, Deanery of Nowa Góra, set up a confraternity dedicated to the patroness saint and had a booklet published to popularise the organisation (*Pustynia szczęśliwej pokuty, Bractwo św. Maryi Magdaleny w kościele zalaskim diecezji krakowskiej staraniem i kosztem W.X. Piotra Pawła Gawlikowskiego tegoż kościoła plebana ufundowane w roku 1715 solennie introdukowane i do druku podane* [‘The wilderness of felicitous penance, Confraternity of St Mary Magdalene, founded at the church of Zalas, of the Diocese of Krakow, by endeavour and at the expense of Ven. Fr Piotr Paweł Galikowski, the parson of the aforesaid church, in the year 1715, solemnly introduced and submitted for printing’], Krakow 1715). However, it is uncertain whether the establishment in 1770 of a namesake confraternity affiliated to the church in Serniki, Lublin Land, was inspired to any extent by this particular publication (the local church was also dedicated to Mary Magdalene). See J. Flaga, ‘Bractwa religijne ...’ (*Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne*), p. 339.

290 J. Tazbir, ‘The social function of the cult of Isidore ‘the Ploughman’ in seventeenth-century Poland,’ translated by T. Korecki, *Acta Poloniae Historica*, Vol. 116, 2017, pp. 368–72 (this renowned article was published in Polish in 1955 as: J. Tazbir, ‘Społeczna funkcja kultu Izzydora “Oracza” w Polsce XVII wieku,’ *Przegląd Historyczny*, Yr. 46, 1955, fasc. 3, pp. 420–44); J. Tazbir, *Arianie i katolicy ...*, pp. 203–37; cf. C. Deptuła, ‘Legenda i kult św. Izzydora Oracza a problemy polskiej wsi pod zaborami,’ *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL*, Yr. 39, 1996, No. 1–2, p. 130.

Więclawice near Proszowice, established in 1633, and another in Radziechowcy not far from Żywiec in 1720.<sup>291</sup>

The religious confraternities in the countryside did not differ from their urban counterparts regarding their statutes. Such regulations were usually copied from devotional publications usable for this purpose; in some cases, one-page printed slips popularising the statutes of popular confraternities (for example those dedicated to the Scapular) were used and simply sewn into the organisation's registers.<sup>292</sup> The duties of members, of either sex and of any confraternity, were limited to the diligent fulfilment of the defined worshipful practices. Participation in church ceremonies was stimulated by the mandatory presence at the confraternal Masses and practising sacramental life, including by encouraging 'facultative' (other than at Easter time) Confession and Communion. The brethren and sisters were moreover recommended to say daily the prescribed number of the most popular prayers (the Lord's Prayer or Hail Mary). Holding a discerning devotional token, such as a scapular, rosary, medallion or picture featuring the organisation's patron saint, was obligatory. Should participation in religious practices be assumed as the touchstone, it can be stated that the role of confraternities was to introduce the parishioners to active participation in the life of the Church and arrange for them a godly way of spending their leisure time.<sup>293</sup>

However, the confraternal statutes did not extensively focus on the formation of a mundane community founded upon devotional practices, as the fundamental plane of any such confraternity's operation. The social, and societal, role of religious confraternities was not as developed as in the case of the traditional confraternities in Western European Catholic countries: those organisations could virtually do without a priest whilst focusing, mainly, on holding community celebrations. The major reason behind this situation was a limited popularity of confraternities in mediaeval Poland (in contrast to the countries of Western and Southern Europe), which resulted in a resolute dominance of Counter-Reformation confraternities, which in turn were more strictly dependent on the ecclesiastical institutions and more focused on devotional issues.

Nevertheless, the confraternities operating in Poland did fulfil a variety of social functions. Firstly, they singled out an exclusive group among the faithful, sharing a method of devotion. Membership was determined and confirmed

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291 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia* . . . , p. 518 [1719] and 525–6 [1720].

292 BC, ms 3431, p. 241.

293 J. Tazbir, 'The social function...', pp. 364–7.

by means of entry in the confraternity book (register) and, additionally, an external token: rosary, scapular, or medallion. Confraternities shaped the community of their members through common participation in confraternal ceremonies: church services, processions, and funerals. The brethren often wore copes during such ceremonies; another practice was group celebration of the so-called discipline (i.e. flagellation).<sup>294</sup> Such an external setting of the cult certainly rendered the membership more attractive. Another community-forming factor was electing 'functionary' members, which enabled the expression of a network of interdependencies and hierarchies penetrating any such community. The brethren were additionally integrated through a separate calendar of celebratory feast days in worship of the patron as well as common care about the fraternity's chapel or altar. Compulsory participation in prayers for the souls of the deceased confreres, and, in general, the eschatological orientation of confraternities, transferred the temporary community, as it were, into the afterlife dimension.

It was the eschatological function that was predominant in the activity of confraternities. Apart from a variety of indulgences, these organisations ensured religious care over the *confraters*, from providing an appropriate setting for the funeral ceremony, through participating in the obsequies, organising periodical Masses for the defunct, to regular commemoration of the deceased in the confraternal prayers.<sup>295</sup> Naturally, all of this followed to a considerable degree from the broad popularity of belief in Purgatory and a variety of related convictions.<sup>296</sup> Scapular confraternity members, for example, adhered to the so-called Saturday privilege, the promise that the Virgin would release the deceased confrere's soul from purgatorial torments on the first Saturday after his or her demise.

The eschatological function of the confraternities caused that they saw the largest inflows of new members in moments of intensified threat, typically during plagues and similar disasters. Individual personal crises also attracted new members. The decision to join was made resulting from illness or after a miraculous healing, typically in such cases enlisting with the confraternity affiliated at the sanctuary to which the successful recovery was owed.<sup>297</sup> Some would hit

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294 For example, this rather popular custom is identifiable in the inventories of parish churches; cf., e.g., M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka ...*, p. 86.

295 J. Flaga, 'Bractwa i przejawy ...', pp. 56–60.

296 S. Bylina, 'Czyściec u schyłku średniowiecza,' *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, Vol. 90, 1983, fasc. 4, pp. 737–8.

297 Frequent among nobles and burghers, the practice was also known to peasants; see, e.g., BC, ms 3432, p. 13.

upon the idea only in the face of death. One clear instance of the latter is Martyn Portasz, a reaver executed in Żywiec in 1689, who in his last will successfully besought the local curate to be posthumously registered with the local Rosary confraternity.<sup>298</sup>

As aforementioned, religious confraternities were a novel phenomenon to the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century countryside, transferred from an outside context; they represented an intensive type of religiosity that differed from the one typical of the countryside. In setting up such organisations, urban cultural patterns were followed in the first place. To become efficient, such a 'transplanted' body needed to adapt, to some degree, to the local conditions and determinants. Hence the appearance of certain traits characteristic of rural confraternities, all essentially coming down to an interpenetration of the confraternal organisation and the rural community (*gromada*), with the resulting reinforcement of the social role of the confraternities.

The underlying premise was the very reason for why the religious confraternities were organised in rural parishes. From the standpoint of diocesan clergymen, rural confraternities were an efficient and most recommendable method of religious mobilisation of local populations. They made the people accustomed to regular devotional practices, focused the attention of the lay audience on religion and incited them to visit the church more frequently. This translated into more efficient teaching of the articles of faith and shaping of Christian moral attitudes. The promulgation of a type of cult or devotion method was secondary to the pastoral tasks aimed at founding the confraternity.<sup>299</sup> The rural confraternity was thus tasked not as much with distinguishing its members among the community but more encompassing the entire *gromada*, or at least stimulating it religiously. This goal could be best achieved by adapting to the social structure of the *gromada*. The existence of a confraternity thus gave an institutional form to the religious dimension of the rural community's organisation, and the confraternity itself became part of the village's life, gradually taking over the devotional obligations of the *gromada*. Consequently, a countryside parish typically hosted not more than one confraternity at a time. A rural confraternity was

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298 A. Komonieczki, *Chronografia*... , p. 246 [1689]. Another such a case was the one of a robber named Ryczek Senczyk, executed in Wiśnicz, who had offered a testament bequest to the local 'literary' confraternity, himself being of the Uniate faith; cf. *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae. Księga złoczyńców sądu kryminalnego w Wiśniczu (1629–1665)*, ed. by W. Uruszczak, I. Dwornicka, Kraków 2003, No. 45 [1664].

299 For more on the incentives that drove the parson of Radzichów in founding a St Isidore confraternity in his parish: A. Komonieczki, *Chronografia*... , p. 511 [1718].



strongly fused with the *gromada* in which it operated, to the extent preventing, or making pointless, any element of competition or choice. In the 1750s in the entire Diocese of Przemyśl, only three rural parishes, against 43 with a confraternity, hosted two confraternities each (the younger of each pair being a few years old); in the Archdeanery of Lublin, Krakow Diocese, the situation was similar.<sup>300</sup> Moreover, there were no exclusive confraternities in the countryside, such as 'literary' ones (with the central criterion of skill).<sup>301</sup>

As a result, the rural community's and the confraternity's structures tended to interpenetrate over time, as is observable in the above-described relationship between the *gromada* and the parish. Signing up with confraternities were countryside elites, who maintained the most animated contacts with the church and the parsonage. For them, the devotional character of a confraternity was, in all probability, perfectly understood, most welcome, and prestige-boosting. The rare information on 'functionary' members suggests that the office was willingly held by village elders,<sup>302</sup> as were the posts of churchwardens. However, membership in rural confraternities was apparently extensive. It was perhaps the elite whose example influenced other members of the rural community; or, perhaps, membership in the confraternity gradually became a moral duty. In any case, in some villages the memberships in a confraternity and a community practically merged with each other. One locality where this must have been the case was Kasina Wielka, as in 1755 the entire *gromada* resolved at a community meeting to entrust Błażej Skwarczek, a tenant farmer, with the function of promoter of the Holy Rosary at the local church (it was probably an elective post at confraternity).<sup>303</sup> The stronger community-integrating function of rural confraternities probably meant that they were joined by entire families together with children much more commonly than their urban counterparts.<sup>304</sup>

We can conclude that the development of confraternities in the countryside was connected with the institutionalisation of the existing religious community: the *gromada*, whilst also stimulating its religiosity. How important the

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300 See H. Borcz, op. cit., p. 87; J. Flaga, 'Bractwa religijne w archidiakonacie lubelskim ...' (*Biuletyn Lubelskiego TN*), p. 74; also, cf. E. Piekarczyk, op. cit., pp. 88–9.

301 The question remains open to what degree the confraternities described as 'literary' actually consisted of literate members. In the small town of Koprzywnica, for example, the local organisation could be joined by anybody who was willing to join, the illiterate included; cf. H. Ruciński, op. cit., p. 267.

302 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4689 [1720].

303 *Ibid.*, No. 3700 [1755].

304 J. Flaga, 'Rekrutacja do bractw religijnych ...', p. 111.

confraternities' mobilising role was in rural areas until the middle of the eighteenth century is difficult to assess; their impact on peasants' piety was rather limited, in any case. This is attested by very rare bestowals to the benefit of confraternities in peasants' testaments. Among more than 300 such documents produced in the region under discussion and compiled between 1600 and 1760, only a few include bequests to confraternities,<sup>305</sup> whilst just one testator summons his confreres to pray for his soul.<sup>306</sup>

To a certain extent, confraternities doubled the religious functions of the peasant community (*gromada*) and this might be the reason why nurturing them in rural areas was so slow a process. It was not before the middle of the eighteenth century that the second confraternity would be set up in rural parishes. This phenomenon can be recognised as a symptom of rural confraternities becoming independent of the *gromada* structures: where one could select a religious association for himself/herself, the ceremonial unity of the village became a matter of the past. As for *gromada*, it probably started to cease in the period in question to be an organisation that met the religious purposes or expectations of its members.

The unprecedented increase in the popularity of confraternities in countryside areas in the eighteenth century prevalently resulted from the activity of the clergy, marking a successful outcome of the dozens of years of instilling a post-Tridentine religiosity model in the peasantry. The other important factor was the gradually declining importance in the religious functions of *gromada*, with peasants seeking religious fulfilment outside the structures of their social organisation.

### 3. Religion as the basis for the village's social structure

Religion also played a very important role in the relationships prevailing inside the rural community. Social coexistence in the countryside was principally founded

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305 Czukiew, Vol. 2, pp. 601–2 [1677]; Vol. 4, pp. 75–7 (reversely) [1686], p. 136 (reversely) [1689]; K. Dobrowolski, *Włociańskie rozporządzenia ostatniej woli*. . . , No. 21 [1730]; Trzebowniko, pp. 10–11 [1738]; Golcowa, Vol. 2, pp. 461–2 [1741]. In Ruthenian Uniate villages, the situation was different as the confraternities operating there actually administered the church property, and hence bequests to the church and the confraternity were practically identical.

306 Albigowa, Vol. 3, p. 10 [1734].

upon, and sanctioned by, religious concepts and ideas. The social worldview of peasants had the underlying conviction that there was an unchanging and objective paradigm of appropriate human conduct – a standard whose origins were essentially supernatural. The paradigm needed no definition or strict guidance as it was impliedly assumed that it was innate to all humans; its universality was culturally founded.

The standards of social coexistence were clearly Christian in Lesser Poland's early modern countryside. This was, partly, the effect of a lasting absorption of the rudiments of the Christian hierarchy of values following from centuries-long pastoral action. This fact was influenced, to some degree, by the adoption of the Christian conceptual framework and terminology, which enabled efficient verbalisation of the applied moral principles. These two phenomena were lengthy processes with roots going back to the time of Christianisation. An acceleration of these processes was observable in the Polish countryside in the post-Tridentine period, through an evident extension of the binding moral standards and promulgation of related notions.

Clearly, the Christian rules of coexistence and cohabitation were founded upon the Decalogue. The Commandments were the most common, and oftentimes the only known, text that codified the standards of conduct (the precepts of the Church were far less popular). However, by its very nature the Decalogue primarily provided the grounds for interdictions; hence the enormously powerful role of the Commandments in the legislation and judicial decisions of local assessors' courts. Nevertheless, a positive programme of human behaviour could not be limited to avoidance of acts prohibited by the Commandments of God. Thus, the rules of appropriate behaviour were occasionally established through custom, this being dynamically modified under the influence of ministry. Despite the considerable influence of ecclesial teaching on the formation of positive models in rural areas, the community-based awareness of correctness remained the appropriate criterion of appraisal of conduct and behaviour.

This fact by no means restricted the religious motivation of good conduct. On the contrary, the conviction was prevalent that the *opinio communis* completely reflected the will of God Himself. Acts that pleased God had to be appreciated by the village community as well, whereas the group's moral hierarchy was a projection of God's precepts. To use an example, such identification was manifested in the acknowledgements expressed by a *rugownik* (an in-village public prosecutor) to the community of Kasina, that to his mind nothing had occurred "of the sorte that shouldst have bene contrarie to the wille of God and honestie of

the communitie,” or “what ever shouldst have not pleased God the Lord and the good people.”<sup>307</sup>

The historical records related to the countryside in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries refer to positive norms of behaviour much less frequently than to bans, as there was apparently no need to write down the models deserving of imitation. Nevertheless, the authors of some civil-law documents, such as prenuptial agreements or last wills, formulated wishes and encouragements regarding the conduct of their relatives. For example, a woman named Anna, from the demesne of Łącko, obliged her second husband, on the occasion of bequeathing her property to him in the event of death, “the wealth not to desolate but beget and build, foremost, what ever ought to please the Lord and the goode people . . . And, after both of them have departed this life, then their own descendants, shouldst the Lord deign to bestow them, shall remain in their entirety in this same wealth and in their patrimony as the very own inheritors of this wealth, and those children whom she hath had with her first husband shall commonly and diligently exert themselves about them, and give honest breeding and what ever might there be, foremost, to the worshipp, to the glorie of the Lord and the good people, so that it might please.”<sup>308</sup>

Evidently, prominent among the recommended characteristics were thriftiness and responsibility for the family, both religiously motivated as they were considered conformant to God’s will and fulfilling the spiritual standards of human life. A certain Matyas Cygankiewicz, when taking the daughter of the Suterek parents for his wife, committed to “duely labour to earn bread, as God wisheth.”<sup>309</sup> The hereditary headman (*soltys*) of the village of Kasina, called Wojciech, demanded upon bequeathing his farmstead to his son Stanisław: “that hee rulle and exercise all the thinges manorial and domestic of mine with [= according to] mine wille so that this be to the reverence and glorie of God the Lord.”<sup>310</sup>

The positive models for life were never limited to these two otherwise important features. Behaving in a manner pleasing to “God and the good people” referred in essence to a broad complex of life-governing rules prescribed for a member of a rural community. There was no stringent code of conduct, though.

307 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3122 [1630], 3171 [1635]; Osobnica, p. 267 [1589]; also, cf. Jasionka, p. 6 [1742].

308 Łącko, No. 407 [1607].

309 Pieskowa Skała, p. 440 [1714].

310 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 2753 [1581].

One was supposed to behave in an appropriate manner, as God and thereby the *gromada* would have expected. Such identification of the principles regulating human interaction and interpersonal relations with a supernatural order made the social arrangement of village essentially religious. This fact was solemnly reconfirmed regularly at the village community's annual sessions combined with court sessions (and called *sąd rugowy* or, in brief, *rug*). These were obligatorily attended by the entire community, including women, and every participant was expected to testify as to the iniquities of which he or she was aware. Apart from the fixed date in the annual cycle, a *rug* might have been convened on the call of the village's proprietor. With time, however, the extraordinary character of these special sessions waned, turning into one of the regular meetings of the *gromada*.<sup>311</sup>

As the 'collective conscience' of the village community, the *rug* was permeated with religious content and symbols whose role was dual. Firstly, they formed a frame of reference for the matters discussed at the meeting; second, they provided the sessions with an adequately lofty and solemn setting. To give an example, the phrase used in Wola Żarczycka to open the session was: "In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen. Now do I initiate this law by the power of the Holy Trinity, of God the One, by the power of the Mother of God conceived of Him, by the power of all the Saints of the Lord and the patrons of the Polish Crown. I do initiate this law by the power of the Supreme Vicar of Christ, the Roman pope, by the power of the bishop of our diocese and of all of the clergy. ... In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."<sup>312</sup> At a gathering of entire community of the village of Łukawiec at the local inn in 1693, each of the attending husbandmen, according to the inventory, "upon the kissing of the holy cross, with his two fingers raisen upwardes," was to give an account of his acts and deeds, and submit complaints, if any, "this to be for the praise and glory of God, the Lord Allmighty ... of the Holliest Virgin Mary and All the Saints, and for us sinners for ammelioration of our lives and for forgiveness of all our sins."<sup>313</sup>

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311 J. Rafacz, *Ustrój wsi samorządnej małopolskiej w XVIII wieku*, Lublin 1922, pp. 229–30, 339–42.

312 M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka ...*, especially a note (possibly in the author's hand) on the inside of the rear cover in the copy kept by the National Library (BN I. 480.151, reading: "*arynga* [i.e. oration phrase] with which *rug* sessions were initiated."

313 Łukawiec, p. 5 [1693]; also, cf. another detailed description of the community's *rug* procedure imbued with rhetoric and religious gestures: LNB, The Ossolineum Collection, ms 2403, fol. 1–6<sup>v</sup>, cf. O. Vinnychenko, 'Do istorii sil's'koho sudochnynstva: "ruhove pravo" v halyts'komu seli pochatku XVIII stolittia, *Drohobyts'kyi kraïeznavchyi zbirnyk*, Vol. 11–12, 2008, pp. 514–526.

In Ołpiny, the role of the *rug* assembly in perseverance of the social order was emphasised, at a 1725 session, by a strongly devotional vow, obligatorily sworn by every member of the community, which concluded as follows: “My supreme good, God, the one in the Trinity, I do cherish Thee above any thing that thought might embrace. Thee not for the sake of heaven and eternal felicity but for the sake of the goodness alone, of Thee, my God of which love of Thee, I abhor the sins, and weeping bitterly for them, I do wish to dwindle with teares.”<sup>314</sup> It was essentially an act of faith whose official and individual forswearing was meant to affirm the conduct compliant with the social message of the *rug* institution, with respect to each and all members of the *gromada*.

The system of values and the underlying principles of a social orderliness translated into the notion of good neighbourliness. This rather vague idea embraced the foundations of concordant coexistence within the village as well as the community’s internal hierarchisation, interdependency systems, and so on. The practical implementation of the good neighbourliness principle was meant to ensure peace and alleviate conflicts among the community’s members. The fundamental role of this rule in regulating social relations in the countryside corresponded with the religious incentive behind it. Concord among neighbours resulted from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.<sup>315</sup> Amicable resolutions of conflicts were owed to Divine assistance, which was on some occasions expressed by the characteristic phrase: “having gained assistance from God the Lord, stricken the Devil in the face, they voluntarily made. . . an arrangement.”<sup>316</sup>

Opposing the principle of good neighbourliness was in turn approached in terms of a breach of the order sanctioned by God. The rural aldermen deemed it appropriate to oblige the guilty to make an ecclesiastical atonement.<sup>317</sup> The religious sanction caused that any infringement of good neighbourly relations was a question of conscience, whereas appropriate conduct towards others was motivated also by a fear of enduring God’s punishment. Arguments of this sort would obviously not be frequent in the records, as they refer to reasons behind the **abandonment** of certain wrongdoings. A declaration by Bartek Krysta from Albigowa is a good example. Incited by a neighbour to illegitimately seek a stake in an inheritance, the man, “fearing God, was willing to take the innocent ground

314 Ołpiny B, fol. 6 [1725].

315 See, e.g., Rogi, fol. 494’ [1719]; Czukiew, Vol. 3, p. 747 [1771].

316 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4978 [1623].

317 For example, Łącko, No. 623 [1720]; also, cf. Kasina, pp. 68–70 [1694]; Tuszów Narodowy, p. 105 [1703]; Tryńcza, pp. 194–5 [1723].

not, him selfe fearing God, the Lord, and the Divine judgement, for knoweth he that unpunished shan't he go from the Divine judgement.”<sup>318</sup>

The religious character of the principles regulating interpersonal relationships in rural areas was complemented by a sacred approach to fairness and justice. God was at the source of it, and thus restoration of justice was regarded as the fulfilment of God's will. The village community's courts took approach, and this is how they comprehended their activity. Phrases such as “in the wille to content Divine equitie,” or, “With God the Lord hither, & the Holy Justitie,” were used to reinforce the justification of numerous verdicts passed by village aldermen.<sup>319</sup> At times, these courts went as far as describing themselves as ‘the law of God.’<sup>320</sup> Characteristic of the religious comprehension of the judicature is, for example, an entry documenting the election of the assessors' court in Markowa in 1718: “Primarily, our communitie and oure whole populace of Markowa have elected, taking the law of God the one in the Holy Trinitie from the inspiration of Holy Spirit, . . . elected have we for the orderliness of the entire village of Markowa as the father of the children with all the Divine law, beginning with the creator himselfe of heaven and earth, who hath submitted this to us so that we may have the teaching from Holy Spirit, and so wee with this spirit heare their Divine judgements, and for them to judge according to the conscience, as the law of God.”<sup>321</sup>

The sense of religious importance of the re-establishment of Divine justice at the local level was by no means declarative. The *gromada's* assessors often made decisions thoroughly grounded on their institution's role in maintaining the appropriate order of things. When Wojciech Orzeszek's farmstead in Brzozowa burnt down in 1652, and the injured party did not officially apply for prosecution against the conjectured arsonist, “relying [instead] on God the Lord alone,” the village court punished the suspect, a certain Wojciech Nowak, in the intent not to “remit clear of this harm of God.”<sup>322</sup> In this particular case, the conviction that the misbehaviour ought to have been punished by a judiciary council led ultimately to the aldermen breaking the standard procedure and exceeding

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318 Albigowa, Vol. 1, p. 293 [1778].

319 See, e.g., Kasina, p. 69 [1694]; Żywiec demesne, No. 208 [1715].

320 See, e.g., Osobnica, p. 246 [1580], where even the community's chest was named a ‘Divine treasure.’

321 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4532 [1718]; similarly, Piątkowa, pp. 114–15 [1699], and elsewhere.

322 Brzozowa, fol. 226<sup>v</sup> [1652].

their competences: the rural court of Brzozowa considered it crucial to prevent insulting God through unpunished crime.

A similar pattern of comprehension of the association between the Divine and mundane justice can also be found in the rural courts' verdicts administering punishments interpreted as a substitute of Divine retribution. For example, in the demesne of Strzeszyce, the court resolved in 1742 that a woman (name unknown) guilty of a dissolute act with a farmhand of Marcin Wayda (she was most probably sexually assaulted as she "presented evidence that it was not she to have been the cause of the sin") "shall fall under the punishment, so that she contract an eternall punishment unto her self not, and that she be punished with 50 lashings."<sup>323</sup>

As Divine justice, as understood by Lesser Poland's early modern peasantry, comprised an unambiguously Christian message, the rural aldermen considered it their task to pursue any instance of crime against the Decalogue on behalf of the *gromada*. Therefore, village courts considered cases of witchcraft and blasphemy, curse and perjury, negligence of feast days, disrespect for parents, battery and homicide, fornication and adultery, groundless slander and libel. The primary legal premise referred to in all these cases was 'transgression of the Divine commandment' that was often quoted in the verdict, or indicated by the number. The Commandments played the crucial role in the judicature of rural aldermen in criminal cases and were, moreover, informed by the heterogeneous nature of the legal principles applied by them, whereas the judges' command of the Magdeburg Law was, in most cases, merely declarative.<sup>324</sup>

The prevention of insult to God (or punishing for committing acts capable of inciting such an insult) was not limited to Decalogue crimes, though. Religious motivation was also applied to wrongdoings other than directly derived from the Commandments but which affected the group's sense of righteousness or socially approved norms of conduct, in line with the principle of the sacralisation of the notion of justice/righteousness. Thus, tobacco smoking and playing cards,<sup>325</sup> or attempted deception of relatives,<sup>326</sup> were on certain occasions regarded as instances of insults to God.

323 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3995 [1742]; also, cf. Sucha demesne, p. 456 [1753].

324 The Magdeburg law was theoretically in force in the majority of villages in Lesser Poland; cf. L. Łysiak, 'Prawo i zwyczaj w praktyce małopolskich sądów wiejskich XV-XVIII wieku,' *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne*, Vol. 34, 1982, fasc. 2, p. 11.

325 Łącko, No. 666 [1728]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4177 [1756].

326 Świętoniowa, p. 47 [1729].



Some of the decisions taken by aldermen's courts in the countryside attest to quite a broad comprehension of religious principles that were underlying to social coexistence. Anna Matongowa was a thief from the demesne of Sucha, who in 1699 once stole a chest from Wojciech Bogdanek that contained some clothes plus "a stroke of saffron, seven diamonds, and one temple-pendant." The court naturally sentenced her exemplarily for recidivism and trespass against the God's commandment. The accuser was however ordered to offer to the church an equivalent of the diamonds he had lost to Anna, for albeit the former had obtained them legally as a bequest of Jan Kowalczyk, the court considered the that possession of such gems by a fellow villager generally exceeded the accepted limit. The gems were regarded as a peculiar evidence of dishonesty (of an unspecified sort), or perhaps sin, as it was not known "in what way, namely, have they been acquired, for no-one payeth with diamonds."<sup>327</sup>

Prominent in this latter case was the conviction that there exists a higher, supernatural level of justice which is not regulated by any human laws, and even the Decalogue is not directly applicable. Transgression against such ultimate justice was regarded as potentially dangerous in the religious realm. This is why the rural aldermen, when faced with an issue of this sort and deeply convinced that the act committed was adverse, ultimately ordered a reciprocation in the religious dimension by donating an offering to God of all the undeserved valuables – where none of the human laws would have applied.

It ought to be added that religious concepts had a critical role in maintaining and sanctioning the social hierarchy in the rural environment. God's designs stood at the root of the social stratification. Identification of the earthly order with the supernatural one led, in this respect, to the conviction that the skill of social conduct and acceptance of the community's arrangement was strictly correlated with the appropriate religious stance. Such reasoning was most expressly reflected in the statute for the villages of Krzyżownicy and Proszów, dated 1602: "First & fore most, what regards the glorie and the sservice of God. Every husbandman [with] his domestic sservants unnecessarie [at the given moment] shall uppon permeysion go to the churche of God, lissten to the Divine worde with dilligency and learne how he oughte to behave in respect of God, his supreme authoritie, allso [in respect of] the neighboure, and theretoo accordant

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327 Sucha demesne, pp. 39–42 (also, pp. 103–6) [1699]. A similar incident took place in Pieskowa Skała (cf. Pieskowa Skała, p. 74 [1632]), with the local court resolving that a certain Dębowa offered to the church the money she had earned from the sale of a stray cow which had turned up at her homestead.

organise his life entirely.<sup>328</sup> Among the prescriptive records in the region of Lesser Poland, a similar rule probably inspired the statute for the demesne of the Sucha dated 1696. The statute was inserted at the opening of the *Registry book of the castle court for the community of the demesne of Sucha*, a volume featuring ‘The Ten Commandments of God’ meticulously written down on its front page.<sup>329</sup> Such an insertion of the Decalogue was apparently an ideological declaration and clear guidance that the Commandments lay at the foundation of the law operating in Sucha. However, the very wording of the statute rarely referred to any of them. While crime was not its focus, the regulations extended to the social institutions of the Sucha demesne’s *gromadas*, economic and legal relationships among the peasants, as well as between the manor and the villagers. The Decalogue featured in a prominent place was an express reminder that the social organisation of the villages was religiously sanctioned, by the Word of the Lord; and observance of the rudimentary principles of Christian life was regarded as the foundation of sustainability and proper functioning of this order.<sup>330</sup>

The class-based division overlapped in the rural hierarchical system with the local arrangement of legal, economic, and personal relationships. The postulated obedience, loyalty, and respect for individuals of a higher societal position often coincided with actual dependence and serfdom. Hence, when describing the social hierarchisation prevalent in villages, the peasantry’s attitude towards the nobility and the clergy needs to be specified. In everyday routine, these relations were mostly typical of those between subordinate and superior. The nobleman with whom the peasants had contacts and communicated was usually the proprietor, leaseholder or administrator of the village, whereas the clergyman was the parson of their parish. Hence, the inter-estate relations overlapped with the very concrete systems of dependence and control. The religious ideas and concepts seem to have had a critical role in the sanctioning of the system. Religious arguments sufficed to give grounds for its existence, as it was set forth in item six of the statute for the villages in the estate of the Discalced Carmelite cloister in Czerna: disrespect towards the superiors constituted a gross misdemeanour before God, “for all the power and sovereignty [originates] from God.”<sup>331</sup> This

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328 Krzyżownicy and Proszów, p. 5 [1602].

329 Sucha castle, p. 1 [1696].

330 The text of the statute has been edited as: (i) W. Chomętowski, in *Materiały do dziejów rolnictwa w Polsce w XVI i XVII w.*, Warsaw 1876, pp. 412–16; (ii) S. Kutrzeba and A. Mańkowski, in *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, pp. 194–7.

331 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7403 [1672].

principle, which over the ages was the foundation of the functioning of all Christian societies, was commonly known to Lesser Poland's village residents in the early modern age, and was used, in the first place, in prescriptive acts and court decrees issued by, or under evident influence of, estate owners. Hence, it is difficult to assess the degree to which it actually informed the peasants' mindset, but as the arguments in question were in common use, their effect must have been certain.<sup>332</sup>

The sacralisation of obedience to superiors implied that trespasses against the village's owner were identified with going against the Commandments. Harm done to the lord was categorised separately among the crimes immediately after crimes against the Lord Himself. The 1602 statute for the villages of Krzyżowniki and Proszów thus determined the sequence of cases to be considered at *rug* court sessions: members of the *gromada* were supposed to "first and foremost, evvery thing what shouldst be knowne to ye, what evver might have been gainst God, therre after gainst the Lorde of youres," with any other types of case dealt with after these priority ones.<sup>333</sup> A similar idea was expressed in the *Obligations of the reeve of the village community in the demesne of Sucha* of 1752: any trespasses "where harm to God be the case; this same to be understood in respect of harm to the lord allso," were excluded from the jurisdiction of the local reeve.<sup>334</sup>

The rhetoric used in some singular verdicts in cases involving crimes against the village's owner often identified such instances unambiguously with misdemeanours against God. The accused became a 'rebellizant' ('rebel') disobedient towards God and towards his master.<sup>335</sup> It may be doubted whether the peasants commonly shared this opinion. In any case, the association between disobedience towards the superior and trespass against the Divine order was emphasised with use of rhetorical methods. In use was the arsenal of rural penalisation measures applied to criminals who broke God's Commandments. Verdicts handed down for trespasses against the lord of the estate usually included ecclesial penance – the measure traditionally applied with Decalogue criminals. To illustrate the point, Grzegorz Łukaszów of Kasina was sentenced in 1641 for a brawl with a village administrator to stand during four Masses locked

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332 Cf. the considerations of H. Madurowicz-Urbańska, 'Mentalność chłopów polskich w XVIII w. (w świetle suplik wsi królewskich i kościelnych)', *Sobótka*, Vol. 37, 1982, No. 3/4, p. 261.

333 Krzyżowniki and Proszów, p. 4 [1602].

334 Sucha castle, p. 536 [1752].

335 Ołpiny A, p. 35 [1640]; also, cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3922 [1702], 4706 [1726].

in an iron pillory called a *kuna*<sup>336</sup> at the parochial church of Skrzydlina while holding an axe in his hand.<sup>337</sup> Repentance of this kind sought not only to punish the convict through public ridicule and, in parallel, satisfying the insulted Divine majesty; it was also meant to ritually purify, as it were, the offender himself/herself. Employing such a measure to remedy disobedience against the manor was a practical expression of the sacralisation of the dependence relationship between the peasant and his master.

This type of relationship expanded very broadly. Punishing with ecclesial repentance and religious motivation of obedience to the manor extended to minor economic trespasses such as hole-and-corner trading in agricultural produce or breaking the taproom-related constraint. The religious argument employed in such cases was limited to the simple statement that “the remuneratory yield decreases therefor, and insult of God is occurrent.”<sup>338</sup>

The religious incentive for the peasantry’s respect for the clergy was essentially similar to the one underlying obedience towards the master. There were, however, certain characteristics caused by the special position of the clergyman in the rural community. These primarily included treating acts undermining the reliability of the priest, such as slander of inappropriate moral stance, as a grave sin.<sup>339</sup> Respect for the parson was also formed through the religious sanctions imposed for improper behaviour in his presence. Ecclesial penance was imposed on certain overly uninhibited or immodest misdeeds, otherwise tolerable as part of rural morality, manners or customs, if only the priest witnessed them.<sup>340</sup>

Another aspect of religiously motivated respect for the clergyman was anchored in his ritual and pastoral function. In the peasant universe of concepts, the priest belonged to the sphere of the sacred. On the local scale, the priest was the closest to God among the persons contacted personally by peasants and was responsible for the salvation of his sheep. Hence, the prevalent conviction had it that any sin committed by a parishioner was a personal insult to the parson.

336 A *kuna* was a wooden or iron framework with holes for the head and hands in which wrongdoers were locked so they could be publicly ridiculed. *Kunas* were usually installed at the gate of the church.

337 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3250 [1641]; also, cf. *ibid.*, No. 3457 [1692]; Trześcińów, Vol. 3, fol. 35 [1722].

338 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3668 [1748]; also, cf. *ibid.*, No. 3608 [1721]; Odrzechowa, fol. 13–13<sup>v</sup> [1725]; ASD, Vol. 2, pp. 241–2 [1746].

339 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4710 [1729]; Ołpiny B, fol. 18 [c. 1764]; also, see: Czukiew, Vol. 1, p. 303 [1656].

340 See, e.g., *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4021 [1744]; Łącko, No. 646 [1722].

Consequently, public apologies to the parish priest were occasionally imposed as an additional condition of fulfilling the punishment for a Decalogue crime.<sup>341</sup>

Religious sanctions of a similar sort were imposed upon the hierarchical relationships inside the group of peasants, most evidently in respect of the village's elders who held community offices. Characteristically, the theoretical arguments employed in such cases to substantiate the sacralisation of the dependence and control system were identical to those used for inter-estate contacts. When Katarzyna Kokoszczykowa slated in 1698 the 'official people' of Krowodrza, crying out "that the office is all swindlers, and she tucked up her skirt on her back to the contempt of the office," she was admonished by the court "that never again may she dare this and accept that all the superiority hath been established by God the Lord."<sup>342</sup> In 1703, the aldermen of the village community of Kosina passed a judgement on Jędrzej Blaz who, "holding the Divine commandments in disregard, which commandeth to have the elder ones, and particularly the superiors, in due honestie, ... hath dared with his mischievous tongue to impute at various times that the fore nominated legall reeve wasted the communitie's contributions upon liquor and mead."<sup>343</sup>

Disrespect and disobedience towards *gromada* officials and village elders was included under affronts to the Lord, and the perpetrator often had to do the ecclesial penance ordered by the court.<sup>344</sup> The conviction is also identifiable that one had to behave appropriately in the presence of village officials; the grounds for this precept were founded on the religious concepts. God's assistance was called for in such cases in the way it was done, for example in a 1664 decree passed the assessors of the village of Miejsce Piastowe, where an instance of 'unwary blurt' in the presence of the jury was subject to a punishment which "God and the court shall derive."<sup>345</sup>

341 Jazowsko, No. 18 [1678]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4365 [1698].

342 Ibid., No. 4365 [1698].

343 Ibid., No. 7025 [1703].

344 Ibid., No. 3577 [1717]; Zagórzany, p. 104 [1747]; Łącko, No. 867 [1753]; J. Latosiński, op. cit., p. 89 [1774].

345 Miejsce Piastowe, p. 87 [1664]; similarly with Andrzej Pierog, who banged on the table in the presence of the jury at Tuszów Narodowy, and was sentenced to pay fines to the church; Tuszów Narodowy, p. 156 [1741]. Also, cf. Golcowa, Vol. 2, pp. 64–5 [1669]; Wysoka A, pp. 90–1 [1721]. The most detailed known decree regarding conduct at the office comes from Kasina (with no trace of religious incentive, though): cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3105 [1629]. The statute for the villages of Świlcza and Woliczka read, for a change: "When the *rug* be in session or judges elected. . . they ought to. . . behave with the court like at the mass in the church, stand before the office, sit not,

The rules derived from the Decalogue were applied most directly when it came to ensuring the appropriate hierarchy in the family, the term being a broad concept that extended to an entire peasant farmstead. Many a village court's decree regarding family conflicts comprised an explanation like the one worded by the Łącko demesne court "taking into refflexion the second [*sic!*] commandment of the Lord: honour thy father and mother, [Jan Floryjańczyk] hath transgressed this and ought to be punished according to the description of the law of Maideburg [*sic!*]"<sup>346</sup>

The rural people seem to have identified themselves with the religious motivation behind the respect for parents extremely strongly compared to the other rules supporting the hierarchical relationships derived from the Fourth Commandment. In the context of an unproved suspicion of misdemeanour by Wojciech Kot, described as 'swiping a fist' at his mother, the court of Kasina issued a special decree stating: "Which forbid it God that a son like this would ever be in the communitie of Kasina, that he attempt at his mother or his father, then with out mercie give him to be judged by the law, his hand to be cut off."<sup>347</sup> In a similar case, the court of Olpiny resorted to an equally draconian punishment derived from the Magdeburg law, specifying that the cut-off hand ought to be wound around with hemp [i.e. a hemp string], poured with tar, and ignited.<sup>348</sup> In fact, no such amputations were carried out in rural areas; such threatening phrases, purely rhetorical, were mostly used to punish the severest crime (witchcraft, incest, or assassination) in order to intimidate the defendant, emphasise the severity of his or her trespass, and above all to show zeal in the eradication of acts severely affecting the order of the world established by God.

In the light of such glaring instances of violations of the Commandments, the punishment for defying parents had to comprise an extremely severe ecclesial penance. The aforementioned Jan Floryjańczyk was decreed that "in the church of Łącko on every Sunday of the Lent he lie prostrate, his arms out-stretched, in a cope, during holy masses, and on all the passions [the Lenten devotions] make the discipline [flagellation], in a cope."<sup>349</sup> Lying prostrate or kneeling in

take off the cap, appear singly, and make exhorting, chattering, muttering, and quarrelling not, what so ever;" cf. *Ustawa dla wsi Świlczy i Woliczki ...*, p. 10.

346 Łącko, No. 675 [1729]; also, cf. Jazowsko, No. 26 [1685]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3495 [1699], 6044 [1703]; ASD, Vol. 1, p. 403 [1731]; Rajbrot, p. 49 [1753]; Muszyzna demesne, Vol. 2, pp. 98–9 [1762].

347 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3337 [1649].

348 Olpiny B, fol. 17 [c. 1764].

349 Łącko, No. 675 [1729].

the church during a series of masses were usual punishments that appeared in similar verdicts.<sup>350</sup>

Respect for parents was associated with inheritance, a crucial factor in the sustainability of the social system in the countryside. Appropriate relations between parents and children were the prerequisite for parental blessing received upon transference of immovable property and were significant in the context of succession. Disturbance by children of the family system of dependencies, by brawls, arguments or even disobedience (lifestyle contrary to parents' expectations and similar) normally became the reason for disinheritance, fully respected by the *gromada*.<sup>351</sup> Model intergeneration relationships in a household were expected to be founded upon sustainable and simple religious principles: the 'honour thy father and mother' precept, and fear of God.<sup>352</sup> These two premises stood for a whole set of recommended family relationships. Their preservation and observance was a theoretical substantiation of claiming succession rights and of legitimate inheritance (so perceived by the peasants). Respect for the father and mother implied Divine blessing as well as a favourable attitude of the village community.<sup>353</sup>

Among the problems related to succession, the son taking the household over when his father was still alive but decrepit to a degree that he could no longer manage it, proved to be a particularly complex issue. Every such a case was an instance of conflict between responsibility and real power wielded by the master (the son, in this case), on the one hand, and the hierarchical family arrangement with the family's senior holding the top rank. Alleviation of any such conflict was fundamentally enabled by the religious arguments harnessed in the service of the preservation of the social system. Reference to the obligation to observe the Divine commandments was usually sufficient to ensure the expected minimum

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350 Barycz, Vol. 2, fol. 10 [1692]; Jazowsko, No. 38 [1694]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3545 [1706], 3554 [1710].

351 For example, Pieskowa Skała, p. 241 [1688]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3072 [1624], 7214 [1759].

352 See, e.g., the 1736 statute for the village of Ptaszkowa obliging the peasants to "send their children to the holy church, spare no punishment, so that they learn fear of God, for which the Lord shall be blessing, allways;" *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4162 [1736].

353 See, e.g., Wola Rzędzińska, fol. 62 [1598]; Rogi, fol. 356<sup>v</sup> [1621]; Albigowa, Vol. 4, p. 43 [c. 1746]; Piątkowa, p. 60 [1766].

respect for the parent. It was extremely rare that a court registry would take notice of any drastic conflict involving such threads.<sup>354</sup>

In spite of references made to the Divine order, the actual social position of a father who had transferred the farmstead to his son and took advantage of the so-called life-estate rights was clearly declining. A unique method to solve this particular problem, based on the authority of the religion, was applied in 1726 by the court of Kasina: the patrimony was divided between the Nowak brothers, Wawrzyniec and Jan, “with the condition, however, that the father, in accord with the Divine law, as long as he liveth, keep superioritie over the both of his sons and the division of these grounds, remaining the life-time husband-man.”<sup>355</sup> However, there is no trace to testify that such social experiments reappeared. The Fourth Commandment worked well as far as the appropriate attitude towards the parent enjoying the life-estate privilege was concerned, but not as well in cases of artificial superiority over the farm- and house-keeping son.<sup>356</sup>

#### 4. Social harmony as religious value

Religious elements accompanied peasants in all acts and actions that had to do with their social life. The religious character of the celebration of the *rug* court has been described above. However, religious symbolism and sacred message was employed not only with such group acts of conscience cleansing. In fact, any and all official relationships between members of a *gromada* essentially referred to the Divine order and devotional sentiments. Notably, the conciliatory significance of religious elements was of high importance, as is evident in the customary references to the powerfulness of ecclesial ceremonies and God's

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354 The most obvious in this context is a record from Tyniec: a local resident named Antoni Kędziora expelled his father Jędrzej from the home when the old man could work no more; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7260 [1782].

355 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3622 [1726].

356 The picture of social hierarchy expressed in the court decree for the village of Ołpiny, in the context of a case of immoral conduct by a certain Jan Koziół, is characteristic. The culprit never improved his behaviour despite being “admonished by his father once, by the law the next time, by the Lord and even the Shepherd the very next time, and spiritually punished. . . having proved disobedient to the law, the manor and the Church, he committed the same thing disdainful as before.” This marks the consecutive levels of the obedience hierarchy in the rural community, beginning with the parental authority, through the rural elderly, up to the manor and the parson. The last of these seems to have been the utmost instance because of the moral character of the case in question. Cf. Ołpiny B, fol. 25 [1778].



mercy when it came to blood money. Pardoning the assassin by the family of the victim was based not simply on a certain sum of money offered and accepted in reward: apparently, no less important was the repentance and sincere Christian regret of the criminal – to the comfort of the killed man's soul (ensured by the Mass requested and celebrated to this end) and to reverse God's wrath against the murderer.<sup>357</sup>

Religious motivation also appears in amicable resolutions of disputes. The ritual of *rug* permeated with devotional symbolism was applied, for example, in 1693 in Łukawiec, in order to alleviate arguments and disputes between neighbours that had occurred partly because the *rug* had not been convened locally for nine years.<sup>358</sup> The 1719 case of Walanty Młynarz versus Woyciech Uliasz, in Rogi, for their having “reciprocally declared [i.e. accused each other of] unjustifiable things” was settled amicably only when “God hath given them Holy Spirit into their hearts.”<sup>359</sup> In Ołpiny, those involved in a cardsharp brawl at Urban Pyzik's, when taken to the court, “having re-considered their conscience and offered them selves to God the Lord as the guiltie ones, all remitted one another for the sake of love of the Lord and apologised to one another at the court.”<sup>360</sup>

Another act of religious significance which was broadly employed by peasants in public relations was blessing. Transmission of God's blessing was a ritual element of the customs related to inheritance and transfer of land. Blessing also functioned as part of community celebrations, betrothal, and other public ceremonies.<sup>361</sup>

In official contacts between peasants another doubtlessly religious measure was resorted to; namely, a sworn oath,<sup>362</sup> applied in a variety of areas of peasant activity, primarily in the legal field. All the rural officials had to take an oath or vow – whether a reeve, alderman or assessor – thereby undertaking to fulfil

357 For example, Krzyżownicy and Proszów, p. 10 [1563]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3799 [1697], 4351 [1585], 5075 [1576]; Trześniów, Vol. 3, fol. 24 [1697]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 53 [1753]; also, cf. K. Dobrowolski, *Wróżda i pojednanie w sądownictwie polskich wsi beskidowych XVI i XVII w.*, Lwów 1924, p. 29.

358 Łukawiec, p. 5 [1693].

359 Rogi, fol. 494<sup>v</sup> [1719].

360 Ołpiny B, fol. 13 [c. 1760].

361 For example, Świeciechów, fol. 84–84<sup>v</sup> [1695].

362 J. Rafacz, ‘Wpływ duchowieństwa na stosunki prawne wiejskie,’ *Przegląd Powszechny*, Vols. 143–144, 1919, pp. 30–1.

their duties appropriately.<sup>363</sup> In a number of villages, all the members of the local community swore an oath one after the other during the *rug* session, thereby proving their innocence and unawareness of the others' offences.<sup>364</sup> A vow was also useful in the adjudication of disputable and criminal claims, as proof of the convict's guilt or, more frequently, innocence.<sup>365</sup> The measure was moreover used as a token of warranty: in cases where the court was incapable of proving the defendant's guilt where the charge was rather serious and not groundless, the guilty party was decreed to abjure, together with several trustworthy men who would have agreed to testify to his benefit. For example, when Jan Wilczek of Rogi was accused in 1697 of practicing sorcery with use of a magical bone, and the court could not find sufficient evidence to prove it, he was instructed to "foreswear three-some with persons worthy of trust upon the form as [= stating that] 'never have I utilised this bone for any sorcerie.'"<sup>366</sup> It appears that a vow could also have been taken at the request of the neighbours. In effect, every peasant was forced to submit a *jurament* at least a few times in his or her lifetime, as tradition required.

Oath-taking was not an alien custom to the rural areas of Lesser Poland; merely transplanted from the municipal laws, as testified by the *gromada* aldermen's fairly frequent instructions to take a *jurament* as well as the recorded spontaneous instances of peasants resorting to this very measure in the absence of the court. Mikołaj Cebula, a resident of the Jazowsko demesne, once had his hut burnt down because of somebody's reckless dealing with fire whilst he was out; the gossip among the villagers pointed to a certain Marcin Pomiećło as the guilty one. On that very evening, Marcin reportedly smoked tobacco at Cebula's household. However, not inclined to accuse the man on the basis on unverified rumours, Mikołaj asked him directly "whethere thou have been, my neighebour, at my hamlett on that evening, when it burned, *respondit* [i.e. replied Marcin]: 'thou probably shall say that I have burnt thee up'; and, fallen on his

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363 For example, Pieskowa Skąła, pp. 70–1 [1632]; Żywiec demesne, No. 112 [1700]; Czarna, pp. 215 [1712], 221 [1713], 263 [1723]; Golcowa, Vol. 2, p. 439 [1738].

364 For example, Klimkówka demesne, Nos. 691 and 692 [1668]; Łukawiec, p. 5 [1693]; LNB, The Ossolineum Collection, ms 2403, fol. 5 [1720].

365 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 724 [1524] and 3858 [1574]; Czukiew, Vol. 1, pp. 68–9 [1620]; Golcowa, Vol. 2, pp. 27 and 30–1 [1663]; Tarnów, No. 60 [1756].

366 Rogi, fol. 446 [1697]; also, cf. Golcowa, Vol. 2, pp. 27 and 31 [1663]; Odrzechowa, fol. 6 [1723].

knees, his fingers placed onto the cross, quoth he the following: ‘I doe sweare I was there not.’<sup>367</sup>

The ritual of oath was heavy with religious references. Firstly, the oath-taker was supposed to observe a complete fast on the day he or she was to swear – identically as in the event of receiving the Sacrament of Communion.<sup>368</sup> Confession was often required prior to the oath, apart from participation in a series of church ceremonies. In 1747 in the locality of Łąka, the demesne administrator required that the peasants litigating for a few years about a dowry “go to the church for a Holy Mass, and make the confession, so as to insult the Lord in vain not, of] which the priests being then at the church talked and gave an example around the oath, how great a thing the oath is, that [otherwise, if not observed or properly taken], you shalt lead youre souls to perdition.”<sup>369</sup> The Mass, as it seems, was celebrated on this particular occasion, and the priests made efforts to mediate between the feuding parties, taking advantage of the sacral properties of the venue and the religious ambience of the moment. In Łukawiec, immediately before the *jurament*, the oath-takers (as the witnesses) solemnly said their prayers, ‘according to the custom.’<sup>370</sup>

The oath-taker would swear kneeling before a rood:<sup>371</sup> the symbol of the Cross was indispensable. If there was no crucifix available, it sufficed, as the aforementioned Marcin Pomietło did, to ‘kneel and cross one’s fingers.’<sup>372</sup> Characteristic gestures accompanied the ceremony: kissing the rood,<sup>373</sup> rising two fingers of the right hand<sup>374</sup> and beating the breast.<sup>375</sup> The uttered form also contained many religious elements. A typical *jurament* of a rural official was worded thus: “I, [name], swear to the Lord, God the one in the Holy Trinity, and to the Most Holy Virgin Mary, and to All the Saints, as being appointed to this office, I shall ought to fairly recognise the truth with rich as well as indigent persons, with relatives

367 Jazowsko, No. 121 [1738]; also, cf. Tuszów Narodowy, p. 53 [1687].

368 LNB, The Ossolineum Collection, ms 2403, fol. 4<sup>v</sup> [1720].

369 Łąka, p. 15 [1747].

370 Łukawiec, p. 23 [1684].

371 For example, BPAU/PAN, ms 1945, p. 111 [1611]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4511 [1663]; Tuszów Narodowy, p. 53 [1687], Łukawiec, p. 23 [1684].

372 Jazowsko, No. 121 [1738]; also, see Czukiew, Vol. 6, p. 24 [1703]; ANK, *Księgi Grodzkie Sądeckie* 168, p. 259 [1747].

373 For example, Łukawiec, p. 5 [1693].

374 For example, LNB, The Ossolineum Collection, ms 2403, fol. 4 [1720]; Czarna, pp. 250 [1720], 263 [1723].

375 For example, Czarna, p. 221 [1713]; also, cf. Łukawiec, p. 21 [1699].

as well as aliens, not ever being seduced by any corruption whatsoever, which should I unjustly swear, do punish me, God, my Lord, on the soul, on the body and on all my modest belongings, do punish me down to the ninth generation. And should I have justly sworn, then so help me God, my Lord, and His Holiest Passion. Amen.<sup>376</sup> More fanciful were the oaths imposed by courts as a token of innocence. One such wording, recorded for Mogiła in 1739, went as follows: "I, Tomasz, [and] I, Stanisław swear now to God Almighty, the One in the Holy Trinity, the Holiest Virgin Mary, and all the Saints that neither do we know nor have heard who might have stolen them, nor did we steal them our selves, nor do we have any arrangement upon any body who ever should have stolen this money from Matyasz Daniel of Niebieszczany, and we do so truly swear, so may the flesh be severed from our bones, may the blood be spoiled inside us, may we lose God's grace for ever, community with the saints elected in heavens, and receive company with devils in hell, so help us God, our Lord, the one in Holy Trinity, etc."<sup>377</sup>

Oaths and vows were given enormous attention in the rural environment; it was believed that perjurers would be punished by God in their body and soul, and condemned to eternal damnation.<sup>378</sup> The argument of the destruction of the perjurer's soul often reappeared in encouragements to prevent the oath. When in 1701 a certain Mr Sworzeń intended to swear before the court of the demesne of Jazowsko that his brother, accused of having stolen '*numero 2* of fitches' of pork fat, was guilty, it was prevented by his wife, who shouted at the court-of-law, "evil man, be mindfull of God the Lord [and] kill thy soul not, for he had the cut of pork from the town."<sup>379</sup> In 1756, Józef Bogdanik from Stryżawa owned up to perjury in an inheritance case, "fearing the temporary Divine punishment on the body and likewise on the soul." The penalty administered to him by the castle court sought, in the first place, to turn back the anger of God: "for release from eternal punishment... 100 lashes with twigs and for supplicating the Divine Majesty, over five holy Masses before the Passion lay prostrate, arms outstretched, give the Rosary Confraternity seven zloty for light, so that Our Lady begged her son for the abolishment of the eternal penalty deserved in this very sin."<sup>380</sup>

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376 LNB, The Ossolineum Collection, ms 2403, fol. 3 [1720]; also, cf. Pieskowa Skała, pp. 70–1 [1632]; Żywiec demesne, No. 112 [1700].

377 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3819 [1739].

378 For example, Sucha demesne, p. 456 [1753]; also, cf. Kargowa, No. 174 [1663].

379 Jazowsko, No. 54 [1701]; also, cf. Jarosław, p. 90 [1734]; Łąka, p. 15 [1747].

380 Sucha demesne, p. 456 [1753]; also, cf. Czukiew, Vol. 7, pp. 43–4 and 81 (reversely [1719–20]).

The sort of Divine punishment to the body that Józef might have feared is indicated by a written record from the demesne of Klimkówka, dated 1702. Suspected of witchcraft, a certain Olena Baniaska induced Danko, the hereditary headman of the village of Klimkówka, “that he swear in respect of her that she was not a witch and knew no wizardry. Which the decedent, not able to rellinquish, did and swore, right a week afterwards he deceased on this occasion.” Obviously, this was interpreted as proof of the supposed witch’s guilt.<sup>381</sup>

It was therefore little surprise that many a peasant was terribly afraid of any oath-taking, since not only the safety of the body but also salvation of the soul was at stake. In 1672 in Czerna, the court ordered Stanisław Sroka to swear as a witness in a case of battery against Urban Szczygieł of Raclawice perpetrated by Stanisław Małodobry of Paczółtowice. After he heard what the wording of the oath was to be, Sroka “was not willing to accede and ascertain it with conscience before the crucifix, being summoned severall a time, not ever wanted to do this nowisse, saying: ‘Swear shall I not, there would be no thing to come out of this for me.’”<sup>382</sup> A certain Legierski from Żywiec Land could not even be forced to swear for his own benefit. He had accused Bartek Zwardoń of stealing a goat. For lack of evidence, the court ordered him to perform a *jurament*, but Legierski did not want to follow the decree, nor to admit Bartek to adjure. As a result, the accusation was rejected, and Legierski had moreover to compensate the alleged thief for the fortnight the latter spent in prison.<sup>383</sup>

Occasionally, however, the court itself would prevent the already-prepared parties to the conflict from swearing the oath, recognising for example that excessive ardour in their striving for a *jurament* might have to do with a defiance towards it and potential perjury – especially when both parties declared their readiness.<sup>384</sup> Some verdicts in cases of the sort were Solomon-like decisions indeed. For instance, the court for peasants in the town of Jarosław, in recognising the case of Wojciech Kędzierski vs. Michał Pęczkiewicz for a theft of 16 zloty and 18 grosz, found that “therefore, we would not like to admit an oath in respect of a minor sum, affront to God and killing of their souls for to prevent, recognised have we that you shall not be a lord with the half of the money that you have taken, and so you too a needy who should abandon; and thus the actor ought to

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381 Klimkówka demesne, No. 1156 [1702].

382 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7407 [1672]; also, cf. Jedlnia, fol. 54 [1766].

383 Żywiec demesne, No. 660 [1771].

384 For example, Łąka, pp. 15–18 [1747]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, p. 268 [1759]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 2, p. 42 [1741].

abandon one half and the defendant ought to give the other half, and both of the parties should alike be contented.”<sup>385</sup>

The feuding parties that strove to take an oath were most of the time encouraged by courts to settle the matter in a conciliatory fashion, so as to prevent an insult to God. In a conflict that once occurred in Łąka, the local clergymen and the administrator of the demesne, a certain nobleman called Gidlowski, became involved as mediators persuading the parties not to resort to the oath.<sup>386</sup> Rural courts generally used oath-taking as a last resort, as if any vow were a potentially dangerous and needless infringement of the sacred. As the arrangement between Tomasz Kołtun and Adam Olbięcki provided, “an oath is a difficult thing, and in fear of the Lord” it is better to forgo it.<sup>387</sup> Most peasants shared this approach and satisfied themselves merely with the readiness of the opposing party to swear an oath. In 1663, the court in Markowa, following the imputation from Lurencz Kudem and Jakiel Kuzniar, ordered that a certain Zembroń abjure five-some proving that it was not him to have caused the suicide of his wife (the accusers’ mother-in-law). “Being ready for which, having squared the accounts with his conscience, appear he did with those persons before the law, with which the [opponent] party was contented, how ever the court ordered that, having kneeled with those persons by the statue [i.e. crucifix], he confirm it; to do which he was willing, and hath allready kneeled down; seeing which, the party remitted the same one the oath for the sake of a better and more certain friendship betwixt them.”<sup>388</sup>

The concern shared by peasants in respect of oath-swearing meant that it occasionally sufficed for the court to threaten a *jurament* to bring about an arrangement. With this method used in 1662 in Bielcza, in a dispute over one-and-a-half (Polish) rod of land, the respondents immediately consented to return one rod to the applicant party, to the latter’s satisfaction.<sup>389</sup> Albeit quite common and frequent in the legal system and social custom of Lesser Poland’s countryside, oath-taking was for peasants always a nerve-wracking act of contact with the sphere of the divine. Additionally, it was one of the very few religious ceremonies

385 Jarosław, p. 90 [1734].

386 Łąka, p. 15 [1747]; also, cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7054 [1662]; Piątkowa, p. 122 [1671].

387 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7054 [1662]; also, cf. Równe, fol. 86 [1737].

388 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4511 [1663]; similarly, BPAU/PAN, ms 1945, p. 111 [1611]; Czukiew, Vol. 1, p. 77 [1620], Vol. 4, p. 47 [1682]; Jazowsko, No. 194 [1748]; also, cf. Nowogród, Vol. 3, p. 151 [1702].

389 Bielcza, fol. 24<sup>v</sup>–25 [1662]; also, cf. Trześniów, Vol. 2, fol. 50<sup>v</sup> [1623].

in which individual peasants played a central role; other such ceremonies were normally connected with the Sacraments and other church ceremonies, such as nuptials, preparation for demise, (less popularly) Confirmation, and churching (involving females only); hence, possibly, the importance attached to the ceremony under discussion.

## 5. The role of religion-related individuals in the life of village communities

The importance of religion in the social life of peasantry was also reflected in the role played in in-village relationships by individuals linked to religion. The parish priest or parson and the curate [*wikary*] clearly enjoyed a special position, owed to the status earned within the faithful community based on theological premises and to the parishioners' expectations of their pastor. Let us mention at this point that, in spite of the general conviction that it was the clergy to state and enforce the requirements for the faithful, priests also faced the challenge of meeting the requirements and expectations of the lay parishioners.<sup>390</sup> Situations in which a village community undertook steps to discipline a parson who failed to satisfy their religious and ritual needs, and what these steps were like, has already been described above. A parallel can be drawn here with the period's relationships between the parishioners and the clergy in rural Orthodox and, subsequently, Uniate parishes in the eastern and southern outskirts of Lesser Poland. To give an example, in 1584 pope Piotr and his descendants were given the hereditary possession of the presbytery and the land belonging to it by the hereditary headman of the village of Hańczowa, called Fiedor. The condition was that the pope and each of his successors "shall be a worthie servant of Godd and the communitie;" should, however, "he fail to be a worthie servant, thenn the community] shall be mightie to move him from this popecie of his."<sup>391</sup> The view that a local clergyman is a servant of God as well as of the *gromada* was never phrased – at least definitely never written down – in a like way by Roman Catholic peasants. However, it does seem to have been rather close to the idea, prevalent among peasants, of the social role of the religious functions of clergymen. Such a

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390 See, e.g., K. Luria, *Territories of Grace. Cultural Change in the Seventeenth-Century Diocese of Grenoble*, Berkeley 1991, p. 76 ff.

391 Hańczowa, Wysowa, and Blechnarka, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> [1584]. The *gromada* of the nearby Wysowa entered, in the same year, into a similar arrangement with pope Jurko; see *ibid.*, fol. 30 [1584]; also, cf. Tyrawa Solna, fol. 135 [1675].

stance would have not been contrary to the theory of priesthood in the Catholic Church; it essentially highlighted one of the aspects of ministry.

Apart from religious functions, the priest in the countryside fulfilled a number of social functions as well. His importance in this field was derived from his high authority as a priest, and from his knowledge, skills and competences, unrivalled from the peasant's perspective. For the *gromada*, the most practical among them was writing and reading. The parson or the curate often acted as scribes of the documents issued by rural offices.<sup>392</sup> An extreme case in point is the registry book of the village community of Staszkówka, which, with the decreased importance of rural self-government, became an economic registry of the parish church and the parson's notebook. But even where the rural office would hire a professional scribe (in most cases invited from a town), the priest remained the only one who in a matter of urgency could compile the demanded document, such as the last will of a moribund person.

Owing to his high position in the village, the priest was a sought-after witness to civil-law contracts or legacies.<sup>393</sup> It was the clergyman who was addressed for financial assistance when the entire *gromada* was affected by a crisis.<sup>394</sup> The conviction of extensive knowledge and deep wisdom of the priest meant that peasants sought advice from him when making their decisions and in other disputable situations. The problems in respect of which peasants sought assistance from priests were most diverse indeed. Urban Dziergas, a resident of Żywiec Land, requested advice from priests Waxman, Martynski, and Raczkowicz about whether it was worthwhile to initiate proceedings for the return of half of the farmland to which he had proximity.<sup>395</sup> Jadwiga Mikołajska from the vicinity of Nowa Góra visited, together with her daughter Cecylia, a certain 'worthy priest in Kraków' to seek advice on where to look for the money that had once been buried by her late brother.<sup>396</sup> The *gromada* of Świętoniowa requested their parson, the Rev. Jakub Radliński, for guidance about what to do with a notorious thief who had been caught redhanded.<sup>397</sup>

The high status enjoyed by Catholic priests in rural communities did not mean that they lived in stark separation from their environment. Underpaid curates

392 S. Grodziski, op. cit., p. 118.

393 For example, Klimkówka, fol. 283 [1625]; Świątniki, fol. 53<sup>v</sup> [1694]; Olszówka, fol. 20 [1695]; Skotniki, pp. 67–8 [1715].

394 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7096 [1603]; AAPrz, ms 160, fol. 22–23<sup>v</sup>.

395 Żywiec demesne, No. 150 [1710].

396 Nowa Góra B, pp. 37–9 [1681].

397 BC, ms 2066, pp. 46–7 [1741].



replacing non-residing parsons, or parsons active with poorly endowed rural churches, shared concerns similar to those of the peasants, were involved in local relations, and established diverse ties with their parish, some of them engendering extraordinary sympathy from their parishioners. While declarative attachment to the parson was plainly a standard in the available historical records, there are records indicative of spontaneous and personal sentiments among the peasants towards devoted priests. For instance, a certain Matys Kalatka from Świeciechów transferred to local curate Rev. Wojciech Tomkowicz, in a testament, a chestnut horse, “stipulating for himself, however, that if death come upon the present reverend curate, that very same [horse] be appropriated not by an other priest but instead sold and allotted to the edifice of the church.”<sup>398</sup> The donor thus overtly distinguished the Rev. Tomkowicz whilst showing distrust towards his possible successor.

Clergymen were involved in local relationships in a variety of ways. A certain Rev. Krzykowski was locally noted for unsuccessful efforts to associate marriages among peasants.<sup>399</sup> Some priests became embroiled in local conflicts so deeply that they would refuse confession to either of the conflicting parties (or were induced to do so).<sup>400</sup> In Rajbrot, Rev. Wijakowski proactively joined a conspiracy against the community scribe Franciszek Babraiowicz, advising his foes, compiling *puncta* against him, and together with the peasants: “fomented and inebriated” his wife, “all this to the doom of this man.”<sup>401</sup> Evidently, the relationship between the village’s parson and his parishioners might at times have been a far cry from the official position of impartial pastor.

Church attendants also played diverse social roles in the rural community. This particular group essentially consisted of two types, based on the education criterion: one formed of organists and *klechas* (under-clerks), the latter term generally denoting would-be priests serving as attendants, teachers, cantors, etc.; the other, of tollers, gravediggers, and the like. In the rural parishes of Lesser Poland in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, usually one and the same man acted as the organist or cantor and teacher. Parish schools did not function with

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398 Świeciechów, fol. 24 [1630]; similarly, Trześniów, Vol. 3, fol. 127<sup>v</sup> [1783–4]. Also, cf. Czermino, fol. 174–175<sup>v</sup> [1666], where a clergyman entered into an eschatological property-related arrangement (typical for family-like relationships) with Wojciech Sikora.

399 ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 270<sup>v</sup> [1756].

400 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4693 [1721]; Nowa Góra H, p. 15 [1752]; Rajbrot, p. 66 [1754].

401 Rajbrot, p. 66 [1754]; also, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 19–20 [1751].

every single rural church; the existing ones usually had a few pupils each. Hence, maintaining a teacher as a separate post made no sense. The function was therefore usually entrusted to the organist;<sup>402</sup> or, conversely, the skills commanded by a teacher were normally sufficient to arrange the music for church services. Normally, the larger and more affluent the parish, the more numerous and differentiated was the staff employed in it.

Apart from fulfilling their teaching and 'artistic' duties, the organist and the *rector scholae* took an active part in the organisation of the parish's religious life: they arranged processions, funerals, and other church celebrations to the degree they enjoyed the parson's trust. Not infrequently did it fall upon them to repeat the prayers and songs of piety and devotion on Sunday forenoons.<sup>403</sup> In consequence of the organists' and under-clerks' active participation in the liturgy, peasants requested them to render for them paraliturgical services whose nature was at times magical, or to provide ecclesial vessels and other implements to be used in superstitious practices. Item No. 18 of the constitutions of a 'general synod of the submontane under-clerks,' being a satirical literary portrayal, was worded thus: "That nonne ever dare to give to witches any wax, fringes or tassels, baptismal water from the church, moss from the roof, cadaverous bones, rust from the bells, save for the holy water, aspersorium, herbs, artemisia; for they use all these things for possessions to be spoiled, for marriage to be rendered loathsome, for missies, and allso younglings, to be sprinkled. Likewisse, it is not seemly to give the stole to the pregnant for enlacing. Never admit looking at oneself in the baptismal-font for the sake of jaundice."<sup>404</sup>

Apart from religious functions, the organist's and teacher's role in the village community was founded upon the skill of reading and writing and on the

402 A. Zapart, op. cit., pp. 178–83; also, see Limanowa B, p. 208 [1644].

403 As per a 1761 charter for the *organaria* (post of the organist) of Starogród, the organist was supposed to "sing on every Sunday [and] on every holy day at ordinary hours, expressing together with the people the rosary, the songs, the Confession of the Holly Faith, and the other ordinary songs in the after noon, the prayers for the souls of the deceased, upon a separate . . . sollution from the parishioners [of] eightt Prussian zloty per liturgy-of-the-hours, playing at the hours;" "toll for the prayers every day, keep all the paintings and church equipments, and all the church, in due spruceness;" "teach the children and the parishioners . . . the Fear of the Lord, catechisms, and reading;" and so on; cf. ASD, Vol. 9, fol. 266<sup>v</sup>–268<sup>v</sup> [1761].

404 'Synod klechów podgórskich,' in *Polska komedia rybaltowska*, ed. by K. Badecki, Lwów 1931, pp. 169–70; cf. C. Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature. Updated Edition*, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London 1983, pp. 103–4.

authority connected with this knowledge. Such authority was not at all comparable to that enjoyed by the parson; however, as the peasants' relations with the organist or teacher were less constrained than those with the priest, their daily practical value was perhaps even greater. The organist or the under-clerk usually maintained deeper or more familiar relationships with the village's elders, and customarily acted as intermediaries between the *gromada* and the parson. Due to their abilities and skills, they often functioned as the community's scribes, thus assisting the village's administrative and legal life and, presumably, gaining excellent awareness of the social and financial relations among the peasants.<sup>405</sup> Their knowledge, based on a relevant sophistication and authority of ecclesial official, would have also made them efficient mediators and schemers. While the records are tacit about these aspects, it is quite improbable that organists/under-clerks were more abstemious than the parsons themselves as far as engagement in local conflicts was concerned.<sup>406</sup>

The other church assistants, such as tollers,<sup>407</sup> and gravediggers were considered by the peasants to be the parson's 'servants' or 'retainers,' which usually reflected the reality.<sup>408</sup> Although they did enjoy certain privileges related to their position,<sup>409</sup> the *gromada* would have not hesitated to 'sort them out' with

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405 See, e.g., *Ustawa dla wsi Świlczy i Woliczki ...*, p. 2; Gać, Vol. 2, p. 27 [1614]; Barycz, Vol. 2, fol. 3 [1650]; Husów, p. 30 [1664]; Golcowa, Vol. 2, pp. 97 [1673], 263 [1696], 293 [1701]; Raniżów, fol. 27 [1705]; Markowa, p. 743 [1724].

406 The role of organists in the *gromada*'s internal relationships is attested by, e.g. a record in the registry book of the court of the village of Rogi in the case of an argument at the church, with the following hierarchy of mediators appearing: the priest, the organist, the churchwardens. See Rogi, fol. 461 [1705].

407 Organist or under-clerk occasionally tolled the bells himself, as an extra activity. The following passage deals with specialised bell-tollers only.

408 A written contract between the *gromada* of Wysoka and a local gravedigger, Grzegorz Jaworski, has survived. The community was to furnish him, at its own expense, with a spade and an axe, and promise to beseech the manor for a dwelling for him; all the same, they refer him "to the disposal and government of Rev. the parson, whoever might be for the time." See Wysoka A, pp. 70–1 [1708].

409 For example, in 1708, the parson of Rychwałd, Rev. Andrzej Pluciński, forbade bell-ringing in the churches since the administrator of the demesne had coerced the tollers to do the villein service, though they had been released from this duty before then. "Because of this, only the ave-bell was rung, albeit this only on the greatest feast-days, for the service, and thereby it has occurred like in Turchia [i.e. Turkey], where it is not seemly for Christeans to toll," as commented by A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia. . .*, p. 322 [1708].

a birch-rod if the parson proved unable to bring them to heel himself.<sup>410</sup> Due to their access to the ecclesial vessels and other equipment, and contact with dead bodies (on a professional basis, as with gravediggers), the attendants played an important part in the peasants' superstitious ideas and practices.<sup>411</sup>

Although fulfilling various services to the church, the churchwarden (Latin *vitricus*; Polish *witryk*) was not part of the 'retinue'.<sup>412</sup> Like the other village officials, a churchwarden was elected for the post, any such election having been confirmed by the parson.<sup>413</sup> A parish usually had two, occasionally three, *witryks*. Whereas their main tasks included collecting the church's dues and managing the parish's expenditure, their major prerogative was holding the keys to the second lock of the church's money-box (the parson held the key to the first). This gave the *gromada* some oversight of the parsonage's expenditure. On the other hand, the duty was incumbent on the churchwardens to enforce the financial liabilities with respect to the church, and hence their responsibilities were often limited to those of an economic clerk assisting the parson. The functioning of the churchwarden's office was a standard at parishes in the Dioceses of Krakow and Przemyśl in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and visitators ordered that a *vitricus* be elected in those few parishes where there had been none yet or the position was vacant.<sup>414</sup>

In recognition of the churchwardens' merits for the financial economy and maintenance of the parish, they enjoyed a number of privileges, including holding the keys to the church and the money-box, and occupying a privileged seat during services at church. Those *witryks* who died while in office had the right to a free-of-charge funeral in the church or on the cemetery.<sup>415</sup> The function

410 For example, Rajbrot, p. 129 [1798]; also, cf. a decree of the court of Włosienica, in Włosienica, No. 3 [1782].

411 BO, ms 1444, p. 51; *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae...*, No. 42 [1662]; 'Synod klechów podgórskich', pp. 169–70.

412 See S. Sołtyszewski, 'Geneza instytucji witrykusów w polskim ustawodawstwie synodalnym,' *Prawo Kanoniczne*, R. 2, 1959, No. 1–2, pp. 418–419; cf. T. Nowicki, *Ministri ecclesiae. Służba kościelna i witrycy w diecezji włocławskiej w XVIII wieku*, Lublin 2011.

413 S. Sołtyszewski, 'Powolywanie witrykusów w polskim ustawodawstwie synodalnym,' *Prawo Kanoniczne*, Yr. 2, 1959, No. 3–4, pp. 348–50; cf. Raniżów, fol. 47<sup>v</sup> [1689]; Rogi, fol. 445 [1697]; BC, ms 2147, p. 81; AAPrz, ms 167, fol. 83<sup>v</sup>.

414 See, e.g., AAPrz, ms 158, p. 2038.

415 S. Sołtyszewski, 'Powolywanie witrykusów ...,' p. 357; S. Sołtyszewski, 'Prawa i obowiązki witrykusów w polskim ustawodawstwie synodalnym,' *Prawo Kanoniczne*, Yr. 3, 1960, No. 1–2, pp. 263–71.

led to prestige among the peasant community and so the local elders, including incumbent reeves and aldermen, willingly applied for the post. This was quite in line with the Church's policy: sedate and circumspect individuals were certainly preferred, especially if they enjoyed authority in their milieu.<sup>416</sup> They were occasionally required to set a good example of piety for the others to follow, by frequently confessing and receiving Holy Communion.<sup>417</sup>

As has been remarked, the churchwardens played an important part for the *gromada* as they oversaw the church's expenses of funds made up from the parishioners' contributions. The care about the condition of the church building and its equipment, imposed on them as a duty, reinforced in the peasants a sense of responsibility for their shrine. A *witryk* was furthermore supposed to enforce the pecuniary contributions, tributes and other dues to the benefit of the church; hence, he would often appear in legal registers to acknowledge overdue payments, reconcile the repayment of debts and confirm the receipt of willed bequests. The custom of making bequests to the church meant that the churchwardens assisted at times as witnesses to the dying individual's last will. This practice might also have had to do with their high position in the rural community, since 'credible' – that is, prestige-endowed – individuals were called to act as last-will witnesses.<sup>418</sup>

The custody exercised by the *witryk* over the church's finance meant that they administered the areas or aspects of the church's economic activity which were of importance for the rural economy. They were responsible for the distribution of the offerings donated by the faithful in the form of produce,<sup>419</sup> dealt with the distribution of 'church cows'<sup>420</sup> and with the sale and lease of land bequeathed to the church in last wills and testaments.<sup>421</sup> Their connections with the church and their work for it made the *vitrici* influential and even more prestigious in their environment; although, on the other hand, they were expected to act in the

416 S. Sołtyszewski, 'Powoływanie witrykusów ...', pp. 352–3; also, cf. Ranizów, fol. 47<sup>v</sup> [1689].

417 AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, p. 79.

418 For example, Gać, Vol. 1, p. 173 [1573]; Klimkówka, fol. 212 [1590]; Miejsce Piastowe, pp. 210–11 [1604]; Limanowa B, p. 142 [1626]; Kąkolówka, Vol. 1, p. 81 [1632]; Markowa, p. 739 [1720].

419 AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, p. 79.

420 ANK, Księgi Grodzkie Bieckie 171, p. 1472 [1624]; cf. J. Półwiartek, 'Tak zwane "krowy kościelne" – problemem badawczym dziejów wsi,' in P. Franaszek (ed.), *Celem nauki jest człowiek... Studia z historii społecznej i gospodarczej ofiarowane Helenie Madurowicz-Urbańskiej*, Krakow 2000, pp. 303–4.

421 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4875 [1587].

(thankless) capacity of collectors, and this did not earn them much sympathy among their neighbours.

There was one more group of the lay faithful associated with their local church. The inmates of the parish hospital were kept alive and taken care of owing to the religiously motivated charity of the parishioners, and therefore high requirements were imposed on them in respect of morality and participation in religious practices. Reformation decrees of church visitations emphasise their obligation to live a pious and exemplary life, and to sacrifice themselves to devotion. In particular, they were expected to frequently confess (preferably, on a monthly basis) and receive Communion, attend all services celebrated at the church, say prayers every day and sing the *Bogurodzica* anthem before the Holy Mass. They were also supposed to pray on a daily basis for their benefactors and the hospital's founders.<sup>422</sup> Many of them performed fairly simple chores inside the church.<sup>423</sup> As they permanently stayed very close to the church, they were often charged with the duty of guarding it.<sup>424</sup>

As social care institutions, hospitals did not enjoy a high priority in the rural environment of Lesser Poland. In the Diocese of Krakow, most of the hospital foundations connected with rural parish churches only emerged in the early decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>425</sup> By the middle of the century, they were no longer a rarity; still, their proportion remained much lower compared to urban parishes. As is estimated, hospitals could be found then in every fourth or even every second, based on Piotr Gach's calculations, rural parish in Krakow Diocese.<sup>426</sup> There were usually no more than five to six patients at a time in each such a shelter. Apart from this, the care system was principally based upon family connections and mutual obligations, rather than systematic, organised assistance by the *gromada*. Maintenance of indigent inmates was important for the

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422 AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, p. 80; BC, ms 2147, p. 51; AAPrz, ms 156, pp. 525, 529.

423 AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, p. 80; Z. Budzyński, *Dzieje opieki społecznej w Ziemi Przemyskiej i Sanockiej (XV-XVIII w.)*, Przemysł–Krakow 1987, p. 137; Z. Góralski, *Szpitalne na Lubelszczyźnie w okresie przedrozbiorowym*, Warsaw–Łódź 1982, p. 159.

424 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4689 [1720].

425 S. Litak, 'Szpitale w Polsce przedrozbiorowej. Rozwój i problematyka,' in M. Dąbrowska, J. Kruppé (eds.), *Szpitalnictwo w dawnej Polsce*, Warsaw 1998, p. 21.

426 P. Gach, 'Sieć szpitali w dawnej diecezji krakowskiej w połowie XVIII wieku,' *Roczniki Humanistyczne*, Vol. 21, 1973, fasc. 2, Table No. 3 on pp. 247–8; cf. S. Litak, 'Szpitale w Polsce . . .,' p. 24. The situation was probably similar in the western part of Przemysł Diocese, whereas hospitals were virtually unknown to Uniate parishes; see *ibid.*, pp. 22–3.

local peasant community primarily in respect of fulfilling the Christian virtue of charity and earning salvation through the distribution of alms. In addition to these merits, the beneficiary's prayer was received in exchange.

Apart from regular charity activities on Sundays, part of the standard rural practice was giving a dinner for the needy in a last will and testament, which inclined the recipient to pray for the testator's soul.<sup>427</sup> The custom was meant, among its several peers, to reduce the donator's soul's time in purgatory, and as such was highly important in respect of funeral-related concepts and rituals.

However, not only practical and eschatological aspects gave the peasants a positive attitude towards the poor: the respect they enjoyed in the countryside was essentially religious. Wanderers making their living on mendicancy used the opportunity to no lesser a degree than the hospital inmates.<sup>428</sup> Although the peasants realised that the lives of vagabond beggars were far from practicing Christian virtues, their penury – treated as a dispensation of Providence – meant that their peasant benefactors perceived them as being close to the sacred. Hence, to an extent beggars were men of authority as far as religion was concerned. Their prayers and pious songs were appreciated; their stories of revelations and other miraculous occurrences were trusted. Who might have met the Holiest Virgin in the woods, if not the poorest of the poor? The type of piety propagated by beggars was often superstitious. They would not infrequently resort to various deliberate deceptions in things religious, such as selling holy pictures and other devotional objects as consecrated or having a miraculous powers, and so on.<sup>429</sup> The clergy endeavoured to stamp out such abuses, albeit with little success.

In addition, the peasantry ascribed to vagabond beggars a certain wisdom that stemmed from their knowledge of the world; similarly, hospital inmates were seen as sages because of their age. Consequently, both were repeatedly requested to help solve a variety of minor problems.<sup>430</sup>

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427 Barycz, Vol. 1, fol. 353<sup>v</sup> and Vol. 2, fol. 2–2<sup>v</sup> [1643]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7063 [1749]; K. Dobrowolski, *Włociańskie rozporządzenia ostatniej woli...*, No. 33 [1751]; Spytkowice, Vol. 2, p. 280 [1760], and elsewhere; cf. S. Flizak, 'Dziadowskie obiady,' *Lud*, series II, Vol. 15 (35), 1937, pp. 53–5.

428 See Pieskowa Skala, pp. 338–43 [1698] and J. Bieniarzówna, *O chłopskie prawa. Szkice z dziejów wsi Małopolskiej*, Kraków 1954, p. 202; cf. Z. Budzyński, *Dzieje opieki...*, p. 161.

429 M. Nowakowski, *Przewodnik miłosierny w drodze najniebezpieczniejszej idących, i do spocznienia najpożądańszego wodzący*, Kraków 1747, p. 61; Cf. J. S. Bystron, *Kultura ludowa...*, pp. 107–8.

430 For example, ASD, Vol. 2, p. 257 [1746].

Showing dislike towards the needy was regarded morally reprehensible; using violence against them was considered a gross sin, as evidenced by the adventure of a certain Maryna, wife of a blacksmith from the demesne of Jazowsko, who beat a poor woman named Zofija Bierecianka in front of the church at Easter. The punishment administered against her included a fine of ten pounds of wax to be donated to the church, being locked in a *kuna* during the masses on two Sundays, and making an obligatory public apology to the parson and requesting his forgiveness before the service, and was much severer than usually applied in cases of a brawl in similar circumstances.<sup>431</sup>

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431 Jazowsko, No. 18 [1678]; also, cf. Łąka demesne, p. 106 [1791].



### III. THE ECONOMIC DIMENSION OF PEASANT RELIGION

#### 1. The cost of participating in religious life

Religion penetrated the lives of peasants and had a strong impact on their economic activities, among the other domains. However, the peasants bore – whether voluntarily or compulsorily – the cost of belonging to the Church and participation in its rites and rituals. In this respect, research into religiosity can pertain to the peasants' attitude towards the funding of religious life, comprehension of the associations between the material and the supernatural facets of the cult, or the religious elements in the economic relationships between the village and the parsonage. On the other hand, the impact of religion on the economic life of peasants was pronounced in the spiritual layer of their economic activities. Religiousness manifested itself in this sphere in the role played by the religious factors in the stock of ideas related to economic actions.

The material stratum of the cult called for considerable financial effort from the peasants, beginning with the costs related to organising social religious life and ending with individual expenses made out of devotion or custom. The church building was erected and constructed using funds provided by the external founder, be it royal, noble, or ecclesial. The parish would be given it 'as a gift' and had thereafter to care for its physical condition. The idea to have a church edifice built on their own and for their use was not alien to peasant communities, though. The most obvious barrier to such activity was financial resources. The construction of an appropriate building for religious practice was usually beyond the peasant community's reach. Much more of an issue to the *gromada* would have been to provide funding for the parson's office, or to settle the legal and administrative formalities. It did at times happen, although very rarely indeed, that peasants undertook the construction of a church or provided considerable funding for the purpose. In 1578, a village called Wola Żarczycka was founded, *in cruda radice*, near Leżajsk. The moment the settlement was set up, its lokator, Piotr Żarczycki, and the community (*gromada*) commenced saving money for the construction of a church; the compulsory contribution equalled 2 grosz per half-*łan* of land (ca. 12 ha) per annum. Moreover, collections were organised during which voluntary offerings were made for the purpose, between

6 grosz and 2 *grzywnas*.<sup>432</sup> The church was eventually built 29 years later in 1607. While it would by no means not have been done without royal patronage, the effort contributed by the village community to the church's construction calls for appreciation.

However, it occasionally happened that peasants made an attempt to erect a church building with no outside support. In the 1560s in the parish of Bydlin, collator Mikołaj Firlej had the ruined local wooden church demolished and set about building a new brick temple. Dissatisfied with the new church being erected in a different place, the parishioners undertook on their own to have the old building reconstructed and started bringing down the building materials. The initiative was discontinued after the inspecting bishop intervened.<sup>433</sup> The construction of a church in Trześniów ended in a success: in 1592, the local *gromada* had it "erected and founded, embellished from their own expense."<sup>434</sup> However, this church appeared owing to a unique situation; namely, in reply from the parishioners to the apostasy of the estate's heir, a certain Błoński, who had assumed the Reformed Evangelical confession and annexed the parish church in the village of Jasionów. Before the local Catholic community regained the church in Jasionów in 1644, the Trześniów temple initially functioned as their parish church, and subsequently, by a decision of Przemyśl Bishop Paweł Piasecki, services were to be held in both churches alternately. Although Trześniów was finally made a filial church to Jasionów, until the late eighteenth century the *gromada* of Trześniów struggled with the Jasionów parson to worship in 'their' church.<sup>435</sup>

At the end of the eighteenth century, an individual initiative of a peasant who decided to have a church built also reached a successful conclusion. There was a site called Revelation (*Objawienie*) in the village of Księżomierz. The ruins of a chapel reminded the locals of an icon of Our Lady, famous for its graces, to which the chapel had once been home, before it was relocated to the parish church in Dzierzkowice. In 1783, Michał Guz, a peasant from Księżomierz, purchased an old, small wooden church in Chodel, which was meant to be demolished. Helped by Józef Wybranowski and other peasants, he transported it to his village and erected it on the site of the destroyed chapel, installing a copy of the former

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432 Wola Żarczycka, No. 1 [1578].

433 H. Wyczawski, 'Studia nad wewnętrznymi dziejami kościelnymi ...,' No. 3–4, p. 30.

434 TsDIAUL, f. 48/1, Vol. 9, No. 3 [1682].

435 *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich*, Vol. 12, Warsaw 1892, p. 576; also, see a file of relevant documents dated 1620–1827, at TsDIAUL, f. 48/1, Vol. 9.

miraculous painting. Consequently, the Księżomierz church was made filial to the parish of Dzierzkowice.<sup>436</sup>

However, initiatives of this sort were exceptional among peasants. Usually, the village community's foremost ambition was to have the existing church complex redeveloped and/or extended on their own. For example, in 1693 the peasants of Rajcza used their collected money to found a belfry for their church and helped construct it.<sup>437</sup>

Financial participation, even if the most modest, in the erection, redevelopment or renovation of the church was a means of reconfirming membership with the parish. In 1668, inhabitants of the lower part of the village of Spytkowice (which at that time belonged to the parish in Jordanów, some ten kilometres away) pooled their money to have a parish church built in the much closer locality of Raba: "and those who gave the money now belong to Raba, one neighbour would not give an egg, and this [= his] soil hath heretofore belonged to the Parish or Jordanów," the village's reeve explained ninety years afterwards.<sup>438</sup>

While participation in the construction or redevelopment of a church was an extraordinary event in rural areas, exertions around the existing church building were part of peasant communities' everyday activities. True, keeping the church in an appropriate condition essentially depended upon the individual activity of the parson,<sup>439</sup> whilst the related expense primarily encumbered the parishioners.<sup>440</sup> However, they took an active part in collecting and expending at least a portion of the local church's budget. Any fixed contributions and a variety of the parish's irregular income from members of peasant communities were normally gathered by the churchwardens, who kept custody over the church's treasury and disbursement of the money. There were (rare) cases where the entire rural community was admitted to making decisions regarding the church's finances; such was the case in Zawada in 1586, where the *gromada* was to resolve about how to allocate the 20 *grzywnas* having been borrowed by the local innkeeper from the parson and never returned, owing to the latter's death.<sup>441</sup> The peasants' influence on the management of the church building was, clearly enough, much weaker

436 Ks. Waław z Sulgustowa, *O cudownych obrazach w Polsce Przenajświętszej Matki Bożej wiadomości historyczne, bibliograficzne i ikonograficzne*, Krakow 1902, pp. 347–8.

437 A. Konomiecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 253 [1693].

438 Quoted after J. Kracik, 'Duchowe niedostatki wsi beskidzkiej . . .', p. 172.

439 J. Kracik, 'Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...', pp. 149–150; cf. BK, ms 1735, *passim*.

440 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3221 [1638], 4195 [1776]; cf. *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 363 [1756].

441 Zawada, Vol. 1, fol. 92–92<sup>v</sup> [1586].

in parishes domiciled in towns. In such situations, the peasants restricted themselves to caring about a chapel or an altar in their temple, usually following some previous foundations or administrative decisions from above.<sup>442</sup>

Apart from financing the church's activities on an ongoing basis, the *gromada* came up with initiatives regarding the furnishing of their temple or arranged for an appropriate setting for the rituals and ceremonies celebrated; for instance, they would fund a chapel or shrine, a bell, a positive organ, or a silver revetment for the icon of the Holiest Virgin.<sup>443</sup>

As a result, peasants perceived the church building as 'communal property,' particularly in rural parishes. Any misdemeanour against it, such as burglary, was treated as attempt at the common wealth, and it was the *gromada* or its authorised representatives that repeatedly appeared as the accuser in such cases.<sup>444</sup> A significant event took place in Czukiew in 1656. At the command of Przemyśl Bishop Andrzej Trzebicki, all the diocese's churches were to offer their gold and silver ecclesiastical utensils for the needs of the country, then at war against the Swedish troops flooding Poland-Lithuania. When the bishop's commissioners commandeered the silverware of the local church (including the monstrance, chalices with patines and communion plates, and more), the village's reeve Sobestian Zymowicz and its churchwardens, "having commiserated and bewailed of a losse so greate," collected from the villagers a sum in excess of 200 zlotys, pursued and caught them up in Przemyśl, and bought back from them their temple's equipment.<sup>445</sup>

The sense of responsibility for the condition of the community's 'own' church building led the peasants at times to an overly unrestrained approach. The parishioners in the village of Rogi surrounded the church with haylofts;<sup>446</sup> in Krzeszowice, pork fatback was stored behind the altar, for a change.<sup>447</sup> As cases

442 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7356 [1599].

443 For example, Zawada, Vol. 1, fol. 92–92<sup>v</sup> [1586]; Osobnica, p. 512 [1646]; AAPrz, ms 187, fol. 3<sup>v</sup>; also, cf. R. Żukowski, op. cit., pp. 91–2 [1727]; 'Dwa dokumenty dotyczące bartnictwa w starostwach tucholskim i świeckim,' ed. by A. Mańkowski, 'Zapiski TNT,' Vol. 4, 1917, No. 2, pp. 47–48 [1734].

444 See *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae...*, No. 17 [1639]; *Akta Sądu Kryminalnego Kresu Muszyńskiego 1647–1765*, ed. by F. Piekosiński, SPPP, Vol. IX, Krakow 1889, No. 17 [1661].

445 Czukiew, Vol. 2, pp. 173–4 [1656]; cf. W. Sarna, *Dzieje diecezji przemyskiej obrządku łacińskiego*, Part 2: *Biskupi przemyscy o. ł.*, Przemyśl 1910, p. 351.

446 AAPrz, ms 156, p. 666.

447 Nowa Góra A, fol. 17 [1737].

of this sort are very rare in the visitation records, it may be inferred that peasants acted in moderation when transferring their economic activities into the sacral space of the church.

For peasants, the costs of religious life were not limited to bearing the burdens related to their membership in the local community. Personalised expenditure, borne as part of a man's individual relationships with the Sacred, was of no lesser significance. Popular religion in the early modern time attached considerable attention to making offerings as a means of communicating with God. An offering delivered at church was of a supplicatory or thanksgiving character. In either case, the faithful referred to the principle of reciprocity in man's contact with the supernatural, which might have repeatedly been a sort of commercial transaction.

The conviction that one should not enter the church empty-handed was expressed in a wide popularity of mass offerings. Making offerings as a homage was a mediaeval custom that survived in Poland at least until the Partitions.<sup>448</sup> The amounts of donations and contributions significantly increased at major holidays, particularly on Good Friday. Making such offerings in kind, customary in rural areas, disturbed the seriousness of the Holy Mass. Rev. Hieronim Powodowski was one of the first to revile the disorders appearing in rural and small-town churches. As he observed, "with the verie time coming for the consecrating of the flesh of the Lord, [the altar] is burdened not onely with *kwartniks*,<sup>449</sup> moneyes, and allso breads, kollachs, egges, cheeses, and all, nearely, the byre of lambes, pigglets, yeanlings, hens, geese, and othere cattle, which they are brining in with great and disordered pressuring and tumult, and leaving thereat, by the altar."<sup>450</sup> Bernard Maciejowski's Pastoral Letter recommended, however, that this custom be kept up, remarking that quietness and dignity should always accompany the act of donation.<sup>451</sup>

Peasants usually offered simple foodstuffs, such as loaves of bread, eggs, cheeses; occasionally, wax and candles were donated.<sup>452</sup> The light burned out

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448 W. Schenk, 'Z dziejów liturgii w Polsce,' in *Księga 1000-lecia katolicyzmu w Polsce*, Lublin 1969, Part 1, p. 153.

449 *Kwartnik* was a silver coin minted, among others, in the Kingdom of Poland and Silesia; a monetary equivalent of the *kwarta* (quarter), equalling 1/96 of the *grzywna* (mark). [Transl. note]

450 H. Powodowski, *Liturgia, abo opisanie Mszej świętej i obrzędów jej*, Krakow 1604, p. 35.

451 *Epistola pastoralis ...*, p. 57 (chap. [15]: *De Sacrificio Missae*).

452 See, e.g. AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, p. 79; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7417 [1503] (p. 433).

in the church, the foods were sold, and the money thus earned was used to support the church. However, donations given at Masses did not exhaust the peasants' generosity for religious purposes. It was customary of Lesser Poland's villages to fund, on an irregular basis, small items with which to equip the parish church's interior, or to finance the construction of shrines or chapels and way-side crosses.<sup>453</sup> The incentive behind such acts was not purely religious: the donor sought to emphasise his or her position in the community which was organisationally founded upon the cult, rites and rituals. In this respect, offering a donation was an efficient means of gaining notoriety and attention. The hopes of such donors were not groundless. Even today, among the masses of nameless peasants from the Land of Żywiec, we can identify a certain Jakub Machalik of Leśna, Adam Gawel from Zdziebło, and Walenty Wawak from Międzybrodzie, who in the early eighteenth century founded stone statues representing the 'Lord's Torments' (Passion).<sup>454</sup>

The generous peasants of Małopolska provided funds for sacred furnishings and church interior design or decoration items: those who could afford it funded chalices<sup>455</sup> capes and chasubles,<sup>456</sup> banners,<sup>457</sup> or religious pictures and various decorative elements for the temple's interior.<sup>458</sup>

Apart from such rather expensive and sumptuous gifts, which were to publicly attest to the donor's munificence, the inventories kept by the churches specify certain donations which financially were rather modest but whose emotional significance was remarkable. They were not meant to be ostentatious; instead, their offering was a token of one's personal and intimate attempt at establishing communication with the sacred. For example, countryside females offered in large numbers various (probably, homemade) textiles to the temple such as tiny crucifix aprons, tablecloths, and towels. A 1728 supplement to the inventory of the church in Świlcza features a number of such items: "Anna Kowalka from Świlcza hath given a linen table-cloth with simple laces, . . . *virgo* Regina Łagoszanka hath given a striped taffata curtain for the altar of the Holiest Virgin; the same hath given a pin-striped linen kerchief for the painting, . . . the arduous

453 H. Wyczawski, 'Studia nad wewnętrznymi dziejami . . .', No. 3–4, p. 91.

454 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . ., pp. 268 [1699]; 366 [1711], 412 [1713]. The statue erected by Walenty Wawak exists to this day; see W. Jura, *Żywieckie kapliczki, figury i krzyże przydrożne*, Żywiec 2000, p. 33.

455 For example, Raniżów, fol. 48 [1664].

456 For example, AAPrz, ms 187, fol. 4.

457 For example, Staszkówka, fol. 104<sup>r</sup> [1712]; BO, ms 11714, p. 897.

458 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . ., p. 511 [1718]; Staszkówka, fol. 106 [1722].

Anna of Ruda hath given a couple of linen towels. The arduous Regina Woytonka hath given a linen kerchief hemmed with black silk,” and so on.<sup>459</sup> Simple pieces of jewellery, mostly chaplets or necklaces, and strings of beads also appeared among personal gifts.<sup>460</sup>

Legacies or bequests to the Church were traditionally made in parallel with preparing testamentary legacies. It can be assumed that the presence of the priest beside the individual’s deathbed had a say in this respect. In some cases, the clergyman acted as a testamentary witness or scribe, and thus the redactor, of the dying individual’s last will. Such bequests made by peasants in extremis seem to have resulted in most cases from this custom, rather than one’s individual piety, whilst the parson’s personal influence essentially concerned the amount of the legacy being offered.

A dying peasant would normally bequeath a specified sum of money to his or her parish church.<sup>461</sup> The bequeathed sum reflected the donor’s place in the rural social hierarchy and financial ability. Those short of cash made a ‘farm-land’ bequest; that is, encumbered their real property with a mortgage. Such legacies usually made the donor’s inheritors long-term debtors of the church.<sup>462</sup>

Some testators stated the actual purpose for which their donated money should be used, including the purchase of a banner,<sup>463</sup> renovation of the altar,<sup>464</sup> or commissioning a painting by an artist.<sup>465</sup> Others satisfied themselves with a general obligation to expend the bequeathed sum on church ornaments or equipment, leaving the details for the parson and his churchwardens to decide, “for whichever they might think be demanded.”<sup>466</sup>

Testamentary bequests to the Church were often delivered in kind; farm animals were a popular donation, depending on the type of holding: sheep,<sup>467</sup>

459 AAPrz, ms 160, fol. 301; cf. Staszkówka, fol. 105 [1715], 106<sup>v</sup> [1723], 130 [1757].

460 AAPrz, ms 160, fol. 268<sup>v</sup>; Staszkówka, fol. 130 [1757].

461 For example, Rogi, fol. 314<sup>v</sup> [1603]; Równe, fol. 47<sup>v</sup> [1697]; A. Komonicki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 293 [1704]; K. Dobrowolski, *Włościańskie rozporządzenia ostatniej woli*. . . , No. 30 [1748].

462 For example, Gać, Vol. 1, pp. 322 [1594], 336 [1596] and 348–349 [1597]; Markowa, p. 565 [1643]; Andrychów, Vol. 1, p. 149 [1680]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*..., No. 4928 [1690].

463 K. Dobrowolski, *Włościańskie rozporządzenia ostatniej woli*. . . , No. 21 [1730]; also, see Czermno, fol. 184 [1690].

464 Husów, p. 51 [1703].

465 Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 229 [1765].

466 Pieskowa Skała, p. 239 [1687]; also, see ASD, Vol. 1, p. 101 [1722].

467 For example, Żywiec demesne, No. 291 [1744].

horses,<sup>468</sup> beehives<sup>469</sup> and, primarily, cows.<sup>470</sup> A portion of such bequeathed cows were included in the parish church's 'fixed assets' and source of income; those were referred to as 'church cows.'<sup>471</sup> They formed a herd whose stock, though kept at various pens run by local peasants, was fixed and strictly defined. The users of church cows paid the church a beneficial annual rent. In some villages, church cows amounted up to 25 %–30 % of the whole population reared by the peasants.<sup>472</sup>

Another characteristic testament-related custom was rural women who were about to die giving linen kerchiefs (called *rańtuchs* in Polish) to the church. To be more precise, a kerchief, which was a female cape covering the head and arms, four cubits long, was used as a nether altar-cloth. The habit of offering these objects to the church from the deathbed was associated with Our Lady wrapping her son Jesus in a veil whose counterpart was the *rańtuch*, as an element of Lesser Poland's female attire.<sup>473</sup>

Occasionally, in a last will peasants bequeathed to the Church their arable land, either in whole or part.<sup>474</sup> Such bequests could have instigated clashes between the peasant and the estate owner who could see no reason why the benefice of the parish church should be expanded at the expense of his property.<sup>475</sup> Landed bequests were therefore settled on an amicable basis, by coming to terms with the testator's inheritors who would take over the field bequeathed to the

468 For example, Czermno, fol. 153<sup>v</sup> [1641]; Krzczów, pp. 30–1 [1737] – “for the priests to ride and service the sick.”

469 For example, Kąkolówka, Vol. 1, p. 281 [1684].

470 For example, Jawornik, p. 640 [1619]; Świniarsko, p. 230 [1653]; Błazowa, Vol. 1, p. 184 [1684]; Trześniów, Vol. 3, fol. 87<sup>v</sup> [1771]; Albigowa, Vol. 2, p. 7 [1791].

471 For example, ANK, Księgi Grodzkie Bieckie 171, p. 1472 [1624]; Bestwina, p. 55 [1781]; Trześniów, Vol. 3, fol. 127<sup>v</sup> [1783–4].

472 J. Półćwiartek, ‘Wieś Markowa . . .’, p. 52; also, see J. Półćwiartek, ‘Tak zwane “krowy kościelne” . . .’, p. 306.

473 F. Kotula, ‘Rańtuchy. Elementy kultury ludowej w wyposażeniu kościołów’, *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 10, 1959, pp. 377–90; Staszkówka, fol. 131 [1766]; also, cf. Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, pp. 71 and 87 [1762].

474 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4875 [1587]; Golcowa, Vol. 1, pp. 139–41 [1621]; Brzozowa, fol. 203<sup>v</sup> [1666]; also, cf. Czukiew, Vol. 2, pp. 406–8 [1676]; Tyrawa Solna, miscellaneous records, fol. 61<sup>v</sup> [1744], 64 [1745].

475 A 1733 statute for the villages of the city of Poznań overtly barred the making of any landed bequests to the parish church, convent, or hospital; see *Polskie ustawy wiejskie* . . ., p. 263; a similar ban was issued in 1643 to the residents of the small town of Limanowa by its owner Achacy Przyłęcki; see Limanowa B, p. 195 [1643].



church, committing instead to paying its equivalent.<sup>476</sup> Only in exceptional cases did land bequeathed by peasants add to the ecclesial benefice, upon the consent of the demesne's proprietor and the diocesan authorities.<sup>477</sup>

However, it sometimes happened that peasants bequeathed in their last will their entire movable and immovable property to the Church.<sup>478</sup> Usually such testators had no bodily heir, but occasionally such a decision was made at the expense of disinheriting one's closest relatives. This might testify to a special manifestation of the testator's extraordinary piety, which incited them to assign all their property and possessions for a purpose that was dear to their heart. The other reason might have been some presently unidentifiable combinations, dependence relations, or pressures. The latter explanation is supported by the fact that upon establishing a bequest to the Church, some donors tried to settle their private business by making use of the authority of the religious institution. For example, the testamentary bequests of specified sums 'to the glory of God' were often made not in cash but rather in debts contracted from the donator by other peasants; transferring a debt to the Church was the final and, arguably, most efficient means of enforcing such 'bad' debts. The creditor would have never seen his money again anyway; by bequeathing it for a pious purpose, he or she would at least have made a contribution to an immaterial cause. Such was, evidently, the ulterior motive that drove a certain Jerzy Macek from Wysoka, who bequeathed to the Church 400 zlotys in debt, the condition being that the debtor might not return his money when the creditor was still alive.<sup>479</sup> Such combinations were not always successful: in 1679, Zofia Prosieciacka produced before the court of Wola Żarczycka a promissory note for 100 *grzywnas* due from Stanisław Stalio and donated the money to the Church. Stanisław solemnly swore, however, that he had already given her the money back. Nevertheless, since the bequest had already been established, the court ordered Zofia to pay its equivalent out of her own pocket.<sup>480</sup>

Delivering votive offerings was a special practice which appeared on a mass scale in Poland's pilgrimage shrines in as early as the mid-sixteenth century.

476 For example, Iwkowa, No. 542 [1713]; Świątniki, fol. 156<sup>v</sup>-157 [1756].

477 Golcowa, Vol. 2, pp. 461-2 [1741]; also, see *ibid.*, p. 263 [1696]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4904 [1639].

478 For example, Jadowniki A, fol. 163<sup>v</sup>-164 [1603]; Golcowa, Vol. 1, pp. 139-41 [1621]; Wara, No. 384 [1622]; Klimkówka demesne, No. 323 [1633].

479 Wysoka A, p. 265 [1777]; also, cf. Zalasowa, fol. 100<sup>v</sup> [1598]; Klimkówka, fol. 266<sup>v</sup> [1607]; Bzianka, fol. 7<sup>v</sup> [1645].

480 Wola Żarczycka, No. 134 [1679].

Offering a votive was complementary to the act of offering oneself to the holy protector of the sanctuary; it was meant as a token of donating oneself, or commemorating such an offering.<sup>481</sup> In practice, this was connected with very concrete situations, mainly miraculous healings, protection against danger, and strictly specified benefits experienced by pilgrims through intercession of the saint worshipped in the sanctuary. The votive offering act is interpretable in terms of a particular manifestation of an exchange of gifts or donations.<sup>482</sup> The faithful who experienced the graces gave thanks for them and, simultaneously, offered a gift at the temple which represented or denoted the good received. Votive offerings (also called “ex-voto”) were usually shaped in the form of the healed organ, such as eye, arm or hand, leg or foot. Figurines of children or farm animals could also be found among them, as well as representations through which the donors endeavoured to recount more tangled miraculous interventions. Some of the votives were quite valuable: made of gold or silver, usually in the form of a plaque with a relevant inscription or drawing engraved on it. Usually, however, the votives offered by peasants were made of wax. Hence, their importance was not about a measurable material value but more about a symbolic purport of the very act of offering a votive.<sup>483</sup> Owing to their realistic shapes, wax votives directly expressed the strict relationship between the grace received and the reciprocation of the faithful donor. This relationship was used in a variety of ways; for instance, a female healer from Nowy Wiśnicz used the wax poured from one vessel to another above a child’s head, in an act of cancelling spells or curses, to mould a wreath-shaped votive offering, thus engaging a Christian sacredness in her sorceries.<sup>484</sup>

Paradoxically, the cheap votives made of wax played a more significant part in the sanctuary’s economics than their gold or silver counterparts. Those made of precious metals served as ornaments whereas the wax ones, appearing in mass quantities, were recast into candles and so used in the temple. However, silver votives also appeared among those offered by peasants: village communities could afford them when acting, in their entirety, as a pilgrim.<sup>485</sup> During a cattle pestilence in 1752, pilgrimages from diverse nearby villages offered at

481 J. J. Kopeć, ‘Polskie zwyczaje maryjne ...’, p. 146.

482 P. Kowalski, *Prośba do Pana Boga. Rzecz o gestach wotywnych*, Wrocław 1994, p. 136.

483 J. Olędzki, ‘Wota woskowe i srebrne w wiejskiej obrzędowości religijnej,’ *Roczniki Socjologii Wsi*, Vol. 8, 1968, pp. 179–80.

484 *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 42 [1662].

485 Cf. J. Olędzki, ‘Wota srebrne,’ *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, Vol. 21, 1967, No. 2, p. 73; A. Jaśkiewicz, ‘Złotnictwo wotywnie regionu częstochowsko-wieluńskiego. Studium

the sanctuary of Stara Wieś identical silver ex-votos featuring the effigy of Our Lady adored by a group of kneeling people and cattle. It was probably a product manufactured serially by a craftsman. Eight years later, the *gromada* of the village of Blizne offered a silver votive offering in the shape of a heart.<sup>486</sup> At times, individual peasants founded their ex-votos made of ores. In the church in Husów, whose role as a sanctuary was thoroughly marginal, the inspector spotted in 1744 an “ex-voto with its edges ridged and one kneeling person, this having been made by Matyasz Bestek” and “ex-votos alias two silver legs,” also probably donated by peasants from nearby areas.<sup>487</sup>

## 2. Obligations and duties towards the Church, *iura stolae* offerings

The expenses borne by peasants for religious purposes were usually not voluntary, however. No parish church would have persisted on the beneficence of its faithful. Apart from the parson's household and farm, priests made their living from the rent in grain called *meszne*, or from tithes, plus the customary fees received for performing their religious ministries. The role of *meszne* and tithes in the economics of rural hubs has been investigated at length.<sup>488</sup> However, the problem is indicative of the relationship between compulsory benefits to the Church and the actual religiosity of the peasants. The Church endeavoured to sanction the payment of such contributions in supernatural terms. Willing, prompt and timely payment of tithes or the *meszne* was among the major features of the model of ideal farmer propagated by the preachers. The disobedient could expect ‘punishments from God,’ such as suffering hunger and want.<sup>489</sup> In 1703,

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z zakresu sztuki prowincjonalnej i ludowej XVII-XIX wieku,’ *Rocznik Muzeum Okręgowego w Częstochowie. Sztuka*, Vol. 1, 1982, p. 17.

486 W. Mrowiński, op. cit., p. 88.

487 AAPrz, ms 167, fol. 85<sup>v</sup>.

488 For the region in question, the problem is discussed in, among others: E. Trzyna, *Położenie ludności wiejskiej w królewskich województwach krakowskiego w XVII wieku*, Wrocław 1963, pp. 279–81; J. Półciwiatek, *Położenie ludności wiejskiej starostwa leżajskiego w XVI-XVIII w.*, Warsaw–Kraków 1972, pp. 119–23; J. Półciwiatek, *Z badań nad rolą gospodarzo-społeczną plebanii ...*, pp. 93–117.

489 J. Związek, op. cit., pp. 208–9. Church attempted to ‘hire’ St Peter to recover the amounts due, as the so-called *Palikopa* (namely “crop-burner”), the nickname given to the saint by common folk in the context of his feast day (St Peter ad Vincula, 1 August), on which it was believed the crops often fell victim to thunderstorms (which, of course, was supposed to apply mainly to those who were in arrears with duties);

a certain peasant died in excommunication imposed for failing to offer a tithe to the parson of Tenczynek. He was buried in the field, without soliciting for the curse to be released, for which the parson heralded to his fellow villagers that they would be punished by God. Indeed, not long afterwards the home village of the anathematised man was haunted by a series of disasters: fires and hailstorms. Overwhelmed, the peasants requested the parson for absolution – for themselves and their deceased countryman.<sup>490</sup>

In peasant mentality, however, it seems that supernatural sanctions were imposed on the paying of one's tithes or *meszne* only to a small degree. This fact has its significance, because peasants normally approached financials related to the Church in a rather superstitious manner. When it came to testamentary bequests, donations, or even church cows, the fear of God's wrath essentially prevented embezzlement and misappropriations of ecclesiastical estates or demesnes, even if not efficiently in each case. Committing any dishonest acts like these was lined with fear of supernatural intervention. With a *meszne* or tithe, such concerns were in fact unapparent. Instead, the peasants argued severely over every single spike or penny, escalating their conflicts to the breaking point.

The clergymen, in parallel, eagerly resorted to religious levers in the clashes over duties including refusing confession to peasants who failed to meet their tribute obligations.<sup>491</sup> The Rev. Marcin Szaniawski, the aforementioned parson of Iwkowa, "hath for three years not been willing to hear the confession of Matyasz Kaczmarczyk, and is not so willing, and this for his having brought the *meszne* tax in grain to him: this the reverend pastor was not willing to accept, but ordered instead that the *meszne* be paid to him in moneys."<sup>492</sup> Preventing confession and, consequently, the receipt of Easter Communion, was a very grievous measure for the peasants, but in feuds over the *meszne* tax, the religious implication of the punishment faded: the peasants primarily perceived it in terms of a personal dislike of their parson. Once, Rev. Szaniawski was visited before Easter by a certain Piekarczyk, "and arranged with the reverend parson that I [= he] can hardly wait to be heard in confession, Rev. Szaniawski was saying to him that you [= he] pay what ever, be it through the half of what you owe to me [= the parson], he [i.e.

see W. Baranowski, 'Relikty wierzeń w św. Piotra Palikopę – egzekutora dziesięćin,' *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, Vol. 79, 1969, No. 4, pp. 897–902.

490 J. Kracik, 'Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...', p. 211.

491 See, e.g., S. Litak, 'Ze studiów nad religijnością niższych warstw społecznych . . .', p. 172; E. Wojtusiak, 'Saskie czasy w karpackiej posiadłości Małachowskich. Pleban, dwór i poddani,' *Nasza Przyszłość*, Vol. 60, 1983, p. 213.

492 BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 9.

Piekarczyk] replied to him [i.e. Szaniawski] that I am not fleeing from the village yet, and with this, he went away of the parsonage.<sup>493</sup>

When a refusal to hear confession proved inefficient, parsons resorted to anathematising individual peasants or even the entire village. Such a method of debt enforcement was probably rather common, as is attested by the self-promotional phrases uttered by under-clerk Gregorius at the satirically portrayed ‘general synod of the submontane under-clerks:’

Owa widzę, żebym był nie głupi plebanus.	Lo, I'd be a plebanus; not foollest of the fool me:
Meszne umiem odebrać, dziesięcinę wytknąć,	The grain-rent can I collect, levy the tithe,
Chłopa zakląć, kijem stłuc, z kościoła go wypchnąć <sup>494</sup>	Force the peasant out of church, curse, stab; may he writhe.

The feud over *meszne* tax finally led in 1690 to anathematising the *gromada* of Gać, 12 years later the curse extended to the nearby Nizatyce (minutes before the publication, an arrangement was settled in the latter case). In Wola Żarczycka, a dozen or so peasants were anathematised in 1712, and the whole of the village's aldermen a year later as well, for this same reason.<sup>495</sup> The local parson likewise excommunicated peasants from the other villages in the parish, including the whole community of Jeżowe. The text of this latter anathema, rather original, is known to history. The dwellers of Jeżowe who failed to offer their *meszne* could hear the following wishes from the pulpit: “they have fallen for malediction: may it come unto them; they rejected the blessing: may it be averted from them. May their dwelling become empty. May their sons be orphans, and their wives widows. May their wandering sons waste and decay, and may they beg and be thrown out of their dwelling. May the usurer forage through all the properties of theirs; may the aliens sequester their labours around. May they have a foe above them. When judged upon, may they be damned, their prayer may be a sin. May their days be pared away, and may their welfare be given to some body else. May they have no help, and may there be no-one to exercise mercy upon their orphans.”<sup>496</sup>

Exclusion from the community of the faithful was a severe misfortune for a peasant. The suggestive spectacle at the church, which accompanied the excommunication (ringing of bells, symbolic knocking of a blown-out candle onto the floor) could affright the ceremony's ‘villain’ and his or her possible imitators.

493 Ibid., fol. 72’.

494 ‘Synod klechów podgórskich,’ p. 163.

495 J. Półciwiatek, *Z badań nad rolą gospodarczo-społeczną plebanii ...*, pp. 105–9.

496 M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka ...*, pp. 77–9 [1712].

However, in spite of the extraordinary severity of the punishment that could fall on peasants for failing to meet their duties towards the Church, it did not stop the disobedient. A fortiori, those who vigorously pursued their disputes over the *meszne* tax and those already cursed, showed no fear of the Divine intervention that was promised to them. In Wit Korczewski's 'Polish conversations alternated with the Latin language' [*Rozmowy polskie łacińskim językiem przeplatane*], the Lord advises the Parson that, if his peasants fail to pay their dues:

Będzielić co dłużeń kmieć	Shouldst indebted be thy serf,
Do mnie się w tej rzeczy uciec.	In this thing, to me thou swerve:
Nie do pozwu, ni do kłątwy,	Sue him not, and curse him not;
Bo to na kmiecia strach wąty;	A frail fear these, not an aught.
Rychlejci się kłody lęknie,	Scared will he be of the stocks:
Gdy go w niej posadzą pięknie. <sup>497</sup>	Let him throne, enjoy the mocks!

Why this was so is difficult to explain. Perhaps the overly frequent resorting by the parsons to excommunication led to a devaluation in this repressive measure. The amount for which the conflict was waged might also have alleviated the religious concerns. Perhaps the peasants might have believed that Divine justice did not really coincide with that administered by their parish priest, and a groundlessly cast excommunication had no supernatural sanction whatsoever.

Apart from tributes, rural parishioners paid other compulsory fees to the Church, which were directly connected with its activities. Participation in the regular life of the parish incurred, among other things, offerings made to the clergyman on the occasion of him performing religious ministries. In the early modern Church, such offerings functioned as remuneration and constantly triggered conflicts. Let us mention that, according to the calculations made by Dariusz Główka for the Diocese of Płock in 1775–1781, such fees were the second (after the tithe) basic source of income of parish priests in Poland. In better-funded parishes, they amounted to 15 % of the clergy's income; the figure for the less affluent parishes being 20 %–40 %.<sup>498</sup>

The theoretically governing principle was that clergymen ought to fulfil their ministries to the congregation free of charge, as their duty was to "distribute without

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497 W. Korczewski, *Rozmowy polskie łacińskim językiem przeplatane*, ed. by J. Karłowicz, Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich No. 2, Krakow 1889, p. 82.

498 D. Główka, *Gospodarka w dobrach plebańskich na Mazowszu XVI-XVIII wieku*, Warsaw 1991, p. 78.

cost what they have received without cost.” Such was the stance of the resolution adopted by all the diocesan synods in pre-partition Poland. Clergymen receiving voluntary donations or contributions from the faithful was an acceptable practice. In fact, the custom was regarded commendable and worth sustaining, even if with use of ecclesiastical punishments for parishioners who evaded payment.<sup>499</sup> In practice, the actual amount of the offering payable for the ministries was conditional upon the local customs and was individually bargained with the priest, until the moment the tariffs of the *iura stolae* offerings, adopted by the diocesan authorities, grew popular in the eighteenth century. All this meant that, eventually, only the canonists could discern between the offering and the fee for a religious ministry.

*Iura stolae* offerings were received with the administration of a sacrament or the reciting of a blessing, as well as with funeral ceremonies. For example, in Easter-time confessions, the ex-gratia payment was usually 1 grosz, and attempts at encouraging a larger amount were reviled by the ecclesial authorities, as was the overly ostentatious collection of the money given by those going to confession.<sup>500</sup> The faithful essentially accepted the obligation to remunerate their father confessor, be it with money or gifts in kind. This custom functioned on the verge of appropriateness, tending to tilt towards an almost mercantile act of remission of the sins in exchange for a donation. In a satirical epigram by Adam Władysławiusz, the parson ‘hearing the confession’ of his parishioners gathered on the opposite bank of the Vistula, as they were forced to stay away from their homes because of the rising water, addresses them thus:

Co za grzechy macie?	‘So what’re the sins of yours?’
Takie jako i tak rok, jeśli pamiętacie.	‘Such as we had, remember? In former years.’
Pokutujcież jak tak rok. Idźcie do dom zgoła, [...]	‘Now goe home, do your penance, like you all last did. [...]
Jednak jajec, kołaczy, przynieście w pogodę –	When the weather’s good, bring me the eggs, and oil-cakes!’
I tak ci ich on pleban rozgrzeszył przez wodę. <sup>501</sup>	Thus the priest had them redeemed through water-quakes.

499 H. Karbownik, *Ofiary iura stolae na ziemiach polskich w latach 1285–1918*, Lublin 1995, pp. 37, 87.

500 Z. Zalewski, ‘Komunia święta wiernych w okresie reformy trydenckiej,’ in *Studia Liturgiczne*, Vol. 5, Lublin 1988, p. 135.

501 *Polska fraszka mieszczańska. Minucje sowiżrzańskie*, ed. by K. Badecki, Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich No. 88, Krakow 1948, pp. 101–2.

However, the custom of offering donations to the clergyman at Easter-time confession seemed suspicious to the Church hierarchies and was eventually barred in some Polish dioceses. It contributed to the erroneous conviction spreading among the faithful that receiving absolution depended on the offering donated.<sup>502</sup> A fixed monetary payment was a safer solution in this respect, and clergymen encountered no serious problems in levying it – as long as they did not cross the limit of decency. The parson of Poręba Wielka, hated by the local *gromada*, “is willing to give not a card [confirming the confession] on Easter if not paid a penny; if with poor people this, then for the penny that is not, and the Rev. parson tells them to give it of necessity, then he would abnegate the confession, and so the others avoid confession for this reason.”<sup>503</sup> The ideal that the reform-oriented hierarchies endeavoured to attain was to purify the sacrament of Penance of all the signs of mundane profitableness. Contributions donated by the faithful ought to be *offerings* rather than charges; their role was *not* to authorise an automatic absolution, and not to let the penitent be heard out of turn.<sup>504</sup>

Occasionally, the clergymen demanded a special payment for dispensing the Communion. The most glaring instances of this abuse are mentioned in the resolution of the 1607 Synod of Lutsk, which banned the practice of placing bowls on the altar steps (or elsewhere) into which those receiving the Communion were expected to throw money.<sup>505</sup> Attempts were made to collect offerings, on a compulsory basis, with the sacraments of Baptism, Marriage, or Anointment, and with the banns and blessings.<sup>506</sup> The priests were, reportedly, particularly greedy when it came to performing funeral celebrations. Resolutions passed at synods in all Polish dioceses repeatedly reminded the clergy of the ban on collecting fees for the sacraments and the obligation to be satisfied with the customary offerings made *post factum*. Special attention was devoted to funeral offerings and donations, any bargaining in this respect having been forbidden; it was emphasised that the indigent deceased ought to be buried free of charge.<sup>507</sup> The synods held in Lutsk in 1641 and 1726 remarked that the parsons’ greed was

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502 H. Karbownik, *Ofiary iura stolae ...*, p. 42.

503 BO, ms 11714, pp. 899 and 904.

504 J. Ataman, op. cit., p. 128.

505 *Synodus dioecesisana Lucoensis celebrata a. D. MDCVII*, Zamoscii 1607, fol. C2’.

506 H. Karbownik, *Ofiary iura stolae ...*, pp. 39–44.

507 For example, *Reformationes generales ...*, pp. 124–5; J. Sawicki, *Synody diecezji chełmskiej ...*, p. 169; also, cf. APP, No. 160, fol. 319’, 321, 371, and passim.



the reason why the poor faithful had their dead buried in the woods or fields.<sup>508</sup> In 1643, the synod of the Diocese of Płock condemned those of the clergy who were postponing funerals having received no money and explained their reasons by pointing to external factors; as well as those who, having received less than demanded, behaved outrageously and derisively during the ceremony.<sup>509</sup> It can be presumed that parsons in the Dioceses of Krakow and Przemyśl extorted their funeral fees in a similar way.<sup>510</sup>

The tariffs of fees for religious ministries and services were meant to solve the problem of the *iura stolae* offerings. From the late seventeenth century, these tariffs were published in most Polish dioceses. While the rationale behind the tariffs was to restrict the abuses committed by parish clergy, their issuance meant, in fact, that the officially propagated idea of voluntary offerings was obviated. In the Diocese of Krakow, a tariff of this sort appeared in print in 1737, signed by Bishop Jan Aleksander Lipski (and was republished in 1740, 1747, and 1779).<sup>511</sup> This particular pricelist was based on an earlier version, edited in 1721 by Bishop Konstanty Szaniawski and circulating in manuscript form.<sup>512</sup>

This 1737 *Ordinance in respect of ecclesial perquisites* (*Ordynacja względem akcydensów kościelnych*) aroused significant interest among the faithful. The text can be found, interleaved or rewritten, in several rural court registers.<sup>513</sup> The tariff regulated in detail the fees chargeable for banns, marriages and funerals;

508 *Constitutiones synodi dioecesis Luceoriensis ab [...] D. Andrea Gembicki [...] a. D. 1641 [...] Luceoriae [...] celebratae*, Cracoviae 1641, fol. D3<sup>v</sup>–D4; *Constitutiones synodales dioecesis Luceoriensis et Brestensis [...] ab [...] Stephano Boguslao Rupniewski [...] celebratae et promulgatae anno [...] 1726*, Varsaviae 1726, fol. L2.

509 H. Karbownik, 'Sprawa pobierania ofiar za posługi religijne przez duchownych w diecezji płockiej w czasach przedrozbiorowych,' *Studia Płockie*, Vol. 15, 1987, p. 250.

510 Cf., e.g., W. Kowalski, *Uposażenie parafii archidiaconatu sandomierskiego w XV–XVIII wieku*, Kielce 1998, pp. 61–2.

511 H. Karbownik, *Ofiary iura stolae ...*, p. 88.

512 As we can learn from the *Dziejopis Żywiecki*, on 9 March 1721, "sheets were distributed amongst the headmen of the vyllages from the castle of Żywiec with the informatyon of paying the reverend parsons per funeral and othere perquisites, so that the payments be effected according thereto": A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia...*, p. 530 [1721]. The complete text of Bishop Szaniawski's *Moderacja akcydensów* is contained therein (seemingly unknown to H. Karbownik, cf. A. Komoniecki, *Ofiary iura stolae ...*, p. 88).

513 For example, in the register of the village of Skotniki: *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7472 [1737]; also, Olszówka, fol. 63–4 [1737]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, pp. 139–41 [1737]; also, see Tylicz A, pp. 600–3 [1757].

baptisms, churching and other blessings were to be granted free of charge, albeit the priest could receive a voluntary donation on any such occasion. The indigent were to receive marriage or burial free of charge. Characteristically, the *Ordinance* focused mostly on funerals, fixing in detail the prices for all the items of funeral ceremony and admonishing the clergy that “in conciliating funerals, they abstain from avarice, and indeed demonstrate the innermosts of their pastoral mercifulness.”<sup>514</sup>

The publication of the tariff apparently did not change a great deal in parochial relations. In the Diocese of Krakow, abuses in this respect were probably the same as in the Diocese of Przemyśl, where no tariff of fees for religious services was ever compiled before the Partitions. The crucial factor was the personality of the parson and the way he settled his relationships with his parishioners. It is actually difficult to determine what sort of conduct would have been deemed as abuse by the faithful – whether charging fees above the diocesan tariff limit, or negligence of the customary amount of a donation or of the financial potential of the contributor.

There is a strong indication that coerced offerings on the occasion of religious ministries were a significant item in the peasants’ budget; the expenditure related to funeral ceremonies almost led to the economic collapse of the dead person’s inheritors. Having to deal with a parson who mercilessly enforced the charges, one was exposed to the loss of almost all of his or her property, along with the deceased relative. In the middle of the eighteenth century, the Rev. Stanisław Podgórski, parson of Poręba Wielka, “rips the people off upon funerals without mercy, thus prefers to die he who pays the funeral, and although he has no-where to [get the money from], or [falls into] debts, and instead the Honourable Rev. parson commands that your very last cow be brought along, never mindful of the children being brought up and the other misery.”<sup>515</sup> Rev. Szaniawski of Iwkowa did not satisfy himself with movables: “when some body has no thing to pay with, he takes the cattle away, and when there is no cattle, then he orders that the buildings left by the deceased be transferred onto the parson’s ground.”<sup>516</sup>

But even in the parishes where the parson and his faithful got on well with one another, the need to bear funeral-related expenses was economically draining for the deceased’s family. Usually, a peasant would not have sufficient money in cash to cover the costs. Instead, they gave away their cows, working cattle or

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514 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7472 [1737].

515 BO, ms 11714, p. 899; also, cf. Krasna, p. 207 [1775].

516 BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 8<sup>v</sup>.

horses, which in the long run hindered the resumption by the farm-holding of its previous economic activity. Others would sell part of their arable farmland or get into debts.<sup>517</sup> Money for the fees was collected in humiliating conditions, as parish priests would not usually have the corpse buried unless they received the agreed amount.<sup>518</sup> While they sought to prevent bad debts in such a way, for the peasant the postponing of the funeral, in some cases for several days, aggravated their personal situation and concerns about what might be happening to the deceased's soul, which was believed to remain in a state of peculiar suspension until the dead body was finally buried in consecrated ground.

It happened that moribund people feared whether his or her entire possessions would suffice to pay for the priest's service and the funeral rite and ceremony. Some counted on a charitable attitude from the *gromada*;<sup>519</sup> others endeavoured to appeal to the parson's mercy. Such was the case with Józef Sysło from Lipnica Górna, who in his last will expressed a request: "for the funeral, I implore to the honourable Rev. parson with my great humbleness that my children be troubled not for this . . . but, in accord with the capability of mine property, the honourable Rev. parson be satisfied, but I do earnestly request mercy from thy honour, for there has been a year now of me getting cripple and every thing bedeviling."<sup>520</sup> It can be presumed that at least some of the rural parish priests would never have allowed a dead man to be buried for free, as a rule. In 1779 in Zawada, a certain Katarzyna Kuzerka, who apparently had no close relatives, "was bound to be deceasing by the Koniarka's fence and was thrown into the rye," as the parson had her buried only after someone of the rural community undertook to pay for the ceremony.<sup>521</sup> In a similar situation in Hłomcza, it was the Jewish innkeeper who finally offered to fund the funeral of a young orphan.<sup>522</sup> What kind of individual would have been regarded by those clergymen as sufficiently indigent to be buried free of charge, in line with the Episcopal instructions, is extremely difficult to establish.

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517 For example, Iwkowa, No. 587 [1726]; Nowa Wieś, Vol. 8, p. 71 [1731]; Andrychów, Vol. 2, p. 72 [1758]; Hłomcza, Vol. 1, fol. 115<sup>v</sup> [1775].

518 Iwkowa, No. 587 [1726]; also, cf. Tyrawa Solna, miscellaneous records, fol. 64 [1745].

519 Limanowa A, p. 93 [1621].

520 Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 137 [1734].

521 Zawada, Vol. 2, No. 214 [1779].

522 Hłomcza, Vol. 1, fol. 127 [1778].

### 3. Customary offerings and contributions related to religious rites

The merciless enforcement of *iura stolae* offerings by parsons from their rural parishioners was only one part of the equation. The amounts of expenses for religious reasons did not all have to be imposed by the clergymen. The peasants themselves strove to provide a proper setting for individual religious ceremonies such as baptisms, marriages and funerals, and usually did not skimp on resources on such occasions, albeit within the limits of their financial means. However, the structure of this expenditure somewhat differed from what the priests would have desired: prestige- and ludic-oriented expenses were more important, in the payers' perception, than generosity benefiting the Church.

The sums expended on funerals are known in great detail because the dying peasants provided detailed instructions in their wills. The testators desired that their internment to be framed in an appropriately ample setting. The general recommendations for the inheritors bound the latter to hold a "possibly most appropriate" or "beautiful" funeral,<sup>523</sup> or at least, "one that he might afford."<sup>524</sup> The relative splendour of the rites and the amounts of the bequests supplied to the Church was meant to reflect the place of the deceased in the village's hierarchy. Nonetheless, the organisation of an appropriate and abundant funeral was about something more than emphasising the social role of the person who had died. An adequate funeral ceremony was conducted to ensure the deceased's access to eternal life; the more masses celebrated, prayers said, and alms given, the shorter his or her term in Purgatory. The sums allocated by moribund people for the rituals related to the funeral could thus directly influence his or her afterlife.

Therefore, almost all the peasant testaments specified the amounts allocated for the celebration of Holy Masses for the testator's soul.<sup>525</sup> Some did not confine themselves to their parish church and commissioned Masses at churches in a nearby town or at centres of pilgrimage.<sup>526</sup> Affluent peasants made small

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523 Jaworsko, p. 300 [1695]; Andrychów, Vol. 1, p. 330 [1710]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 399 [1774].

524 Bielcza, fol. 208 [1707]; Łobzów, unnumbered document, dated 27 June 1719; Terliczka, p. 23 [1757].

525 For example, Pieskowa Skała, p. 239 [1687]; Równe, fol. 47<sup>v</sup> [1697]; Krzczów, pp. 30–1 [1737]; Albigowa, Vol. 1, pp. 168 [1757], 221 [1762]; Bestwina, p. 25 [1777].

526 For example, Krzyżowniki and Proszów, pp. 41–2 [1573]; Andrychów, Vol. 1, 165 [1683]; Albigowa, Vol. 1, p. 31 [1685]; Błazowa, Vol. 2, p. 5 [1745]; Czarna, p. 483 [1774].

endowments to the parish church in exchange for their names to be mentioned during the Mass on a 'perpetual' basis, their souls being recommended to the congregation to pray for. The renovation of the church or school building could be done using such endowments;<sup>527</sup> renovation of the altar,<sup>528</sup> 'appointment' of a church cow,<sup>529</sup> or simply the bequest of a larger amount meant to be invested to yield a fixed return.<sup>530</sup> The strife for ensuring one's soul a salvation after death meant at times that the amounts bequeathed by dying peasants with Holy Masses or endowments in mind exceeded the actual value of their properties and their inheritor's financial potential.<sup>531</sup>

With respect to funeral expenses, it is usually difficult to discern which expenses in particular were driven by religious needs and which supported a display of prestige. The sums expended on Holy Mass celebrations were generally justifiable in devotional terms. Prestige-driven expenditure certainly included an embellished undergarment for the deceased,<sup>532</sup> an adornment of the catafalque,<sup>533</sup> and candles and ornaments to be used in the church.<sup>534</sup> The desire to highlight one's social position was presumably the driving force also with those who were able to pay a high price for the burial site in the church, which exceeded by several times the fee payable for a cemetery burial.<sup>535</sup> The desire to rest as close

527 Gać, Vol. 1, p. 322 [1594]; Staszkówka, fol. 8–9 (reversely) [1703]; also, cf. Hłomcza, Vol. 2, fol. 15<sup>v</sup> [1799].

528 Husów, p. 51 [1703]; also, cf. Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 229 [1765].

529 Jawornik, pp. 711–12 [1779]; Bestwina, p. 55 [1781]; Trześniów, Vol. 3, fol. 127<sup>v</sup> [1783–4].

530 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 293 [1704].

531 For example, Gać, Vol. 1, p. 322 [1594]; Czermno, fol. 184 [1690]; Stara Wieś Górna, p. 24 [1801]. Moreover, cf. the insights and comments on the synod of Poznan, 1738: *Synodus dioecesisana Posnaniensis sub ... Stanislao de Bezdán Hosio, episcopo Posnaniensi ... Posnaniae in ecclesia cathedrali ... a. D. 1738, [s.l. 1738]*, p. 201.

532 Andrychów, Vol. 2, p. 264 [1792].

533 See ASD, Vol. 9, fol. 267<sup>v</sup> [1761].

534 Andrychów, Vol. 1, p. 249 [1695], Vol. 2, p. 264 [1792]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3831 [1754].

535 The right to a resting place inside the church was vested in the collators (patrons), the heir of the estate and his family, as well as the churchwardens who died while in office, and the major benefactors of the church. Thus, burial in the church was possible only for the village's elite, essentially in parishes where the local noblemen or burghers were not strongly competitive (such cases were not unique, though); see, e.g., Jadowniki A, fol. 79 [1588]; Jadowniki B, pp. 445 [1656], 497 [1664], 662 [1656]; Brzozowa, fol. 109<sup>v</sup> [1616], 126<sup>v</sup> [1622]; Łącko, No. 480 [1629]; Uszew, fol. 53 [1667]; Krzeczów, p. 17 [1751]. On the other hand, a burial place in the church was also available to indigent

as possible to the Sacred might have had a say in this respect. Cemeteries also offered 'better' sites depending on the proximity of sacral objects, such as "by the bell-fry opposite the grand door" of the parish church.<sup>536</sup>

It is not easy to determine what propelled those of the dying who wanted several clergymen to attend their funeral ceremony. For one thing, this enhanced the ceremony's prestige and spectacularism; for another, the funeral's religious significance was enhanced through the multiplied prayers and rites.<sup>537</sup> A similarly twofold ulterior motive drove, in all probability, those moribund people who instructed that a sumptuous wake or beggarly dinner be held after his or her death.

The holding of an abundant funeral feast was meant to help the dead (wo) man's soul part with the temporal earthly world and, in parallel, helped demonstrate his or her personal significance during his or her lifetime. The funding of a wake in a setting appropriate for the decedent's social position was a major item in the funeral budget. The clergy opposed at this point and endeavoured to have the money spent by the faithful on a feast, with carousals as an integral element, redirected for purposes related to the church or hospital. Recommendations in this spirit, targeted at the faithful in their entirety (not only simple parishioners), formed part of the *Pastoralna* letter by Bishop Bernard Maciejowski.<sup>538</sup> The visitation instructions issued 180 years later by Krakow Bishop Kajetan Sołtyk (1781) was confined to recommending the eradication among the commons of the custom of arranging funeral banquets "whereat vagrants and vagabonds are commonly getting drunk and fattened." Parsons were expected to encourage their parishioners to "give those raw portions of foodstuff away to their parish hospital," instead of going to great expense on funeral parties.<sup>539</sup> Earlier, the

inmates of the parochial hospital, and was for the sake of their role in the faithful community; cf. Z. Guldón, W. Kowalski, 'Szpitale w województwie sandomierskim w drugiej połowie XVII w.,' *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 84, 1995, pp. 115–16.

536 Trześniów, Vol. 3, fol. 87<sup>v</sup> [1771].

537 Zawada, Vol. 3, p. 6 [1790]; Hłomcza, Vol. 2, fol. 16 [1799].

538 *Epistola pastoralis* ..., p. 75, (chap. [24]: *De funeribus et suffragiis pro defunctis*). N.B., the resolutions adopted some 50 years earlier in 1568 by the synod of Włocławek did not bar funeral banquets, encouraging the arrangers to carefully select the attendees and observe sobriety; cf. 'Acta synodi dioecesanæ Wladislawiae Anno 1568 ... per Stanislaum Karnkowski episcopum celebratae,' in *Statuta synodalia dioec. Wladislawiensis et Pomeraniae* ..., p. 77.

539 BO, ms 1444, p. 52.

resolutions of the Poznan synod of 1738 condemned wakes given by simple people owing to drunkenness and profligacy that led to poverty.<sup>540</sup>

Less controversy occurred around the funeral-related custom of dispensing a dinner to indigent patients at the parish hospital. The peasants perceived it as an opportunity to show their largesse in an individualised fashion. The significance of such a party was primarily founded on the role of the beggars as a tie with the supernatural world in the rites connected with the cult of the deceased. From the Christian perspective, a dinner arranged specially for the indigent was meant to encourage these invited guests to pray for the soul of the deceased. The phrase ‘dining for one’s soul’ functioned in the daily language, suggesting the reception’s propitiatory character.<sup>541</sup> Giving a funeral banquet for the local beggars was an act akin to almsgiving. Those about to die usually stipulated the arrangement of such a dinner in their testament, some specified the quantities of the victuals to be prepared for the purpose.<sup>542</sup> Occasionally, instead of holding organised entertainment, the hosts confined themselves to allotting some food, usually grain or meat, to the poor.<sup>543</sup> Charity on the occasion of a funeral extended to the distribution of old attires left by the deceased; or, less frequently, cash donations.<sup>544</sup>

Alms expenditure was relatively profuse. Marcin Bieniek of Pieskowa Skała bequeathed 20 zlotys for a dinner “for the impoverished,” which equalled the aggregate spend on his own funeral and a Mass for his soul.<sup>545</sup> Antoni Lenar of Albigowa donated one cow for the purpose, and bequeathed another one to the church.<sup>546</sup> In this respect, it seems that much depended on the donor’s personality: for instance, an innkeeper of Mogiła, Antoni Świerkał, allotted 16 groszy for alms whereas his funeral and wake cost as much as 91 zlotys.<sup>547</sup>

Not as much is known about the alms distributed by peasants on occasions other than their own funerals. As the rather numerous groups of rural beggars and vagabond mendicants somehow made a living, it may be assumed that the

540 *Synodus dioecesisana Posnaniensis [1738] ...*, p. 200.

541 For example, Barycz, Vol. 1, fol. 353<sup>v</sup> [1643]; Zawada, Vol. 3, p. 6 [1790].

542 For example, Pieskowa Skała, p. 239 [1687]; K. Dobrowolski, *Włościańskie rozporządzenia ostatniej woli...*, No. 4 [1692]; Świętoniowa, p. 23 [1713]; Czarna, p. 315 [1737].

543 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7119 [1629], 7459 [1715]; Krzeczów, p. 31 [1737]; Andrychów, Vol. 2, p. 27 [1752].

544 Wola Żarczycka, No. 145 [1686]; also, see ASD, Vol. 3; fol. 31 [1749].

545 Pieskowa Skała, p. 239 [1687]; also, cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3473 [1695].

546 Albigowa, Vol. 2, p. 7 [1791].

547 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3831 [1754].

peasants were essentially driven by mercy in their daily lives. How much of their income in percentage terms such peasants assigned to charity is undeterminable. Pecuniary contributions were probably not that important: the poor were chiefly supported by distributed agricultural produce. The distribution of alms in front of the church on Sundays and holidays was apparently a commonplace custom in the countryside. Accounts by some wandering beggars tell us that also peasants intruded upon at their homesteads or pens on an ordinary day would offer support to the needy, insofar as they could.<sup>548</sup>

The propensity of some peasants to spend excessive money for religious purposes had to be tempered by the village community or by the owners and administrators of the village. Controversies were aroused, in particular and for a variety of reasons, by testamentary bequests made to the Church in excess of what was locally regarded as a customary amount. For village owners, such excesses needlessly impoverished the donor's farm-holding, thereby deteriorating the economic position of the demesne. We can completely understand why the leaseholder of the village of Rogi pursued a special investigation in order to find whether the bequest made by a certain Marcin Mika, who donated his entire property and possessions to the Church in 1570, thereby disinheriting his family, was to be at all trusted.<sup>549</sup> In 1801, the dominion office of Stara Wieś Górna stood up for Józef Nycz, who was requested by the local parson to pay off the bequests once promised by his mother, the value of which exceeded the entire property she had left behind.<sup>550</sup> The court of the demesne of Muszyna is also attested to have extinguished excessive legacies.<sup>551</sup>

In his rural statute of 1775, the proprietor of Krasna, Ignacy Dulski, bestowed extensive rights to the local peasant self-government in respect of inspecting funeral-related expenditures. According to this deed, the local Uniate parish priest was expected to be contented with "what the reeve with his sworn-men, having considered the propertie of the deceased man, hath opined to be . . . satisfactorie without a harm to widowes or orphanes."<sup>552</sup> However, even without fiats, the *gromadas* in Lesser Poland's villages unofficially maintained supervision of their members' religious expenditures. Such supervision spanned from attempts to persuade the prospective donor to dialogue and negotiation with

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548 J. Bieniarzówna, op. cit., p. 202.

549 Rogi, fol. 238<sup>v</sup>-239<sup>v</sup> [1570-9].

550 Stara Wieś Górna, p. 24 [1801].

551 Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, p. 142 [1757]; Vol. 2, pp. 71, 87 [1762].

552 Krasna, p. 207 [1775].



the clergyman. In Iwkowa, where the community was in conflict with their parson, it is reported that the village's elders barred testamentary legacies to the Church, threatening the potential donors with a royal commission. In parallel, these elders fought the splendour and sumptuousness of funeral ceremonies, persuading that "this is of no import what so ever: may the corpse be buried, how ever reasonably."<sup>553</sup> Such an action was caused, as it may be presumed, by those elders' personal dislike of the parson. If relations with the parsonage were cordial, other methods could be resorted to. In particular, attempts were made to bargain with the parson for a partial remission of troublesome bequests or overstated funeral fees, or spreading them over a longer period; the *gromada*, represented by the reeve and aldermen, acted as a party to such negotiations.<sup>554</sup> Such parleys led to arrangements between the inheritors and the parish priest, entered into before the rural court, regarding the terms and conditions of the payment of testamentary legacies.<sup>555</sup>

#### 4. Religious factors in peasants' economic lives

The role of religion in the peasant economy did not only come down to multiple expenditures. Its influence extended to the spiritual aspect of peasants' economic activities. Religious principles and convictions arranged and organised economic life in rural areas, shaping its cultural practice. This impact is clearly visible in a variety of rural economic customs and habits in the early modern era.

The economic concepts and ideas prevalent among the peasantry in the pre-Partition period differed remarkably from our contemporary theories, with their fundamental principle of maximum benefit at minimum cost. Cultural determinants prevailed over calculation, and this testified to the significant influence of religious convictions in the rural environment. This issue appears, for instance, concerning peasant ideas of achieving revenues deemed 'undeserved' or otherwise suspicious. Such revenue or income was approached with concern, and often the entire amount thus earned or won was assigned for a religious purpose, in order to deal with the trouble. The reasons behind this reluctance might have been various. In 1753, Wojciech Bogdanik won a case at the court of the demesne of Sucha for the succession of the land against his first cousin, Józef. However, since an oath had been sworn during the trial, Wojciech Bogdanik was reluctant to take 30 zlotys as the amount awarded to him (the equivalent

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553 BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 12<sup>r</sup>.

554 *Ibid.*, fol. 33.

555 Gać, Vol. 1, pp. 322 [1594], 336 [1596], 348–9 [1597].

in money of half of the field under dispute), “and, thereto pretending not, for this being vowed he bequeaths therefrom for the church of Krzeszowice, for the revetment-gown of St Anne: 15 zlotys, the other of this 15 zlotys he bequeaths to the Rosary confraternitie in the church of Sucha.” Moreover, “for the labours and costs incurred over the 18 months in this affair, he merely stipulates for himself from Józef a piece of the meadow upon [the latter’s] voluntary allocation.”<sup>556</sup> Again, in Świętoniowa in 1731, a certain Józef Misiąg retrieved, through court judgement, 10 zlotys that had been unjustly drawn from him by Sebastian Bociek; instantly, still standing before the adjudicating panel, he offered the whole amount “to the glory of God, for the Holy Masses for the souls of the deceased ancestors.”<sup>557</sup>

The reasoning of some of those peasants who did not accept their due money is not easy to interpret. Stanisław Woytań from Trześniów arranged with Jerzy Młynarz for compensation for injuries suffered by his son, who had been beaten up by Jerzy’s son: however, “not willing to benefit” from the money “for himself, forthwith he gave it from his hands to the church of Trześniów, to Saint Stanislaus, for the needs of it, which rights afterwards was received by Jakub Ziemianin the church-warden.”<sup>558</sup> Perhaps Woytań’s son was also to blame for the brawl?

The context indicates that peasants’ preconceptions regarding ‘undeserved’ revenue were interrelated with their conviction about the primacy of God’s justice that would not tolerate ambiguous situations, otherwise so frequent in human lives. At times they applied this rule to support their own claims; when, convinced to have the truth on their side, they could appeal to Divine justice to silence their opponents. Walenty Wilk of Łukawiec resorted to the method as he declared, upon acknowledging the disputable 8 *grzywnas* of repayment from his brother: “should there be any body to reason that I am accepting [the money] unjustly, then justly doth God behold and I am giving my hand to the reeve, beating my breast.”<sup>559</sup>

A similar pattern of reasoning is traceable on taking possession of deserted arable land. The acquisition of a field that called for no payment and did not have to be cleared or stumped with one’s own hands was perceived by peasants as not thoroughly honest business. Even though the transaction was carried out

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556 Sucha demesne, p. 456 [1753].

557 Świętoniowa, p. 53 [1731].

558 Trześniów, Vol. 2, fol. 84 [1687].

559 Łukawiec, p. 21 [1699].

with consent (if not outright instruction) by the owner or administrator of the village and on acceptance of the community, such administrative decisions did still not suffice for a lawful and legitimate takeover of the land. A reciprocation was still necessary for the possible breach of the principles of supernatural justice – and this was done by allocating money for a religious purpose. In 1742, a certain Maciej Światowiec was settled by a steward ‘on a void’ in the village of Grochowe near Tuszów Narodowy. The village aldermen concluded that “keeping in memory the fact, though, that the soil hath not been purchased by Maciej Światowiec, neither hath he set[t]led thereupon subsequent to a friend of his, yet, given that nobody could namely tell whether he hath set[t]led [thereon] without any harm to a human, therefore we prescribe through our authority of the court that there be offered as much as practicable for the holy Masses, but this with a spectator [i.e. witness watching], so that each of us, the men of the court, be knowledgeable [of this].”<sup>560</sup>

The financial affairs pervading a peasant's life gained special importance after his or her death. A debt, if unpaid, burdened the deceased's soul and extended its term in Purgatory. Hence, the moribund person imposed on his or her inheritors the obligation to repay their liabilities.<sup>561</sup> In her desire to render her husband's soul “pure before God, the Lord,” Zofia, the widow of Wawrzyniec Skarbek of Mordarka, allocated all of her modest possessions – two heifers – for the repayment of his debts. When she was about to die later, she had to request the *gromada* to fund her own funeral from church contributions.<sup>562</sup> In Olszówka in 1763, the manor decided to pay off the indebtedness contracted by a demised peasant, “thus preventing not only the desolation of a quarterly-part of the soil but also in the will to render the soul of the demised Jan Nawara relieved, so that it all-the-sooner receive Divine mercy through paying-out his debts in this world.”<sup>563</sup>

Not only did the unpaid debt affect the situation of the decedent's soul: in order to ensure peace for oneself in the afterlife, one had, moreover, to complete and conclude his economic operations in an appropriate fashion. To this end, the dying individual was bound to administer his or her assets in a responsible

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560 Tuszów Narodowy, p. 161 [1742]; also, see *ibid.* 202 [1758]; Husów, p. 15 [1628]; Iwkowa, No. 342 [1632].

561 Gać, Vol. 2, p. 253 [1665]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 5087 [1681]; Czarna, p. 173 [1700]; Hłomcza, miscellaneous records, fol. 32 [1780]; Zawada, Vol. 3, p. 12 [1791].

562 Limanowa A, p. 93 [1621]; also, see *Świątyni*, fol. 139 [1650]; Jadowniki B, p. 565 [1681]; cf. Nowogród, Vol. 3, p. 110 [1695].

563 Olszówka, fol. 66 [1763]; also, cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3473 [1695].

and fair manner, so that his or her descendants “wished no hell to the souls, instead of eternall rest-and-peace.”<sup>564</sup> Testamentary bequests and instructions could not satisfy everybody, however; the arguments and misunderstandings thereby incited weighed on the deceased’s soul. A curse was the only means of coercion the moribund individual could use to induce, or force, his or her heirs to respect his or her last will. Hence, many a peasant testament refers to a ‘horrid Judgement of God’ threatening those challenged the bequests.<sup>565</sup> The way in which the peasant summarised and concluded his or her economic life affected his or her hereafter and was secured with restrictive religious measures with respect to the moribund person’s neighbourhood.

Within the framework of the peasants’ ideas and concepts related to property, the greatest religious significance was attached to any transfers in the ownership of land. For a deal to be concluded in accordance with the peasant concept of justice, the outgoing owner ought to have transferred God’s blessing to his or her successor. The holding of such a blessing confirmed, in religious terms, one’s right to the cultivated land. The motif of the transfer of Divine blessing most frequently appears in last wills and other documents related to inheritance: its role was that of a symbolic means of corroboration of inheritance decisions. For instance, in 1730 in Osobnica, a peasant named Matiasz Kosiek offered his sons, on bequeathing his farm and household to them, “the fatherly blessing, so that they be blessed by God the L[ord] in every thing, what ever His most holy will may be.”<sup>566</sup> Wawrzeniec Bieszczad, a miller from Kąkolówka, added to the inheritor’s blessing the wishes: “may God never release His care about thee and thine children and great-grandchildren up into the tenth generation, may He never not.”<sup>567</sup>

Such transferral of Divine blessing could even have replaced the relevant legal act. In 1738, Bartosz Michno from Czarna bequeathed his farm-holding to his son Stanisław, “rendering him the inheritor and possessor of his home-stead situated ass above, in the following manner: ‘My dear son, do settle-down upon this farm-stead, wherefor I have spent the years of mine life the Lord hath

564 Łącko, No. 936 [1786]; also, see Zawada, Vol. 2, No. 22 [1625]; Czarna, p. 314 [1736].

565 For example, Pieskowa Skala, pp. 209 [1680], 908 [1759]; Świątniki, fol. 53<sup>v</sup> [1694]; Torki, p. 342 [1773]; also, cf. Jabłonna, fol. 6 [1641].

566 Osobnica, p. 637 [1730].

567 Kąkolówka, Vol. 2, p. 8 [1757]; also, cf. Ptaszkowa, p. 58 [1643]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3801 [1730]; Łukawiec, p. 87 [1732]; Jasionka, p. 6 [1742]; Iwkowa, No. 672 [1754]; Jedlnia, fol. 52 [1766]; Łąka, p. 28 [1776]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 2, fol. 48 [1777].

permitted, and be thou the serf to your lord, like I my selfe have bene, may thou be blessed by God the Lord for the descendant years and the broods of youres. I shall give thee naught a law [i.e. the document of bestowal of the soil by the village's owner], for I do have nonne my selfe, but am onely giving you the blessing Divine and fatherly, for to this farm-stead there is not any bodie closer but like I have bene then now art thou.'<sup>568</sup>

On the other hand, the expression forewarning against the loss of parental blessing in the event that the heir ill-treats (either of) his or her parents during perpetuity, which appears in a number of homestead transfer documents, essentially stood for the threat of disinheritance, or opened a loophole for 'rebuking' the testament owing to a failure to observe a major condition for legitimate inheritance: the holding of the blessing.<sup>569</sup>

This particular issue was less frequently registered when it came to the purchase or sale of land. In such cases, the blessing was officially transferred with use of special ritual forms, such as the confirming feast called *litkup* (from the German *Leitkauf*, meaning "purchase wine;" Ruthernian *mohorych*), or the 'green birch' custom.<sup>570</sup> What it actually looked like can be reconstructed based on certain more precise records, which offer more than a dry notification of the fulfilment of the custom. To give an example, in 1718 in Świętoniowa, Regina Zrzebionka sold her homestead to Jędrzej Jędrzeczyk, "saying to him these words under a green birch, once and once again, and then again: May thou be blessed by Jesus the Lord and the Most Holy Virgin, so that thou acquire all what be good on this farm-stead."<sup>571</sup> Similarly, in Jaworsko in 1737, on selling three quarters of the land to Walanty Bayda, a man called Józef Jewoła "poureth all the Divine blessing onto this Bayda and onto his wife and onto his children, wishing him all the Divine blessing, quothing: 'May thou be blessed by God the Lord.' This having been reciprocally confirmed by the parties with a *litkup* [drink] and a handshake. And he [Jewoła] bestowed [the soil] to him [Bayda] under the green birch."<sup>572</sup> Some records indicate that the blessing was reciprocal: the party selling the arable land blessed the new user; the one purchasing 'under the green

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568 Czarna, p. 197 [1738].

569 For example, Łącko, Nos. 660 [1726], 849 [1744]; Piątkowa, p. 60 [1766]; Zawada, Vol. 3, p. 43 [1800].

570 Cf. D. Ibbetson, 'From property to contract: The transformation of sale in the middle ages,' *The Journal of Legal History*, Vol. 13, 1992, No. 1, pp. 1–22.

571 Świętoniowa, p. 41 [1718].

572 Jaworsko, pp. 165–6 [1737]; also, see Rogi, fol. 442 [1694]; Lubatówka, fol. 361a [1721]; Równe, fol. 60 [1732]; Orzechówka, fol. 24<sup>v</sup> [1763].

birch' confirmed with a *litkup* "so that God All-mighty regale [him] with luck upon the purchase, as well as his seller, upon his moneys."<sup>573</sup>

Particular religious importance was attached in the countryside to taking over land after its proprietor's death. The one who took over land previously owned by a deceased person was charged with religious duties in respect of the dead owner's soul, which seemingly extended to all the previous owners of the field in question. The obligation to posthumously care for the soul of the testator was a fixed item in the last wills submitted by peasants. In exchange for the real property inherited, the inheritor usually obliged himself or herself to "salvage and do the others good for him after the death."<sup>574</sup> Upon taking over the land after his parents in 1762, Stanisław Grykiar of Albigowa declared as follows before the village aldermen: "Jakub Grykiar [the father] to me his son and with my loving mother Zofia blessed me on this gobbet of the garden, and for this same shall I allways request God, the Lord, day and night, so that God give them eternal rest."<sup>575</sup> Not all of the dying were certain that their heirs would keep the promise. While bequeathing the land to his son, Sobestyan Pecka of Kąkolówka exhorted the testamentary witnesses, Sobek Kwaśny and Tomasz Bator, that they supervise that the heir cared for his soul: "be this otherwise, then I shall at the judgement of God the Lord be crying upon you."<sup>576</sup>

The religious obligations of the inheritor to the deceased extended to the organisation of the funeral and the payment of its cost, the funeral banquet, legacies to the Church, requesting Holy Masses for his soul, distributing the alms and, possibly, repaying debts. Wojciech Skawinka of Skotniki, the successor of the arable land of Stanisław Grabiec, spent in this connection "for the purpose of the parish church of Tyniec, 100 zlotys, ... of cereal, which the demised had assigned to the indigent, three quarters (*ćwiertnias*);<sup>577</sup> a quarter of oat and wheat was

573 Zawada [t. 2], No. 133 [1677]; cf. F. Bortkiewicz, 'Akt litkupu i jego znaczenie przy pozbyciu nieruchomości chłopskich,' *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego. Nauki Humanistyczno-Społeczne*, Ser. I, fasc. 44, 1966, p. 187.

574 Bielcza, fol. 211 [1709]; Łobzów, unnumbered document, dated 6 April 1720; Woźniki, pp. 4-5 [1787].

575 Albigowa, Vol. 1, p. 221 [1762].

576 Kąkolówka, Vol. 2, p. 219 [1780]; also, cf. Zawada, Vol. 3, p. 43 [1800].

577 A quarter (*ćwiertnia*) was the measurement of volume essentially applied to cereals; the Krakow *ćwiertnia*, the most common of the varieties employed in mediaeval and early modern Poland, equalled approx. 140 litres (after 1565), or in the eighteenth century comprised 36 gallons (approx. 136 l), equal to 101 kg of rye and 107 kg of wheat. [Translator's note.]

given by this same Skawinka to the knowledge of the reverend parson, *item* for the indigent in the village, a quarter of oat." He moreover undertook "for thereafter to do good for the demised's soul out of the potentiall of his."<sup>578</sup> Long-term caring for the soul of the predecessor on the land meant regular prayer and occasionally requesting of Holy Masses for the deceased. Andrzej Kłos in Świątniki appeared markedly precautionary: about to die, he obliged his second wife and heiress to buy, on an annual basis, "candles for two zlotys to be placed in front of the image of the Holiest Virgin in Obrazów, and to give two zlotys therein for the holy mass in front of the image, to be celebrated there, which the Świątniki neighbours shall be expected to oversee."<sup>579</sup>

The interdependence between taking over an inherited farm holding and the religious duties to the demised worked both ways. While the inheritance of land made one bound to exercise care of the predecessor's body and soul posthumously, the arrangement for the funeral celebration and its delivery empowered one to inherit after the dead individual. In the peasants' conception, the one who took care of the posthumous fate of an individual in the religious dimension, quite naturally took over his or her property rights. If the son, son-in-law or spouse was established as the inheritor, this principle coincided with the right of propinquity (*ius propinquitatis*). However, also in such situations references were often made to it, as attested to by the wills where the moribund person ordered only one of his children to organise and pay for the funeral ceremonies whilst releasing the other offspring of this burden and, in parallel, rendering them remoter from the inheritance.<sup>580</sup> This principle is clearest in the last will of Jakub Woydan from Tuszów Narodowy, dated 1704. Jakub bequeathed his arable land not to a specified descendant but to one of his three children: the one that "shall have mercy upon his flesh" and have him buried.<sup>581</sup>

The same model of thinking determined moribund people disinheriting those among their legitimate inheritors who failed to perform the social rituals regarding the deceased and showed no interest in their posthumous fate. In 1689 in Tuszów Narodowy, Szymon Dzido's wife, "allready bed-ridden with a paroxysm of her illness, [at] the very last step [of her life]," had her children, Marianna and Wojciech, summoned; and, "since this same afore-named son did

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578 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7459 [1715].

579 Świątniki, fol. 166<sup>v</sup> [1684].

580 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4993 [1685]; Andrychów, Vol. 1, p. 195 [1687]; Stara Wieś Górna, p. 81 [1797].

581 Tuszów Narodowy, p. 108 [1704].

not appear afterward at the very last step of his mother, only this same afore-named Marianna Dzidowna [did], at the death and after the death, and had her buried at her [Marianna's] own cost as her mother, and thence this afore-named wife of Szymon Dzido, the mother, . . . having averted the son with tears, who had not attended at her death and was not willing to bury her," bequeathed the farm-holding to the daughter.<sup>582</sup>

If the heir procrastinated the fulfilment of his or her religious obligations regarding the soul and the flesh of the previous proprietor of the arable field, the village aldermen deemed it appropriate to intervene. A decree enacted by the demesne of Klimkówka court instructed the successors to sell a part of the inherited livestock and request a mass for the deceased owner's soul.<sup>583</sup> In Tyniec in 1782, a son who had taken over his father's farm was compelled to fund the father's funeral.<sup>584</sup> A similar disposition was issued in 1753 by the court of the village of Jaworsko to settle a dispute between the three sons of a certain Błażej Rzepa, over which of them ought to have their father buried. As the father had divided the land into three equal parts, it was decreed that "allso of the death and the funerall all the three of them ought for certain to know, grutching one against another not."<sup>585</sup>

It happened at times that the legacy was taken over by a completely alien person, even if the dead person had relatives whose priority of inheritance was assured by custom and law. This was so not only owing to the special role of last will in rural relationships, where the testamentary provisions prevailed over the legal principles of inheritance.<sup>586</sup> The conviction prevailed amongst the peasantry that failure to satisfy the obligations with respect to the deceased's soul and body restricted the right to succession from him or her. Therefore, if none of the relatives had taken appropriate care of the moribund testator and declared a willingness to pay for the funeral and to fulfil the other related ceremonies, the inheritance rights could resultantly be transferred to the person who had taken care of all this. Such transfer of succession could be effected by a testament; such was the case with the last will of Grzegorz Saydak from Gać. He bequeathed half of his farm to Krzysztof Winiarz, "for his great services in my sickness and the

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582 Ibid., p. 69 [1689]; also, see Czarna, p. 225 [1713]; Gać, Vol. 2, p. 53 [1717]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 88 [1755].

583 Klimkówka demesne, No. 711 [1670].

584 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7260 [1782].

585 Jaworsko, pp. 143–4 [1753].

586 J. Rafacz, 'Włościańskie prawo spadkowe w Polsce nowożytnej', in *Zwyczaje spadkowe włościan w Polsce*, Warsaw 1929, Part V, p. 9.



incommodiousnesses he was undertaking with me for nine weeks, and he was bearing the immeasurable odours with the entire house of his, and services of all sorts did he render, for of the mine children, nonne ever visited me in my sickness, who so ever.”<sup>587</sup>

In addition, the village aldermen were driven by the principle of relationship between the completion of the religious duties in respect of the soul and body of the dead husbandman, and the right to inherit the arable land from him. In 1696, the court of Tuszów Narodowy ordered sisters Agnieszka and Katarzyna Kiełb to return half of the land once owned by their deceased brother to a certain Wojciech Jura, to whom their brother, “having no body, resorted rescuing himself in the debility of his health;” in return, Wojciech spared no money to rescue the brother from his sickness, and then to support his funeral.<sup>588</sup> Another example: in 1726, by a verdict of the court of the Strzeszyce demesne, the estate of an old man called Dzinia was inherited not by his son Bartłomiej but by his brother-in-law, Maciej Zelek, who achieved the favour of the aldermen as the one who had paid the funeral expenses.<sup>589</sup>

In these cases, the heirloom claims neglecting the rule of proximity are explainable not only in terms of the moral right to succession acquired resulting from the fulfilment of the religious duties towards the deceased, because practical considerations were quite important in this respect. The individual who arranged the funeral and funded Masses and dinners for the deceased's soul incurred considerable costs and expenses that had to be set off against the land or property left behind by the former owner. However, the financial incentive did not prevail over the religious character of the conviction shared among peasants about the fundamental relationship between taking possession of the land and the assumption of religious responsibilities towards the deceased former owner. This is attested to by the quite frequent instances of peasants venturing to take over land on costly devotional initiatives whose only rationale was religious considerations. For instance, in 1766 the Rojek sisters, Barbara and Anna, of Jedlnia, having received a meadow bequeathed by their parents, resolved to offer 20 zlotys, which was half of the meadow's value, for a series of Masses for their souls. This was not an element of the funeral ceremony, for this was funded by Barbara and Anna's brothers as the main inheritors: it was, in fact, an offering related to the takeover of the land.<sup>590</sup>

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587 Gać, Vol. 2, p. 53 [1717].

588 Tuszów Narodowy, p. 88 [1696].

589 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3948 [1726]; also, see *ibid.*, No. 7490 [1755].

590 Jedlnia, fol. 54 [1766].

There is a very significant entry in a 1725 court register from the Masovian village of Czermno: upon settling on a piece of arable land that had remained abandoned for around a dozen years since its former owners had died during a plague, a peasant named Piotr “spared not his labour for those soules, which soules hath for long deserved rescue.” What this means is that he went to expense in requesting Masses for their souls, giving alms and dinners for the poor, “so that he could render them admitted to the glory of the Lord, God the crucified.” In exchange, the rural aldermen afforded the land to Piotr and his offspring in perpetuity.<sup>591</sup> There are laconic records that confirm the appearance of analogous behaviour among Lesser Poland’s peasantry. For example, on taking over a deserted piece of land in 1749, Karul Dąbrowski of Świeciechów gave a dinner “for those souls that have belonged to this ground-land.”<sup>592</sup> A similar reasoning is visible in the decree of the aldermen of the village of Tuszów Narodowy which ordered a certain Jakub Woydan to pay for the Masses for the soul of his younger brother, Piotr, who had once left the village and it was not known whether he was still alive. The decision was supported by the fact that Jakub had already been using the part of the land once held by his parents and assigned to Piotr, a circumstance that obliged him to practice solicitude for his brother’s soul.<sup>593</sup>

We can therefore conclude that a clear dependence between a person’s economic activity and religious convictions and beliefs formed part of the complex of ideas and concepts prevailing amongst the peasants of Lesser Poland. The spiritual aspects strongly impacted the rural economic customs, as best exemplified by the powerful interconnection between a specified piece of arable land and the posthumous fate of its deceased users. This relationship implied that the religious duties with respect to the souls ‘belonging’ to such a field were taken over together with the rights to the land. An analogous pattern appeared in popular stories about souls atoning on the earth, in the place that was particularly connected with their lifetime’s activity.

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591 Czermno, fol. 185 [1725].

592 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7063 [1749]; also, cf. Tuszów Narodowy, pp. 161 [1742], 202 [1758].

593 Tuszów Narodowy, pp. 56–7 [1684].

## IV. RELIGIOSITY AND MORALITY

### 1. The background behind the rural moral standards

Being a Christian should imply, and should have implied, the practical application of Christian moral standards. Their rootedness in a given community is therefore quite a significant symptom of its religiousness and piety. The lowest moral requirements posed by the Catholic Church for its faithful in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries was set by the obligation to master the Decalogue by heart. The Ten Commandments was part of each body of rudiments of the faith, even if severely pared-down to appeal to the simplest minds. In parallel, the Decalogue was extremely useful in everyday life. For Lesser Poland's peasants in this period, it was oftentimes the only known text that codified their principles of conduct. Tests of knowledge and the observance of the Commandments, performed on a regular basis by clergymen, rendered the Decalogue principles destined to play a prominent part in the shaping of moral attitudes among the rural faithful.

Amid the behaviours that were condemned and punished by the rural community (*gromada*), crimes and offences violating the Decalogue principles were at the very core. Extended comprehension of the Commandments covered virtually any and all vices, transgressions and peculations the peasant living in the Lesser Poland region could have encountered. The first Commandment was used as a religious sanction for the persecution of sorcery and witchcraft.<sup>594</sup> The second Commandment, in the rural conditions primarily worked against troublemakers and quarrellers, for those usually could not restrain their tongue and easily switched to profanity.<sup>595</sup> The third Commandment was useful in the struggle against those who broke the *gromada's* ritual unity by disrespecting holidays, fasting days, and the like.<sup>596</sup> The fourth Commandment buttressed the observance of the traditional hierarchical social arrangement in the family as well as in the rural community, as well as in the peasant's attitude towards nobles and clergymen.<sup>597</sup> The fifth Commandment was referred not only to manslaughters,

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594 For example, Świątoniowa, p. 52 [1731].

595 For example, Łącko, No. 633 [1722]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 9, fol. 121–121<sup>v</sup> [1759].

596 For example, Odrzechowa, fol. 9–9<sup>v</sup> [1724]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4290 [1777]; *Polskie instruktarze ekonomiczne ...*, p. 1 [1696].

597 See above, ch. II.3; cf. Wola Rzędzińska, fol. 62<sup>v</sup> [1598]; Popów, p. 28 [1613]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 7400 [1670], 3495 [1699], 7025 [1703]; Jazowsko, No. 26 [1685]; Barycz, Vol. 2, fol. 10 [1692]; Czarna, p. 273 [1726]; Łącko, No. 675 [1729];

which in a neighbourhood group resulted mostly from pathological incidents, but also to the fairly widespread brawls, some brutal enough to lead to the occasional killing.<sup>598</sup> The sixth and ninth Commandments functioned as an ideological basis for various aspects of sexual morality in the countryside, regardless of its evolution or local diversities of the latter.<sup>599</sup> The seventh and tenth Commandments regulated the question of ownership in the countryside, and were of use in settling obligations towards the manor.<sup>600</sup> The eighth Commandment might, to an extent, have restrained aspersions cast during quarrels, and certainly formed a theoretical foundation for the institution of oath, with all of its importance in rural social life.<sup>601</sup>

The ethical principles of peasants, however dominated by the Decalogue, were not restricted to the Ten Commandments. On the other hand, the available information on possible other sources that shaped the morality of peasants are quite vestigial. The influence of legal systems prevailing in Poland-Lithuania – German as well as Polish laws – is apparent in the declarative layer of the rural aldermen's decrees. However, as shown through Ludwik Łysiak's analysis, even the peasant decision-making elite made use of legal rules precariously – and, all too often, erroneously.<sup>602</sup> The references to an abstract 'secular law,' made when it came to judging immoral vices, never occurred in separation from the parallel Divine law, which still held primary rank.<sup>603</sup> Similarly, the concrete collections of laws applied in rural areas, primarily the German (Magdeburg) law, were treated as the Decalogue's 'implementing provisions.' Whenever the village aldermen

Albigowa, Vol. 4, p. 43 [c. 1746]; Rajbrot, p. 49 [1753]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 98 [1762].

598 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3553 [1710]; Klimkówka demesne, No. 1200 [1720]; Łącko, No. 633 [1722]; Lubatówka, fol. 376 [1731].

599 For example, Klimkówka demesne, No. 1200 [1720]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, pp. 24 [1755] and 38 [1755]; Vol. 2, p. 31 [1761] and 113 [1763]; Tarnów, No. 48 [1756]; Jazowsko, Nos. 315 [1771], 357 [1778].

600 For example, *Regestr złoczyńców grodu sanockiego 1554–1638*, ed. by O. Balzer, Lwów 1891, No. 64 [1593]; Piątkowa, pp. 114–15 [1699]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3922 [1702]; Rudna Wielka, fol. 4<sup>v</sup> [1718]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 86 [1755]; Tarnów, No. 46 [1756]; Kąkolówka, Vol. 1, p. 349 [1782].

601 For example, Błazowa, Vol. 2, p. 13 [1746]; also, cf. 'Prawo bartne bartnikom należące . . . do starostwa przasnyskiego,' in *Biblioteka Starożytna Pisarzy Polskich*, ed. by K.W. Wójcicki, Vol. IV, Warsaw 1854, p. 225.

602 L. Łysiak, 'Prawo i zwyczaj ...,' p. 11.

603 For example, Klimkówka demesne, No. 1200 [1720]; also, cf. Hańczowa, Wysowa, and Blechnarka, fol. 63–63<sup>v</sup> [1722]; Włosienica, No. 2 [1782].

resorted to Bartłomiej Groicki's statutes (the compendium of German Law) as a point of reference in passing verdicts in criminal offences, the offender's guilt was described by referring to the Commandments ('Divine/God's law'), whilst Magdeburg law was only used to decree the appropriate punishment.<sup>604</sup>

Such an approach to written law severely restricted its contribution to the shaping of rural ethics. The influence of written law, if any, was limited to a secondary hierarchisation of Decalogue offences through a diversification of the severity of the proposed punishments for transgressions. The contribution of rural statutes to the shaping of peasant morality must have been even less. Ethical questions in such documents were mostly touched upon only superficially. The legislators usually restricted themselves to instructing that "what ever the Church willeth to have interdicted, this be not acted against;"<sup>605</sup> or, at once, "the sinns banned by God be warded off amidst the serfs."<sup>606</sup> At times, a penal sanction was added for a failure to go to church or to Easter confession, thus decreeing part of the ecclesiastical precepts. The explanations appearing in some justifications of verdicts for crimes against morality, stating that the guilty had violated the principles of the village or the lord's commands, were always secondary to the arguments derived from the Decalogue and seem to have been the grounds given for requisition of fines to the manor's benefit.<sup>607</sup>

Among the principles normalising ethical conduct, some rural courts' decrees mentioned a 'natural law.' The use of this term was probably an intellectual contribution by the scribe (or other educated member or supervisor of the jury) to the verbalisation of the rural norms of conduct. The notion of natural law was referred to in some special situations, when the misdeed being judged was doubtlessly unethical but not directly referable to the Decalogue; first of all, in family conflicts where the injured party was children or other persons under the trespasser's custody. However, references to natural law always appeared in parallel with the adjuration of Divine law; 'maleficence against Divine and natural law' is an exemplary expression used at such points. Clearly, such undefined natural law harmonised with the law of God and sought support and legitimation through it. In practice, this is how an attempt was probably made to employ judicial language to put in writing the peasants' conviction that Divine orders

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604 For example, Albigowa, Vol. 1, p. 34 [1690]; Lubatówka, fol. 376 [1731]; Wysoka B, fol. 49 [1756].

605 Czarna, p. 274 [1726].

606 *Polskie instruktarze ekonomiczne ...*, p. 1 [1696].

607 For example, Hańczowa, Wysowa, Blechnarka, fol. 63–63<sup>v</sup> [1723]; Odrzechowa, fol. 9 [1724]; cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4100 [1618].

were the source of ethics (for family relations, in this case), albeit no appropriate theological argument was used for the purpose.<sup>608</sup>

However, it was not only the Decalogue that formed the peasant ethical system. The morality of Lesser Poland's sixteenth- to eighteenth-century peasants were moreover informed by other texts and religious principles taught from the pulpit. Their influence was rarely reflected in the historic records, though. The development of a religious-ethical awareness and adaptation to concrete moral principles was encased by the seal of the confessional, unless these principles received the sanction of criminal law. Operating upon a not-quite-concrete legal foundation, the rural aldermen oftentimes felt competent in fighting 'clear and arcane sins.' Therefore, rural courts occasionally penalised unethical transgressions, which, even though they were not punishable by any of the legal systems applied in the Commonwealth, were perceived by the *gromada* as worth punishing – as vices against the accepted moral principles. Although isolated and as a rule surfacing on the occasion of other crimes, such instances are particularly interesting as they demonstrate which elements of Christian moral doctrine were absorbed by rural communities, or at least by their elites.

Discernible among them are traces of using, for penalisation purposes, the set of Seven Cardinal Sins: for example, anger<sup>609</sup> and intemperance in drinking were punished.<sup>610</sup> In this context, characteristic is the decree of the court of Jazowsko from 1741 punishing Tomasz Trzepak with 30 lashes for throwing a piece of bread against a wall while arguing. Prayer was referred to as part of the verdict's justification: "so, what we say in our prayers, is 'give us our daily bread,' and we ought not to be throwing it."<sup>611</sup> This case indicates that not only the Decalogue but also a variety of other religious texts might have inspired the ethical norms of standards for the peasants.

In connection with this example, the question however arises whether it was really a matter of influence of Christian prayer on the moral principles of the rural community, or rather a traditional respect for bread, characteristic of peasants, that had been explained and supported by the authority of a known religious text. This single case gives no grounds to resolve the issue. However, it shows a serious research issue of how deep the influence of Christian moral principles was on the ethical system of peasants and to what extent this system

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608 For example, Świątoniowa, p. 47 [1729]; cf. ASD, Vol. 1, p. 403 [1731].

609 Błazowa, Vol. 2, p. 14 [1746]; Tarnów, No. 75 [1756].

610 Włosienica, No. 2 [1782].

611 Jazowsko, No. 165 [1741].

shaped an autonomous moral hierarchy. The issue is complicated by the fact that Christian morality and the peasant community's own ethics did not have to be antithetical. On the contrary: to a considerable extent they could be complementary or coinciding, as in the above-quoted case emphasising respect for bread.

As mentioned above, the Decalogue and other catechism-based ethical rules were used by the rural elite in the moral (and penal) evaluation of crimes perpetrated by their fellow countrymen. This is not tantamount to the statement that criminals and their peers assessed their trespasses in terms of the same criteria. It seems that even if at times the rural aldermen, including the scribe, had trouble matching the appropriate ordinal number with the Commandment in question,<sup>612</sup> even less could be expected from rank-and-file members of the *gromada*. However, the problem did not consist in memorisation of the Decalogue at random: central to it was the position of the Commandments in a broader complex of ethical principles functioning in the rural community. The system under discussion implied an undisputable acceptance of a specified catechism precept, or, at times, its modification or relativization. In some cases, a commandment would be practically rejected for the sake of another, autonomous norm. It is difficult to establish, as did the missionaries and religious instructors operating in rural areas in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries (and later), that instilling the Decalogue meant that some morality was eventually inculcated in the rural areas, amongst the 'ungodly peasantry-knaverie'.<sup>613</sup>

## 2. The functioning of the peasant ethical system

The first autonomous feature of the peasant moral system was that, similarly to the systems of other social strata, it relativized the moral evaluation of an act or deed depending of the perpetrator's status. To this end, criteria were employed which were shared by the entire Commonwealth's society, in parallel with the unique criteria, specific to the peasants' concepts or ideas.

Of course, the highest moral requirements were posed to all the aged persons who, "being stricken in yeares, ... ought to teach a Decalogue and provide his example for those younger to follow."<sup>614</sup> However, all of such men's delinquencies were severely condemned, perceived as unworthy of the dignity stemming from life experience. Also mature and sedate individuals were assessed

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612 For example, Łącko, No. 675 [1729]; ASD, Vol. 4, fol. 175<sup>v</sup> [1750].

613 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7392 [1663]; cf. Włosienica, No. 62 [1794].

614 Nowa Góra A, fol. 17<sup>v</sup> [1737]; cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7058 [1681], and Jazowsko, No. 179 [1742].

rigorously enough, particularly if their offence affected social morality.<sup>615</sup> This is not to say, though, that young people would have gone unpunished with their sins and minor transgressions. As far as delinquencies affecting sexual ethics was concerned, the young age of the offender aroused ever severer criticism.<sup>616</sup> The quality of moral judgement was influenced, moreover, by the gender of the perpetrator, depending on the admissibility of specified sins, which differed for females and males.

The delinquencies in themselves were also relativized; one case in point was manslaughter, an apparently obvious instance. With the gradual disappearance of the custom of blood feud (*wróźda*) and reconciliation, killers were usually referred to municipal courts, in line with the advice offered by Jakub Kazimierz Haur, an author of popular manuals for estate administrators, as well as in accordance with the prohibition of prosecuting matters subject to capital punishment in rural courts. Some cases of this sort were, however, dealt with by a rural aldermen's or dominion courts, which kept no executioner but, in line with the Magdeburg Law, passed death sentences which were thereafter replaced, 'by act of pardon,' with heavy physical punishments. However, this was not the only reason why the rural judiciary tended to be more lenient compared to the urban. An analysis of murder trials implies that aldermen's courts in the countryside took into consideration more extenuating circumstances than criminal courts in towns did. Among the variety of factors, the fact was prominent that *gromada*'s aldermen considered cases of their neighbours, rather than some anonymous peasants, and thus focused more diligently on the context of the crime committed.<sup>617</sup> On the other hand, holdovers of the belief that not every single homicide is improper might have had a role. The forest beekeepers' law for the county of Przasnysz, issued in 1559 and last reprinted in 1730, specified the procedure of beekeepers slaying on the spot the wrongdoer they caught.<sup>618</sup> In 1635, the aldermen's court in Wola Żarczycka decreed that any member of the local rural community was allowed to kill a certain *Praśnik*, guilty of advowtry, if offence recurred, and go unpunished.<sup>619</sup> This same line of thinking can be seen more than 100 years later among the peasants of Świętoniowa, who in 1741 resolved

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615 For example, Jazowsko, No. 22 [1685]; ASD, Vol. 1, p. 36 [1721], 145 [1722].

616 For example, Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 207 [1765]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 1, pp. 199 [1723], 333 [1725], 620–2 [1736].

617 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3925 [1702], 4224 [1630]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 53 [1753].

618 'Prawo bartne bartnikom należące ...,' pp. 246–7.

619 Wola Żarczycka, No. 39 [1635] (also, M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka ...*, pp. 32–3).



to drown a multiple thief they had caught. The man was dragged to the bank of the Wisłok River and asked the incident's ringleader, a certain Krzysztof Bociek, if they were permitted to kill the thief by the Rev. Radliński, provost of Przeworsk, who exercised the supreme judicial power in the area Świętoniowa, which belonged to the Church. Once Bociek told the peasants that the priest had permitted the manslaughter and 'no harm will come to them' (which transpired not to be true), they slew the man without hesitation.<sup>620</sup>

In this particular case, the farmers of Świętoniowa demonstrated a far-reaching group solidarity, which seemingly was a value among peasants that surpassed the moral principles decreed by the catechism. Such bonds become apparent primarily in the villages where the owner enforced strict control over the morality of his subjects, the serfs, which was the case mainly for ecclesiastical demesnes. In a number of various crimes against social norms, peasants reluctantly cooperated with the supreme authorities that strove to punish the perpetrators, as, e.g. in inn fights<sup>621</sup> or involving the breaking of sexual ethics.<sup>622</sup> This is not to say that the peasant milieu did not condemn such excesses. However, they would not be punished by a court due to a sense of group solidarity which was probably supported by an awareness that the manorial court would resort to a different moral hierarchy if it considered the case.

The sense of group solidarity among peasants was not limitless and persistent, like it was often perceived by manorial supervisors. After all, the *gromada* would frequently bring their maleficent members before the judicial body, or reject the idea of standing up for them in court.<sup>623</sup> Opinions about a limited 'ethical sensitivity' among peasants, or outright inbred immorality, were rooted in the fact that peasants, with their specific autonomous moral system, did not always respond in the way they would be expected by their lords and parsons.<sup>624</sup> Therefore, a number of rural statutes encouraged, and occasionally even obliged, community members to inform on miscreants.<sup>625</sup> Once a delinquency was revealed, those

620 BC, ms 2066, pp. 46–8.

621 For example, Włosienica, No. 62 [1794].

622 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4037 [1744]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 1, p. 324 [1725]; Vol. 7, fol. 90<sup>v</sup> [1755].

623 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia...*, p. 106 [1595]; *Regestr złoczyńców grodu sanockiego...*, No. 100 [1602], 110 [1606], 134 [1611]; Kąkolówka, Vol. 1, p. 364 [1719].

624 I do not deal at this point with the problem of dual standards among the noblemen and the clergy as far as ethical requirements with respect to peasants were concerned; see, e.g., BO, ms 1444, p. 57.

625 For example, Pieskowa Skała, p. 59 [1627]; Żywiec demesne, No. 42 [1689]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3568 [1714].

who 'knew but concealed it' were punished – not only the witnesses<sup>626</sup> but also the harmed ones: once, a girl raped by her stepfather was punished with fifteen lashes with a whip because she had not denounced him.<sup>627</sup> A policy of this kind clearly led to the peasants forming an even more exclusive circle, apparently indifferent to vice, especially where the self-government was deprived of any competence in moral and penal issues.

The basic characteristic of the moral hierarchy applied to relationships within the peasant community was the pursuit of keeping concord amongst neighbours. Of course, conflicts were inevitable and they did happen, with some dragging on for years: even outsider observers must have deemed some of these cases not unreasonable. Nonetheless, harmony and good neighbourhood was valued greatly. The principles of Christian ethics reinforced the importance of concord among neighbours, whilst also offering a practical *and* religious explanation of why quarrelling and dissensions were incongruous. The anger and curses associated with them clearly infringed the Divine Commandments.<sup>628</sup> In lengthy animosities, a useful explanation of their ineptitude was the obligation to calm one's own conscience (by getting rid of anger, among other things) before going to confession. However, this argument was rather rhetorical for its practical value was not considerable. In 1756 in Zalasowa, a certain 'Frankowa Świątkowa' (Franek Świątek's wife) grumbled about Stańczyczka the widow who, in spite of the neighbours having been dispatched to apologise to her, "willing not, by any means whatsoever, to be apologised to, and went to confession;" Stańczyczka replied that "all though she hath approached the Confession, wrathfull was she not, but out right misserable for [her] iniquity."<sup>629</sup> Apparently, she must have been conversant as far as moral sense was concerned.

Associated with the problem of quarrelling was vilifying and libel. In early modern rural areas, gossiping was a very important instrument of communication and opinion-forming. Gossips were hard to fight as long as they remained anonymous. A nosey female rural gossip would very rarely be punished for the mere fact of disseminating unconfirmed information. For instance, a gossip called Waynarka from Ołpiny not only must have brought the wrath of the whole rural community down on her, but also run afoul of the curate of local church,

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626 For example, Łętownia, fol. 133 [1654]; Klimkówka demesne, No. 817 [1679]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3963 [1728], 4019 [1744]; Jazowsko, No. 179 [1742]; Ołpiny B, fol. 17 [c. 1764]; also, cf. Równie, fol. 81<sup>v</sup> [1728].

627 ASD, Vol. 1, p. 415 [1732]; cf. Jazowsko, No. 38 [1694].

628 Kasina, pp. 68 [1694] and 264 [c. 1745]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3948 [1726].

629 Tarnów, No. 75 [1756]; cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3933 [1720]; Błazowa, Vol. 2, p. 14 [1746]; Nowa Góra H, pp. 15 [1752].

because, apart from the lashing, she was ordered to make ecclesiastical atonement for the sin she had committed (“barking at priests”), and was threatened with expulsion from the village.<sup>630</sup> She had probably crossed the thin line betwixt prating and smear, which certainly affected the classification of her act.

If expressed in public, calumny was in fact an accusation that called for a reply. To reconstruct the rural ethical system, the object of slander is crucial as it shows what was considered condemnable or particularly insulting. Certainly, defamations included numerous accusations of a variety of crimes or offences, such as theft, adultery, witchcraft, or murder.<sup>631</sup> The most original instances were the insinuation of attempted suicide<sup>632</sup> and sodomy with a calf.<sup>633</sup> Some of these accusations were probably not unfounded but inefficient due to a lack of evidence. Some others were insults articulated in anger – not to reveal a misdemeanour (usually an imaginary one) but rather to offend the interlocutor.

Unexpectedly, allegations of a crime against the law or the Decalogue were the most provocative insults. Moreover, some of the insinuated acts were not subject to penal accountability or a religious ban, but were instances of a breach of ethical cultural norms. To give an example, a man called Wojciech Sikora insinuated that Jakub Królik, the reeve of Krowodrza [then a village outside Krakow; today, a district within the city] had castrated a dog, “adding thereto that he eateth cadaveric heads and lungs of mares.”<sup>634</sup> Extant records concerning such verbal abuses are very rare, for a variety of reasons, and hence to attempt to reconstruct even a fragmentary catalogue of these insults would be a quite impossible task.

The problem of sensitivity to defamation and responding to insults increases awareness of an important element in the peasant ethical system: the sense of dignity and honour. In this respect, however, we are obliged to assume. Socially impaired in Poland-Lithuania, to an extent incomparable with any other ‘Latin’ European country, peasants had virtually no conditions to develop a sense of self-esteem and an honorary code. They were much more accustomed to humbly exposing their backs to lashes from the granger and to showing abject servility to their ‘benefactors’; thus, they could only show their honour and personal dignity within their own group.

630 Olpiny B, fol. 18 [c. 1764]; also, cf.: *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4279 [1750].

631 For example, Piątkowa, pp. 196–7 [1644]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3294 [1646], 7115 [1622]; Olpiny B, fol. 9 [1734]; Muszyzna demesne, Vol. 2, fol. 105 [1763]; Jazowsko, No. 414 [1793].

632 ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 332–334 [1757].

633 Klimkówka demesne, No. 1029 [1692].

634 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4377 [1701].

Vestigial as it is, the available information suggests that there existed a specific sense of honour among peasants. It was not a difficult thing to insult a peasant; as Jan Dzwonowski, an author of grotesque verses from the early seventeenth century, advised the ‘knaves:’

Z chłopca możesz żartować, kiedy kędy w karczmie,	Thou canst jest 'bout peasants, when somewhere at inn:
Ale jak się postrzeże, oddać to więc zacznie.	But once he hath spotted, re-pay he'll begin.
Dalić kijem z kilka raz, przestań szydzić z niego,	Goe get lashed a little, mock at him no more,
By się zaś nie rozgniewał, a nie rzekł ci czego.	Doe restraine his anger: he may leap to th' fore;
Boć to są nie cechowi, własni to ultaje.	For of no guilde be those: scoundrels ne'er hidden.
I kijem cie obali i jeszcze nałaje.	Thou'll tumble whilst beaten, and yet get chidden. <sup>635</sup>

Mentions of ‘stately’ versus ‘indecorous’ daily conduct are encountered, an entire complex of customary behaviours at the inn seems to have been strongly permeated by the inclination to value others whilst cherishing one’s own value. To reconstruct a peasant honorary code is practically impossible due to the dearth of available material. Similarly, it is impossible to determine the extent to which the peasant sense of honour justified the breaking of moral norms rooted in the Decalogue.

The ethical principles regulating the relationships among the rural community’s members extended to the protection of property and ownership; in this particular respect, the standards observed by the peasants ideally harmonised with the seventh Commandment, extending not only to ordinary theft<sup>636</sup> but also to deliberately harming cultivation or animal breeding,<sup>637</sup> and the

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635 J. Dzwonowski, *Pisma* [‘Writings’], ed. by K. Badecki, Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich No. 58, Krakow 1910, p. 52.

636 Piątkowa, pp. 114–15 [1699]; Tarnów, No. 46 [1756]; Tylicz B, pp. 74–5 [1767]; Kąkolówka, Vol. 2, p. 349 [1782].

637 For example, Błazowa, Vol. 1, pp. 157–9 [1673]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4652 [1701].

attainment of financial gains through fraud or dishonesty towards neighbours.<sup>638</sup> Obviously, absolute observance of the standards was not the case in the peasants' everyday lives. They essentially had to be followed, however, otherwise the community was exposed to disintegration.

However, we also have a low opinion of the peasant's sense of honesty, written down by an anonymous monk who probably acted as an administrator with the estate of the Carmelite monastery in Czerna, in 1663. In his opinion, the peasants were 'traitors' who are "glad to have the occassyon when any steward brother be sent away, they mangle the monastery, contrive some God-knoweth-what debts never due thereto. On such occassions, one ought rather [to be] a carefull superior, not believing them readily, but refer one self to the brother sent-away, or may he [i.e. the claiming peasant] render three witnesses appear, if there is any one claiming any thing *post discessum fratris oeconomi* [after the departed steward-brother]."<sup>639</sup> This confirms the noble authors' opinion about peasants: insidious, they would use any opportunity to "benefit off" (using that period's expression) things at the expense of the manor; they commonly cheat and rob their lord.<sup>640</sup> However, this description is not quite verifiable as it essentially renders the author's subjective feelings and prejudices. There is probably much exaggeration in it: after all, it is the testimony of a party to the dispute, who highlights his suffering. On the other hand, this might have partly come from the peasants' double standards in respect of the seventh Commandment. Meticulously honest towards his or her neighbours, a peasant could break God's orders in his or her relations with the manor, finding an excuse in the fact that the lord and his associates enforced material benefits and labours he or she perceived as undue. The village's owner or leaseholder used his dominant position to economically exploit the serfs, his subjects; no surprise, then, that the peasants returned the favour to the extent possible and forgot about the Commandments of God when doing so.<sup>641</sup>

One illustrative example of the efficient assimilation of the Decalogue into the peasants' ethical system is the reception of the third Commandment. As far as participation in Sunday and holiday services is concerned, it may be considered

638 For example, Albigowa, Vol. 1, p. 293 [1778]; cf. Hańczowa, Wysowa, and Blechnarka, fol. 63–63<sup>v</sup> [1722].

639 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7392 [1663].

640 J. S. Bystroń, *Kultura ludowa ...*, p. 205.

641 Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 240–1; A. Falniowska-Gradowska, 'Dwór a gromada wiejska w województwie krakowskim w XVIII wieku,' in *Studia nad gospodarką, społeczeństwem i rodziną w Europie późnofeudalnej*, ed. by J. Topolski, C. Kukło, Lublin 1987, p. 273.

to have become one of the most persistent customs among peasants, in spite of complaints often encountered in the sources. The administrative control of church attendance, which was compulsory in a number of villages, generally came across no resistance from the peasants; some problems in this respect occurred in areas strongly influenced by the Reformation, and they usually had to do with individuals' disturbed confessional awareness. As a number of records tell us, deterring a peasant from attending a church service would have been a challenging task. In spite of the bans, serfs residing in the demesnes or estates of sixteenth-century reformed nobles sneaked to the nearest active Catholic church, occasionally travelling some distance.<sup>642</sup> Notably, attendance during plagues did not decrease, in spite of the epidemic threat aroused by contact among larger groups of people.<sup>643</sup>

A real obstacle to joining a Holy Mass could have been the necessary farming labours that needed to be done in spite of the feast day. For this reason, some household members had to stay at each homestead on Sunday. Additionally, fairs and kermises organised on Sundays detracted from participation in church services.<sup>644</sup> The peasants seemed to have regarded their absence from Sunday Mass fully justifiable when due to practical reasons. Those who did not take part in a service when they had time and occasion to do it were fervently condemned, as was the case of a miller from Wysoka, Jakub Kochman, who skipped Mass several times in a row "so that he could smoke his pipe during the service, during which [action] he was discovered."<sup>645</sup>

The order to restrain from work on holidays was also reflected in the ethical system to which peasants adhered. The specificity of the farming jobs meant, however, that they often faced the dilemma of whether to break the ban on the grounds of necessity, e.g. when the harvest had to be gathered before expected rainfall which could damage the crops. The 'majority is right' rule seems to have been employed in such cases. When single individuals violated a feast day by working, the village would ruthlessly condemn them.<sup>646</sup> If, however, the decision to work on a Sunday was made by the whole *gromada*, the moral justification of such decision could only be undermined by the pastor of its souls. It has to be borne in mind, though, that the clergy residing in rural areas were farmers

642 W. Urban, op. cit., pp. 152–3.

643 W. Smoczyński, *Kartka z dziejów Tęczyna*, Krakow 1888, pp. 57 and 75–7.

644 Cf. S. Litak, 'Z zagadnień kultury religijnej ...', pp. 336–7.

645 Wysoka B, fol. 61–62 [1765]; also, see Jazowsko, No. 119 [1738].

646 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3183 [1636], 3403 [1677]; Raniżów, fol. 48–48<sup>v</sup> [1664]; Odrzechowa, fol. 9 [1724]; Żywiec demesne, No. 460 [1765].

themselves, earning income from the cultivation of arable land, and in an emergency or under unexpected circumstances granted their parishioners an indulgence for field work on church holidays.<sup>647</sup> Characteristically, in almost all the popular exempla showing a sudden and worldly Divine punishment for working on a holiday, the sinner devoted himself to a craft, rather than farming.

While refraining from work on church holidays was durably incorporated in the peasants' ethics, foregoing secular entertainment opportunities on such days became part of rural practice to quite a limited extent. It was only in 1777 that the first known mention was written down indicating that some peasants considered dancing on solemnly celebrated holidays condemnable.<sup>648</sup> Earlier, such records only refer to extremely drastic infringements of the serious character of feast days. For instance, in 1750 in Zagórzany, the rural court punished Józef Szperka who during a service held on Candlemas Day did not break off the dancing, playing instruments and drinking at his home, and was moreover shooting with a pistol.<sup>649</sup>

However, it should be remarked that the pressure exerted by the post-Tridentine Church in Poland on restricting the secular models of celebrating holidays was not as strong as in the Catholic countries in the west of Europe. The main reason was that the traditional Polish celebration of feasting customs (rather modest compared to their French or Italian counterparts) never implied an excessive familiarisation with the Christian sacred, almost on the verge of profanation, as was otherwise the case in the Provençal bibulous processions with relics, crowded with a banquet in a relaxed atmosphere. In Poland, drunkenness was the central problem in this respect. The Church's requirements were limited, however, to forbidding publicans to offer alcohol in during the services to avoid competition against the Holy Mass. Such a restriction apparently covered several villages, mostly those in ecclesiastical demesnes.<sup>650</sup> Elsewhere, as in Sułoszowa for example, where at least two inns offered drinks during church services,<sup>651</sup> no related conflicts are observable. Condemnation, in terms of the peasant ethical system, seems only to have extended to getting drunk before

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647 For example, Pieskowa Skała, p. 369 [1702]; cf. J. Kracik, '»Nieposłuszne Kościołowi dziatki«. Reakcja społeczna na papieską redukcję świąt w Polsce w 1775 roku,' *Analecta Cracoviensia*, Vol. 27, 1995, pp. 501, 505.

648 Krowodrza, Vol. 4, pp. 100–1 [1777].

649 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4275 [1750].

650 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3137 [1632]; Łącko, No. 625 [1720]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 185 [1764]; cf. Jazowsko, No. 110 [1738].

651 Pieskowa Skała, p. 343 [1698].

a service, to the extent that it might have caused improper behaviour in the church.<sup>652</sup> Regarding other addictions that distracted peasants from attending Masses, such as tobacco smoking or dice, these were not dealt with in detail perhaps because they were considered secondary to entertainment in the inns and alcohol consumption.<sup>653</sup>

### 3. Sexual ethics of peasants in the light of the Christian model

The issue of sexual ethics is an example of the dominance of the peasants' autonomous moral system over the norms derived from the Decalogue. While the period under discussion witnessed some rather substantial changes in this respect, the durability of certain principles and ways of ethical evaluation among peasants is worth emphasising. In the early modern period, the gradual 'moralisation' of sexual customs and morality occurred, resulting from pastoral activities of the Church, whilst the role of the traditional system of values in this respect became limited. In spite of this evolutionary trend, certain persistent elements of the system are identifiable, and their relation with the Decalogue-based principles is determinable.

In summary, it can be stated that autonomous sexual ethics were considerably less rigorous than the model proposed by the pastoral ministry.<sup>654</sup> This particularly referred to the question of sexual activity among unmarried people. The differences in this respect were truly fundamental. In the ethnical system adhered to by peasants, the notion of 'chastity' in its sexual connotation was actually unknown. True, some verdicts passed by village courts suggest that, in the opinion of the aldermen's jury, maidens ought to 'observe maidenhood' while adolescent males should 'remain well-nigh unaware of such a sin.'<sup>655</sup> However, in practice commencing sexual life had more to do with biological determinants to the detriment of the religious norms that strove to restrict sexuality to marital intercourse. In a grotesque form, the issue is illustrated by a folk rhyme, written down in the early eighteenth century:

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652 For example, Jazowski, No. 119 [1738]; BPAU/PAN, ms 7121, fol. 52<sup>v</sup>; cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3138 [1632]; ASD, Vol. 2, p. 174 [1744].

653 See, e.g., Łącko, No. 625 [1720]; Wysoka B, fol. 62 [1765].

654 Cf. Z. Kuchowicz, *Miłość staropolska*, Łódź 1982, pp. 210–11. I have discussed extensively the problem of sexual customs of early modern Polish peasants in the book: T. Wiślicz, *Love in the Fields. Relationships and marriage in rural Poland in the early modern age: social imagery and personal experience*, Warsaw 2018.

655 Błażowa, Vol. 2, p. 2 [1745]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, p. 258 [1759]; cf. Jazowski, No. 203 [1748].



Od sochy do sochy  
 Niech trawa rośnie.  
 Nie dawaj picochy,  
 Az ci porośnie.

May the grass grow stout  
 From hoe to hoe.  
 Till thy quim doth sprout,  
 Don't give naught, tho.<sup>656</sup>

Virginity was not particularly cherished in the peasant environment. The notion of 'wreath' [*wieniec*], usually identified with virginity, did function; references to 'subducting' or 'awarding' the wreath were made, although the meaning of such phrases is not clearly apparent to us. Only in a single case did the rural aldermen use the word *wieniec* in our contemporary meaning of virginity: it was an extremely drastic instance of the rape of an eleven-year-old girl.<sup>657</sup> 'Loss of wreath' was referred to much more frequently to describe, in broader terms, a blemish on the reputation of a girl which implied a decrease in her reputation on the matrimonial market, in a vague, indirect connection with the actual condition of her maidenhead. In practice, it was usually tantamount to giving birth to a bastard.<sup>658</sup>

Sexual activity practiced by unmarried individuals of either sex did not provoke unambiguous condemnation among the rural community. On the contrary, we can rather conclude that silent complicity with premarital intercourse was prevalent, as long as certain customary norms were observed. Once, Agnieszka Starczalina from the demesne of Sucha had an affair with Bartek Karcz. Her mother, "knowing that they have had tightness betwixt themselves, ridiculed at this and, as if sneering, told Karcz: be careful with my lass."<sup>659</sup> The actual problem began when the girl was found pregnant: both lovers were then exposed to physical chastising and fines, women were additionally affected by a considerable detriment to their reputation, and the prospect that she would have to bring up and feed the child herself. This, however, was the worst scenario: the ordinary way to avoid trouble (though not to evade punishment and undergo an alleviated one instead) was to get married.

Among the verdicts on fornication involving unmarried people entered in the registers of Kasina in 1602–1714, more than 29 % finally led to a voluntary or court-ordered marriage of the defendants. In the demesne of Muszyna,

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656 C. Hernas, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 58.

657 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7058 [1681].

658 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4991 [1681]; Rajbrot, p. 23 [1752]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, p. 159 [1758]; also, see ASD, Vol. 1, p. 56 [1721], Vol. 2, p. 125 [1743].

659 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4637 [1700]; also, see Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 174 [1764]. Cf. Z. Kuchowicz, *Miłość staropolska ...*, pp. 214–15.

the proportion was almost 43 % in 1754–66. However, these data represent the tip of the iceberg, as most of these occurrences remained completely unregistered: marriages were usually entered into without the intermediation of the aldermen's court, and endeavours were made to conceal acts of fornication. This issue would have become clearer based on an analysis of parish registers, showing the proportion of women getting married while pregnant; unfortunately, specialist research of this sort is carried out very rarely,<sup>660</sup> whilst the vestigial condition of such sources in the Lesser Poland area does not facilitate the task at all.

As it may be guessed, however, this way of arranging marriage must have been quite commonplace. If an epigram by Waclaw Potocki, a leading Polish seventeenth-century poet, is to be trusted, it was almost standard in the countryside:

Inakszej zażywiają chłopi na wsi mody, Bo i zmowa na piecu i łożnica wprzody ...	There's a different fashion peasants now enjoi: All's agreed by the stove, bed-chamber decyoeth . . .
Aż skoro pannie młodej brzuch nosa dosięga, Wtenczas ślub i małżeńska nastąpi przysięga.	And then, should the bride's womb reach up to her nose, The marriage cometh, and, contract vows are posed. <sup>661</sup>

The girl involved in an affair could actually be rather easily conciliated by the promise of marriage. On encouraging Bartłomiej Piekarczyk's daughter to 'venture an excess,' Wojciech Sitowski of the demesne of Łącko "promised to marry her, and upon this foundation they were insulting God the Lord."<sup>662</sup> Marcin Łukaszewicz, who "hath long declared marital friendship" to his lover, Regina, "and admitted himself those carnall deeds out of true affection," thereby explained his motives in somewhat deeper terms.<sup>663</sup>

660 Of particular value is the study: C. Kukło, 'Funkcjonowanie społeczności parafialnej na tle analizy rejestracji chrztów parafii Trzciannie 1600–1654,' in *Spoleczeństwo Staropolskie. Studia i szkice*, Vol. 3, ed. by A. Wyczański, Warsaw 1983, pp. 185–228.

661 W. Potocki, *Ogród fraszek*, Lwów 1907, Vol. 2, p. 432.

662 Łącko, No. 868 [1753].

663 ASD, Vol. 1, p. 510 [1733]; also, cf. Tylicz A, p. 206 [1689]; Rajbrot, p. 22 [1751]; Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 79 [1754]; ASD, Vol. 1, pp. 145 [1722] and 415 [1732]; Vol. 7, fol. 90<sup>v</sup>–91 [1755] and 351 [1757].

Such a pattern of marriage contracted as an emergency exit in the event of unwanted pregnancy was most cynically summarised by a certain Senko of Czukiew who, wooing Hasia Tuledzyna, said to her, “You’re a widow, I’m a bachelor, if I do something I’ll take you, if I do not, all’s gone.”<sup>664</sup> The countryside opinion saw nothing condemnable – or in any case nothing immoral – in this, and *gromada* members did not intervene as long as all was following the usual path. Attempts made in the eighteenth century to impose fines and other penalties on marriages whose first child was born before nine months had lapsed from the date of the marriage seemed to have been, essentially, the village owners’ idea to gain additional money from peasants in the guise of the defence of morality; such practice was popularised primarily in episcopal demesnes. These instances are known in the demesne of Muszyna and in the demesne of Starogród (in the Land of Chełmno), where the moral issues were subjected to the efficiently organised domanial judicature. The peasants themselves kept a distanced attitude towards these doings.<sup>665</sup>

It is not entirely known how the peasant milieu responded to intercourse between unmarried people who did not take the option to marry into account, be it for reasons beyond their control (e.g. issues under church law<sup>666</sup> or the matrimonial policy of their parents), or only because neither of them was willing to contract marriage.<sup>667</sup> Courts only considered the cases of couples to whom offspring had been delivered. Clearly, the rural morality preferred not to notice such relationships as long as there was no ‘outcome.’ Characteristic in this context is a case from Wojkowa where, in 1762, a widow called Ewa Czekanka, a mother of five, became pregnant once again after an affair with Piotr Bartoszczyk.

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664 Czukiew, Vol. 1, p. 397 [the second half of the seventeenth century]. Widows and widowers in the countryside were expected to observe higher moral standards than maids and bachelors, due to their real-life experience. However, age was the decisive factor; if a widowed woman (men were concerned to a lesser degree) was still in the matrimonial market, her position was ambivalent: while she could use certain privileges of the unmarried, she would be suspected of an easier inclination for ‘carnality’ and therefore was permanently ‘on the carpet.’

665 See, e.g., ASD, Vol. 1, p. 324 [1725], Vol. 7, fol. 90<sup>v</sup> [1755].

666 For example, Nowa Góra G, pp. 24–5 [1677]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3811 [1728]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 351 [1757].

667 A single instance is known to us where both the girl and the youth expressly claimed, “I wanted to take her as my wife not, nor did I so promise to her; neither doth the defendant [i.e. the girl] want the one as her husband now” (ASD, Vol. 1, p. 56 [1721]). It can be presumed that there were numerous such instances among those couples who in spite of an unwanted pregnancy did not resort to marriage, thus exposing themselves to responsibility in the form of fines and lashes.

It was only at that point that the reeve and another neighbour started rebuking Piotr that he had done an evil thing visiting Ewa and begetting a child with her. The case came to a tragic end when Bartoszczyk, exasperated with the reproofs, became drunk and strangled his lover while asleep.<sup>668</sup>

Begetting a descendant in such prenuptial relationship, with the father unwilling or unable to espouse his lover, had an adverse impact primarily on the life of the woman, whilst it was detrimental to the man to a lesser degree. The opinion of Bogdan Baranowski, who stated that the rural opinion treated such a 'fallen' woman 'with overt hatred,' whilst the prevalent custom coerced the community to expel her from the village in a most disgraceful manner, is difficult to maintain.<sup>669</sup> It is true that among those who were 'candled out' for crimes against morality, males were a rarity. However, the punishment was applied to women only in exceptional cases. In Kasina in the aforementioned period, merely every fifth sentence in sexual offence cases ordered the defendant woman to be expelled. In general, this punishment was imposed on persistent female offenders and those guilty of incest, and underclass women (such as a brigand's lover).<sup>670</sup> The courts of Kasina were extremely severe. In the examined period of 1754–66, the court of the demesne of Muszyna ordered only one fornicator to leave the village, probably saving her from suffering the painful ritual otherwise customarily accompanying expulsion.

Another trend is clearly apparent, though. Those women who became pregnant in a non-sacramental union often took legal action with their local judicial institutions against the child's father, for what we would call today redress of moral damage, and alimony. For example, a certain Maryanna Stannionka appeared in 1721 before the court of the demesne of Starogród to complain against a man called Kazimierz Kron, "and this that he hath defaced her probetie, constraining her toward the evil sin and toward uniting with him

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668 *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego*. . . , No. 34 [1732].

669 B. Baranowski, 'Problematyka badań nad mentalnością chłopca pańszczyźnianego na obszarze woj. sieradzkiego i łęczyckiego w XVII i XVIII w.,' *Rocznik Łódzki*, Vol. 14 (17), 1970, p. 271.

670 The punishment consisting in 'candling out' indecent women (expelling them from the village and its community) was provided, among others, in the penal statutes for the villages in the demesne of the Carmelite monastery in Czerna (*Księgi sądowe wiejskie*..., No. 7403 [1672]) and the Łącko demesne of the Convent of Poor Clares in Stary Sącz (Łącko, No. 544 [1670], 599 [1702], 603 [1712]). However, this law was apparently never applied by the courts of Łącko.

who . . . was begetting sin with her to the extent that she conceived the burthen and allready sayeth she be close to the deliverie, . . . this same Maryanna allso requesteth that the plough-man Kazimierz Kron be punished and rewarde her for the wreath, and allso that he offer moneys for the infant.<sup>671</sup> At such accusation, the court responded by coercing the man to offer specified benefits, pay a fine to the manor, the *gromada* and the church, occasionally having the accused corporally punished as well. Interestingly, in most cases no evaluation of the conduct of the complainant woman is expressed, whilst she had also contributed, in some way, to the sin and the offence committed. What the court records tell us is, however, that penal responsibility in the case of indecency was borne in its entirety by the male party. This observation is reflected in an epigram by Adam Władysławiusz entitled *Of the Steward with Maciek (O włodarzu z Maćkiem)*, where the protagonist, a farmhand, induced a girl to carnal sin, pledging that he would marry her, but when his lover turned out to be pregnant, he withdrew his promise. The girl, supported by her parents, sued him at the village's office. Having appeared at the trial, Maciek says as follows:

[. . .] O pojęciu wzmianka z nią  
nie była.

I teraz panie wójcie, nie wiedźcie mię k temu,  
Wolę raczej karaniu podlec inakszemu.

Wójt winy bykowego wprzód dać mu nakazał,

Dziewce kopę za wieniec odłożyć mu kazał;

Albo ją wziąć za żonę, na wolą mu dawał.

Ale Maciek na pierwszym wyroku przestawał

I zarazem dwie kopie na stole położył.

Wójt winy jedną kopę do swej  
skrzynki włożył,

[. . .] Nought was said of marrying, or bride.

Conduct me not, Lord the reeve, to this end;  
To an other suffer should I rather tend.

The reeve had him bull-tax'd<sup>672</sup> and allso  
imposed,

For coronet, three-score; or else, he  
compose

A couple with the girl, at his libertie.

Maciek took the former as facilitie,

Off'ring two three-scores, for him to  
contribute.

Th' reeve put one in the chest: this be the  
tribute,

671 ASD, Vol. 1, p. 56 [1721]; also, cf. Nowa Góra A, fol. 3<sup>v</sup> [1587]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4991 [1681]; ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 131<sup>v</sup> [1755]; Łąka demesne, pp. 138–42 [1793].

672 Bull-tax, (*bykowe*) describe here the penalty for begetting an illegitimate child. [Transl. note.]

Drugą dziewce wziąć kazał. Ta licząc płakała;	The lass to take one, too. She counted, and wept,
Naliczywszy pół kopy, w wacek je schowała.	Till halfe-score be reckoned, in pouch to be kept;
A drugie ku Maćkowi po stole pomknęła,	She whisked forth the other half to him, and quoth,
Mówiąc: Jużem ja swoje połowicę wzięła.	Now I have got mine halfe; 'tis part of the troth.
Drugą sie też Maćkowi słusznie zostawiła,	Maciek justly received the remaining fare:
Bo spolna nasza praca na tę kopę była.	For commonly have we laboured for the share. <sup>673</sup>

In the eighteenth century, however, exacerbated control of morals and moral standards in the countryside can be seen. Maidens with a child who requested the courts to award them alimony benefits became treated as accomplices in depravity and punished physically, although their claims related to the child's father were satisfied. The aforementioned Maryanna Stannionka exposed herself to fifty lashes with birches but obtained from her ex-lover "a good in-calf cow propitious for her avail . . . also a swine," and so on.<sup>674</sup> Hence, the extremely severe persecution of women who transgressed the sixth Commandment was not really the case. It was more a matter of custom that ignored the ethical assessment of illegitimate offspring, focusing instead on practical, economic problems, while moral valuation was relegated to the background. This is evident in 'Points against the Rev. priest Podgórski, Parson of Poręba Wielka' [*Punkty na Msci księdza Podgorskiego Plebana Wielkoporębskiego*], written by the local communities in 1763, pointing to the clergyman's numerous illegal offspring: "12mo [Item 12]. In anno 1762 Starmaszonka of Witów, from this same parish, remained pregnant and has a child with the Hon. Rev. Parson, whom he promised to give a cow and did not give for her maidhood, that one who visited the manor complaining against the Rev. Parson that he had given her no cow. 13tio [Item 13]. The Reverend parson brought Aneczka away from Krakow, whom he had made pregnant, and had her sent with the womb to Krakow, as that she arrived with her mother after the puerperium demanding an award;" etc.<sup>675</sup>

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673 *Polska fraszka mieszczańska* ..., pp. 57–8.

674 ASD, Vol. 1, p. 56 [1721].

675 BO, ms 11714, p. 895.

Despite this to-the-point and fairly suave approach by peasants to the question of illegitimate progeny, it has to be borne in mind that a maiden with a baby was pushed behind the core rural community. First of all, her chance to enter a beneficial marriage was severely diminished. She was affected by certain economic and social degradation, with the risk for her to succumb to criminal milieu. A gradual collapse is visible in the history of three Portasionka sisters of Skotniki Górne. Orphaned by their parents, “having no regard for their own probity, they behave themselves any how, not listening to good neighbourly persuasions [persuasions] and admonitions, and what regards rather the Divine commandment, they have transgressed, for at first the elder one, Iadwiga, afterwards the younger, Zofia, carnally decayed, divagated round the vicinity and up until now are not in the village, whilst the youngest one, [also] Zofia, committed adultery not only with unmarried persons, as she testified it, but also with an espoused one.” As a result, she was deprived of the inheritance from her parents and put under her own brother’s guardianship.<sup>676</sup>

On the other hand, we can conjecture (although appropriate sources which could have helped prove this statement are not available) that the problem of illegitimate children primarily concerned a hypothetical group of rural women for whom this specific experience was transmitted from one generation to the other. The group would have consisted of low-life individuals without an opportunity to improve their status. A maiden’s child did not exert a significant influence on her position in the social hierarchy, for it was difficult to fall any lower down the ladder, while a good marriage was in any case impossible.

In general terms, the scale of the phenomenon was not enormous. As per the not-fully-trustworthy calculation of B. Baranowski, the proportion of children born outside wedlock in the countryside was 3 % to 10 %. Based on the much better source-evidenced research conducted by Jan Kracik for the Deanery of Nowa Góra in the first half of the eighteenth century, the proportion was 1 % to 5 % locally, depending on the parish.<sup>677</sup> A similar figure (1.8 % on average) is quoted by Marian Aleksandrowicz for the parishes of the Arch-Deanery of Gniezno in the period 1700–20.<sup>678</sup>

Practicing sexual relationships while unmarried was overall a rather risky decision, particularly for women. It does however seem that such women remained optimistic, in a way, as they counted on contracting a marriage in the

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676 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7503 [1775].

677 J. Kracik, ‘Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...’, pp. 207–8.

678 M. Aleksandrowicz, ‘Z badań nad dziejami religijności wiernych ...’, p. 29.

event of trouble; that is, becoming pregnant. Such trust must have followed from group experience and probably proved its usefulness most of the time. This is additionally confirmed by cases (rare as they were, for they are difficult to prove) where the girl made a premeditated use of the threat of pregnancy in order to accelerate marriage with their still-hesitant lover.<sup>679</sup> The pregnant women who demanded that their lovers fulfil the marriage promises were moreover supported by the village offices which had more means of persuasion at their disposal.<sup>680</sup>

If no illegitimate child was begotten and any other public scandal was prevented, the peasant community did not interfere in the sex life of unmarried individuals, leaving them some liberty within the confines of traditional models of sexual selection. It is only in the middle of the eighteenth century that records appear that testify to a condemnation of prenuptial sexual intercourse. In 1762, Walenty Blecharz from Filipowice reprehended his farmhand Witek Gąsiorek in anger: “you bull, you have ingnominated mine house,” as Witek had been punished by the manorial court for a carnal deed with a servant maid.<sup>681</sup> In Markowa in 1773, Szczepan Lew and Zofia Krauzówna together with their parents entered into a composition whereby Szczepan undertook to marry the pregnant Zofia, as he had promised to do. There was a clause reading: “by means of this present decree, it be sharpened that no body dare reproach this married-couple henceforth for the excess committed and if there is any body that may venture to deride when-and-ever,” he shall fall under lashes and fines.<sup>682</sup> What this demonstrates is that fornicators of either sex were becoming mocked and calumniated in the rural environment. By the late eighteenth century, the morality of peasants had grown strict enough to prevent letting harlotry go unpunished. In Jasionka in 1791, the village’s office went beyond the competencies defined by the superiors in considering the case of Sobek Kurdziel and Małgorzata Wiszka “on having unlawfully begetting the issue.” Summoned to appear before the patrimonial authority, the reeve Krzysztof Pokrzywa thus gave his reasons for why he had lawlessly judged the culprits: “the people were telling me that it is indecent that

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679 For example, a certain Marianna Plucienska let herself “be sedduced” by Mateusz Kumczenski “so that he could be a faster husband of hers she hath readilie lost her virginittie”: APK, Akta Urzędów Wójtowskich i Ławniczych Miast 1, p. 8 [1775]; cf. *Księgi kryminalne miasta Krakowa z lat 1630–1633, 1679–1690*, ed. by W. Uruszczak, M. Mikula, K. Fokt, Kraków 2016, No. 324 [1685].

680 See, e.g., *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 2878 [1606], 3988 [1742]; ASD, Vol. 1, pp. 510–11 [1733]; Łąka demesne, p. 163 [1794].

681 Nowa Góra H, pp. 29–30 [1762].

682 Markowa, p. 915 [1773].



the missdemour committed by Kurdziel and Wiszka hath not been punished hitherto and that they ought be punished so that the others never dare perpetrate this . . . at hearing which the legall men brought forth the case to their court.<sup>683</sup>

This exacerbation of moral requirements among the peasants could not have occurred earlier than in the middle of the eighteenth century. Sixty years before the above-described instance of overzealousness of the Jasionka aldermen, the reeve and the aldermen of the village of Kamionka, in the demesne of Strzeszyce, were sentenced by their manorial superiors to fines and 30 lashes each with tethers for their extraordinary lassitude in the case of a certain Józef Zelek's fornication with a woman from the neighbouring village. Initially, they failed to inform the demesne administrators of Józef's misconduct, then probably enabled his escape from prison and subsequently ignored an order to search for the man. Finally, an order was passed to bring Józef before the manorial court under pain of fines and lashes imposed on the entire *gromada*.<sup>684</sup>

Exhorted by the pastors, Christian sexual morality was based upon – and essentially limited to – the institution of marriage. The traditional peasant culture also attached great importance to marriage. The standards applied by the rural community with respect to married individuals were considerably stricter compared to those applied to maids and bachelors. If a married person committed adultery, aldermen's courts, even in villages where the self-government powers were broad, occasionally resorted to reminding the defendants that the offence was punishable by death.<sup>685</sup> This clearly indicates the degree to which the rural community condemned such excesses. Allegations of adultery often led to fervent arguments and even fights.<sup>686</sup> In some extreme cases, the *gromada* denied those deemed guilty of adultery their arable land,<sup>687</sup> which happened only with the most serious crimes. In comparison, fornication between unmarried persons was never a reason to take away land from the husbandman; for committing this offence, only members of lowest strata tended to be expelled from the village.

While in the matter of sexual relations between unmarried people the rural morality attached attention primarily to the clearly visible outcomes, adultery

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683 Łąka demesne, pp. 107–8 [1791]; a similar situation occurred 30 years earlier in Florynka near Muszyna: Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 75 [1762].

684 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3963 [1728], similarly, in the demesne of Starogród, ASD, Vol. 6, fol. 127–127<sup>v</sup> [1755].

685 Wola Żarczycka, No. 39 [1635] (also, M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka ...*, p. 32); cf. Ołpiny B, fol. 3 [1718].

686 For example, Wysoka A, p. 63 [1708]; Rajbrot, p. 86 [1755]; Tarnów, No. 53 [1756].

687 Kąkolówka, Vol. 1, p. 364 [1719]; cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 5036 [1729].

became reprehensible and punishable through 'giving a verisimilitude [*danie podobieństwa*].' The phrase referred to a reciprocal male-female relationship that was unacceptable in terms of the peasant ethical system as it suggested a sexual interest in each other, which was inadmissible if either or both of the parties to such a relationship were already married. The catalogue of such suspicious behaviours was broad and included obvious visits "with liquor to spend the night whilst the husband be away;"<sup>688</sup> "leading one-another thro' faires and patron-saint's-day kermesses,"<sup>689</sup> through to treating to vodka at the inn, picking each other's lice,<sup>690</sup> and 'supererogatory conversations.'<sup>691</sup> Such manifestations of extramarital fondness by an individual of the opposite sex were usually severely reviled because, as it was assumed, they might have been symptoms of adultery.

Such detailed prevention in this respect apparently suggests that the countryside's ethical system had quite thoroughly acquired the sixth Commandment, certainly with respect to persons bound by marriage. However, in everyday life, there were a number of diverse factors that alleviated the severity of a judgement of adultery. Practical considerations came to the fore, in fact. Marital loyalty was apparently positioned insufficiently high in the moral hierarchy of peasants to deserve the sacrifice of other values for the sake of it. When in 1743 Jan Solenka of Rajbrot complained to his brother and sisters that he had caught his wife with Antoni Mulka red-handed, the siblings advised him, "Leave it off; this is what man lives for, and mention this to his [Antoni's] wife not, for she be pregnant."<sup>692</sup>

The pragmatic factors behind an assessment of adultery meant that such transgressions were relative depending on external circumstances. This is particularly visible regarding cultural diversity in respect of sexual freedom between the sexes. Males enjoyed a broader range of socially acceptable circumstances that alleviated the fact of committed adultery. The arguments employed on such occasions usually referred to the status of the object of misdeed; in other words, the responsibility for the male's sexuality was shifted onto the woman. Obviously, this attitude was not characteristic of the early modern peasant ethical system. The phenomenon appears widely, virtually wherever a patriarchal social model is prevalent. In the countryside areas of Lesser Poland, the type of excuse brought

688 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4704 [1725].

689 Ołpiny B, fol. 3 [1718].

690 Rajbrot, miscellaneous records I, No. 20 [1720].

691 For example, Wola Żarczycka, No. 39 [1635]; Wysoka A, p. 63 [1708]; Ołpiny B, fol. 3 [1718]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 4726 [1750], 3937 [1720].

692 Rajbrot, miscellaneous records I, No. 35 [1743].

forth primarily consisted in pointing out the generally immoral conduct of the woman with whom the man had committed adultery – as if the fact that “she hath ill-consorted with others” diminished the burden of vice. Such arguments were efficient indeed, as is confirmed by a decree from the manorial court of Bratkowice, which leniently approached the adultery committed by a certain Mikołaj Dziuba, for “this hath occurred not with a maiden, or with a married woman, but with a *zawitka* [‘maid with child’],” the latter being considered an inherently ‘degenerated’ woman.<sup>693</sup>

The level of sexual freedom for married women is a more complicated issue. On the one hand, married women came across intensified control in this respect and could virtually enjoy no ‘discount tariff,’ unless they could successfully prove that they had been raped. On the other hand, there are records attesting that some married peasant couples generally tended to take infidelity issues rather lightly. Peasant couples who were reciprocally permissive to a degree that glaringly contrasted with our present-day idea of a traditional peasant family remaining under the influence of Christian culture did not occur rarely. Franciszek Solorz from Ołpiny is reported to have let his wife keep a relationship with farmhands working on his farmstead; moreover, “he mocketh at this and addeth [them] courage . . . , those who have things to eat and drink at their service, and still instead of being contented with this, they converge to wash them selves thereat, change their raiment thereat, and thereat do they squander the leisurely hours on those wanton lycences, and this is all seen by the hussband and abrorreth this not.”<sup>694</sup> In Kasina in the mid-eighteenth century, a woman called Katarzyna Krostkowa, who had dwelled for several years with her husband Marcin but without issue, “with that her husband was sickish,” resolved to get pregnant with a neighbour, Iosek Szpyrka, which occurred to the knowledge and consent of Iosek’s wife.<sup>695</sup> Instances of this sort were multiple; such situations were, after all, extreme and drastic enough to have caused a counteraction from an arm of the law. They are valuable to us today as they depict how extensive was the rural community’s tolerance for adultery, whether caused by ordinary licentiousness or excused by a ‘necessity’ or ‘imperative’ to have offspring. The relatively high frequency of such situations in Lesser Poland’s peasant environments between

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693 AGAD, Archiwum Roskie CLXIV/126 [1732]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 1, pp. 198 [1723], 324 [1725].

694 Ołpiny B, fol. 21 [c. 1770]; also, cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7139 [1685] and ASD, Vol. 6, fol. 126–126<sup>v</sup> [1755].

695 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3714 [1759]; also, cf. *ibid.*, No. 3929 [1702].

the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries does not merely point to some particular, personalised instances of failure in the engrafting of Divine Commandment number six, but it bespeaks of the degree of its overall absorption by the ethical culture of the countryside.

The peasant idea of marriage differed, perhaps even to a significant degree, from the pattern proposed by the clergy. The admissible sexual freedom of married individuals was not the priority issue. According to the Church's teachings, the sacramental union was indissoluble. Nonetheless, traditional culture was not as dogmatic in this respect. Although the custom of 'trial marriage' was unknown to Polish countryside, as opposed to Catholic Ireland, break-ups of ill-matched couples were regarded by peasant opinion with some forbearance. In turn this disturbed the noble and clerical estate supervisors. In 1620, Jan Gogoliński, administrator in the demesne of Łącko, took to a dominical court the case of Marcin Wróbel, a miller, and his wife Małgorzata, who had parted ways. The investigation found evidence whereby "no-one knoweth for what a reason, that, how ever, the people say this was for [due to] the free will of both parties," an explanation the peasant community must have found satisfactory.<sup>696</sup> The increasing pressure of external control over the life of the peasants caused that they occasionally made efforts to legalise their divorces by trying to obtain a canonical annulment of marriage.<sup>697</sup> The easiest and probably the most frequently used way to resolve this question was to escape from the village and start a new life elsewhere.<sup>698</sup>

The ecclesial and secular authorities were faced with the necessity to stand up for marriage and defend it very restrictively in its post-Tridentine form. An interesting symptom of this campaign was the court trials against a social verbal entertainment practiced at inns, after alcohol, which consisted in jokingly 'trafficking' wives. In Krowdrza in 1699, Marcin Multanik and Jan Koczczek, who "at a parley and in gaiety" peddled in their wives "as if laughingly, . . . which purchase the holy Catholic Church and the faithful gathered at the Church of God resent, as this be contrary to ecclesiastical observance," were sentenced to fines and three days in prison each.<sup>699</sup> A more fanciful penalty was administered

696 Łącko, No. 444 [1620]; also, see *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3944 [1721], 4723 [1750]; Jazowsko, No. 356 [1778].

697 For example, Nowa Wieś, Vol. 4, fasc. 6, pp. 28–9 [1736]; ASD, Vol. 6, fol. 104 [1755]; Tarnów, No. 52 [1756]; cf. Klimkówka demesne, No. 1202 [1720].

698 See, e.g., ANK, Dep., ms 6, p. 259 [1663]; A. Komonieczki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 370 [1712]; cf. Ołpiny B, fol. 3 [1718].

699 Krowdrza, Vol. 3, p. 54 [1699].

for guilt of the same sort by the court of Czukiew on Jakim Cziuyko and Hryń Pasternaczek, who during four Sunday masses were to be alternately locked in the pillory (*kuna*) or stay lying underneath the threshold of the Uniate church, so that “the people shall cross them whilst going to the church, and fro.”<sup>700</sup>

Having said this, it is thought-provoking why the village statutes dealt so little with counteracting adultery, compared to fighting fornication between the unmarried. In fact, only the 1733 statute for the villages of Zegrze and Rataje discusses the problem at some length, rather than confining it to a general prescription to punish the sin.<sup>701</sup> The reason might be that in fighting adultery, the Church had fallen back to a greater degree than in the case of *fornicatio*. In contrast to out-of-wedlock pregnancies, which were apparent to the naked eye, instances of *adulteria* came to light, as it may be presumed, mainly at confession. Perhaps, punishing fornication among the unmarried was a less obvious thing for peasants than counteracting adultery, and was not part of the customary penal code adhered to by the villagers. Hence, its appropriate place was in the written law.

The process of the moralisation of sexual ethics in rural areas began at least in the early years of the seventeenth century. Religious teaching and the doctrine of sin, redemption, and punishment was crucial in this respect. This education yielded fruit gradually, forming an awareness among peasantry in line with the postulated model. A compilation published in 1754 under the title *Krakowiak w swojej postaci czyli śpiewki wiejskie krakowskie* (*The krakowiak as it stands, or, the villagers' songs of Krakow*) featured a short folk song:

Oj, parobecku gładki,	O my farm-hand boy sleek,
nie chodź do mężatki,	Go not to the wife meek,
będzies gozał w piekle	You'll bee roasted in hell
po same łopatki.	Upp to your neck or cheek. <sup>702</sup>

This, presumably, reflects the teaching on posthumous punishments assigned for adultery; perversely employed here as an incentive to take more interest in maidens.

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700 Czukiew, Vol. 1, pp. 107–8 [1624]; for another such occurrence in the village, see Czukiew, Vol. 7, pp. 118–21 (reversely) [1722]; also, cf. BPAU/PAN, ms 2457, fol. 351<sup>v</sup> [1720].

701 *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 269.

702 The piece is only known from a transcript; C. Hernas, op. cit., Vol. 2, p. 79.

Additionally, certain individual testimonies indicate that the peasant culture began assuming the general features of the proposed system of sexual ethics. For example, in 1760 Małgorzata Sporkowa, an alewife from Krowodrza, who had been accused of adultery with Jan Magosinski, a fiddler from the same inn, owned up that she had inebriated him and then coaxed him into sinning. She confessed to the jury that she was aware her conduct was evil, but all of this came from drunkenness.<sup>703</sup>

The influence of the Church's teachings in the sphere of morals and customs also stood out in the visions of self-appointed prophets. In 1718 in Żywiec Land, a cow-maiden nicknamed the old Klara Szafranka had a vision of a mysterious wanderer and, subsequently, a speaking wolf, who demanded that morals improve. Klara, obviously, started exhorting her contemporaries to do as the phantom wanted, deploring them for their moral degeneration.<sup>704</sup>

#### 4. Confession and conscience

Peasants' adoption of Christian moral standards proved efficient thanks primarily to individual priestly control exercised through confession. The religious precept ordaining that the Sacrament of Penance ought to be approached at least once a year was reinforced in a number of villages by administrative orders of the secular authority. While this was mainly the case in ecclesiastical or monastic demesnes, secular owners and leaseholders of villages also felt empowered to prosecute infringements in this respect.<sup>705</sup> The usually decreed civil penalty for evading the obligatory confession was a fine of 1 to 5lbs of wax (in the second half of the seventeenth century, 1lb of wax cost 8–10 groszy). Nonetheless, there are no extant records from Lesser Poland that testify to the enforcement of this order by administrative bodies.<sup>706</sup> Perhaps ad-hoc punishments were applied without a trace having been left in the written sources. More likely, however, is that punishment for this particular transgression was customarily handed over to Church institutions only, with secular actors intervening on the clergyman's

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703 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4393 [1760]; also, cf. *ibid.*, No. 4155 [1726] and ASD, Vol. 1, p. 56 [1721].

704 A. Komonieccki, *Chronografia...*, p. 508 [1718].

705 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3915 [1679]; also, cf. ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 287<sup>v</sup> [1750]; *Polskie ustawy wiejskie...*, pp. 175 [1692], 259 [1733] and 312 [1749].

706 A case of this kind is known, for a change, from the demesne of Starogród, the area where the climate of religious confrontation with Protestants might have had a significant role; ASD, Vol. 1, p. 393 [1731].

request. When a consistory in Przemyśl excommunicated a serf in 1744 from the village of Czelatycze in the parish of Rokitnica for shunning confession, the ecclesiastical visitator recommended that the local parson request the manorial jurisdiction for appropriate chastising of the culprit (with lashes, as might be guessed).<sup>707</sup>

As visitation reports state, the supervision exerted by the parish on the annual confession was very efficient in the countryside. The lists of parishioners, introduced mostly in the early seventeenth century, and a system of slips obliging them to visit the confessional, enabled the potential penitents to be counted in detail and their duty to be personally enforced. The records of visitations to rural parishes usually found that “*anno currenti omnes confessati sunt*” (‘everybody has approached confession in the current year’); instances of peasants avoiding the confession were extremely rare, and usually were described by indicating the specified person.<sup>708</sup> It can of course be doubted whether the picture reflected in the visitation documents is completely reliable. Even if we assume that the inspector was reliably notified of the condition in the parish, it has to be taken into account that the parishioner statistics did not include vagabonds of various sorts, who often resided in one village for months. Doubt may also surround the accuracy of such censuses in extensive, mountainous or multi-religious parishes. Evidently inaccurate are the rounded figures which were often quoted (e.g. 1,500 or 2,000 of those obliged to confess). If a parson determined the number of his parishioners with an accuracy of one-hundred, it can be conjectured that a similar accuracy was applied to Easter-time confession.

In spite of all these reservations, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – the period following religious turmoil – a definite majority of Lesser Poland’s peasants seemed to confess on a regular annual basis. The Sacrament of Penance was for them an important and indispensable element of contact with the sacred, which is attested, e.g. by the custom of confessing at pilgrimage sites.<sup>709</sup>

It also became apparent for the rural milieu that those avoiding Easter confession had something on their conscience, and hence it was presumed that they had committed some heavy crimes.<sup>710</sup> On the other hand, criminals were often ordered to make an extraordinary confession as part of penance for delinquency

707 AAPrz, ms 166, fol. 177<sup>v</sup>.

708 Ibid., loc. cit.; BC, ms 2147, p. 50; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 54, 56, 75, 76; BPAU/PAN, ms 1965, fol. 12<sup>v</sup>; and elsewhere.

709 See, e.g., a monastic scribe’s remarks in this respect; BC, ms 3432, p. 2.

710 For example, Nowa Góra H, p. 15 [1725]; Nowa Góra A, fol. 17<sup>v</sup> [1737]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4286 [1776].

committed against the Divine Commandments. In some cases, such purification of conscience was meant to be completed not at the perpetrator's home parish, but in a religious hub of importance, such as Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Częstochowa, or Kobylanka.<sup>711</sup> The underlying incentive was perhaps a belief in a greater power at a sacred pilgrimage site; approaching the confession in such special circumstances was doubtlessly expected to shake the conscience of the offender who apparently had not been sufficiently cared for by the parish ministry. The instillation of the habit of approaching the Sacrament of Penance implied that the faithful were forced to analyse their conduct on a regular basis, under the guidance and with the help of the priest. The objective was to interiorise the Christian norms of conduct in the faithful. Putting it otherwise, the point was that the faithful, "when the desires seduce [him or her] to the misdeed for thereafter, [be] excited at shame by God."<sup>712</sup> The ideal the pastors strove to achieve was to unfold in all the Catholics of the skill of self-reflection relative to the principles of religious morality, so that they may be driven by the directives of conscience in their lives.

Were satisfactory results really achieved in this field with peasants in the sixteenth- to eighteenth-century period? Due to the lack of first-hand accounts, the question is very difficult to answer. The Rev. Andrzej Gołdonowski fulminated that the husbandmen (peasants) usually did not even make an effort to debate their own consciences, pleading lack of skill as an excuse: "what's this stupid thing? What's this excuse? He that can be sinning but cannot confess? ... being witty to an insult of God, and being incompetent to begging Him [for mercy]?"<sup>713</sup> It was still in the mid-eighteenth century that Marcin Nowakowski castigated the inability of simple parishioners to analyse their conduct in terms of religious ethical categories.<sup>714</sup>

The sources occasionally provide traces of moral self-analysis by peasants, but all of them are at least uncertain. For example, the court register of the village of Czarna features a note from 1737 which tells us that Michał Reyman, taking over a farmhouse inherited from his parents, himself "not being obligated with

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711 Popów, p. 23 [1607]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4004 [1742]; Łącko, No. 845 [1744]; cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3517 [1703], 7246 [1764].

712 Tarnów, No. 46 [1756].

713 A. Gołdonowski, *Krótkie zebranie świętobliwego żywota ś. Isidora rolnika z Madryki od świętej pamięci Grzegorza XV między święte wpisane* [*A brief assemblie of the saintly life of S. Isidore the Plowman of Madrica, named in the register of saint ones by Gregory XV of holy memory*], Krakow 1629, fol. [D4]<sup>v</sup>.

714 M. Nowakowski, *Koleśda duchowna ...*, p. 572.



a testament,” paid out copious shares to his nine brothers-and-sisters. This act was reportedly caused by Michał having “mitigated himself with conscience,” which may mean that he eventually considered his succession unfair. However, the phrase might have referred to some impossible-to-reconstruct economic calculation by this man, or a reasonable assessment of the prevalent interdependencies; and if not, simply fervent family sentiments.<sup>715</sup>

A brawl during a game of cards occurred around 1760 in Ołpiny. According to the scribe, the injured and the conjectured culprits, brought before the village’s aldermen, “having mitigated their conscience and offering themselves as guilty to the Lord,” forgave one another and apologised to one another. Again, we cannot be certain whether they really understood their guilt and repented, or perhaps the brawlers, sobered up, forgot on the following morning what the matter was and could not name the ringleader, and thus agreed to the court’s mediation and eventually deemed the case non-existent.<sup>716</sup>

A trace of the skill of self-control of conscience can be seen in Stanisław Drewnaczyk of Piątkowa, who in 1671 was accused by Tomasz Krasoń of stealing a plough. With a lack of evidence, the aldermen’s court ordained both parties to prepare to swear an oath, admonishing “that they be mindfull of their conscyence and soules, and also of those people who stood beside them. . . . Thence, this same Stanisław Drewniak, considering thereby for himself the Passion of Christ the Lord, began saying these words, that I have done what ever, that I have bought those thinges from that man, then I do allowe ye mine neighbour that ye take [them] as thine owne, and may I lose the purchase and may [mine] soule be in entiretie [i.e. be saved].” Thus, he owned up that he had possibly bought the commodity from a thief or fence.<sup>717</sup> But fear of Divine punishment that would have been brought upon him in case he made a false oath might have prevailed in this particular case.

Hence, we cannot conclude for certain whether an unaided ability to analyse their behaviour had successfully been developed in the peasants. The possible answer is, no. It nonetheless seems that the need to make such analysis had been aroused in them, with proactive support from the father confessor. We are told here and there, and rather often, that a perpetrator of a morally reprehensible act went to confession out of his or her own accord. So did, for instance, Jan and Barbara from the demesne of Jazowsko, whose incestuous affair had ended in

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715 Czarna, pp. 300–2 [1737].

716 Ołpiny B, fol. 13 [c. 1760].

717 Piątkowa, pp. 121–122 [1671].

pregnancy. They both visited the confessional on an Our-Lady-of-the-Scapular day, 16 July, which was not long after the mandatory Easter confession (considering the conditions of the time), probably on the first feast day after they realised their situation, on which the parish church held its routine confessions.<sup>718</sup>

A similar response was demonstrated by Anastazja Malarczykowa of Słotwiny who, still a maiden, fell pregnant by the hereditary headmen of the village. Obviously, she wanted to go and confess the sin but her lover told her not to do so before the delivery, and started looking for a husband for Anastazja in all haste.<sup>719</sup> Among those who visited the confessional out of habit, we come across a vagabond called Jan Szyjak, from Żywiec Land, who probably dabbled in brigandage,<sup>720</sup> or a horse-thief from Wolica near Sanok. This latter case is, however, very special. The villain had entered into a specific partnership with his kin, a Ruthenian pope, with whom he shared a part of his spoils in exchange for absolution of the roguery he had committed.<sup>721</sup>

As it may be assumed, confessions were made not only in similar situations, when the penitent was threatened by criminal responsibility: an inner incentive for receiving the Sacrament of Penance might have been based on a disturbed moral sense caused by some more common or minor sins, or by hesitation in the face of everyday ethical challenges. No reliable records in this respect have survived, though.

In any case, when making a summary of one's entire life became necessary in face of approaching death, the moribund peasant would obligatorily send for the priest in order to confess and receive the Last Sacrament. It was not only a matter of utilitarian fulfilment of the appropriate ceremonies, in order for the dying individual to have a decent funeral in consecrated ground. The last confession was meant to crown the person's spiritual life, and the absolution thereby received eased the person's conscience before embarking on the final journey.<sup>722</sup>

Postulated by post-Tridentine homiletics, the vision of a Christian's inner moral life, consisting in permanent and meticulous analysis of one's own deeds,<sup>723</sup> did not gain traction among peasants. It was the confessor's role to review the rural penitent's moral sense and express a relevant afterthought. However, an

718 Jazowsko, No. 95 [1732].

719 Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, pp. 159–60 [1758].

720 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 4625–4626 [1699].

721 *Regestr złoczyńców grodu sanockiego...*, No. 150 [1614].

722 See *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7103 [1606]; Jabłonna, fol. 4<sup>v</sup> [1636]; Świątniki, fol. 166<sup>v</sup> [1684]; Nowa Wieś, Vol. 4, fasc. 6, p. 52 [1740].

723 K. Górski, op. cit., p. 233.

important achievement of the Church was the inculcation among peasants of the custom, or the need, to carry out such analysis under the priest's oversight, which did contribute to the in-depth absorption of Christian moral rules and principles in the peasant community. When exactly did this happen is difficult to pinpoint; it was certainly before the middle of the eighteenth century, but the trend was doubtlessly progressive and extended to increasingly larger groups of peasantry from the early seventeenth century onwards. This marked one of the greatest attainments of the post-Tridentine reforms in Poland.

## 5. Fear of God and Divine punishment

Whenever something was not attained through self-analysis, fear of God could prevail. Peasants' defective absorption of the rules of examining the conscience, and their lack of independence in this respect, meant that the promotion of Christian moral norms was more efficiently supported by a system of supernatural punishments and rewards, with special emphasis placed on the former. People were supposed to eschew certain misdemeanours in fear of the infallible counteraction by God. Fear of God was regarded as an unshaken foundation for moral conduct; hence, the obligation imposed upon parents to bring children up with the fear of God and piety.<sup>724</sup> The legislators' wishes, "may fear of God be blossoming in the village," were tantamount to the duty to observe the ethical norms imposed by the Decalogue.<sup>725</sup>

Fundamental to the practical role of the notion 'fear of God' were the features characteristic of the peasant worldview in respect of the ideas or concepts of God, the significance of justice, and the notion of sin.

In the mentality of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century peasants, religious determinism had an enormous role. They sensed the subordination to God's will stronger than other social groups in Poland-Lithuania. This subordination, or dependence, harmonises with the passiveness of life and extreme conservatism characteristic of rural traditional culture – the aspects emphasised by scholars. The experienced burden of God's verdicts often led to apathy, impaired decision-making skills and the ability to cope with unusual situations. The aforementioned couple Jan and Barbara from the demesne of Jazowsko, who begot a child

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724 *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 259 [1733]; Łącko, No. 604 [1712]; ASD, Vol. 9, fol. 268 [1761]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4162 [1736]; also, cf. *ibid.*, No. 3811 [1728].

725 Łącko, No. 599 [1702]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3921 [1702], 4203 [1776]; Czarna, p. 274 [1726]; Jazowsko, No. 110 [1738]; *Polskie instruktarze ekonomiczne ...*, p. 8 [1765].

out of an incestuous relationship, thus, considered their situation after the first symptoms of the girl's pregnancy appeared (according to Jan's testimony): "we were talking to each other, both of us, either ye go into the world, or I'll do, and there after have I relied on the will of God."<sup>726</sup> The idea was not the best possible, because they were both executed.

Lending oneself to the will of God extended primarily to the major events in human life. The concepts cherished among the peasantry had it that God procured a spouse,<sup>727</sup> gave offspring,<sup>728</sup> cured lameness, illnesses, and brought death upon man.<sup>729</sup> Dependent upon His will was also a series of minor issues, such as the choice of trade or craft,<sup>730</sup> prosperity in husbandry and breeding,<sup>731</sup> and even the accidental death of a cow by choking.<sup>732</sup> 'Acts of God' such as fire,<sup>733</sup> attacks by brigands<sup>734</sup> or Tatars,<sup>735</sup> and cattle pestilence,<sup>736</sup> fell into a separate category.

When combined with the colloquial style, as expressed on the phraseological level, the considerate attitude towards the works and judgements of God in concrete cases occasionally yielded humorous effects. One example is an utterance by Stanisław Frag from Brzozowa, which seems to have been roughly edited by the scribe. Upon buying the land, the man "at that time had no wife, for she had bene taken by the Lord, though [he got it] together with this other spouse that hath bene given to him by the Lord."<sup>737</sup> Woyciech Chayno had his last will written

726 Jazowsko, No. 95 [1732].

727 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7044 [1618]; Spytkowice, Vol. 1, p. 32 [1633]; Barycz, Vol. 1, fol. 374 [1659]; Kąkolówka, Vol. 1, p. 270 [1683].

728 For example, Jedlnia, fol. 26<sup>v</sup> [1618]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 5028 [1695]; Pieskowa Skała, p. 674 [1754].

729 Nozdrzec, p. 279 [1579], BPAU/PAN, ms 1945, p. 8 [1584], Rudna Wielka, fol. 12<sup>v</sup> [1728]; Palikówka, p. 19 [1730]; Krasna, p. 164 [1747]; Hłomcza, Vol. 1, fol. 76 [1752]; Sucha castle, p. 346 [1757].

730 For example, Łącko, No. 430 [1618].

731 For example, Kąkolówka, Vol. 1, pp. 98 [c. 1639] and 335 [1748]; Lubatówka, fol. 317 [1650].

732 Klimkówka, fol. 265<sup>v</sup> [1607]; also, cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 461 [1632].

733 For example, Uszew, fol. 34 [1630]; Jazowsko, No. 35 [1690]; Tryńcza, p. 261 [1734]; Łąka, p. 49 [1774].

734 For example, Klimkówka demesne, No. 697 [1668].

735 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4500 [1627]; Kąkolówka, Vol. 1, p. 178 [1663]; Golcowa, Vol. 2, p. 101 [1673].

736 For example, Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 56 [1750]; Jazowsko, No. 218 [1752]; also, cf. *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4908 [1650].

737 Brzozowa, fol. 115<sup>v</sup> [1619].

down in 1622 to have his property disposed of, “discerning [i.e. realising] that there be nothing more certaine than deathe, where God forbid the death, that if be taken by God the Lord away from this worlde.”<sup>738</sup>

Although somewhat grotesque, these examples demonstrate the influence on the peasants’ mentality of the conviction of a dominant role by the will of God in the fate of humans. The readiness to accept God’s verdicts tranquilly was blended with an incapacitating determinism, which however did not contradict the relevance of addressing God with pleas or wishes related to the future.

An ideal order of the world in the peasant mentality might be as follows: The will of God is (being) done; man is completely and trustfully subordinated to/dependent on it, although God does have a habit of hitting him badly from time to time. However, this ideal state is permanently disturbed by man, as man yields to sinful temptations. Sin is a token of objection against God and against the way the world has been organised. Even if sinning, however, man is not capable of altering God’s will; instead, he provokes counteractions from Him, as the majesty of God is offended by sinning. The punishment for committed sin(s) reaches and strikes the perpetrator/offender during his present, earthly life.

Although, in theological terms, incommensurable with the condemnation sinners could expect in the afterlife, such punishment had a more efficient effect on the imagination of simple people. This motif was exploited in a number of exempla that could be heard from the pulpit and those that circulated in the form of gossip. Some of them referred to situations founded on the precise local realities and topographic features. For example, around 1720 in Przeworsk, the history of a certain painting apprentice who dwelled in the suburb of Łańcut, opposite the town’s gate, in a precisely located house (owned by a man called Stelmach), was recorded. On the eve of St Sebastian Day, the young man encouraged his landlord to play cards with him. Stelmach declined the offer, pointing to the necessity to prepare for the feast service on the following day. “At that, the apprentice unbridled himself with blasphemous talk[:] what sort of a saint he, I can have him painted here on this wall and there’ll be the saint and his celebration day. After this pronounciation, being thitherto healthy in everything, within an hour was he seized by heavy pains, colic and other pains tormented him so that he could hardly speak a thing ... . After the confession, regretting for his sins at that very hour whereat he dared to attempt at the saint with his blasphemous tongue, he expired.”<sup>739</sup>

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738 Ibid., fol. 126<sup>v</sup> [1622].

739 BC, ms 2066, p. 22.

A punishment delivered by God would not always strike the sinner soon after what he or she did; it is absolutely certain, though, that it would occur. Any single sin, be it the innermost one, could never go unseen by God. Once committed and unexpiated, the sin 'mortgages' the specified individual who cannot escape Divine justice. Antek Mazurek, who in 1781 killed his brother-in-law Łukasz Kolan in a quarrel, ascertained this. After the slaughter, he fled from his village and drifted on Earth for more than six months; yet, "not only hath he gained nothing through service, though he did serve, but moreover, what ever he took with him from home of the attire and pennies, of this was he robbed, for the sin followed him every where." Finally, he returned home in the spring, and for eight weeks, "as he could not wait till he be accused by the fathers of the killed son and the defunct man's wife, he appeared on his own accord before the castle superiors, begging with abasement the penalty he hath deserved."<sup>740</sup>

It seemed most clear to the villagers that an individual who committed a heavy or mortal sin had thereby exposed himself or herself to a high risk of earthly punishment by God, which would reach the sinner in the form of what is today termed 'misadventure' or 'unfortunate accident,' sudden death included.<sup>741</sup> And, conversely, if an unexpected tragic occurrence was regarded as Divine punishment, the victim was suspected of having some serious, latent sin on his or her soul. Wherever punishment happens, there must have been guilt.<sup>742</sup>

In some drastic cases, Divine punishment could turn into God's wrath targeted not only at the sinner but also against his whole household, or even the entire village. Therefore, the best way of coping with such situations was to get rid of the vicious individual, so that "God doth not bring His punishment upon the judges as well as on the village entire."<sup>743</sup> As it seems, any contact – even if passive – with a sin that could imply the Lord's revenge was considered unwelcome and unsafe for the village community. In the village of Sosnka near Nowa Góra, a certain Walanty Latoszowicz practiced adultery for two years with his wife's maidservant Katarzyna. His proper wife, Barbara, complained about this to their neighbours, clearly casting herself in the role of victim. When the misdemeanour was finally brought to court, the latter, willing to prevent the

740 Pieskowa Skała, unbound sheet at the end of the volume, No. 5a [1782]; cf. the observations in Z. T. Wierzbicki, "Tradycyjna religijność wiejska (Badania monograficzne we wsi Zacisze)", *Roczniki Socjologii Wsi*, Vol. 8, 1968, p. 200.

741 For example, see *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3995 [1742].

742 For example, Krasna, p. 25 [1648]; Wysoka A, p. 56 [1708].

743 Wysoka B, fol. 49 [1756]; cf. the observations in B. Baranowski, 'Problematyka badań nad mentalnością chłopca pańszczyźnianego ...', p. 271.

bloodshed of capital punishment, ordained that all the three be ‘candled out’ of the village – quoting no grounds whatsoever behind applying the sentence to Barbara, whose only fault was, apparently, the entanglement in a marriage with the illicit husband.<sup>744</sup>

Fear of the wrath of God, so exuberant that it could turn into collective penalising, was however aroused by the most severe sins. Normally, divine justice affected concrete sinners in the first place. However, punishment could be avoided, or at least restricted, by atonement. Jan Zelek of the demesne of Strzeszyce, having committed a carnal sin with his stepdaughter (by mistake and whilst drunk, as he pleaded), was to go on a pilgrimage to the Częstochowa sanctuary, thus “paying Divine justice the tribute;” once there, “having requested a Mass, lay prostrate, his arms outstretched, in the course of it before the image of the Holiest Mother, and this for the reason that there is no way in which to appease the Divine majesty but through the intercession of the Holiest Mother; also, that he go on pilgrimage to Kobylanka sanctuary, and thereat, having requested a Mass, lay prostrate, his arms outstretched, in the course of it before the miracle-working image, so that he practice public penance there also.”<sup>745</sup>

Actions of this kind can be summarised in the way Władysław Smoleński did, remarking that the “moral economy of the people of that time only sought to unceasingly compensate for transgressions by way of religious formalism.”<sup>746</sup> It would however be more legitimate to observe that the Catholic Church efficiently harnessed its rites and ceremonies to educate its faithful community in ethics. In the longer run, however, a focus on the inevitability of punishments meted out by God on sinners would have been unproductive in its traumatising effect. The awareness that a misdemeanour or transgression is, at least partly, redeemable through penance, repentance, and humility, even if these were confined to a religious gesture, deepened the notion of sin. Namely, it demonstrated other feelings that, apart from fear of the expected Divine revenge, should be aroused in a person who has sinned. For peasants, such religious formalism could to a significant extent bear a magical significance, helping reverse the threat of a temporal punishment from God. In any case, it at least somewhat diminished the role of fear in the acquisition of the Christian moral system.

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744 Nowa Góra B, pp. 161–3 [1688].

745 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4004 [1742]; also, cf. *ibid.*, Nos. 3979 and 3995 [1742]; Ołpiny B, fol. 17 [c. 1764]; Sucha demesne, p. 456 [1753]; ASD, Vol. 7, fol. 351 [1757].

746 W. Smoleński, *Wiara w życiu społeczeństwa polskiego w epoce jezuickiej*, Warsaw 1883, p. 39.

## 6. Salvation and condemnation

Fear involved in committing sins concerned not only the immediate and inevitable temporal punishment. From a priestly point of view, it was merely an appendix to the basic punishment of condemnation in the hereafter. For peasants, it was perhaps a more abstract topic than the wrath of God experienced during lifetime; by all indications, though, the notions of posthumous punishment and reward formed to a significant extent their concepts of sin and morality. In any case, clergymen generally did not complain about the primacy of worldly thinking in respect of these matters among rural people.

At least from the middle of the eighteenth century onwards, in the peasant worldview the dependence between the commitment of sin and afterlife condemnation stood out. Dating back to this period are numerous reliable records of declarations such as the one made by Bartek Krysta of Albigowa. Instigated by a neighbour to claim illegitimately a share in an inheritance, “fearing God, he did not want to take the innocent [*sic*] ground onto himself, fearing God the Lord and the Divine judgment, for knoweth he that he shall not evade the judgement of God.”<sup>747</sup> Withholding from sinning was explained by fear of “temporal Divine punishment to the body, and also an eternal one to the soul.”<sup>748</sup> This is not to say that before then peasants overlooked the interrelation between sin in life and condemnation after death. The infernal torments experienced by the sinner’s soul were one of the most concrete and appalling elements of Christian eschatology. The peasants’ conscientiousness about the soul, preventing it from falling in with the painful company of daemons, is first attested by single records from around the mid-seventeenth century, where the soul’s lot is clearly dependent on man’s deeds.<sup>749</sup>

In the realisation of the cause-and-effect relationship between the quality of life and the posthumous fate of the soul, the dissemination of the image of purgatory played a large role. It became the basis for detail and expressive realisation of the relations between the deeds of man and the posthumous punishments to which he was exposed. Moreover, it allowed a gradation of human trespasses in the eschatological depiction; the awareness that they could be atoned or expiated

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747 Albigowa, Vol. 1, p. 293 [1778]; also, cf. Jawornik, pp. 711–12 [1779]; Husów, p. 249 [the end of the eighteenth century].

748 Sucha demesne, p. 456 [1753].

749 For example, *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3908 [1670], 4904 [1639]; Piątkowa, p. 122 [1671].



fed the hope for salvation. Additionally, the popularisation of the notion of purgatory supplied rich creational material for popular concepts of afterlife.

In the peasants' awareness, the vision of 'the afterlife was a resultant of simplified homiletic teaching and the cultural burden as well as daily experience gained in the rural environment. People's self-determination concerning the thus developed concept of the otherworld was a determinant of their moral self-assessment; hence, in the considerations on the religious features of the morality of Lesser Poland's peasantry, it is important to determine how they understood their own afterlives.

Where did the average peasant living in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries believe he or she would go to in the next world? From the pulpit, he or she could listen to permanent admonitions to improve and to expressive descriptions of infernal tribulations waiting for inveterate sinners. "Tight is the wickett and narrow the path that leads to life eternall, and rare are those who can find it,"<sup>750</sup> the peasant could learn. Peasants also heard that "God is mercifull of His nature, He is ready to redeem through mercy, [those] whom he hath found not capable of redeeming through justice, who wants that all the people be saved, not one perishing. He who quoth through the prophet: on whichever day the sinner may convert, he shall live with life, and die not. That, also, everybody be sinfull and undevout, if he go to penance, may he not doubt to obtain redemption through mercy."<sup>751</sup> For God is ready to "remitt everybody whoever onely truly converteth towards Him."<sup>752</sup> However, "in this world one must needs earn his reward, or his punishment. . . . One needs to think either of stars, or of flames: every moment of time may be the price paid for sempiternall merriments or continuall torments."<sup>753</sup> Peasants were not intellectually capable of permanently controlling their conduct in this way. A reply to the question of 'what would happen with me after death?', which was more appealing to them, was given by the Rev. Wojciech Tylkowski: in one of his sermons, he found that "we know not, though, who is in heaven and who is in hell, or else in purgatory, yet we can make a guess, for a heathen, that he goes to hell is a clear thing, that a martyr goes to heaven, as well as little children after baptism, this be overt. It therefore remains to a matter of

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750 J. Wujek, *Postylla mniejsza*, Poznan 1579, p. 636.

751 *Ibid.*, p. 212.

752 *Ibid.*, p. 946.

753 A. C. Załuski, *Kazania, które się na prędce zebrać mogły*, Warsaw 1697, fol. D3.

verisimilitude that other Christians faithful commonly go to Purgatorie, where-with this be enough for us so that we pray for them.”<sup>754</sup>

How about the peasants' attitude themselves? There is an anecdotal example from the 1660s, an apprentice at a Warsaw monastery, “a good man though a big boor, he could not comprehend that, of indigent condition, those villager people could be in heaven; as far as he was told by some-one that he offer his labours to God the Lord and beware of sin, thereby earning his eternal redemption and heaven, he replied with a great sigh that heaven is not for boors, but for the gracious Masters, and for we the poor it appertaineth to be in hell,” and could not be persuaded to otherwise.<sup>755</sup> Stanisław Brzeżański, the dean of Dunajów and keen observer of his parochial community, argued that doubting in remission of sins in simple people was rooted in “the obstinance they have experienced against themselves and the tyranny of certain of their lords, of which they infer unjust detrimentation about God, the Lord of infinite goodness and inconceivable mercy, thus understanding wrongly.”<sup>756</sup>

The expectations expressed in the peasants' testaments were different, though. It was only in single cases that those about to die expressed their doubt or concern about Divine adjudication. Such was the case with the last will of Rejna Głanoska from Przegonia: “reminiscent of the Divine decree which encountereth me after mine deathe, good or bad, have mercy upon me Jesus as long as my soul remaineth in the flesh.”<sup>757</sup> In most testament records, however, a hope prevails in the mercy of God and the belief that the moribund person will be blessed with salvation. One example is the last will of Franciszek Mierniczak from Olszówka, who cherished a “strong hope in His [God's] teeming mercy in the wounds and the blood of Christ, that He shall wash me of all my sins with this same blood of His,” and pardoning “all and any severities, anguishes . . . shall attribute me with salvation and admit me heavenly glory, where I shall for ever exalt the Name of God Omnipotent.”<sup>758</sup> Some, such as Walenty Szpunar of Albigowa, seem to have been certain of redemption. In his last will, he gave his soul over to God “as the work of His Divine hands,” committing the care of it to St Valentine, Our Holiest

754 W. Tylkowski, *Problematyka święte, abo pytania około wyrozumienia św. Ewangeliej*, Poznan 1688, Vol. 1, p. 222.

755 [R. Kalinowski], *Klasztory karmelitek bosych w Polsce, na Litwie i Rusi*, Vol. [III], Krakow 1902, p. 112.

756 S. Brzeżański, op. cit., fol. G.

757 Pieskowa Skała, p. 908 [1759]; also, cf. Czarna, p. 238 [1715].

758 Olszówka, fol. 19 [1695]; also, cf. Świątniki, fol. 53 [1694]; Czarna, pp. 257 [1720] and 470 [1751].

Lady, Guardian Angel, and All the Saints. He further on committed to intercede after his death for his relatives with God, in whose proximity he was apparently certain to arrive, as befits a righteous man.<sup>759</sup>

Although illiterate testators could inform the final shape of their last wills to a limited extent, the scribes edited their words according to the assumed canons of written utterance, the wording or phrases used did not excessively divert from the testator's mood and thoughts of the one who had to approve the document. The various features individualising the message, even if somewhat processed literarily, most probably come from the actual testator. It can therefore be guessed that in general, peasants died with the hope of being saved.

Another 'paragraph' common to peasants' testaments indicates, however, that the usual expectation was Purgatory, as the first stage of the afterlife. The enumeration of the legacies to the church and obliging relatives to offer prayers and celebrate the Mass was meant to 'save' the moribund person's soul and render it possible for it to "view the Divine face all the sooner."<sup>760</sup> Inheritors' fulfilment of these obligations was considered to be a measure of the legitimacy and correctness of the succession (see Chapter III.4). Some undertook additional such obligations, "so that all the more, and eassier, relievie and curb the purgatorie torments for his parents."<sup>761</sup> The propagation of the concept of *purgatorium* meant that belief spread amongst peasants in common purgatorial living of souls after death. Moreover, they also believed that numerous souls in purgatory, who "cannot obtain rescue from no-where," did their penance in this world, perhaps in the places where they had sinned before.<sup>762</sup>

How long did purgatorial torment affecting the soul of (an average) dead peasant last? Members of Scapular confraternities, which were fairly popular in the countryside from the latter half of the seventeenth century onwards, were expected to be freed from *purgatorium* by Our Lady on the first Saturday after their death. Seemingly, not many actually hoped for such a rapid release, however. The prayers and Masses requested by those about to die were meant to be held regularly for a rather long time, whereas the 'memory' – as the prayers to be said by the successors were described – was to be 'perpetual.' At times testators

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759 Albigowa, Vol. 3, pp. 9–12 [1734]; also, cf. Lipnica Górna, Vol. 1, p. 82 [1754].

760 Olszówka, fol. 19 [1695]; also, cf. *Klimkówka demesne*, No. 541 [1643]; A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 293 [1704]; Andrychów, Vol. 2, p. 26 [1752].

761 Czarna, p. 300 [1737].

762 Cf. Czermino, fol. 185 [1725].

requested Masses for the souls of their deceased spouses, siblings, parents, or relatives, possibly expecting that they were still remaining in purgatory.

Thus, these testators seem to have expected lengthy tribulations in purgatory: if not up to the very Day of Judgement, then designed for several decades at least. For instance, the wife of a Rychwałd organist was decreed to 36 years of torment for having called for a quack-doctress when in illness, as she disclosed to her husband in his dream vision.<sup>763</sup> On bequeathing to his parish church, in 1781, a fixed annual fund based on proceeds from his farm, in view of “perpetuall at this locall church enumeration, or advocating for public praying, of the souls of Antoni and Zofia [possibly, his parents],” Jan Niemczyk of Bestwina foresaw that sometime in the future such foundations might be abolished, or that “the rituals of the holy Catholic Roman faith (God benevolent forbid this) may be ceasing and collapsing in this church.”<sup>764</sup> Thus, either he demonstrated a disbelief in the sustainability of the Catholic Church under Austrian rule (the sole reign of Emperor Joseph II has just begun), or referred to some distant, almost unconvivable, future.

The awareness that “heavenly salvation” ought to be “earned in this world”<sup>765</sup> coincided among peasants with a critical self-evaluation leading to the conclusion that purgatory is inevitable in any case. Salvation, as it was expected, would only come after all the sins had been repented, whereas an ordinary human being could not possibly completely prevent himself or herself from committing them. Painstakingly guarding oneself against sins and living an appropriate life could ensure a shortening, rather than evasion, of the painful transitory period.

If numerous sins were committed, the Commandments of God and the precepts of the Church infringed, and so on, the chance to have them repented in purgatory could be lost – and condemnation was earned instead.<sup>766</sup> All the same, those who perpetrated even the most abhorrent deeds did not lose trust in Divine mercy and hope for eternal life, as if in defiance of those preachers who threatened their listeners with eternal damnation even for the slightest delinquency. For instance, the reeve of Żywiec Andrzej Komoniecki wrote that in 1688 the thieves Mikołaj Rachniak and Tomasz Płonka from Radziechowy, “who, when they were led through the town [to the gallows], were singing the litany on the

763 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 331 [1709].

764 Bestwina, p. 55 [1781].

765 Olszówka, fol. 19 [1695].

766 See Jazowsko, No. 38 [1694], 146 [1740]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*..., Nos. 3819 [1739], 5179 [1776]; Husów, p. 249 [the end of the eighteenth century]; Jawornik, p. 712 [1779].

Holiest Virgin Marie aloud by themselves, on the way to being killed [namely, hanged].<sup>767</sup> A year later, Martyn Portasz, the cruel ringleader of a bunch of robbers, hanged in Żywiec on a hook, elicited from his confessor before the execution that he be registered after death with the Rosary confraternity, with the quite apparent intent that the confraters' prayers put him out of his purgatorial misery.<sup>768</sup> On his way to be executed, another brigand, Sebastian Gruszecki, "so taught at school," read to himself the salutary acts aloud, and when the executioner broke his legs and his arms, he sang, in Latin: "*In manus Tuas Domine commendo spiritum meum ...*" (This man was probably not of peasant descent.)<sup>769</sup>

While sinners thus 'merited' did not lose their belief in ultimate redemption and the salvation of their souls, all the more were common penitents convinced that their vices would be redeemable, possibly (at least partly) still while alive. The father of an illegitimate child from the demesne of Jazowsko was ordered by the priest to keep fasting during seven consecutive Wednesdays, to repent for what he had done; his mistress was to do the same on Tuesdays and Fridays.<sup>770</sup> Having done this repentance, would they have felt quiet and safe in terms of the eschatological dimension? The example of the daughter of a certain Prokop from Kasina may suggest that they would indeed. The girl "lived very dissolutely with her custommes ... that is, a great harlot she was," for which her parents had her disinherited. Some time later, then already as a wife of Matys Szerszeń of Mszana, she claimed her right to a dowry of her mother. Whilst she owned up, she had once led a "licentious life," she supported her claim with the argument that she had already completed her repentance. Apparently, she must have deemed her previous deeds cancelled on the supernatural plane, and hence their legal consequences should have been annulled.<sup>771</sup>

Błażej Leszek and Agnieszka Rozworzanka from Łącko demesne, who had "committed a carnality" when Błażej served as a farmhand at the household of Agnieszka's father Jan Rozwora, were decreed to lie prostrate, arms outstretched, at their church during one Mass, the Divine Majesty for to implore, "recollecting His most holy Passion that He hath undertook for human deliverance."<sup>772</sup> Grzegorz Dziedzic from the demesne of Strzeszyce for his fornication with a servant maid was expected to lie prostrate during five Masses, "thus re-paying

767 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 245 [1688].

768 Ibid., p. 246 [1689]; cf. BJ, ms 5493, fol. 3<sup>v</sup>-4.

769 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 254 [1693].

770 Jazowsko, No. 95 [1732].

771 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*..., No. 3072 [1624].

772 Their penance was to be this short, for they got married; Łącko, No. 842 [1744].

to Divine justice.<sup>773</sup> The same penance was imposed upon Józef Bogdanik of Stryszawa, a perjurer, who was moreover supposed to give “to the Rosary confraternity for the light seven zlotys so that the Mother of God beg her Son for annulment of the eternal punishment deserved for this sin.”<sup>774</sup> For a total of 15 Masses, wearing a cope (the expiatory garment otherwise used by flagellants), Walenty Doscocz was ordered to lie in the church of Skała for killing a certain Stanisław Kalębka.<sup>775</sup> Much more complicated, and time-consuming, were the penances imposed on Ian Zelek of Strzeszyce demesne for his intercourse with his own stepdaughter,<sup>776</sup> and on Jadwiga, daughter of a Trześniów miller, for her contribution in the murder of her own husband.<sup>777</sup> There was a common denominator to all of these penalties: they were meant to reverse God’s wrath from the criminals, and please and satisfy the insulted majesty of God. And, all were imposed by civil courts – mostly, aldermen’s juries. The local parson might indeed have heavily influenced these verdicts; in any case, however, the punishments administered by such courts could have never replaced the ecclesial penance.

As it therefore seems, the peasant community comprehended Divine justice in terms of a state of balance. Upsetting it by committing a sin required that the perpetrator be absolved by a priest, while the misdeed was supposed to be compensated for by yielding to humiliation (public penance), suffering (physical discipline), and/or self-restraint (fasting and the like). There was a repentance ‘tariff’ in the peasants’ consciousness, related or possibly identical to what might be termed customary (or common) law. The penance done, the supernatural state of balance was restored and the sinner’s eschatological concerns or fears were probably alleviated to a significant degree. Never completely so, though, because man is sinful by nature and cannot possibly counterbalance all of his misdeeds during his lifetime: there would always be a sin to repent. As one blacksmith was advised, who had mistakenly been locked in a dungeon instead of the actual bandit: “as he suffered the prison innocently, may he consider this as repentance for his sins from God the Lord.”<sup>778</sup>

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773 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3988 [1742].

774 Sucha demesne, p. 456 [1753].

775 Pieskowa Skała, p. 731 [1720].

776 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4004 [1742].

777 Trześniów, Vol. 3, fol. 24 [1697].

778 *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego. . .*, No. 27 [1686].

## V. RELIGIOUSNESS AND SUPERSTITION

### 1. Magic and superstition in the peasant vision of the world

Scholars currently tend to avoid using the notion of ‘superstition,’ deeming it subjective and evaluative. For the purpose of the present considerations, however, the term will be used because this chapter concerns those manifestations of peasant religion which the Church of the time deemed improper, erroneous, and blameworthy; which means, superstitious. In the post-Tridentine period, substantial attention was attached to purifying the faith of any manifestation of spoiled religious worship or adoration, of practices and beliefs deemed superstitious. However, there appeared considerable discrepancies in respect of differentiating between superstition and non-superstitious behaviours and practices. Then, the eradication of improper rites and attitudes was ambiguous. In the following discussion, the notion of popular superstition will be used to determine the area of conflict between official religion and peasant culture, and to show the transitory zones between them.

In summarising his pastoral experiences, Rev. Stanisław Brzeżański wrote: “every shepherd of Christ’s sheep, when he teaches the commonalty, the primary prayers, the Hail Mary, and all the other prayers, devotions, teachings and ceremonials of Christ’s true sheepfold of the holy Catholic Church of Rome, is ought to remember diligently and continually that *diabolus est simia operum Dei*. Poles explain this thus: Wheresoever God buildeth his church, there the devil also buildeth his chapel; why, to us the parsons, pastors of the commonalty, the most evident this is that the devil doth blend his superstitions into all the customs of Catholic life and rituals amidst the contumacious commonalty.”<sup>779</sup> Brzeżański has in his description aptly pointed out the dynamic character of the emergence of superstitions and their adoption by the faithful, in parallel with the progress of Christianisation and catechisation of common people. Folk superstition did not form some stable body of relics of paganism, which gradually disappeared due to priestly, pastoral action. Such religious archaisms did also appear, but did not play a key role in popular religion. The character of the latter was determined by phenomena that combined aspects of magic, superstitions or prejudices, and the traditional peasant vision of the world, with Christianity and the civilisation it had shaped.<sup>780</sup> The Christian doctrine that employed an abstract language and

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779 S. Brzeżański, op. cit., fol. F3.

780 Cf. M. Bogucka, op. cit., p. 93.

focused on the spiritual life of man came across certain very concrete expectations from the peasants. Religion was alluring to them primarily on a utilitarian basis. The interest in the cult focused on what formulas and practices were more efficient in terms of achieving individual goals – both supernatural and mundane.<sup>781</sup> As a result, the tendency intensified for common people to superimpose a magical significance to various elements of Christian doctrine and cult, thus producing an abundant Christian magic.<sup>782</sup>

Accepted selectively and superficially, religious doctrine also modified and enriched the transcendental/metaphysical world and daemonic imagination of the common people. This influence was, however, not as intensive as with the techniques of communicating with the extrasensory world. Phantoms, ghosts and daemons were part of the almost daily experience of simple people. The rich imagery and concepts in this sphere were not reducible – as Christian doctrine would have wanted it – to various emanations of the devil. Andrzej Komoniecki described the posthumous history of Ignacy Janota, a sheep-breeder from Ujsoły, who died on 23 December 1719 and “who was the main vampire [*strzygoń*]<sup>783</sup>. And he, overtly and furtively after his death, in the day and in the night alike, being buried by the Rajcza church, did to the people threats, damages and onslaughts, haunting one house after the other, would not leave them in peace and wanted to strangulate the dwellers. Having deliberated of which, it was ordained that he be exhumed and his head cut off inside the grave, and so it was done. However, he was walking around with his head cut-off, which he carried with him, and was inflicting devilments to the people.” This lasted a week and a half. At last, the communities of the villages of Rajcza, Ujsoły, and Rycerka, “having him dug-out from the grave, brought him to the boundary and there, his arms and legs cut off, he was put onto a stack of fire-wood, and so burnt. Out of which fire, from his entrails, something furry was spurting out upp-wards and anomalously moving, till this was burnt up together with the flesh.”<sup>784</sup>

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781 J. Kracik, ‘Katolicka indoktrynacja ...’, p. 14.

782 J. Kracik, ‘Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...’, pp. 187–90.

783 Polish vampire beliefs were formed even before the codification of the European image of the vampire in the second half of the eighteenth century. The *Strzygoń* of Polish folklore bore the main features of a vampire, but was a slightly different demonic figure.

784 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 521 [1719], cf. pp. 235 [1679], 538 [1722]; cf. a similar (though less drastic) story occurring in 1714 in the parish of Tenczynek, in J. Kracik, ‘Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...’, p. 191. In 1529 in the village of Lalin (the



The influence of the Christian concept of the devil was quite clearly evident, however. In 1705 in Żywiec, witnesses saw inside a locked inn some peasants dancing and saltating, wearing their *magierka* Hungarian-style caps with sort-of-horns sewn-on. The vision disappeared as quickly as it had appeared: “The devils were so dancing, it was said around.”<sup>785</sup> Four years later, Bieruta Ormiańcowa of Gilowice was approached in the night by a “grand man in the shape of Michał, brother of the husband of hers, and called her out to the field,” where she was caught over by a “herd of Hermanns [i.e. Germans, in folk demonology, a euphemistic term for the devil]” and dragged across the field by the braids, until she was finally sprinkled by the brother with holy water and incensed with a hallowed herb.<sup>786</sup> In explaining to the villagers that the human soul is immortal, the Rev. Stanisław Brzeżański recommended that they refer to the common transcendental experience: “as a finall recourse, the people, be it these most simplest, shall admit that devils are there, thence a life eternall, that is perpetuall, they do have, and therefore it followeth that the souls of humans eternall be also, for these are spirits as well, as are the Angels evil and good.”<sup>787</sup> This finding apparently suggests that the peasants may have found it easier to absorb the figure of devil than one of the basic principles of Christian religion: the immortality of soul.

Some of the magic practiced by common people was accepted by the Church and subsequently Christianised. The custom of pouring corn on somebody on Polish Yuletide (*Gody*), which in the peasant culture was meant to ensure health and strength, was explained in Christian terms as a commemoration of the stoning of Saint Stephen, the first martyr; the drowning of a straw effigy in the spring was identified by the Church with the figure of Judas, worthy of such condemnation; and so on. In contrast to this, the clergy ruthlessly eradicated those customs whose entertainment nature was prevalent, offering a pretext for unrestrained social behaviours: *Dyngus* Day (water-prank day, wet Monday) or the leaping of the youths over fire on the summer solstice (*sobótka*) being examples.<sup>788</sup>

parish of Grabownica), a dead man's body was profaned with the local parson's consent; cf. T. Śliwa, op. cit., p. 137; also, cf. BO, ms 4465, fol. 24.

785 A. Konomiecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 300 [1705].

786 Ibid. pp. 333–4 [1709].

787 S. Brzeżański, op. cit., fol. G2.

788 J. Tazbir, *Historia kościoła katolickiego w Polsce (1460–1795)*, Warsaw 1966, p. 114; cf. J. Dydowiczowa, ‘Problematyka i metody badań nad wiejskimi zwyczajami gospodarczymi,’ *Kwartalnik Historii Kultury Materialnej*, Vol. 13, 1965, No. 1, p. 97.

However, many a folk practice could not be categorised as Christianised or defeated superstitions. The meaning of some of them was unclear to most of the peasants, while their persistence was determined by inurement. In 1702, a certain Fenna Iwanowa (Iwan's wife) of Klimkówka swore ('the two thereof,' i.e. together with her husband) before the court that she could not bewitch and harmed anyone with wizardry, "the oath which this same Fenna hath fulfilled appropriately according to the decree." However, "after the oath, her husband, who fathometh what for?, told his wife to wind a-circle." The jury was apparently not aware of the superstition's significance, but must have regarded it as potentially menacing, and imposed ten lashes upon Iwan "for such insouciance."<sup>789</sup>

The manifold superstitious behaviours of the common people kept pushing into church ceremonies. "Upon carrying the dead man from home, they put a harrow nail into his coffinne, and banging with the coffinne three times against the threshold; consecrating the oil-cakes for Easter, they take their belts off, and with the paddlocks closed place them underneathe the oil-cakes, I ordered to punish them, and after consecration of such oil-cakes, not with aspergill had them [i.e. these people] sprinkled," the Rev. Stanisław Brzeżański wrote.<sup>790</sup> However, such purists were not numerous among the parish clergy. In any case, these priests were confronted with an enormous variety of superstitions, heterodox beliefs and customs, and were themselves subject to it, to a greater or lesser degree. Some clergymen were however aware of how prevalent the superstitions were among the common people. If the testimonies of these priests are to be trusted, the popularity of superstitions almost endangered the position of Christianity itself. Whilst publishing an edict in 1727 against witch-hunts by secular courts, Krzysztof Szembek, Bishop of Włocławek, admonished the clergymen that, "whilst teaching through sermons and catechisms," they "wean the simple folks away from the wizardry, superstitions and void observations, which are disorderly conjurations with appendages, and the void, and with evil purpose, usage of the holly words, ... to which the fiend posing himself as the luminosity of an angel, attaches and persuades the people to use them more than prayers. ... Furthermore do we interdict the divination, investigation of the damages perpetrated, with the use of water, fire, melting of lead, spilling of wax, as banned by the law, and also the perverse spinning, and firing off sicknesses, since these methods are provided by the fiend."<sup>791</sup>

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789 Klimkówka demesne, No. 1138 [1702].

790 S. Brzeżański, op. cit., fol. F3–F3<sup>v</sup>.

791 *Monumenta Historica Dioeceseos Wladislaviensis*, ed. by S. Chodyński, Wladislaviae [Włocławek] 1885, Vol. V, p. 19.

The use of superstitious practices among peasants – or, in broader terms, their comprehension of the world in magical categories – did not express a conscious opposition to the principles of the Christian religion nor their mental rejection. A conscious critical attitude towards particular manifestations of early modern Catholicism was more common with religious reformers (whether Protestant or Catholic), who were capable of precisely defining the rules of orthodoxy; anything that exceeded the confines of these rules was regarded by them as a contribution from Satan. On a more popular level, influences of such thinking can be found with those persecutors of witchery who assumed that there was some anti-Christian conspiracy or ‘heresy’ that made the witches or enchantresses act in clusters. Let us note, however, that accepting that the use of superstitious practices is a matter of a person’s conscious choice, both of the above-mentioned groups might have had in mind completely different things while considering superstition. It was already in the early eighteenth century that some Polish bishops officially considered witch-hunts superstitious on a par with rinsing cows with water soaked in holy herbs, the latter practice very frequently becoming the reason for witch trials at the time.

Peasants did not comprehend magical practices in terms of opposing religious practices. Their vision of the world encompassed, side by side, orthodox devotional ceremonies and superstitious sorcery or wizardry. In both cases, the main point was about the efficiency of these measures to fulfil particular purposes. The post-Tridentine emphasis placed by the homiletics on eliminating superstitious behaviours among the faithful only led to a gradual re-classing of some magical practices as those regarded to be improper. The condemned sorcery practices were still considered efficient, however; as a result, this contributed to an intensified persecution of witchcraft. Nevertheless, preaching against folk magic promoted other corresponding practices, such as magical rituals with use of ecclesial vessels (or other similar implements) or consecrated objects. At times, it was a side effect of the pastoral effort, or a purposeful replacement of a superstitious custom with another one that was easier for the Church to accept. Moreover, the parochial clergy, who to an extent sympathised with some of the popular superstitions, transferred the local superstitions to other regions and propagated those they regarded as ‘learned’ or ‘bookish,’ of foreign or pre-Christian (e.g. Roman) origin.

However, all of these transformations in the countryside were superficial: they touched upon concrete practices rather than the actual way in which the world was comprehended. Superstitions tended to become modified and Christianised, some of them fell out of use, but generally they still played the same very serious role in the peasant reality. The conviction that they were very

powerful pushed simple folk into using them commonly, almost on a daily basis. This was expressly visible in folk medicine: while not infrequently making use of efficient herbal treatments, it focused on magical actions. (It should be added that despite this methodological backwardness, rural medicine women had no worse results than doctors who took advantage of the then-most recent scientific achievements, who were available to the top social elite of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. No surprise, then, that a number of noble persons formed a particular clientele of female folk healers.) Traditional treatment techniques such as ‘washing off’ the conjuring (in order to reverse it), spilling the waxes, or spells, were regarded by peasants and others throughout the period in question as obvious methods of treatment and therapy. They survived in folklore almost until the present day and have been a fruitful subject of research for folklorists.<sup>792</sup>

Divination practices were another typical use of wizardry. They were usually pursued by specialised fortune-tellers, either male or female, who were requested for help in finding lost or stolen objects. The fame of some folk clairvoyants exceeded the boundaries of their social class. In searching for valuables stolen from the town council’s chest in 1660, the councillors of the town of Biecz sought assistance from an academician astrologist in Krakow and, in parallel, from a rural sorceress called Zacharyaszek (as this is a Polish male name, his/her gender is not fully certain).<sup>793</sup> In 1690, Katarzyna Przyłuska from Krakow wished to help her lord, a certain Dębinski, regain a stolen sabre and therefore visited a female fortune-teller who dwelled as far as beyond Kalwaria Zebrzydowska. The woman “was pouring the wax then, and telling me: there’s a sabre, and showed me on the wax (but I could not see there anything certain), and that there were two women who stole it and pledged it, drinking spirits there upon.” She advised Katarzyna to ‘drill’ a clove of garlic ‘into’ the wall where the sabre hung, by “turning the auger contrariwise,” and then the stealers would return it.<sup>794</sup> Wizardry had much to do with the use of a variety of talismans, often composed of herbs by folk

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792 See AAPrz, ms 179, fol. 115<sup>v</sup>–116 125<sup>v</sup>–126<sup>v</sup>; *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 33 [1653], J. Kracik, ‘Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...’, p. 191.

793 F. Bujak, ‘Śledzenie złooczyńców za pomocą czarów (z rachunków miasta Biecza z r. 1660),’ *Lud*, Vol. 16, 1910, pp. 54–6.

794 *Księgi kryminalne miasta Krakowa...*, No. 536 [1690]; also, see *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4627 [1699]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, p. 18 [1754], 166 [1758]; Lawsuits over duties, involving peasants, APR, the Lubomirski Archive 693, fol. 21 [1758]; ANK, *Księgi Grodzkie Krakowskie*. Relacje 108A, pp. 768–9 [1681].

healers to enhance efficiency in trade or theft, in hunting, as well as in protection against sicknesses, physical pains, and so forth.<sup>795</sup>

The prevalence of wizardry or sorcery among peasants demonstrates how permeated with magic the world must have seemed to them: magic cast its shadow on even the simplest daily activities. In terms of such perception, the lack of an appropriate talisman virtually prevented any successful commercial transaction; otherwise, a neighbour pouring the pigswill on the road turned into a menacing witch. Those who practised magical arts themselves (as peasants generally used to do) suspiciously observed what his or her next-door neighbours did. In 1687, the court of Nowa Góra considered a case where Bartłomiej Jadamczyk and his wife Agnieszka brought to court a certain Sobestyan Piorczyk, who had slandered Bartłomiej's wife as he purportedly had "encountered her do a disgraceful act; that is, standing naked on her head upon some sorcery." Summoned before the court, Sobestyan replied "that seen her have I not do any evil deed, or what ever; it is just that casually, walking my way from Olkusz, did I intrude upon her, *salvo honore* [= saving the honour, i.e. pardon the word] of ye lordes, upon the innate sitter and I hemmed, she got up at that, and I told to her: 'so help God,' and she said to me: 'Give thee health God the Lord.'<sup>796</sup>

The belief in the power of superstitions made peasants resort to them in situations where conventional methods failed. One such situation was fighting with the manor. A conflict with the owner or leaseholder of the village made a single peasant fight a lost battle. However, when the whole peasant community acted in concert, there appeared at least a faint chance of winning. Entangled in individual disputes or clashes, peasants had to resort to sorcery and witchcraft as the most powerful and conclusive arms. In any case, noblemen were confident that peasants used magic in their scheming to the detriment of the manorial farm's economics or even directly damaging their lord's health or life.<sup>797</sup> Such conviction was fundamental to a number of witchcraft trials instituted by nobles against their serfs. Although this superstitious combat was only waged in the

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795 See, e.g., *Regestr złoczyńców grodu sanockiego*. . . , No. 82 [1597]; *Materiały do dziejów zbójnictwa góralskiego z lat 1589–1792*, ed. by S. Szczotka, Lublin–Łódź 1952, No. 22 [1606]; ANK, AD 67, p. 189 [1628]; Świętoniowa, p. 49 [1729].

796 Nowa Góra B, p. 141 [1687].

797 For example, Wola Żarczycka, No. 125 [1679] (also, M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka* ..., p. 59); Rogi, fol. 447 [1697]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*..., No. 4930 [1698]; APL, Księgi Lubelskie Grodzkie, RMO 282, fol. 700 [1741]; cf. G. Adamczewska, 'Magiczna broń i jej rola w walce między wsią a dworem w Sieradzkim w XVII-XVIII w.', *Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne*, Vol. 5, 1963, pp. 5–16.

sphere of fantasy by both parties to the conflict, the intentions and actions of the attacking party were not at all imaginary. Peasants did resort to sorcery in order to do harm to their lords. Despite the relevant evidence coming from torture-enforced testimonies, they are by all means probable. For instance, in 1656 in the area of Zabłotów (Zabolotiv) in Red Ruthenia, three women and a man struck an alliance against Stanisław Karski, the village's leaseholder: "at the house, as they have got together, Pilipicha, Petrycha, [and] Olexina, were saying that Karski *ne bude tut panowaty* [in Ruthenian, 'will not rule here'<sup>798</sup>], they often so boasted against their lord." The plotters bewitched the leaseholder's children, "so that the lord go from Zabłotów betimes; once the children are dead." Olexina's testimony tells us that the villagers permanently employed magical methods in respect of the manor's dwellers, for not only Karski but also "mister Kamieniecki, Wołyński and all the lords whoever dwelled there, were bewitched by her together with the others."<sup>799</sup>

Superstition was a major driver behind peasants' actions and doings in the entire period under research. In as late as 1790, Katarzyna Beretowa bought a special herb from a wayfaring oil-seller that proved helpful if a cow was deprived of milk. The bewitched cow had to be incensed with the herb, so that the sorceress guilty of the deed be forced to come over to the cowshed as soon as practicable; "and so it happened [after application of the method] that when the daughter of those Krzywdas came over, we toppled her onto the ground and I gave her mouth a thrashing (saying that you are alike your mother), and when her husband got interested, I slackened her."<sup>800</sup>

It was only at the end of the eighteenth century that the first clear testimonies appeared of individual peasants noting a qualitative difference between sorcery and religious rituals. The gradual rejection of folk practices was evidently propelled by devotional considerations – by a deeper and more orthodox comprehension of Christianity. This argument was used in 1788 by a certain Grzegorz Muniak during a trial before the dominial jurisdiction of the demesne of Przeclaw: Grzegorz offered Wojciech Mozdziach "the teaching that it be not

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798 The sentence is completely understandable to a Polish reader both then and now, and it probably harmonises in some way with the Khmel'nitsky uprising which was then going on in Ukrainian lands. Despite the revolutionary atmosphere in the eastern part of the Commonwealth, in this case perhaps some ambitious, or perhaps financial, issue must have been the point.

799 W. Semkowicz (ed.), 'Dwa przyczynki do historii wierzeń ludowych,' *Lud*, Vol. 6, 1900, pp. 386–9.

800 K. Kaczmarczyk, 'Przyczynki do wiary w czary,' *Lud*, Vol. 13, 1907, p. 332.

seemly to revert to forecasters in the events, but rather to God.” Wrathful at this remark, Mozdioch ran at Muniak with a rod.<sup>801</sup> The distance with respect to superstitions in the countryside was probably just beginning to extend to individuals who identified themselves most strongly with the teachings coming from the pulpit.

## 2. Magical practices in the countryside

Among the rural superstitions, witchcraft was the most distinguished category. In the early modern age Europe (Poland-Lithuania included, albeit with a delay) saw an eruption of an obsessive fear of witches. A wave of witch-hunts followed, carried out under the law by authorities at various levels to the applause of local communities. To our current knowledge, town and municipal courts took the lead when it came to the persecution of witches in the Commonwealth, mainly in northern and western Poland. The victims were mostly rural.<sup>802</sup>

The complexity of the issue of witchcraft consists in the fact that the notion of it was ambiguous to a society that comprehended the world in terms of supernatural phenomena and daily magical propitiations. The practice, which under certain conditions was considered an efficient and morally neutral measure, became in other circumstances redoubtable and condemnable ‘making it through with the devil’ (i.e. taking advantage of him). In the middle of the eighteenth century, while Rev. Michał Barański of Nowa Góra condemned the activities of a witch from the village of Libiąż, the parson in nearby Rybna, Rev. Kawecki, called for a wizard so that she could heal an ox of a growth on the tongue with use of magical conjurations and strokes with two sickles.<sup>803</sup>

“What is wizardry?” the Rev. Benedykt Chmielowski asked, and replied, “No thing other than obstinate exasperation to do harm to others with the agreement and assistance of the daemons.”<sup>804</sup> This definition can be regarded as fairly to-the-point for it renders the fundamental characteristic of witchcraft; that is, their

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801 Przeclaw, p. 13 [1788].

802 In recent years, several valuable works have appeared discussing the persecution of witches in Poland in various aspects, e.g. M. Pilaszek, *Procesy o czary w Polsce w wiekach XV-XVIII*, Krakow 2008; M. Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host: Imagining Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland*, Oxford 2011; W. Wyporska, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland, 1500–1800*, Basingstoke 2013; J. Wijaczka, *Kościół wobec czarów w Rzeczypospolitej w XVI-XVIII wieku (na tle europejskim)*, Warsaw 2016.

803 J. Kracik, ‘Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...’, pp. 179–80.

804 BJ, ms 7079, fol. 25.

intentional harmfulness. Thus, witchcraft should be understood to mean such superstitious practices which were used in order to endanger or impair other people. This differentiation would coincide with the categorisation into black and white magic, with the reservation that the border between them is highly porous. This was so because it was usually the harmed party who prejudged who was the harming party, and what practices he or she had employed. A superstitious act committed by somebody with no evil intent might have been perceived by his or her neighbour as an instance of an horrendous act of magic that could bring upon him or her a whole chain of misfortunes. In 1748 at Obidza in the demesne of Jazowsko, having moved into a shack formerly occupied by Matyjasz Kozicki, Antoni Tuciak and his wife swept up the homestead and threw the litter onto the baulk. Shortly afterwards, ‘twain of the cattle’ held by their neighbour Kozicki died, so he took the Tuciaks to court, blaming them for magic. The Tuciaks explained themselves saying “that they soe did not for the sake of some deede, so that this be of harm to Kozicki and the cattle of his, but for the custom, as the people be wont to do.” Although the court discovered no evidence of transgression in what they did, it all the same sentenced Antoni to fines, just in case, ordaining: “that this custom be abandoned not only by the Tuciaks but allso by the other people, for them onely to make the powerfull holy sign of the cross and to besprinkle with holly water,” instead of sweeping cottages left by those not related to the new dwellers.<sup>805</sup> As can be seen, the catalogue of superstitious practices regarded by the harmed party as black magic might have been considerably broader than the set of techniques applied in reality to the detriment of the neighbours.

How popular were magical practices in Lesser Poland’s rural areas from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries? To statistically assess the number of active sorceresses is impossible. Should the number of trials for witchcraft in the area under consideration be taken into account, we might conclude that Lesser Poland was less intense in this respect than the Greater Poland (Wielkopolska) or Royal Prussia (Prusy Królewskie) regions, but much more intense than the Masovia (Mazowsze) and Ruthenian voivodships of the Polish Crown.<sup>806</sup> The total number of 10,000 witches burnt at the stake across Poland-Lithuania during the three centuries, as quoted by B. Baranowski (the number often repeated in studies on witchcraft persecution in Europe) is remarkably exaggerated. Małgorzata Pilaszek found only 867 documented witchcraft trials in Poland

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805 Jazowsko, No. 201 [1748].

806 See M. Pilaszek, *Procesy o czary w Polsce...*, p. 509.



in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, in which 558 people were sentenced to death.<sup>807</sup> These numbers point to active magical practices as a phenomenon with a marginal reach. In reality, however, the number of trials recorded does not reflect the popularity and frequency of sorcery practices. The numerous theories attempting to explain the intensified witch-hunts in early modern Europe seek the reason in the social transition taking place on the threshold of modernity, rather than in the increased popularity of magical or enchanting practices. Hence, in discussing how widespread magic and sorcery were in the peasant milieu of Lesser Poland, subjective sources have to be referenced.

In 1679, a nobleman called Jacek Jan Marchocki, hereditary royal reeve of Wola Żarczycka, wrote a protest against the community of this village, who because of their intractability admitted “big larcenies, man-slaughters, meretricious hallotries occurring amidst the fairer sex, and allso of the sorceresses so many have spawned.”<sup>808</sup> This picture of the village’s moral decline is probably painted as black as possible, but mentioning magic amidst sins as commonplace as theft or adultery or fornication is symptomatic. In 1668 the peasant communities of the villages of Kunkowa and Klimkówka “were railing amidst themselves” at the *rug* court sessions “that there is great damage taking place in the village, partly through sorcerie, and partly through thieving.” The point was “that the people seize the advantage upon the cattle one from the other through wizardry, also through thieving there are things aplenty that perish amongst them.”<sup>809</sup> Evidently, sorcery was quite a commonplace practice in villages. The conviction that the transgression was quite popular was reflected in the detailed provisions regarding the organisation of the rural community’s *rug* for the village of Drohobyczka, passed in 1720 (and confirmed in 1770 and 1809). At the session, every attending male was supposed to swear that he had never stolen anything from anybody and had stayed loyal to the lord and the neighbours; as for the women, “with reference to the witch-craft, sorcerie, wasting the children, who each separately must be queried thoroughly and ought to reconfirm this through jurament.”<sup>810</sup> Thus, every countryside woman was potentially suspected of practicing magic, which was probably not without grounds as magical techniques were commonly known, and the will to use them to the detriment of the others apparently sufficed.

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807 *Ibid.*, pp. 266 and 293.

808 Wola Żarczycka, No. 125 [1679]; also, M. Podgórski, *Wola Żarczycka ...*, p. 59.

809 Klimkówka demesne, Nos. 691–2 [1668].

810 LNB, The Ossolineum Collection, ms 2403, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> [1720].

The catalogue of methods of bewitching or conjuring which were employed among peasants is not extremely varied: various forms of sympathetic magic of the contagious sort prevailed (following J. G. Frazer's categories). Among the superstitious actions which most frequently implied accusations of witchcraft were an entire array of magical procedures used on cattle, such as incensing, washing or sprinkling cows with consecrated herbs, occasionally simply with holy water or 'whispered' ('conjured') water,<sup>811</sup> and rubbing them with menstruation blood.<sup>812</sup> Another practice was the one which a certain Obszyńska from Wierchomla Mała told her herdsman to apply: namely, "that he breake and bitte the rods with which the sheep are drived on the cassern [i.e. the pen area] and rubb them against the tits of the cows."<sup>813</sup>

Moreover, it was customary to suspect those who wandered around the others' fields or balks without a clear reason of dangerous sorceries, primarily at dawn on feast days. Such persons were believed to be collecting dew, the typical ingredient of magical decoctions, or sprinkling field-patches with magical substances.<sup>814</sup>

The magical practices that aroused accusations of witchcraft included burying a carefully matched set of objects on the balks of one's own or somebody else's field; or, at times, by the wall of a house or outbuilding. This custom was not thoroughly magical, though. Rev. Benedykt Chmielowski advised in his *Nowe Ateny* that, for the protection of crops and harvests, slips of paper with extracts from the four Gospels, previously "kept upon the Monstrance or benedicted by the chaplains," should be buried on the borderlines of fields, towards the four corners of the world, hidden in small pipes.<sup>815</sup> Driven by the same intention, the illiterate would bury various objects to which they ascribed a magical power. In the eyes of their neighbours, who feared a harmful impact from such packets, those usually were 'pot-fulls of filth.' The judges from Nowy Wiśnicz thus

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811 ANK, Akta m. Kazimierza, K-267, pp. 13–14 [1611]; K. Kaczmarczyk [ed.], 'Proces o "czarostwo" w r. 1688 i 1689,' *Lud*, Vol. 7, 1901, pp. 305, 312–13, 316; Tylicz B, p. 134 [1771]; cf. I.T. Baranowski, 'Wsie miasta Kalisza,' *Przegląd Historyczny*, Vol. 20, 1916, fasc. 3, p. 366.

812 Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 207 [1765].

813 Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, p. 92 [1757].

814 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4364 [1698]; *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego...*, No. 35 [1763], Klimkówka demesne, Nos. 849 [1682] and 1156 [1702].

815 B. Chmielowski, *Nowe Ateny, albo akademia wszelkiej sciencyi pełna*, Part 3, Lwów 1754, p. 444.

described their first-hand experience of the content of one such packet: “some matters blended, as it seems, with ash and strands of some sort, very squalid, ... cadaveric bones and some unsightly ash.”<sup>816</sup> Indeed, with a magical purpose in mind, various organic substances were frequently buried. Before the harmed individuals could dig them up, they were subject to at least partial decomposition, so they looked rather abominable. The choice of the ingredients is shocking enough. In 1781, Anna Białowansowa buried the following composition in a field of Tylicz, wrapped in a ‘neglectful clay-pot.’ “a cross, broken and not complete, a flask-neck, a herb, a brome, a smokey piece of rug.”<sup>817</sup> A hundred years before then, in Płaszów, Regina Kuspiczina buried by a cross on the pasture, in a bag, “a larynx or gorge of a beast, also three blood-stained head-scarves, dyed in some verdancy.”<sup>818</sup> A neighbour who found such ‘treasure’ on the border of his land might become quite fearful indeed. Overall, the use, for any purpose, of animals and things considered disgusting, such as lizards, snakes, worms or insects, frog squawk, corpse heads, dung or manure, and so on, triggered a suspicion of witchcraft.<sup>819</sup>

Gestures specific to magic or wizardry are covered in the sources only to a small extent. They were perhaps generally described as ‘practice of witchcraft,’ a phrase that appears rather often in the accusations. We are told more only by a few records. For instance, the wife of Matyasza Manka from Rajbrot “on driving the cattle into the field, would sit down in the water saying that [she was doing it] so that the cattle run wild not and so that the vermin stay away of them.”<sup>820</sup> Expelled from the court for doing harm to her mistress, Jadwiga Usiecka, dwelling near Wieliczka, “moved into an empty barn, and was seen there, in front of that-very barn, falling down onto the ground like a duck, her gown distended, was turning round thrice, drawing the sand towards both sides around herself.”<sup>821</sup> The practice of standing on the head naked (for some magical purpose), which reappeared at times in witchcraft imputations, is not

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816 *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 7 [1632].

817 Tylicz B, p. 246 [1781].

818 ANK, Akta m. Kazimierza, K-269, p. 57 [1691]; also, see *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 4364 [1698]; ‘Proces o “czarostwo”...’, p. 308; ‘Ze starych aktów. Proces o czary w Bochni 1679 r.’ ed. by K. Kaczmarczyk, *Lud*, Vol. 16, 1910, p. 52; cf. BC, ms MNK 276, fol. 67 [1636]; APL, Księgi Chełmskie Grodzkie RMO 163, p. 365 [1764].

819 For example, ANK, Dep., ms 6, p. 139, 146 [1644]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 1, p. 201 [1758].

820 Rajbrot, miscellaneous records I, No. 20 [1720].

821 ANK, Księgi Grodzkie Krakowskie, Relacje 72, p. 539 [1646].

confirmed by the records for the area of Lesser Poland. The practice does not seem to have been one of the actually applied sorcery techniques but was rather part of the set of popular ideas about how witches behaved, similarly to flying on a broom.

Magical deeds also manifested themselves in the rather technically primitive homeopathic; that is, imitative, magic. During a 1688 trial before the court of Nowy Wiśnicz, a woman called Jadwiga Macowa from Łapczyca near Bochnia admitted that she had used several like practices, such as ‘burning the pebbles,’ and this for “hail to pour down, plum-tree and peases yield not;” she would plaster the furnace with spoiled milk “for the reason that snow fall down in the summer;” and, on the Easter holiday, she would be seated on a shack in a black dress: “so that there be flood, I took a watering-can and sprinkled onto the roof-ridge and onto the ground.”<sup>822</sup> The spontaneity of these associations indicates that these magical practices might have been the woman’s own concept rather than a sorcery technique passed down the generations. In any case, such ideas are far from original; they directly stemmed from the traditional, magical vision of the world, according to which appropriate action taken on a micro-scale triggers similar phenomenon with a larger reach.

Elements of Christian practices were also used for magical purposes. Józef Wołczykowski of Świątniki and his mother once wanted to bring death upon the local reeve, Antoni Górski, and two other individuals, “are fasting and parching with the mother Sundays, to the service at the church in Brzezcie as their parochial church going not, and are only going to the Divine Passion standing in the Świątniki field at the crossroads, this one they walk round up to a few times.”<sup>823</sup>

Devotional Christian texts were widely used in magical practices. Their mutated versions were used for ‘whispering onto’ the water (which was thereafter used in wizardry). When casting spells, incantations were pronounced stylised after Catholic prayers. One example is a formula used to obviate beer: known to us is a record taken near Kalisz, Greater Poland, which is however quite characteristic of this type of texts: “O Holiest Virgin Mary, a sinful wretched woman summons Thee to come upon her so that Thou deigneth intercede with Thy Most-loved Son and deaden these worms, as He did deaden the dissimulators when they solicited for his health. By the power of God Almighty, so that they be lost into the earth. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit

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822 ‘Proces o “czarostwo...”,’ pp. 304–7.

823 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 7211 [1758].

three times.”<sup>824</sup> Original texts of popular prayers such as the Lord’s Prayer and Hail Mary were used occasionally as well, imbued at times with a perverse connotation by, for instance, denying each single word: “Hail not, Mary not, full of grace not,” and so forth.<sup>825</sup>

Similarly, Catholic saints could be involved in wizardry. A certain Zofia Strzałkowszczyńska residing near Jarosław happened to cast a spell on Michał Wachowicz’s cow and moreover cast Michał blind with use of a very special practice: as she threatened him in presence of witnesses, “I have entreated with the Holiest Mother of God of sorrows [i.e. as represented in the miraculous effigy in the Jesuit church in Jarosław] that as you have gone blinde in your one eye so then you go blinde in the other, which hastily soon became so, to the outrage of the people.”<sup>826</sup>

Sorcery practices extended to adding poison to beverages or food, and poisoning wells. In fact, any use of poison meant contact with substances characteristic of wizardry. In 1749 in Cholerzyn, a woman called Zofia persistently, though to no avail, poisoned her husband Kazimierz Bartyzel: “so many a time did she blend lime for him in the decoct, then even if he ate it this never harmed him; ... from the hammer-smithie she got some scale from the copper, having broughte which she gave him this in the decoct, only once did he have severe mawkishness, having eaten with this scale, but salved himself with vomiting, ... also lizards, snakes did she catch and put it into his food, but this was of no harm to him. Likewise, she brought along a cadaverous head ... which he scrape into his food, so that he wither and live to a year not, ... also the cousin of hers Zofia from Burów bought together with her quick-silver in Krakow ... for it to be given to her husband.”<sup>827</sup> As can be seen, Zofia poisoned her spouse with substances that were noxious indeed (mercury vapours, for instance) on a par with agents whose presumed efficiency was determined by their use in magical practices (lizards and cadaverous heads).

An accusation of superstitiously practising magic might also have been made because of a superstitious use of certain objects, such as blessed candles and

824 B. Baranowski, *Ludzie gościńca w XVII-XVIII w.*, Łódź 1986, p. 39.

825 *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 42 [1662].

826 Jarosław, pp. 83–4 [1730].

827 Nowa Góra A, fol. 10<sup>v</sup> [1749]; also, see: ANK, Akta m. Kazimierza, K-267, pp. 16–18 [1612]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*..., No. 3306 [1647] and 3850 [1572]; ANK, Dep., ms 6, p. 472 [1692]; Tarnów, No. 69 [1756]; APR, Archiwum Lubomirskich 692, fol. 16–16<sup>v</sup> [1758].

consecrated herbaceous plant,<sup>828</sup> dew,<sup>829</sup> mother's milk,<sup>830</sup> wolf's throat,<sup>831</sup> or some mysterious sorcerer's bone which was used by Jan Wilczek of Rogi, and which the rural court ordered burned at the border.<sup>832</sup> In addition, the fact that somebody possessed an amulet, usually in the form of a 'bundle,' which was quite common in the countryside at the time, might have become the reason for the imputation of witchcraft. In 1734, a man called Jędrzej Piwoński from the demesne of Bratkowice received 100 beats with 'whiskes' on seven Fridays each and had to do ecclesiastical penance after Jan Szarama had incidentally found inside his cap a bundle with seven types of herbs. This sufficed to accuse Piwoński of some ill intents supported by magical means. The set of herbs ("rue, southern wormwood, elderberry, moss, allseed, sylvan dandelion[?], creeping-willow leaves") indicates, however, that the bundle was probably a pain-relieving agent.<sup>833</sup>

The fact that holding an amulet might trigger an accusation of black magic was well known to Stanisław Gęza of Jodłowa, who was suspected by the local community of having killed the curate. He was arrested by a group of peasants in the field while working: "I had with me at that time a wreath from the Monnstrance and I rejected it from me when I was captured because I did want them to understand this was not a magic; and I was carrying the wreath with me because I dealt with commerce. I also had a consecrated elderberry with me, and this ... for the luck in business."<sup>834</sup>

The composition of amulets/bundles was diverse, but often included objects connected in one way or another with the Christian sacred sphere. Wawrzyniec Kubernacik, a thief and native of the village of Łęgi (which is Łęg Tarnowski today), had a bundle "which he carries with him since his adolescence" with "a piece of consecrated sausage, of consecrated bread and consecrated pork-clod, which he carried not for any sorcerie but that, he says, it is good to carry for the

828 *Postępek prawa czartowskiego przeciw narodowi ludzkiemu*, ed. by A. Benis, Kraków 1892, Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich No. 22, pp. 105–6.

829 Piątkowa, p. 128 [1653]; *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego...*, No. 35 [1763].

830 BO, ms 5725, p. 21 [1756].

831 ASD, Vol. 2, p. 451 [1746].

832 Rogi, fol. 446 [1697].

833 AGAD, Archive of Roś [Archiwum Roskie] CX 10/1a [1734]; also, cf. Klimkówka demesne, No. 399 [1636]; 'Wybór źródeł rękopiśmiennych do dziejów wsi nad Sanem i Wisłokiem w XVI i XVII wieku', ed. by J. Półwiartek, *Prace Humanistyczne*, Series I, fasc. 17, 1980, p. 231 [1694].

834 ANK, Dep., ms 6, p. 200 [1653].

sake of luck.” After he robbed the church in Siedlce near Nowy Sącz, he added seven hosts wrapped in a separate kerchief to his collection of amulets.<sup>835</sup> The bundles were probably the most subjective object associated with wizardry. They were mostly intended by their holders to act solely as an amulet: they were not designed to do harm to anyone, and hence their use ought not to have been accepted as evidence of practicing sorcery. However, the accusers perceived those objects primarily as a source of magical power, the use of which was driven by the owner’s intent. If he or she was suspected of evil designs, his or her bundle became a dangerous instrument of witchcraft.

If the accusers and coerced testimonies of the accused witches are to be trusted, magic was most frequently employed against property. The charge of bewitching a field was popular; for instance, in Klimkówka, “Olena Baniaska walked in the morning across the others’ fields, giving a verisimilitude of sorceries.”<sup>836</sup> Harming the crops was often understood as bringing down dry weather. In 1679, Maryna Mazurkowicowa, reportedly of a six-member ‘regiment’ of witches from the vicinity of Bochnia, gave evidence of her experience in this respect: “when I was reaping in the fields of the Rev. Dąbski with Borucina and Kucina, who asked Borucina in Krakow and myself that we cause scarceness on the grains, for which this same Rev. canon priest gave this Borucina 1,000 złotys.” Apparently, the priest had a plenty of corn stored and wanted prices to rise. To carry out what they were mandated to do, the witches procured a baby infant whom “this same Borucina apparently tore to venules, dry and into the air.” They also prepared a magical powder and “when the elder ones threw that powder in Zawiśle [i.e. ‘behind the Vistula River’], told us to repeat after them, ‘may the yeares be dry, like this powder, may rains come not and that no thing may spring out.’”<sup>837</sup>

Among witchcraft that affected property, let us note the rather rare accusations of bewitching a well, a mill, or a person’s possessions in their entirety.<sup>838</sup>

However, domesticated animals, primarily cows, were the most popular object of harmful activity by witches. The main point was about ‘seizing the advantage’; that is, causing a cow, with the use of wizardry, to cease giving milk, or to give a milk that was of no use. Reveen A. Komoniecki described what the

835 ANK, AD 67, p. 271 [1638].

836 Klimkówka demesne, No. 1156 [1702]; also, cf. *ibid.*, No. 849 [1682]; *Acta maleficorum Wisníciae*. . . , No. 7 [1632]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*... Nos. 3157 [1634], 4364 [1698].

837 ‘Ze starych aktów ...’, pp. 50–1; cf. *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego*. . . , No. 18 [1678].

838 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*... , Nos. 3157 [1634], 3369 [1652], 3850 [1572]; *Muszyna demesne*, Vol. 2, p. 65 [1762].

practice was like: “in that very year [1698], suspicion fell upon Jadwiga Kubienka and Katarzyna Chyrdula of the village of Lipowa, that they were apparently dealing with sorceries and seizing the neighbourly advantages. Presenting, that neighbour, the milk, that she had it curdelling, that she could tangle in onto the reel like a yarn, stating this upon them that they have caused this her.”<sup>839</sup>

Witchcraft and magic were also suspected of causing sicknesses in or killing off cattle, horses, or sheep. Maciej Bierlitz was convinced that it was because of his neighbour, Jadwiga Kuczmina, that “of the cattle, I am having twain cows marvellously ailing and willing to stand upp not, ... one having overturned, having bent the head underneath her, strangely broke a horn and time-and-again that cow is escaping into that place and is willing to stand upp not, and when we part with her she rises.”<sup>840</sup> Josko Ylkowycz accused Waško Zubek that he had caused pestilence amongst his cattle, “thiss being, of horsstes four, of cows foure in-fawne, of heyferres four, of thiss alle twelfe.”<sup>841</sup>

Witchcraft could also do harm in the apiarian economy, destroying the other beekeepers’ bees or bewitching those of one’s own so that they collect honey from someone else’s hives.<sup>842</sup> The manufacture of alcoholic beverages was susceptible to witchcraft as well. Above all, failures in beer brewing, the activity with which numerous superstitions were associated, raised suspicions of magical intervention. Even a simple accident could have aroused an accusation of damage caused by witchcraft in the production of alcohols. In 1702, Jędrzej Kocurzak complained about Dzwonczychna, wife of the hereditary headman of the village of Kunkowa, “that when she entered his house once upon a time asking about a spirit, if production is successful, since there after his vodka became forth with decaying.”<sup>843</sup>

839 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 267 [1698]; also, see *ibid.*, p. 106 and *Materiały do dziejów zbrojnictwa góralskiego*. . . , No. 10 [1595]; Klimkówka demesne, Nos. 691, 692 [1668]; ‘Proces o “czarostwo” ...’, p. 303; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie*..., No. 4930 [1698]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2 p. 260 [1766].

840 ASD, Vol. 1, pp. 248–9 [1724].

841 Wara, No. 262 [1585]; also, see Klimkówka demesne, No. 1138 [1702] and ASD, Vol. 1, p. 188 [1723]. For more instances of casting spells on cattle, horses, sheep: Liber maleficorum Miechowa 1571–1747, BJ, ms 86, fol. 66<sup>v</sup> [1656]; Jarosław, pp. 83–4 [1730]; ASD, Vol. 1, pp. 437 and 443 [1732]; Jazowsko, No. 201 [1748]; Tylicz B, p. 17 [1763].

842 Wola Żarczycka, No. 173 [c. 1633–6]; ASD, Vol. 2, p. 257 [1746]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 267 [1766].

843 Klimkówka demesne, No. 1126 [1702]; also, see *ibid.*, No. 1138 [1702]; *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 42 [1662]; ‘Dwa przyczynki ...’, p. 386; cf. W. Uruszczak, ‘Proces



The second major area of applying magic was doing harm to human health and life. Activities of this sort assumed a variety of forms. Fiedko Thass, an innkeeper of the village of Torki, ‘had his feet ablated’ when he stepped over the ‘enchantment’ which Ewa Maksymowa “outepoured or enchanted with her sorcerie on the roads and on the thosse patthes whych he wallked to the myll.” Due to the Ewa woman, Thass’s wife went blind as well; as the witch herself boasted, Fiedko lost his sight soon afterwards, too.<sup>844</sup> Zofia Strzałkowszcanka also struck her former landlord, Michał Wachowicz, with blindness: his fault was that he had delayed paying her the merited tribute.<sup>845</sup> Agata Mardakówna, in turn, was reported to have ‘strewn’ Wawrzyniec Galus ‘with pimples:’ the man “for the cause of hers was heavily sick for seven weekes,” and this because he had chosen another girl as his wife.<sup>846</sup> The aforementioned Maciej Bierlitz was convinced that he had “his children swallowing and ailing” owing to the sorceries of his neighbour Jadwiga Kuczmina: “and I am expecting this same thing, as well as the affliction upon my wife, for I have something burning inside me.”<sup>847</sup> The witches’ responsibility extended to inciting a devil’s possession against their predetermined victims and gnawing them with phantoms. Jadwiga Usiecka and her mother, serving at young noblewoman Barbara Otwinowska’s estate near Wieliczka, “bothered the innocent body of the maiden with untold magic without ceasing, even temptations many a time together with horrid carriageguards-like [*sic*] noise they had sent over to the fore-court, and should once the maiden, who was already ... willing very much to rush out to the fore-court, not have been halted, for which she humbly thanked once she recovered consciousness, the Lord knoweth what would have happened with her.”<sup>848</sup>

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czarownicy w Nowym Sączu w 1670 roku. Z badań nad miejskim procesem karnym czasów nowożytnych,’ in *Historia prawa. Historia kultury. Liber Memorialis Vitoldo Maisel dedicatus*, ed. by E. Borkowska-Bagieńska, H. Olszewski, Poznań 1994, p. 197.

844 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, No. 3845 [1572]. The aforementioned Ewa Maksymowa also attempted on the health of the other local innkeeper, named Kusszma; also, see Nos. 3850–3851 [1572].

845 Jarosław, pp. 83–4 [1730].

846 Tarnów, No. 69 [1756].

847 ASD, Vol. 1, p. 249 [1724]. For more cases of doing harm to health through witchcraft: *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 7 [1632]; *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 3157 [1634], 3306 [1647], 7211 [1758]; Klimkówka demesne, Nos. 850 [1682], 1156 [1702]; Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, p. 206 [1765].

848 ANK, *Księgi Grodzkie Krakowskie. Relacje* 72, pp. 539–40 [1646]; also, see ANK, Dep., ms 6, pp. 127–8, 140 [1645]. Characteristically, the witches’ accusations of

Love-related enchantments formed yet another category. These were usually employed by women in order to coax their desired man into loving them. Such actions would only come to light essentially if they failed and the object of affection fell ill instead. Witchcraft practices of this sort were common with 'professional' witches who used them to associate marriages but also to break marriages and condemn women to spinsterhood, prevent unwanted pregnancy, or send down infertility.<sup>849</sup>

### 3. Persecutions of witches in rural settings

The earliest known witchcraft accusation brought to a rural court in Lesser Poland is dated 1450;<sup>850</sup> however, until the end of the sixteenth century, similar cases were a rarity. The first known victim of persecution for witchcraft in the countryside was Barbara Opiolanka from the village of Lipowa in Żywiec Land, who was burnt at the stake in 1595. The town court of Żywiec passed the verdict but the accusation had come from the *gromada* and the village administrator (*sołtys*), for "she hath been in evil suspicion amongst them, that she apparently was spoiling their cattle and seizing the advantages." The case was drastic as Barbara did not admit to any of the charges despite being tortured, and hence the only evidence of her guilt were the sworn testimonies of her neighbours, the accusers.<sup>851</sup>

The practice of judicial persecution of witches seemed to spread in the countryside under the influence of the urban custom. Such influence was enabled through the peasants' daily contact with the local urban hub and via the legislative activities of the village's owner or leaseholder. The latter shaped the legal norms in their estates and demesnes in line with their own concept of judicature. Some rural statutes rendered the peasants and estate administrators to pursue and punish witches, as was the case with the instruction for the demesne of Tuchla (now in the Ukrainian Carpathians) published by Teofila Ostrogska

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causing devil's possession were put forth almost only by victims of noble descent; the motif might not have been too popular in the beliefs shared by peasants.

849 See APL, Księgi Grabowieckie Grodzkie. Relacje 77, pp. 415–16 [1608]; ANK, Dep., ms 6, p. 140 [1645]; *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 42 [1662]; *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego*. . . , No. 18 [1678]; Tarnów, Nos. 52 [1756], 69 [1756].

850 Trzeźniów, Vol. 1, No. 109 [1450].

851 A. Konomiecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 106 [1595]; see: *Materiały do dziejów zbójnictwa góralskiego*. . . , No. 10 [1595].

(1620–3): “and whenever any one convinced that [a local woman is] a witch, then she be burnt, as the law teacheth.”<sup>852</sup>

However, it was customary that noblemen used their own example to show how to deal with such business. In 1608, a noble called Mikołaj Turkowiecki, feeling bewitched because he had fallen in love with his farmhand, Stanisław Skrzypczyk, travelled to Tyszowce to kidnap a local quack-doctor and fortune-teller, a certain Lewkowa. He brought her to his manor in Turkowice and “therein, having used certain methods to frighten her (for at first she would not want to voluntarily confess a thing)” he extorted from her the promise that she would withdraw the enchantment so that he could dwell together with his wife and mother-in-law again, rather than chasing the laddie.<sup>853</sup> When in 1698 a noblewoman called Rusiecka, wife of the leaseholder of the village of Jadowniki, had her dairy-goods spoiled, so she sent her cheese, via the village officials, to a certain Kantorczyna, threatening, “if I do not have my dairies improved, then I shall write a letter to His Lordship the Starost, and shall give you off to the torturer.” Lady Rusiecka’s dairy products improved immediately, which somehow confirmed the suspicion; hence, it was ordained that Kantorczyna be floated, together with 14 other women of the same village.<sup>854</sup>

Usually, however, the nobles would have their serfs suspected of magical practices to their detriment judged by municipal courts: the latter were deemed competent in respect of considering criminal offences punishable by death (one reason was that they had an executioner at their disposal). If a person of peasant descent accused of witchcraft was unlucky enough to be taken to a town court, the usual verdict was to have him or her burnt on a pyre. The court of Nowy Wiśnicz sent the largest number of female peasants to the stake in Lesser Poland, probably as many as six or seven between 1632 and 1785. Witchcraft trials were essentially rare in the region in the period under discussion compared with northern parts of Poland or Habsburg’s Silesia to the west of Lesser Poland. Not more than one or two witches were tried in most of Lesser Poland’s towns during more than two hundred years, between the middle of the sixteenth century and the First Partition of Poland-Lithuania (1772). Only some urban hubs, such as Biecz, Bochnia, Dobczyce, and Nowy Wiśnicz set the stage for several trials each,

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852 ‘Teofili Ostrogskiej instrukcja do wybierania win w włości tuchelskiej,’ in *Polskie ustawy wiejskie ...*, p. 94 [1620–3]; cf. ‘Wilkierz dla wsi klasztoru oliwskiego,’ in *ibid.*, p. 75 [1616]; G. Labuda, ‘Nieznany pomnik polskiego prawa bartnego na Pomorzu,’ *Rocznik Gdański*, Vol. 14, 1955, p. 360.

853 APL, Księgi Grabowieckie Grodzkie. Relacje 77, pp. 415–16 [1608].

854 *Księgi sądowe wiejskie...*, Nos. 4930–4939 [1698].

while the largest in the region, the Krakow agglomeration (and one of the capitals of the kingdom), witnessed more than 20 of them. Only a part of those charged with witchcraft at municipal courts were of rural origin, however.

Following the noblemen's model (and, probably, following their incentive), peasant communities occasionally brought witchcraft cases to the court in the town. This was not common in Lesser Poland, though. Apart from the aforementioned trial of Barbara Opiolanka from Lipowa, only one more sorcery case was brought by peasants to the court in the town of Żywiec in 1589–1782.<sup>855</sup> Between 1611 and 1759, the criminal court in the town of Kazimierz considered two such cases only,<sup>856</sup> its Nowy Wiśnicz counterpart heard four between 1632 and 1785, two of which were part of the 1688 sorcerer vocation series.<sup>857</sup> Usually, however, instances of similar accusations among peasants were finally dealt with by rural courts. While one reason might have been the excessive cost should the case have been dealt with by a town court, the peasant judicature had developed a procedure for adjudicating witchcraft cases that differed from that employed by the courts-of-law functioning in towns. Inspired by urban practice, the procedure was formally restricted and, most probably, enriched by rural legal customs,<sup>858</sup> and therefore more appropriate, in the peasants' perception, when it came to resolving their specific problems.

Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, altogether 67 cases were reported that involved witchcraft charges considered by rural courts; the actual number of accusations must have been higher, though. The registries mentioned almost exclusively debatable matters that demanded to be settled by a court. In cases where the village community was unanimous, the suspect was probably 'candled out' without leaving a trace in writing, or even with no trial at all.

Although the fragmentary condition in which the court sources for Lesser Poland's rural areas have been preserved does not help compile statistics, it may be tempting to attempt to determine, at least in approximation, how the intensity of witchcraft accusations altered in the peasant milieu between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries. Neglecting the abovementioned single written account dating to the fifteenth century, the earliest case from the area of Lesser Poland

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855 A. Komonieczki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 267 [1698].

856 ANK, Akta m. Kazimierza, K-267, pp. 13–14 [1611] and K-269, pp. 57–65 [1681].

857 *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 7 [1632]; ANK, I.T. 205, pp. 13–19 and 20–22 [1688], 33 [1689], the latter three ed. by K. Kaczmarczyk, 'Proces o "czarostwo" ...', pp. 302–12, 321–2.

858 T. Wiślicz, 'Czary przed sądami wiejskimi w Polsce XVI-XVIII w.', *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne*, Vol. 49, 1997, fasc. 1–2, pp. 58–62.

comes from 1529,<sup>859</sup> the date of the latest being 1785.<sup>860</sup> Only three accusations are testified for the whole of the sixteenth century (this being 4.5 % of all such known cases), with 14 (21 %) and 22 (33 %) for the former and latter half of the seventeenth, respectively; and, 15 (22 %) and 13 (19.5 %) cases for the first and second half of the eighteenth century, respectively. However, these statistics are heavily burdened with randomness of the extant material. For instance, the two surviving court registries for the demesne of Muszyna, covering the period 1754–66, include almost 70 % of witchcraft cases from the second half of the eighteenth century. The statistics would be considerably different had the earlier records been preserved for the area.

It can be stated that, in general, witches became persecuted in Lesser Poland's villages more or less in the early seventeenth century and peaked in the second half. The phenomenon was much rarer, and lost importance, in the following century. After 1733, a definite majority of the court cases for witchcraft were based on illegitimate innuendos which were withdrawn by the slanderers when they faced the court. Thus, the countryside of Lesser Poland differed somewhat in this respect from the areas located more northwards, such as Masovia and the lands of Sieradz and Łęczyca, where witchcraft trials attained their peak somewhat later, in the early eighteenth century, and began declining afterwards.

However, we should note that the witch-hunts that took place in Lesser Poland's villages were not very bloody. It might be guessed that not a single witch was ever burnt resulting from a rural court's decision. A disputable occurrence that appeared in 1634 in Kasina ended up with two capital punishments ruled, but – as B. Baranowski aptly presumed – that particular decree was passed by a town court brought along in order to hear the case. Moreover, more than a quarter of the witchcraft cases (to be specific: 19, or 28 %) led to the defendant's 'sworn denial' of the incrimination and a pledge that no sorcery was known or had been practised by her whatsoever, and that she would not do any harm in the future whatsoever. In nine of the cases (13.5 %) the parties came to an agreement. When the suspected witch had her guilt proved, lashes were the most frequent punishment used in 12 cases, which is 18 % of all the known witchcraft cases that were dealt with by rural courts in Lesser Poland. In a total of ten cases (15 %) a fine was imposed; in eight of the verdicts (12 %), the rural court threatened the accused with the death penalty in the event of recidivism. Three persons were 'canded out' of the village (4.5 % of cases), and another three were ordered to do

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859 Trześniów, Vol. 1, No. 709 [1529].

860 Trześniów, Vol. 4, fol. 10 [1785].

ecclesiastical penance.<sup>861</sup> Torture was used in a single case while floating of the suspect was ordained twice.

It is difficult to tell exactly which of the peasant social strata was the accused women's background: such information is usually not specified in the records. In a few cases the defendants are unanimously described as belonging to the most indigent groups: such was the woman described as *drabka* ('[female] vagrant thug') or *służebna* ('servant').<sup>862</sup> However, many of the accused represent the privileged group of full peasants (*kmiecie*), or the village's official elite, such as wives of the reeve or hereditary headmen.<sup>863</sup> As it follows, the social status of the average witch is difficult to establish. Resorting to magical techniques in the countryside was not determined by social stratification. Instead, the female nature of witchcraft is apparent. The aforementioned set of rules regarding the organisation of the rug courts of Drohobyczka ordained women only to swear an oath that they did not use witchcraft or sorceries.<sup>864</sup> The confessional handbook by Rev. Marcin Nowakowski, from 1747, only mentions the application of sorcery in a catalogue of special queries posed to women: "How did you contrive it when you encountered disfavour with your dairy products? Were you not looking for women so that they prattle to you? ... When you had your husband or your progeny sick, did you not make water for him with chars, or with herbs from ninne houses, or against the spells, etc., if you did not bind with a thread?"<sup>865</sup>

Additionally, among those accused of witchcraft and heard by rural courts, women formed a definite majority. Males were involved in only 11 cases, which accounted for a sixth of all such instances. The numerical prevalence of women taken to court in the countryside was thus definite, but not overwhelming. The situation looked in this respect identical to that in towns and the percentage of men accused of witchcraft before the rural courts in Lesser Poland was exactly the same as men before all courts in the Polish Crown.<sup>866</sup>

Although the custom of the judiciary persecuting witches spread in the rural areas of Lesser Poland under the influence of urban culture and with the intermediation of the noblemen, this never meant a simple translation of foreign

861 The percentages do not total 100 because the verdicts are not known in several cases whilst at times two types of punishment were applied simultaneously.

862 Iwkowa, No. 284 [1602]; Jarosław, pp. 83–4 [1730].

863 Klimkówka demesne, Nos. 775 [1677], 1126 [1702].

864 LNB, The Ossolineum Collection, ms 2403, fol. 5<sup>v</sup> [1720].

865 M. Nowakowski, *Przewodnik miłosierny* ..., p. 63.

866 M. Pilaszek, *Procesy o czary w Polsce* ..., p. 512.

patterns into rural relations. The pervasion of witch-hunts in early modern Europe cannot possibly be considered in terms of a gradual expansion of the phenomenon into newer and newer territories and milieus by means of imitation. More to the point is to identify it as a symptom that accompanied a certain phase of development of rapidly developing European societies in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Regional studies have indicated, after all, a variety of local determinants and conditions behind the occurrence of witch-hunts, some of which are quite crucial. As for the rural areas of Lesser Poland, no unique fundamental factor is readily identifiable. The intensification of the judicial treatment of magic or witchcraft in the territory in question was primarily caused, as all over Europe, by the early modern social and cultural transition. The local peculiarity was the fact that, unlike in other countries, it was not religious conflicts, confessionalisation or state building that were of the greatest importance, it was the change in the fundamental popular religion. This transformation restricted the use of folk magical practices whilst not bringing about a rejection by the people of the comprehension of the world in magical categories.

However, this evolution did not mean that the peasants' attitude towards witchcraft and those dabbling in it turned hostile, with resulting legal cases. It is difficult to suspect that before then peasants had tolerated those who practiced bewitching or spell-casting, or proved harmful through some other supernatural methods. The problem was not about sorcery or witchcraft being approached in severer ways: instead, the point was that the phenomenon's recognition became more frequent: for instance, regarding previously approved magical healing or treatment techniques. However paradoxical this might seem, as the religious standards of rural residents were enhanced, the fear of witches grew. The mechanism of these developments consisted in a group decrease in the trust towards traditional magic ousted by para-magical practices of a Christian character.

The diminished trust could have led to suspicions of witchcraft in manifold ways. Their basic models are best describable with use of examples. In Rajbrot, a session of the *rug* court held in 1720 received an accusation of suspicious practices by a certain Manczyna, who "sat herself in the water upon driving the cattle into the field." The defendant explained herself before the court that she did this "so that the cattle run wild not and so that the vermin stay away of them."<sup>867</sup> In a number of similar cases, accusations of witchcraft stemmed from catching somebody practicing superstitious actions in respect of his or her belongings, primarily breeding animals. Various instances of washing or incensing cows,

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867 Rajbrot, miscellaneous records I, No. 20 [1720].

‘delivering’ herbs to them, and the like actions, are often mentioned by witnesses as evidence of the suspected witch’s guilt. We thus deal with a situation where the traditional magical economic habits are becoming no clearer for all the dwellers of a given village. While some of the peasants still practice or employ them, the others had already forgotten what they stood for, and thus read the superstitions they could not understand as noxious sorcery.

The other model is illustrated by the case between Jan Melma and Marianna, a housekeeper to a Uniate priest from near Muszyna. One day, Jan visited the parsonage of Bania on some official business. He used the opportunity and “made various pranks” with Marianna “and wanted to commit a carnall effect with her, and as he distinguished from her a monthly illness [i.e. menstruation] ... having spotted upon her the monthly signs he besought her for them for the reason that he had been informed by Antoni, the inn-keeper of Śnietnica, that if the oxen or the other cattle be rubbed with the monthly signs then they will be fattened and this is because he was beseeching the mentioned Marianna for them, who herself having carved off with a hay-knife gave him with a piece of lap-shirt.” She fell seriously ill shortly afterwards. The illness (not specified) devoured her from the Candlemas until the Pentecost, the moment she received from Jan “that lunatic sign” back, which became a premise for her to accuse the man of having magically harmed her health.<sup>868</sup> In this case, the economic superstition was also known to the plaintiff, or at least was understood by her. This is why she agreed to have her own menstruation blood used for sorcery. At the same time, coming into contact with a magical practice intensified her suspiciousness, thereby convincing her that unwelcome side effects had happened, which eventually led to the accusation of witchcraft.

The third model is a case when the person to become the accuser herself reports to a forecaster or quack to request help through a magical practice, and when the expected result is not brought about, she blames the quack for witchcraft. In 1651, a certain Kurdzielowa of Czukiew [today, Chukva in Ukraine], who stole horses from a stable, sought advice from Zuzanna Żołnirczanka who enjoyed a reputation as one who had travelled in Podolia, a region considered to be a breeding ground for witches. As Kurdzielowa reported, Zuzanna “went with me to my house and said to me: give me just a handfull of spinning-yarn and so I gave her, thereafter she commenced the spinning and having woven she tied the knots, and moreover ordered that the threshold be tumbled [in the stable] ... thereafter she ordered that a splinter be cut [out of the threshold]; having pieced

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868 Muszyna demesne, Vol. 2, pp. 206–8 [1765].



it together, the splinters as well as the knots, she apposed a stone thereat, went home soon after and said to me: forbear this till I come over to thee again; and, when she was back at my home again she said: be concerned not, there will be horses, go look for them.” Kurdzielowa most probably did not expect any other methods of assistance from Żołnirczanka, but when these practices failed, she began to suspect wizardry in them. In parallel, she started shedding her responsibility for the application of magic, explaining to herself that she had visited Żołnirczanka not for the sake of witchcraft but “out of great grief, knowing that she, being a godly woman, asking her that she request God the Lord for me as well.”<sup>869</sup> This was the most drastic form of erosion of trust towards magical practices, one that stemmed from an unknowing psychological hypocrisy. Those yielding to it were inclined to use superstitions for their benefit, while in the event of the slightest failure they deprecated them, calling them witchcraft and finding a scapegoat. This is what finally happened to quack-female-doctors whose healing methods had failed and who were consequently accused of witchcraft, or to overzealous (female) neighbours who counselled to apply the well-tested (magical) methods in case of trouble.

All of these models of the loss of confidence in magical practices among peasants between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries have a common denominator: fear. The gradual limitation of the role of traditional superstitions in daily life in the countryside meant that the magical sphere was becoming increasingly alien and potentially hostile. On the other hand, priests endeavoured to endow it with a negative connotation and associate it with infernal forces. In this configuration, the one who had, perhaps even consciously, renounced the use of superstitions would not cease to believe in their enormous potential. Moreover, he or she would attribute to them a devilish origin. What this was like in practice is exemplified by the testimony of a witness in a 1646 witchcraft trial. The man, Stanisław Olszyński, was a burgher of Nowy Sącz and a customer of the quack-doctor Regina Oleksa: “my wife had a whitflow in her finger, we came to Oleksa; so Oleksa made crosses over the finger, yawning on it. I was laughing, so that I clogged my mouth with a cap, and all of a sudden the porter [i.e. vault-supporting pole] began to creak, and got my hair stand [on end] and I said to my wife that there is devill in this porter;” then he fled and told his wife never to visit the Oleksa woman. Later on, he testified at the trial which eventually led the quack to the stake.<sup>870</sup> Despite the man’s declared aversion or disbelief in

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869 Czukiew, Vol. 1, p. 242 [1651].

870 ANK, AD 67, p. 326 [1646].

superstitions, the woman seemed to him to rule a dangerous supernatural force. His untamed laugh during the visit to the quack's place was surely a nervous laugh that masked his fear. The cracking entablature turned his scepticism into terror.

Overall, witchcraft trials largely resulted from the restricted role of traditional magical practices resulting from accelerated transformation of the religious standards of the rural people in the Counter Reformation years. Superstitions, less and less comprehensible then, started arousing fear and aggression that were vented in the persecution of witches. In Lesser Poland's rural areas, the reach of such persecutions was apparently limited compared to the other regions of Poland or Silesia. To determine the actual reasons would require in-depth research into the various aspects of witchcraft trials in Poland. The scale of the phenomenon indicates that the peasants of Lesser Poland did not fall on a mass scale into an obsessive fear of witches. This might testify to the fact that the change in popular religion was not sufficiently deep in this area. The peasants' attitude towards sorcery and magic, although increasingly fearful with time, never lost its ambivalence. Twelve years after Zofia Konstancja and Agnieszka Michałowska were burnt at the stake in Kasina, two citizens of the nearby Sidzina, Mathias Szarek and Błażej Goryl, proudly pledged for a certain Anna, called 'Proroczka' ('Prophetess'), who dealt with wizardry, deferring charms and 'washing' the sick, which was not welcome by the local curate Marcin Słomowski.<sup>871</sup>

#### 4. Superstition Christianised

Limiting the role of traditional magical practices in the peasant's perception of the world ultimately led to a notable persecution of witches but was not the most important manifestation of folk superstition in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The period saw a thorough comingling of Christianity and popular beliefs. The phenomenon began in the late Middle Ages when, after several centuries of Christianisation, the common people had become accustomed to the ecclesiastical rituals and had acquired the Christian sacred. The process as a result of which traditional magical practices used by Polish peasantry (and their metaphysical world as a whole) largely adopted formal Christian features intensified in roughly the fifteenth century.<sup>872</sup> However, it was only the intensive

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871 Sidzina, p. 53 [1649].

872 S. Bylina, *Kultura ludowa ...*, Warsaw 1999, pp. 178–81; cf. A. Gieysztor, 'La religiosité populaire en Pologne et en Bohême medievales,' *Les Cahiers Franco-Polonais*, Vol. 5, 1981, pp. 89–102.

catechisation of common people, following the launch of the Tridentine reforms, that brought about a definite supremacy of para-Christian superstitions.

The trend was most visible in the catalogue of objects used in magical activities due to their supranatural power. Since the end of the sixteenth century, a clear majority of these objects were related to the Christian cult in one way or another, primarily with its ceremonial and rites. The traditional carriers of magical forces had gone out of use or more frequently had to be Christianised through ecclesiastical consecration, blessing, or at least physical contact with a miraculous image, monstrance, or similar object.

The greatest magical strength was ascribed to the Blessed Sacrament. This central object of the Catholic Mass was the wished-for object of magical procedures. Due to its high saturation with transcendent energy and very close relation with divinity – an aspect which might have not been completely clear to the peasants – the Host was used in practices ensuring success and driving evil forces away.<sup>873</sup> From the Church's standpoint, gaining the Host for a superstitious purpose was sacrilegious. In addition, the rural parishioners showed overt hostility towards those who attempted to illegally come into possession of the Host. However, this seemed primarily to follow from the concern that such a strong source of transcendent power could be grasped by individuals who could use it to do harm to others. Suspected of such attempts were primarily those to whom magic was imputed, and therefore such persons were watched attentively while receiving the Holy Communion, as they could potentially spit inconspicuously the Host into the hand and hide it.<sup>874</sup> This might have been a method used by some to gain the Host for magical purposes. The climate of condemnation for such practices probably restricted their occurrence to a religious periphery.

Consecrated objects such as candles, salt, water, foods, herbs, and so on were commonly used in superstitious activities. When blessed by the priest, they gained a special strength which was taken advantage of in carrying out essentially un-Christian magical rites. In the Church's intent, providing the faithful with consecrated objects was meant to reinforce them spiritually and bodily in their combat against evil, through the Divine blessing which was associated

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873 ANK, AD 67, p. 273 [1638]; B. Baranowski, W. Lewandowski (eds.), *Nietolerancja i zabobon w Polsce XVII i XVIII w.*, Warsaw 1987, pp. 163–4; cf. R. Gansiniec, 'Eucharystia w wierzeniach i praktykach ludu,' *Lud*, Series II, Vol. 24 (44), 1957, pp. 97 ff.

874 *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 22 [1643]; APL, Akta Miasta Lublina 142, pp. 122–32 [1644]; Albigowa, Vol. 1, p. 34 [1690]; *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego*. . . , No. 35 [1763].

with it.<sup>875</sup> In general, the superstitious parishioners who used such objects in a variety of defensive, medicinal, or success-ensuring magical practices pursued the same goal. Nonetheless, from the Church's standpoint, a number of popular customs associated with consecrated things were unacceptable. Abuses in this respect are dealt with in a dedicated chapter of the pastoral letter by Cardinal Bernard Maciejowski,<sup>876</sup> whilst detailed provisions with respect to punishing the maleficent were passed by diocesan synods.<sup>877</sup>

Despite this, consecrated objects were commonly used in sorcery practices. According to the anonymous author of a popular devotional print called *The Trial of the devilish law against the human nation (Postępek prawa czartowskiego przeciw narodowi ludzkiemu)*, "the devils have of this one delight ... when they incest with herbes consecrated, with the blessed candle, for it is women who consecrate for bewitching the most, to the honour, to the glory of fiends."<sup>878</sup> No synod stated it precisely, however, which practices with the use of consecrated objects were to be interdicted. The judgment had to take into account the local customs as well as the intentions of the one who perpetrated the superstitious act. In effect, the notion of the superstitious use of consecrated objects was quite relative. For instance, the practice of incensing cows with consecrated herbs – a stock item in the repertoire of professional witches – was recommended by the Reformed Friars Minor from the Biecz monastery to protect the cattle against bewitchment.<sup>879</sup>

The superstitious attitude to consecrated objects points to the fact that in the ideas shared by simple people in the period in question, religious rite and ceremony was the basic occurrence that triggered supernatural forces. This was the reason why a variety of ecclesiastical objects or vessels were used in magical practices, along with consecrated or other objects somehow associated with the religious cult, even if only in the imagination of their users. Special importance ascribed to consecrated or blessed objects suggests that clergymen were regarded as the most potent distributors of supernatural power. Once distributed, the power became autonomous and could be, as it were, reused without the priest's knowledge or consent, or even in spite of his interdiction. To be precise,

875 *Epistola pastoralis ...*, p. 64 (chap. [19]: *De Sacramentalibus Caeremonialibusque & abusu illorum tollendo*).

876 *Ibid.*, pp. 64–5.

877 See, e.g., J. Sawicki, *Synody diecezji przemyskiej ...*, pp. 105, 253.

878 *Postępek prawa czartowskiego ...*, pp. 105–6.

879 *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego. . .*, No. 35 [1763]; cf. Tylicz B, p. 246 [1781].

magical strength was identified only with the objects deliberately bestowed by the clergyman with magical power (such as holy water or the Host). Supernatural strength was virtually unattached to objects with which the priest's contact was incidental. This confirms that, according to popular concepts, clergymen were not considered to be sources of magical energy: they merely triggered it through an appropriate ritual.

No supernatural powers seem to have been discerned by peasants in human beings. Records testifying to the ascription by peasants of a magical force to peculiar individuals, such as saintly hermits, are rather rare for the sixteenth-to-eighteenth-century period. Among the objects identified as permanent transmitters of the sacred in the earth were miraculous images and, to a lesser extent, relics. Any objects that had ever come into contact with them were used for magical purposes, whether by purposefully putting an object against the image or relic, so to be 'charged with power,' or by decorating or maintenance such 'transmitters.'<sup>880</sup>

Christian ceremonies, the rites and rituals, also had an important role in superstitions; on the verge of modernity, for the rural people they became an obvious and practical means of contact with the supernatural world. Hence, rites and rituals were not only used in official church ceremonies but were also employed in various, often covert, magical offices. The application of prayer texts or elements of Christian ceremonial, e.g. fasting or processions has already been touched upon. Their influence on 'everyday' magic was even stronger. Words, gestures and rituals used in the church overwhelmed superstitious techniques; bewitching and enchanting formulas were entirely Christianised, for example.<sup>881</sup>

The usefulness of ecclesial rites in the superstitious perception did not have to manifest itself in their deformation or in borrowing their convenient elements only. Religious ceremony was in itself regarded as a reliable method of contact with the supernatural, which could be taken advantage of to meet one's own purposes. The manuscript penitentiary entitled *A general collection of all the sins (Zbiór generalny wszystkich grzechów)* from 1776 advised that the confessor learn from the penitent "whether you have prayed and do pray, hear the Holy Mass, have given and do give alms, etc., so that you obtain something evil, which is, that you steal something from somebody, deprive of fortune, kill somebody,

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880 See, e.g., BO, ms 12890, pp. 21, 25.

881 S. Bylina, *Kultura ludowa ...*, pp. 182–5.

commit an impure sin; deceive, rip off somebody by unfair profit.”<sup>882</sup> A quack-female doctor operating in the mid-seventeenth century in the vicinity of Nowy Wiśnicz and Lipnica revealed the following superstitious practice: “when a man falleth ill, or hath a night-mare, then a chaplet is said for him with the Holy Mass, and when they have said it completely [i.e. errorless] then he shall be wholesome, and when they have mistaken it, then this very sick man shall die.”<sup>883</sup>

In such cases, quite fundamental errors in the understanding of Christian ceremonies appeared, rather than some easy-to-discover formal abuses of the ritual. Jan Kracik explains the intentional distortions that occurred in the religious practices by the influence of traditional magical way of thinking prevalent among simple parishioners who approached Christian rites and ceremonies in a similar way as superstitions; namely, as a mechanically operating means to achieve their goals, or a ‘business deal,’ in a sense, with the supernatural.<sup>884</sup> According to Kracik, it is notable that such an attitude towards Catholic religious ceremonies was common in the first half of the eighteenth century in the provincial parishes of Lesser Poland. This is understandable considering that the Polish clergy mainly focused on controlling regular and formally correct participation in the cult, rather than the cult’s quality in the spiritual dimension – the mindset that prevailed at least until the end of the eighteenth century.

In addition, the calendar of cyclical folk customs showed a strong dependence of superstitious practices on religious rites. Since its beginnings, the Church had endeavoured to replace the traditional timetable of annual rituals with the liturgical calendar. With the two cycles overlapping, the folk ceremonial calendar evolved, which tended to adapt to the calendar of Church holidays while preserving the fundamental framework of traditional customs. Some of them were approved by the Church and subjected to superficial Christianisation, but most of them were attacked by the clergy.<sup>885</sup> However, the Church’s efforts to combat popular ceremonies was not overly arduous or efficient even in the post-Tridentine period. The liturgical year thus posed a chronological standard of reference for accumulating annual customs, which in result favoured the peasants absorbing the Christian calendar.

Furthermore, magical practices became associated with the cycle of religious feasts. For example, selecting the appropriate days for superstitious actions

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882 *Zbiór generalny wszystkich grzechów*, ed. by J. Stecki, *Wisła*, Vol. 15, 1901, p. 655.

883 *Acta maleficorum Wisniciae*. . . , No. 42 [1662].

884 J. Kracik, ‘Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...’, pp. 187–8.

885 S. Bylina, *Kultura ludowa ...*, pp. 70–73.

depended on this cycle. Thus, fields were enchanted on Sunday mornings; herbs to be delivered to cows were picked on Saturdays; the sorcerer's bread was baked on Saturday or on Sunday, possibly on St Mark's day; rain was brought down exactly on Easter Day.<sup>886</sup> Even witches are reported to have respected the rhythm of Church holidays, arriving at covens on Christmas Day, on the Epiphany, and so on. In the popular imagination, the days of a Christian festival were therefore not merely the proper date for a religious ceremony but also the best time to use magic.

The clearest example of early modern peasant superstition that was Christianised are the so-called miraculous places. These were informal sites of spontaneous folk devotion that were ascribed supernatural properties. Numerous superstitious behaviours occurred in these places, and the places in themselves were to an extent the creation of popular magical imagination. Usually, there was nobody to exercise control of the devotional expression of those who frequented them; hence, the sites in question can be regarded as a credible measure of the Christianisation of popular customs of a religious character.

It is believed that the creation of miraculous places was a relic of pre-Christian religious concepts manifesting themselves in veneration of natural objects such as trees, springs, waterholes, and the like. In the Middle Ages, the Church endeavoured to restrict the role of such pagan objects of worship by means of patronisation; that is, attaching a Christian warden to them. One way to achieve this was by building shrines next to miraculous springs or suspending worshipped holy images in the trees. Using such methods, the pilgrim's attention shifted from the sacral power of a natural object towards iconographic Christian representation.<sup>887</sup> Many such sites of worship turned into famous hubs of Christian devotion before the Middle Ages came to an end.

While patronisation brought about a fundamental alteration in the significance of miraculous sites, it could not limit the popular inclination to seek a supernatural power in natural objects. Additionally, in the early modern period, the spontaneous religiosity of common people created miraculous places eagerly. In fact, a revival of their popularity is observable then, which has to do with the dissemination of the cult of miraculous images and pilgrimages, which was similar in character. The early modern stage of discovering miraculous sites did not mean a recurrence of paganism. On the contrary: an analysis of the relevant

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886 See, e.g., Klimkówka demesne, No. 1156 [1702]; 'Proces o "czarostwo..";' p. 304, *Wilkiez miasteczka Czarza ...*, p. 55.

887 A. Witkowska, *Kulty pątnicze ...*, p. 84.

individual records leads the conclusion that the phenomenon testifies to a prevalence in the peasant imagination of Christian concepts and ideas.

This is visible in the very act of the discovery of a miraculous site: it happened with the support of the Christian *sacrum*. A typical example is an etiological legend concerning the 'spring of living water' in the forest near Miczaki, in the parish of Męcina. The legend was written down in 1608 as told by the reeve of the village of Krasne, Marcin Woysz, who said he had heard the account directly from Jan Mikosz, the man who had discovered the spring. One Sunday, he went to the woods; "mused and almost going out of his mind, he was walking in that hilly forest wandering for the whole day, and was there over the night. Where he afterwards, having recuperated, walking towards home through the forest he came across one beech tree from which a stream came out, by which stream he met a woman beautifully clothed in a white garment, who said to him: 'Poor fellow, leave your thoughts in peace, or else you will perish. I am the Virgin Mary, me who am talking to you. Behold, you have the waterlet, having arrived to which anybody on a Sunday in the morning whoever would wash himself in it, asking God the Lord for health, that I shall obtain it for him with my Son.'"<sup>888</sup> A revelation of the Virgin was central to almost all etiological legends related to miraculous places in the early modern era. Usually a simple man would act as the discoverer, peregrinating across the woods pondering or in affliction. Our Lady would appear before him to give a sign that she had chosen a concrete place where she would be worshipped and from which she would miraculously help people.<sup>889</sup>

A miraculous place was thus an area where the impact of the sacred was particularly strong. As mentioned above, in popular ideas the *sacrum* was genetically Christian. This observation is reconfirmed by an analysis of the symbolic designations and tokens of miraculous places. The discoverers would adorn them with primitive emblems; the pilgrims arriving at the place added their own items. The cross was almost always placed first, then a Passion cross was added, and an image of the Virgin or other representations of holy figures. For instance, in 1640–8 at the 'Zjawienie' ('Appearance') site in the woods near Krasnobród, the discoverer and first guardian of the place, Jakub Ruszczyk, and the visiting

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888 AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, p. 110. For Marcin Woysz's testimony (abridged), edited by B. Kumor, see published in 'Archidiakonat Sądecki. Opracowanie materiałów źródłowych do Atlasu Historycznego Kościoła w Polsce,' *Archiwa, Biblioteki i Muzea Kościelne*, Vol. 9, 1964, pp. 97–8.

889 See, e.g., C. Bogdalski, *Pamiętnik kościoła i klasztoru OO. Bernardynów w Leżajsku*, Kraków 1929, pp. 9–33; J. Majewski, op. cit., pp. 27–39.



pilgrims embellished with cheap paper pictures the pine tree by which the Holy Virgin had revealed herself.<sup>890</sup> In some miraculous places, attempts were made to erect a sacral structure. Matias Pławiński, who in 1678 in Pietrzykowice near Żywiec experienced the presence of Virgin Mary under a linden growing in the field of Wojciech Hujec “at his expense ... by this lime-tree had a bulk-head built in a shrine-like form and offered that an image of the Virgin Mary from Studzianna sanctuary be painted.”<sup>891</sup> Usually, however, any architectural form would only appear at a miraculous place when it gained at least a slight approval from the clergy and its popularity reached burgher or noble circles.<sup>892</sup>

The observation of popular religiosity related to miraculous places also yields interesting results. The spontaneous, ‘grassroots’ forms of contact with the supernatural world accompanying such sites demonstrate, for the sixteenth-to-eighteenth-century period, numerous similarities to the worship of holy images and relics propagated by the Church. The phenomenon might have resulted from an interaction between the official and superstitious pilgrimage sites. Their functions were analogous: healing and ‘bringing about success.’<sup>893</sup> It can be guessed that in search of miraculous remedies against their ailments, simple pilgrims visited while wandering about the churches famous for their miracles as well as the unofficial sanctuaries in the woods. This promoted conditions for the development of a homogeneous pilgrimage devotion whose forms, accepted by the Church for official sanctuaries, prevailed at popular miraculous sites as well, despite the clergy exercising no control over them.

Offering votives was one of the commonly practiced customs. By the miraculous waterhole near Miczaki, a small chest nailed together out of shingles was left for the pilgrims to place offerings such as cheeses, breads, or, at times, money; a burgher from Krakow offered his sable or fox hood as a votive. Ornaments and virginal wreaths were hanged on a nearby tree.<sup>894</sup> At a cross erected at a miraculous site in the woods near Leżajsk, pilgrims would leave their pilgrimage

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890 Ibid., pp. 39, 44–46; cf. a description of the miraculous place in Rakszawa: AAPrz, ms 180, fol. 37<sup>v</sup> and 46.

891 A. Komonieccki, *Chronografia* . . . , p. 233 [1678].

892 See, e.g., C. Bogdalski, op. cit., pp. 21–3; A.T. Wójcik, *Sanktuarium Matki Bożej Łaskawej w Janowie Lubelskim*, Lublin 1990, pp. 10–11; J. Majewski, op. cit., pp. 44–8; AKMK AVCap. 60, pp. 93–4.

893 Cf. A. Komonieccki, *Chronografia* . . . , pp. 366 [1711]; C. Bogdalski, op. cit., pp. 19–21; J. Kracik, ‘Praktyki religijno-magiczne na Górze Witosławskiej ...’, p. 151.

894 AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, pp. 110–11.

rods and wax ex-votos.<sup>895</sup> Prayer was another means of devotional expression at miraculous places. The words of the basic Christian prayers were certainly repeated – for many a pilgrim, they were the only religious texts they knew.

Devotional behaviours by the faithful at unofficial sanctuaries were apparently similar to the actions performed by simple parishioners during church ceremonies; that is, essentially limited to saying the basic prayers and donating offerings at the Mass. This analogy is reinforced by the pilgrims' endeavours to combine the cult of miraculous places with official religious practices. It was customary, for instance, that after visiting the miraculous waterhole near Miczaki, the pilgrims went on to the nearby parish church in Męcina to give thanks to God there. In the mid-sixteenth century, an altar was erected by the spring so that the local parson could celebrate Masses and preach in that very place.<sup>896</sup>

Mentions of customs inadmissible at official pilgrimage centres, such as dancing, jumping, feasting and carouses practiced at miraculous places are, characteristically, very rare.<sup>897</sup> Even the overtly hostile accounts by Church hierarchs and visitators condemn popular piety expressed at such sites not due to an inappropriate form of the rite but because of doubts surrounding the authenticity of the revelation or miracles related to such places.

The popular cult of miraculous sites was a significant symptom of a dynamic fluctuation between superstition and official religion. In the eyes of the ecclesial hierarchs, the cult in question was suspected of idolatry; this had been the case at least since the Council of Trent.<sup>898</sup> Those going on pilgrimages to sacred sites in forests were threatened with excommunication.<sup>899</sup> Józef Jordan, Archdeacon of Nowy Sącz, inspired on his inspection of the parish of Męcina in 1727 and seeing the admittance of the local parson Jan Orzechowski for the cult of the miraculous spring near Miczaki, passed a reformatory decree (using very strong terms) finding that the site was devoted not to God but to demons, and ordering the parson, under pain of anathema, that he endeavour to remove these deceptions so that no memory may persist of the idolatry.<sup>900</sup> Bishop Wacław Hieronim

895 L. Janidło, *Odmalowanie obrazu leżajskiego*, Zamość 1646, fol. M2<sup>r</sup>; C. Bogdalski, op. cit., p. 23.

896 AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, pp. 110–11; also, cf. C. Bogdalski, op. cit., pp. 22–3.

897 BN, ms 5631, fol. 402; W. Góralski, 'Andrzej Stanisław Załuski biskup płocki (1723–1736) wobec zjawiska zabobonów i czarów,' *Notatki Płockie*, 1986, fasc. 3, pp. 8–9.

898 See, e.g., *Constitutiones Synodi Dioecessanae Cracovien: Die XX nona mensis martii celebratae, Anno Domini, M.D. nonagesimo tertio*, Cracoviae 1593, p. 8; BO, ms 1444, p. 47.

899 For example, W. Góralski, op. cit., pp. 8–9; BN, ms 5631, fol. 402.

900 AKMK, AVCap. 60, p. 94.

Sierakowski, who in 1754 inspected his diocese in person, ordered that an oaken statue (probably a cross) standing by the miraculous spring in Rakszawa be cut out and burnt, whilst the spring itself (which he called *parva palus*, a 'little swamp') be buried. The curate of the church of Żołyńia was to keep guard to prevent anyone else arriving there with a superstitious purpose in mind.<sup>901</sup>

Some of the parish clergy also took resolute actions against popular miraculous places. In 1590, the Leżajsk parson Wojciech Wyszograd purportedly put into prison a man called Tomasz Michałek, the discoverer of one of them. He personally dispersed forest assemblies of believers, and finally even tried to burn a Passion statue erected by Michałek at the revelation site.<sup>902</sup>

However, such popular miraculous places often turned into official worship hubs, a trend that was supported by the tolerant attitude of some of the parochial clergy.<sup>903</sup> The precondition was, though, that members of the upper classes had taken an interest in the local cult. The burghers of Krasnobród had a chapel built at the place where Jakub Ruszczyk encountered a revelation, after one of the pictures he had hanged on the tree miraculously survived the Cossack destruction in 1649.<sup>904</sup> Thanks to Katarzyna Zamoyska, wife of Chancellor Tomasz Zamoyski, and subsequently owing to Queen Maria Sobieska, a church was eventually erected on that place at the end of the seventeenth century, and Dominican Friars were brought there to take care of the miraculous image.<sup>905</sup>

Several sanctuaries under the patronage of a religious order came into existence in a similar way. In November and December 1645, the Virgin Mary appeared to Wojciech Boski, a barrel-maker from the village of Ruda, as he made his way to the Holy Mass at the church in the small town of Biała (presently Janów Lubelski). Shortly afterwards, the revelation site became the centre of

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901 AAPrz, ms 180, fol. 37<sup>v</sup> and 46; cf. J. Ataman, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

902 C. Bogdalski, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–21, cf. A. Komonieccki, *Chronografia*... , p. 233 [1678]. The endeavours of the clergy of Limanowa to take control of a private miraculous shrine in the nearby village of Mordarka were quite similar (cf. 'Sanktuarium diecezji tarnowskiej,' *Tarnowskie Studia Teologiczne*, Vol. 9, 1983, pp. 195–7), as was the local clergy's regular warfare against the swindler hermit Antoni Jaczewicz (cf. J. Kracik, 'Praktyki religijno-magiczne na Górze Witosławskiej ...,' pp. 153–5).

903 The miraculous spring in Miczaki was in the seventeenth century under the custody of the churchwardens of Męcina; a portion of the votives offered thereat were assigned to support the parish church. In the 1720s, local parson Jan Orzechowski started collecting building materials with a view to constructing a shrine near the spring; see AKMK, AV Cap. 25, fasc. 3, pp. 110–11 and AVCap. 60, pp. 93–4.

904 J. Majewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–8.

905 Ks. Wacław z Sulgustowa, *op. cit.*, pp. 336–7.

a popular cult. The following year, custody over it was taken by the Zamoyski family, the owners of Biała. They probably realised that a pilgrimage centre could support the development of the town that was incorporated only a few years earlier in 1640. The Zamoyskis procured approval from an episcopal commission who arrived for this particular purpose, and subsequently founded a church and a cloister, and had the Dominicans take residence there in 1660.<sup>906</sup> In addition, the miraculous site in Leżajsk, despite initial reluctance from the clergy, within approximately a dozen years, won sympathy not only from the burghers but also from Łukasz Opaliński the elder, the local *starost*, who at the site of Tomasz Michałek's revelation founded a church and monastery of the Bernardines.<sup>907</sup>

## 5. On the borderline of religion and magic

The issue of miraculous places suggests that popular magical imagination borrowed so many elements from official Christian devotion that a hint of goodwill sufficed on the part of the governing elite to channel it into approved religious forms. The interdependencies between official religiosity and superstition were more complex, however. The universe of Polish peasants' supernatural ideas peacefully combined diverse but occasionally conflicting elements. The interpenetration of superstitions and the religion was, in effect, reciprocal.

Somebody once 'delivered poison' to Grzegorz Łabuza, a blacksmith from Kusiennice. Trying to get rid of it, Grzegorz visited a forecaster, or a 'hobgoblinness' (*planetnica*) called Debińska, "and she was obsessed, and he gave her three *tyńfs* [silver coins], a fiend spake through her and said, ye go to that broad-one [*sic*] who is [portrayed in the image] at the Tuligłowy Church, and offer this money. As he only did which, three serpents came out of him, and he became free with the deliverance of the poison."<sup>908</sup> In this story, the miraculous effigy of the Blessed Virgin from the standpoint of a smith appears as a kind of more efficient

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906 A. T. Wójcik, op. cit., pp. 10–14, 'Krótki zarys historyczny słynącego łaskami obrazu Matki Boskiej Łaskawej (Różańcowej) w Janowie Lubelskim oraz formy kultu oddawanego temuż obrazowi,' *Wiadomości Diecezjalne Lubelskie*, Yr. 59, 1985, No. 8–9, p. 174.

907 For a more detailed discussion of miraculous places/sites, see T. Wiślicz, 'Miraculous Sites' in the Early Modern Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in: *Religion und Magie in Ostmitteleuropa. Spielräume theologischer Normierungsprozesse in Spätmittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, ed. by T. Wunsch, Berlin 2006, pp. 287–299.

908 Based on the testimony submitted during the approval process of the miraculous image, carried out by Bishop H. Sierakowski in 1745; cf. D. Jaguściński, *Cuda i łaski Najswiętszey Maryi Panny w obrazie kościoła tuligłowskiego*, Krakow 1769, pp. 21–2,

‘hobgoblinness,’ who moreover charged the same fee. However, the story can be interpreted otherwise. Delivering a poison was a problem for Łabuza the blacksmith, one that in his milieu could only be resolved with the use of magic. A folk fortune-teller would have done it (and he did address one such at first), yet the pilgrimage to a miraculous image yielded no worse a result. Satisfaction of popular demand for magical interventions is also brought about within the confines of the customs recognised by the Church. Such a way had significant advantages over the traditional practices pursued in private. Firstly, one did not have to hide his or her procedures; on the contrary, they were in some way ostentatious. Second, the intermediation of a cleric or temple opened access to the source of the mightiest *sacrum*.

Pilgrimage centres organised around miraculous religious objects or representations, mainly images of Our Lady, became the sphere of the most intense satisfaction of the magical needs of a potentially wide circle of the faithful. As has been mentioned, they showed a considerable functional and genetic similarity with images of Our Lady that spontaneously appeared in informal miraculous places, to the extent that the official sanctuaries and the superstitious ones virtually shared a homogeneous type of religious behaviour.

The need for miraculous assistance that attracted the faithful to miraculous images was shaped to a significant degree by a traditional folk vision of the sacred. Several miraculous occurrences written down in *miracula* books were automatically operating magical remedies: by uttering the appropriate formula and making the specified gestures, an intervention of the Sacred followed immediately and obligatorily. For example, in 1641 a cow owned by Jakub Stępek, “the only provider of his whole home, fell into madness so that she was mooing the whole night most stridently and unceasingly, the agents delivered to her appearing to no avail. Crestfallen, the citizen resorted to the assistance of Holy Virgin Mary and then the cow was mooing less rarely. He right afterwards went to the church [in Tuchów], and when he heard the Holy Mass at the altar of the Holy Virgin Mary and returned home, he found the cow there completely quiet and sound, of which he right on the following day swore by the church of Holy Virgin Mary on his knees, his hands raised towards heaven.”<sup>909</sup>

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also, see pp. 33 and 37. Also, cf. the remarks in J. Kracik, ‘Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...’, p. 190.

909 A. Niemiec, *Obraz cudowny Najśw. Panny Maryi w kościele tuchowskim*, Krakow 1892, pp. 36–7.

The Church hierarchs were aware that the cult of miraculous effigies might have been abused.<sup>910</sup> Hence, a requirement was introduced for the sanctuaries to keep a register of sworn miracles that were used in approval processes. Essentially miraculous images (*imago miraculis*) were discerned, from the theological standpoint, from those famous for graces (*imago gratiosa*). The demand among the faithful for miraculous representations nonetheless grew at an astonishing pace, reaching a peak in the first half of the eighteenth century. According to detailed research by Władysław Szczebak in the Diocese of Tarnów (research done within the limits of the materials available in 1983), 100 images of the sort existed in the area in 1772, against 230 parishes, including Uniate parishes.<sup>911</sup> Such an enormous scale of the phenomenon must have been related to extremely frequent abuses of the cult of miraculous effigies. However, no attempts were made to control the substantive intents of the pilgrims; only certain formal requirements were observed.

Another element of official devotion, one that circumstantially fomented popular superstitions, was the cult of the Blessed Sacrament, which in Polish lands spread as early as in the late Middle Ages. It was then that the faithful began focusing during the Holy Mass on the Elevation, as observing the Host was regarded as a source of multiple graces for the body and the soul.<sup>912</sup> An extreme manifestation of the trend was that simple parishioners considered viewing the Blessed Sacrament the most important purpose of participating in the Mass, and some simply left the church after the Elevation, believing that they had fulfilled their participation in the ceremony.

In the Counter-Reformation period, the Catholic Church promoted the cult of the Host as one of the crucial manifestations of religious identity of the faithful community in the face of the Protestant 'menace.' In Lesser Poland, where the influence of the Reformation on the common people was virtually untraceable, the emphasis on worship of the Blessed Sacrament in rural areas was not imbued with re-Catholicisation content. Instead, the trend met the expectations of the parishioners who saw the adoration of the Host as an opportunity to directly encounter the Sacred: an opportunity that implied not only orthodox hopes. To

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910 Numerous instances of the ecclesial authorities' suspiciousness in respect of the spontaneously spreading cults of miraculous effigies in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be found in J. Kracik, 'Święte obrazy wśród grzesznych Sarmatów. Ze studiów nad recepcją kultowego dziedzictwa,' *Nasza Przeszłość*, Vol. 76, 1991, pp. 172–8.

911 W. Szczebak, op. cit., p. 466.

912 W. Schenk, *Udział ludu w ofierze mszy św. Zarys historyczny*, Lublin 1960, p. 17.

satisfy the believers' expectations, the priests extended the moment of Elevation and made their gestures theatrical. The Blessed Sacrament was exposed in churches on every opportune occasion. Temples of religious orders excelled in such actions, keeping the faithful aware of the services celebrated in their parish churches.<sup>913</sup>

The Church authorities endeavoured to subject the cult of the Blessed Sacrament to rigorous control: their main concern was to ban unambiguously erroneous forms. Cardinal Jerzy Radziwiłł severely interdicted demonstrating an unconsecrated Host to the people, to prevent idolatry.<sup>914</sup> In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, attempts were made to limit the frequency of solemn expositions of the Blessed Sacrament in parish and monastic churches. For instance, the synod held in Płock in 1693 permitted that the Sacrament be exposed no more frequently than four times a year, excluding the Christmas period and its Octave.<sup>915</sup> In 1711, the synod of the Diocese of Krakow banned any solemn exposition of the Blessed Sacrament altogether without the bishop's consent.<sup>916</sup> Similar bans were issued by Cardinal Jan Aleksander Lipski, who was Bishop of Krakow in 1732–46<sup>917</sup>, whereas the 1765 synod of Lwów decreed a special official procedure for soliciting the archbishop's consent for exposing the Blessed Sacrament.<sup>918</sup> Despite the prohibitions of the ecclesial authorities, practices such as processional fetching of the monstrance to fire sites did not cease spreading.<sup>919</sup>

Another paraliturgical and magical practice which was combated by Church hierarchs was the blessing of fields by processionaly going around the borderline of the sowed area on horseback with a rood, or even with the Blessed Sacrament. Such ceremonies were usually held on Easter Day or Easter Monday;

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913 J. Kracik, 'Duszpasterstwo parafialne ...', p. 240; J. Sawicki, *Synody diecezji przemyskiej ...*, p. 216.

914 F. Machay, op. cit., p. 63.

915 *Statuty synodu płockiego bpa Andrzeja Chryzostoma Załuskiego z 1698 roku*, ed. by W. Góralski, Płock 1984, p. 54.

916 *Synodus dioeciesana, ab [...] Casimiro Łubienski [1711] ...*, p. 30; also, cf. *Constitutiones Synodi Archidioecesis Gnesnensis [...] Stanislaw Szembek [...] A.D. MDCCXX [...] celebratae*, Warsaw [1720], fol. L3.

917 J. Bendyk, 'Życie sakramentalne i paraliturgiczne w diecezji krakowskiej w okresie rządów kardynała J. A. Lipskiego (1732–1746)', *Analecta Cracoviensia*, Vol. 17, 1985, p. 467.

918 S. Tymosz, op. cit., pp. 323–4.

919 See BO, ms 1444, p. 44.

or, less frequently, on the Low Sunday or Corpus Christi.<sup>920</sup> The latter half of the sixteenth century and almost the whole of the seventeenth century saw this custom eradicated by Church synods and visitators.<sup>921</sup> The action must have prevalently ended in success. In the eighteenth century, the custom of touring the fields with a crucifix disappeared from ecclesiastical ordinances; the blessing of sown areas assumed different, though no less superstitious, forms. As the Rev. B. Chmielowski wrote, “in time of yore, the husband-men requested the chaplains that during Corpus Christi they by-pass the borders of the field, the grain, with the Bless. Sacrament, but that was excessive familiarity with God and irreverence of His Majesty. Whereas now-a-days, in the solemn procession, the chaplains are benedicting with the Bless. Sacrament to the four parts of the world, the wreaths suspended on the Monstrance during the Octave of Corpus Christi, and then bury them in the fields.”<sup>922</sup>

The abuse or misuse of benedictions marked the clergy’s typical nod to popular superstition. In the eyes of common people, benedictions supported the distribution of magical powers which the Church had at its disposal. The benedictions permitted by the ritual did not satisfy the demand of the faithful, although the Piotrków Ritual (*Rituale Petricoviense*), which was binding in Poland, contained a few more of them than the *Rituale romanum*.<sup>923</sup> Members of begging orders excelled among those specialising in unorthodox benedictions, e.g. the Reformed Friars Minor of Kęty were invited in 1716 to the Żywiec demesne so that they “benedicted the lordly manours and cow-sheds for some sorcery or evil deeds to the cattle, so that nonne ever be there.”<sup>924</sup> In his account on the condition of the Diocese of Krakow, dated 1756 and sent to Rome, Bishop Andrzej Stanisław Załuski complained that the Franciscans and the Reformed Friars Minor in the first place granted a variety of benedictions when moving around the villages. Compiled by those monks, the benedictions were considerably different from

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920 AKMK, AVCap. 4, fol. 39<sup>v</sup>, 113<sup>v</sup> and AVCap. 22, p. 94; ‘Materiały historyczne,’ ed. by F. Bujak, in *Lud*, Vol. 10, 1904, p. 90; T. Długosz, op. cit., p. 311.

921 *Epistola pastoralis ...*, p. 64 (chap. [19]: *De Sacramentalibus Caeremonialibusque & abusu illorum tollendo*); W. Rubin, op. cit., pp. 140–1; Z. Zalewski, *Komunia święta wiernych ...*, p. 105; AKMK, AVCap. 25, fasc. 3, p. 63.

922 B. Chmielowski, *Nowe Ateny ...*, Part 3, p. 444.

923 See W. Wrona, ‘Dzieje rytuału piotrkowskiego,’ *Polonia Sacra*, Vol. 4, 1951, fasc. 4, pp. 356–7.

924 A. Komonieczki, *Chronografia...*, p. 480 [1716], cf. *Akta sądu kryminalnego kresu muszyńskiego...*, No. 35 [1763]; also, see Tylicz B, p. 246 [1781].



those included in the Roman Ritual; they were targeted, for instance, on delivering women, buildings, animals, as well as bread and herbs.<sup>925</sup>

However, the Church hierarchs' objection to such practices was futile. Exhorting the preachers to dissuade common people from "void observations, which are disorderly with appendages of obviation, and the void, and with evil purpose and usage of the holly words"<sup>926</sup> remained fruitless as long as the parish and monastic clergy willingly used such measures themselves. It was they to whom certain publications, "contrived and not approved by the Divine Church," such as Martin von Cochem's *Libellus Benedictionum et Exorcismorum*, a collection of not infrequently superstitious blessings, were targeted. Attached to an abridged version of the Piotrków Ritual published in 1691 in Toruń, the *Libellus* included blessings on liquors, medicines, wells, scents, and even rice-fields.<sup>927</sup> Although the work was listed in the Church's Index of Forbidden Books, it was republished in Poland-Lithuania at least once, in 1700 in Gdansk.<sup>928</sup> But even the imprimatur-bearing book dedicated to Waław Hieronim Sierakowski, the merited Bishop of Przemyśl, written by the Rev. Marcin Nowakowski, the provost of Jaśliska, under the title *Przewodnik miłosierny* (*A mercifull guide-book*; 1747), comprised a detailed pattern of the rite of blessing of cowsheds and cattle against sorcery, or the exorcising of milk and butter spoiled by witches.<sup>929</sup>

The second half of the eighteenth century saw the appearance in the countryside of various 'miraculous letters,' some of them said to have fallen from heaven. Consecrated by a priest or kept under a chalice during the Mass, they were believed to be gaining magical strength that was more powerful than the other amulets.<sup>930</sup> Consequently, their application called for a clergyman to participate in their creation.

The substitutivity of religious practices and superstitions is glaringly demonstrated by the techniques of influencing the weather, traditionally a domain of specialised wizards or hobgoblins called *planetniks*. On its part, the Church

925 *Relacje o stanie diecezji krakowskiej ...*, p. 159.

926 Cf. the 1727 edict of Krzysztof Antoni Szembek, Bishop of Włocławek, *Monumenta Historica Dioeceseos Wladislaviensis ...*, Vol. V, p. 19.

927 *Rituale sacramentorum ac aliarum ecclesiae ceremoniarum pro ecclesiis Regni Poloniae et Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae*, Thorunii [Toruń] 1691.

928 W. Wrona, op. cit., p. 365.

929 M. Nowakowski, *Przewodnik miłosierny ...*, pp. 323–34.

930 One of these letters, An interdict against conjuring [*Interdykt przeciw czarom*], is published in F. Kotula, *Znaki przeszłości*, Warsaw 1976, pp. 213–15; also, see S. Gonet, 'O cudownych listach,' *Lud*, Vol. 2, 1896, pp. 232–5.

proposed for example that in order to protect the fields, shingle planks “quarter-cubit long with a cross drawn in chalk and the letters AGAG [which stood for *Angelus Gabriel annuntiavit Genitrici*] when they see a [hail-]cloud, that this written-on plank be thrown onto the soil, that hails will not harm the grains.”<sup>931</sup> In his 1746 book *The finish of Jesus’s grieves the heart of Mary wounded by seven swords of sorrow* (*Meta boleści Jezusowych serce Maryi siedmiu mieczów boleści zranione*), Rev. Józef Dobrakowski, provost of the church in Młodzawy near Pińczów, which was granted an imprimatur by Maciej Ziętkowicz, doctor of theology and censor of the Diocese of Krakow, proposed a “prayer in the course of excrescent rain-falls,” “during drought,” or “against aerially inclement weathers.” In the event that a tempest could not be stopped, he advised to say the psalm ‘Who yieldeth himself to the Lord’s custody’ and St Athanasius’s Creed, “making the [sign of the] Holy Cross with the hand against the tempest,” and finally conjure away the storm with the following words: “In the name of the Father and the Son and the holy Spirit, Amen. Lord Jesus Christ o deign to cross this cloud which now see before me, and if there is any satanic detrimental power therein, with Thy Holy power do deign revert it onto void and pathless places where it may do harm to none of the humans or animals, or any grains, or benefits, whatsoever;” and so on.<sup>932</sup> However, the most common practice against storms was tolling the bells,<sup>933</sup> barred as superstitious by the Austrian authorities in as late as 1784.<sup>934</sup>

In a way, making magical use of Christian religious practices intentionally resulted from the Church rectifying the errors of popular religiosity. The clergy regarded the replacement of traditional magic with its Christian counterpart as a considerable progress on the way to extirpating the remnants of paganism, idolatry and superstition.<sup>935</sup> It was a matter of a far-reaching compromise, however: the Church allowed the use of numerous traditional folk practices under

931 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia*. . . , p. 417 [1713]; also, see p. 459 [1715].

932 J. Dobrakowski, *Meta boleści Jezusowych serce Maryi siedmiu mieczów boleści zranione*, Krakow 1746, fol. [C]. It has to be remarked that a woman named Dorota Gniećkowa, who was burnt as a witch in 1544 in Poznan, conjured a tempest away with an almost identical incantation; see J. Woronczak, ‘Procesy o czary przed poznańskim sądem miejskim w XVI wieku,’ *Literatura Ludowa*, Yr. 16, 1972, No. 3, p. 51.

933 See, e.g., S. Heumann, op. cit., Krakow 1899, p. 78; H. Wyczawski, ‘Studia nad wewnętrznymi dziejami kościelnymi ...,’ No. 3–4, p. 50. Warding off clouds by bell-tolling was probably obligatory for lower-rank church staff; cf. *Synod klechów podgórkich ...*, pp. 154, 171.

934 J. Półciwiatek, *Z badań nad rolą gospodarczo-społeczną plebanii ...*, p. 151.

935 For example, the Rev. Marcin Nowakowski, the parson of Jaśliska, recommended to his parishioners that, on preparing for the visit of their pastor-of-souls when ‘going

the condition that they had been Christianised only superficially. To give an example, in the late sixteenth century the visitor of the Deanery of Nowa Góra ordered that the local female folk healers be reminded that only the words of the Lord's Prayer, the Angelic Salutation and the Apostles' Creed could be used to support the treatment of illnesses.<sup>936</sup> Parishioners were commonly allowed to use consecrated objects in magical practices; new agents giving a similar effect were also created. This is how the holy medal of St Benedict and St Ingatius of Loyola's water came into use and were even officially praised as helpful in dispelling cattle and in manufacturing dairies.<sup>937</sup> As a reliable remedy against sorcery, the parochial clergy recommended holy water and consecrated herbs, called *agnuseks*,<sup>938</sup> along with crossing and confessing oneself frequently.<sup>939</sup> To protect against devils and drive demons out of those possessed, the beads of the Blessed Joanna were propagated by the Oratorians as highly efficient.<sup>940</sup>

The clergy were aware that what common people expected from religion was, first and foremost, efficiency in its para-magical action. Hence, in order to diffuse religious practices their utilitarian value was primarily emphasised. By making the sign of the cross, as Stanisław Morawicki of Szczodrkowice explained,

odżegna się czarta złego  
od duszy i ciała swego [...]  
też dla tego umarłego  
kropią wodą ciała jego,  
aby zły szatan nie stroił,  
a co dziwnego nie broił

the evil fiend's conjured away  
of body and of soul astray [...]  
with water the dead man's body  
is sprinkled, so to embody  
protection, so evil satan  
banter not, the man's soul straiten,

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carolling' (i.e. on the customary tour done at Christmas), they "keep ready-at-hand also consecrated herbs, etc., as a token that you do not resort to a wizard's medicament if want be, but rather, to things holy;" M. Nowakowski, *Kolęda duchowna ...*, p. 13; also, cf. p. 126.

936 H. Wyczawski, 'Studia nad wewnętrznymi dziejami kościelnymi ...', No. 3–4, p. 94.

937 W. Urban, op. cit., p. 242, ftn. 50.

938 *Agnusek*, from the Latin *Agnus Dei*; a talisman in the form of a round piece of white wax with a convex imprint on one side of the Lamb of God and on the other side St John the Baptist, benedicted by the Pope.

939 BJ, ms 7079, fol. 25'; also, cf. the measures recommended by Bishop Krzysztof Szembek against sorcery in *Monumenta Historica Dioeceseos Wladislaviensis ...*, Vol. V, p. 20.

940 *Powinności chrześcijańskie albo reguła, którą zbawiennie sumnienie rządzić może chrześcijanin*, Leszno [1679], addendum entitled 'Łaski nadane paciorkowi b. Joanny' ('The graces bestowed unto the beads of Blessed Joanna').

nad tem ciałem umarłego,	or frolic weird things at the flesh,
czego jakiego dziwnego,	or render the soul weirdly mesh'd,
bowiem radzi dziwy płodzą,	for they be glad with queers they breed,
mszcząc się, że w ich moc nie wchodzą.	revenging when void be their seed. <sup>941</sup>

The synod of the Diocese of Chełm ordered the parsons to explain to the common people in sermons that they did not avoid the Confirmation, for this particular sacrament was extremely efficient against demons lurking among men.<sup>942</sup> This attitude reduced the role of religious practices to the function of magical manipulations aimed at mundane prosperity. The most extreme manifestation of this phenomenon was the application of exorcisms which since the late seventeenth/early eighteenth century began ousting, in some areas, traditional practices of healing and driving off evil forces.<sup>943</sup>

The overwhelming influence of Christianity on the imagination of the rural people occasionally produced utterly unintended effects. The vivid images of hell and Satan's activities in the earth flowing from the pulpit enriched folk demonology, introducing various emanations of the devil and the methods of combating him.<sup>944</sup> Supported with exempla of souls in penance, the teaching on purgatory effectively populated the fields, forests, and crossroads with ghosts. During All Souls' night, at so-called Passion sites (i.e. near the crosses erected at the crossroads), "little souls kneeling there and candleless burning" were encountered, "and a procession was seen being celebrated in the night."<sup>945</sup>

Moreover, Christian teachings became a nutrient for the visions of folk mystics such as Jakub Kubaczyna of Cięcina. Found once in a field sleeping, "this

941 Stanisław ze Szczodrkowic [Morawicki], *Rozmowa pielgrzyma z gospodarzem o niektórych ceremoniach kościelnych* (1549), ed. by Z. Celichowski, Biblioteka Pisarzy Polskich, No. 37, Krakow 1900, pp. 44, 50.

942 J. Sawicki, *Synody diecezji chełmskiej ...*, p. 155.

943 See, e.g., A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia...*, p. 538 [1722]; ASD, Vol. 1, p. 248 [1724]; Antoni od św. Ducha [Wielhorski], *Zródło dla wszystkich spragnionych obfite Najświętsza Maria Panna cudownemi łask nieprzebranych strumieniami ... na piaskach tomaszowskich płynące*, Lwów 1746, pp. 27–8.

944 See, e.g., A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia...*, pp. 303 [1705], 333–4 [1709]; *Dwa przyczynki ...*, pp. 390–1.

945 A. Komoniecki, *Chronografia...*, p. 512 [1718].

man quoth that he was entranced seeing people whom he had known and they had perished already, in penances and in various lucidities and in torments, and here, who are living in this world, of what merit they are and of what chastising, should they improve not. And this is which he told before the people, crying, and admonished many, complaining that he was awakened and the revelation interrupted.”<sup>946</sup>

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946 Ibid., p. 524 [1720]; also, see p. 508 [1718].



## CONCLUSION

The considerations in this book make a legitimate attempt at a synthetic description of the religion of the peasantry of Lesser Poland in the early modern age. At first, an apparently obvious but occasionally still disputed question should be touched upon: in the period under discussion, rural people were certainly a Christian population. Peasant religion did not always assume orthodox forms, however. Traditional folk culture, considered an adversary by the Catholic Church (then under reform), played a considerable role in religious life in the countryside. However, in Lesser Poland – and this is true for the whole of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth – this traditional culture never became the main objective of the offensive of the post-Tridentine clergy. The pastoral action essentially sought to habituate the people to participate in the cult on a regular basis and to incline them to master the rudiments of religious knowledge. These minimum standards were mostly fulfilled by Lesser Poland's peasants at the end of the period concerned; influenced by the catechisation, the popular rites, ideas and concepts were also modified. The somewhat formalistic approach in the Church's requirements with respect to the rural parishioners provided the conditions for the consolidation among peasants of a model of vulgarised and routine piety.

In parallel, early modern religious culture characteristic of the upper strata penetrated the rural environment and shaped popular religiosity towards intensified practices and more profound faith. Otherwise, the rural type of religiosity also impacted other social strata, contributing to Old-Polish popular religion. It thus contributed to the shaping of the baroque forms of phenomena such as the Marian cult and pilgrimage devotion.

The characteristic features of peasant piety in the nationwide type of Old-Polish religiosity resulted from the internal limitations of peasant culture, which did not favour the development of a personal attitude towards religion. In the rural environment, individual religiosity or piety was conditional on the binding models, which were diverse and depended on the individual's position in the community. Religion had a fundamental role as the factor that organised the local community through determining the ceremonial and ideological base of its functioning. Participation in church rituals and ceremonies reconfirmed an individual's membership of a given group; on the other hand, common participation in the cult united the local community and supplied it with a religious dimension.

In rural areas in Lesser Poland, peasant communities called *gromadas* were religiously determined social units. Their ceremonial and devotional functions were, however, gradually taken over by parishes and religious confraternities, the latter appearing in rural areas from the seventeenth century. The trend meant that the parsonage gradually took over the role of the centre organising social religious life.

The ideological role of religion in the peasants' social lives consisted in standardising the internal relations prevalent in the local community. Christian principles motivated the functioning of hierarchical arrangements and the good neighbourhood principle as the foundation for social order in the rural areas. Additionally, the rituals of peasant social and economic life referred to religious symbols and supernatural sanctions.

The Decalogue-based principles lay at the foundation of the moral system that was binding in the countryside of Lesser Poland. The level of reception of God's Commandments among the peasants suggests, however, that their use was to an extent utilitarian, while autonomous environmental ethics were sustainable. The most glaring instance of divergence between the peasant moral norms and the precepts of religion was the sphere of sexual customs, characteristic of which was indulgence for premarital relations and intercourse, and acquiescence for mismatched married couples to part ways. The measure of success of the Catholic clerical ministry was a gradual exacerbation of peasant sexual mores and the inculcation of moral rigorousness in the rural environment. However, this became the fact no earlier than in the middle of the eighteenth century.

The absorption of Christian moral norms among the peasants was primarily enabled through individual pastoral control, exercised through the Confession. Regular reception of the Sacrament of Penance rendered the faithful accustomed to analysing their behaviour in terms of religious morality. However, it is not certain whether the skill of ethical self-reflection was successfully developed. In any case, the need was raised in them to examine their consciences under the guidance and with the help of a clergyman.

The system of supernatural punishments and rewards had an important role in the propagation of Christian moral norms. Particularly efficient was the impact on simple folk's imagination of the threat of temporal punishment. The spread of the notion of purgatory helped understand the cause-and-effect relationship between the quality of life and the posthumous fate of the soul. However, it was not only fear of punishment that informed the moral attitudes of peasants: positive arguments also carried some weight. For instance, the possibility of having a sin redeemed through penitence, penance, and humility enabled peasants to realise what sentiments ought to have been felt when committing the sin. On top



of this, even the greatest sinners placed their hopes in Divine mercy, by means of which they hoped to attain salvation, obviously followed by an appropriately long period of purgatorial torments.

Superstitions and magic occupied an important place in the notions and concepts shared by the peasantry of Lesser Poland in the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Beliefs of pre-Christian origin played, in turn, a rather insignificant role. Characteristic of early modern superstition were the phenomena appearing on the borderline of magical folk practices and Christianity. The period saw a deep interpenetration of Christianity and popular beliefs. Consecrated objects were commonly used in wizardry proceedings along with Christian prayers, and even ecclesiastical ceremonies.

The demands of superstitious folk religiosity were satisfied in the confines of the customs recognised by the Church, such as alongside the cult of miraculous images or adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. A tribute to popular superstition was also the abuse of benedictions: combated by the hierarchy, the practice was used by lower-rank clergy and monks.

The emphasis placed by the post-Tridentine Church on the elimination of superstitious behaviours among the faithful implied the condemnation of certain traditional practices which were ousted by para-magical behaviours of a Christian nature. Nonetheless, this did not alter the popular way of comprehending the world in magical categories. The traditional magic, less and less comprehensible as it was, triggered fear and aggression that found its outlet in the persecution of witches. The limited range of witch-hunts in the rural areas of Lesser Poland seems to indicate that the change in the folk religious culture was not very deep.

The image that emerges from the analysis of individual aspects, or planes, of the religiosity of Lesser Poland's peasantry between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries suggests that the rural culture was, virtually unrestrictedly, permeated by religion. Its effect left an imprint on almost all the domains of man's activity, worldview, and behaviour. This conclusion is not altogether astonishing if the determinants and conditions under which the peasant culture developed are considered.

How can the peasant religion of the early modern time be evaluated? It is usually referred to as shallow, routine, superstitious, and vulgarised. These appellations are not illegitimate; it is the point of reference that matters. Insufficient spirituality legitimatises the description of the religiosity in question as superficial. One must realise, however, that social and community-related issues prevailed in rural religious culture over individual ones. The depth of religious experience was inferior for peasants in relation to the sense of (co-)participation and multidimensional safety within the community to which one belonged. The

sustenance of these values was ensured by the ritual, apart from ideological, layer of the cult. The dominance of rituals and observances over reflection can be described as routine, but it also testifies to a strict fusion between the religion and human life: after all, people referred or resorted to religious ritual without the need to understand it.

The generally poor religious knowledge among peasants meant that their Christianity was extremely simplified. Nevertheless, they were not only Christians in name alone because they attended church services on a regular basis, participated in the sacramental life, and pursued their transition rituals at church. Their behaviour was also essentially driven by the norms of Christian morality. Furthermore, manifestations are observable in the peasants of a vivid attachment to their religion, or confession, and, locally, to their parish church. While few peasants could perfectly quote the dogma on the Holy Trinity, they normally ardently believed in God, worshipped Jesus Christ and loved Our Lady.

The superstitious nature of peasant religion did not stem solely from the prevalence of traditional folk culture. The development of such a specific stratum of unorthodox beliefs and practices was heavily informed by the clergy, parochial and monastic alike. Not only did priests and monks help sustain certain superstitions, they also contributed to the making of new ones by propagating unorthodox beliefs and marginal practices. The Church elites are also somewhat to blame, as they satisfied themselves with a superficial Christianisation of folk superstitions and generally did not attach much attention to the quality of peasant faith.

Given these conditions, a critique of early modern rural piety from the standpoint of Christian principles, or even in comparison with the other social groups in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, should involve an understanding of the characteristic role religion played for peasants – and of all the limitations that influenced its reception in this specific milieu. Let it be hoped that the interpretative model proposed in this book will contribute to a shift of emphasis in judging peasant religion in the early modern period.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	Archiwum Archidiecezji Częstochowskiej (Archives of the Archdiocese of Częstochowa)
AAPrz	Archiwum Archidiecezjalne w Przemyślu (Archdiocesan Archives in Przemyśl)
AGAD	Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie (Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw)
AKMK	Archiwum Kurii Metropolitalnej w Krakowie (Archive of the Metropolitan Curia in Krakow)
ANK	Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie (National Archives in Krakow)
APK	Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach (State Archives in Kielce)
APL	Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie (State Archives in Lublin)
APP	Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu (State Archives in Poznań)
APPrz	Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu (State Archives in Przemyśl)
APR	Archiwum Państwowe w Rzeszowie (State Archives in Rzeszów)
APT	Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu (State Archives in Toruń)
BC	Biblioteka Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie (The Princes Czartoryski Library in Krakow)
BJ	Biblioteka Jagiellońska w Krakowie (Jagiellonian Library in Krakow)
BK	Biblioteka Kórnicka Polskiej Akademii Nauk (The Kornik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences)
BN	Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie (National Library in Warsaw)
BO	Biblioteka Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich we Wrocławiu (Library of the National Ossoliński Institute in Wrocław)
BPAU/PAN	Biblioteka Naukowa Polskiej Akademii Umiejętności i Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie (The Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow)
KHPP UJ	Pracownia Wydawnictw Źródłowych Katedry Historii Prawa Polskiego Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie (Editorial Section of the Department of the History of Polish Law at Jagiellonian University in Krakow)

- LNB L'vivs'ka natsional'na naukova biblioteka Ukraïny imeni Vasyliâ Stefanyka (Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in Lviv)
- NML Natsional'nyi muzeï u L'vovi imeni Andreïâ Sheptyts'koho (Lviv National Andrey Sheptytsky Museum)
- SPPP *Starodawne Prawa Polskiego Pomniki*, a historical records anthology series
- TsDIAUL Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukraïny u L'vovi (Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv)

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- Dóbr Biskupstwa Chełmińskiego [Records of the Dominial Courts of the Demesnes of the Bishopric of Chełmno] 6.
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- I.T. 211: Księga wójtowska miasta Andrychów 1624–1829 [Reeve's register of the town of Andrychów, 1624–1829].
- I.T. 214: Księga ławnicza miasta Błazowej 1627–1748 [Aldermen's register of the town of Błazowa, 1627–1748].
- I.T. 229b: Księga miasta Nowej Góry [1678–1692] [Court register of the town of Nowa Góra, 1678–1692].
- I.T. 229g: Księga miasta Nowej Góry [1677–1729] [Court register of the town of Nowa Góra, 1677–1729].

- I.T. 229h: Księga miasta Nowej Góry [1742–1798] [Court register of the town of Nowa Góra, 1742–1798].
- I.T. 229m: Księga sądowa wsi Krasna 1654–1866 [Rural court register of the village of Krasna, 1654–1866].
- I.T. 230: Księga sądowa Limanowej 1552–1654 [Court register of Limanowa, 1552–1654].
- I.T. 256b: Księga gromadzka sądu zamkowego majątności suskiej 1695–1779 [Castle court's register for rural communities of the demesne of Sucha, 1695–1779].
- I.T. 257: Księga zapisów i spraw miasteczka Tylicza 1633–1799 [Register of records and affairs of the burgh of Tylicz, 1633–1799].
- I.T. 1805: Księga wójtowsko–ławnicza m. Tylicza 1755–1786 [Reeve and aldermen's register of the burgh of Tylicz, 1755–86].
- I.T. 2059: *Acta nigra maleficorum Wisniciae ab anno Domini 1665* [to 1785].  
 Księgi Grodzkie Bieckie [Judicial Registries for the Castle court of Biecz] 32.  
 Księgi Grodzkie Bieckie [Judicial Registries for the Castle court of Biecz] 171.  
 Księgi Grodzkie Krakowskie [Judicial Registries for the Castle court of Krakow], Relacje [Accounts] 72.  
 Księgi Grodzkie Krakowskie [Judicial Registries for the Castle court of Krakow], Relacje [Accounts] 108A.  
 Księgi Grodzkie Sądeckie [Judicial Registries for the Castle court of Stary Sącz] 168.

*ANK, Oddział w Bochni [Branch of Bochnia]:*

- Starostwo Krzeczowskie [Branch of Bochnia, Demesne of Krzeczów] 1 Księga sądowa Starostwa Krzeczowskiego 1685–1807 [Court register of the demesne of Krzeczów, 1685–1807].

*APK – Archiwum Państwowe w Kielcach (State Archives in Kielce)*

- Akta Urzędów Wójtowskich i Ławniczych Miast [Records of Town Courts]  
 1: Protokół spraw miasta Janikowa tak kryminalnych jako i potocznych. To jest manifesta, dekreta, ugody, obdukcje, inkwizycje, obłaty (1771–1810) [Protocol of the cases of the town of Janików, criminal as well as common, including manifests, decrees, arrangements, obductions, inquisitions, and registrations (1771–1810)].
- Sąd Wiejski Wsi Świątniki [The Rural Court of the Village of Świątniki] (no ref. number): Księga sądowa wsi Świątniki 1518–1810 [Court register of the village of Świątniki, 1518–1810].

*APL – Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie (State Archives in Lublin)*

Akta Miasta Lublina [Records of the City of Lublin] 142: Akta radzieckie lubelskie 1644–1647 [Town Council records of Lublin, 1644–7].

Akta Miasta Lublina [Records of the City of Lublin] 201: Acta maleficorum annorum 1674–1716.

Księgi Chełmskie Grodzkie [Judicial Registries for the Castle court of Chełm] RMO 163.

Księgi Grabowieckie Grodzkie [Judicial Registries for the Castle court of Grabowiec] Relacje [Accounts] 77.

Księgi Lubelskie Grodzkie [Judicial Registries for the Castle court of Lublin] RMO 282.

*APP – Archiwum Państwowe w Poznaniu (State Archives in Poznań)*

Akta m. Kalisza [Records of the Town of Kalisz] I/232: *Acta villanorum*, 1581–1695.

Miscellanea 255: Księga bartna nowogrodzka (III) 1682–1709 [Forest beekeepers' register of Nowogród (III), 1682–1709].

Miscellanea 256: Księga bartna nowogrodzka (IV) 1704, 1711–1739 [Forest beekeepers' register of Nowogród (IV), 1704, 1711–39].

*APPrz – Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu (State Archives in Przemyśl)*

Akta Wsi Albigowej [Records of the Village of Albigowa] 1: Księga aktów wsi Albigowej 1682–1789 [Rural court register of the village of Albigowa, 1682–1789].

Akta Wsi Albigowej [Records of the Village of Albigowa] 2: Księga gruntowa Albigowej 1791–1813 [Land registry of Albigowa, 1791–1813].

Akta Wsi Albigowej [Records of the Village of Albigowa] 3: Księga sądowa Albigowej 1659–1836 [Rural court register of Albigowa, 1659–1836].

Akta Wsi Albigowej [Records of the Village of Albigowa] 4: Akta wsi Albigowej [1686–1892] [Records of the village of Albigowa, 1686–1892].

Akta Wsi Miejsce Piastowe [Records of the Village of Miejsce Piastowe] 8: Księga sądowa wsi Miejsce (Piastowe) 1500–1769 [Court register of the village of Miejsce (Piastowe), 1500–1769].

*APR – Archiwum Państwowe w Rzeszowie (State Archives in Rzeszów)*

- Akta Gminy Błażowej [Records of the Commune of Błażowa] 98: Księga sądowa wsi Piątkowej 1627–1798 [Court register of the village of Piątkowa, 1627–1798].
- Akta Gminy Błażowej [Records of the Commune of Błażowa] 99: Księga sądowa wsi Błażowej 1749–1830 [Court register of the village of Błażowa, 1749–1830].
- Akta Gminy Błażowej [Records of the Commune of Błażowa] 105: Księga zapisowa gromady Kąkolowskiej 1758–1812 [Register of records of the village community of Kąkolówka, 1758–1812].
- Akta Gminy Błażowej [Records of the Commune of Błażowa] 107: Księga wiejska Kąkolówki [1616–1757] [Rural register of Kąkolówka, 1616–1757].
- Akta Gminy Świlcza [Records of the Commune of Świlcza] 49: Księga wójtowsko-ławnicza wsi Świlcza 1631–1838 [Reeve and aldermen's register of the village of Świlcza, 1631–1838].
- Archiwum Lubomirskich [The Lubomirski Archive] 692: Sprawy sądowe między poddanymi starostwa ryczywolskiego 1743–1758 [Lawsuits between the serfs of the demesne of Ryczywół, 1743–1758].
- Archiwum Lubomirskich [The Lubomirski Archive] 693: Sprawy sądowe z chłopami o powinności [Lawsuits over duties against peasants].
- APT – Archiwum Państwowe w Toruniu (State Archives in Toruń)
- Akta Sądów Dominialnych Dóbr Biskupstwa Chełmińskiego [Records of the Dominal Courts of the Demesnes of the Bishopric of Chełmno] 1–9: Księgi ławnicze starogrodzkie [Aldermen's registers of Starogród], Vols. 1–9 (1721–67).

*BC – Biblioteka Książąt Czartoryskich w Krakowie  
(The Princes Czartoryski Library in Krakow)*

- ms 2066: Acta ecclesiae Prevorscensis ab a. 1713 ad a. 1743, inchoata per Franciscum Chodowicz praepos. Prevorscensem. Diariusz dziejów kościoła, oraz kopie aktów dot. kościoła w Przeworsku i samego miasta [*Acta ecclesiae Prevorscensis ab a. 1713 ad a. 1743, inchoata per Franciscum Chodowicz praepos. Prevorscensem*. A diary of the history of the church, and copies of the records relating to the church in Przeworsk and the town itself].
- ms 2072: Kopie aktów i rozporządzeń kościelnych diecezji przemyskiej, gł. dekanatu jarosławskiego z lat 1754–1767 [Copies of ecclesial records and decrees of the Diocese of Przemyśl, mainly the Decanate of Jarosław, 1754–67].



- ms 2147: Akta wizytacyj dekanatu jarosławskiego diec. przemyskiej z lat 1755–1810 [Records of the visitations in Decanate of Jarosław, Diocese of Przemyśl, 1755–1810].
- ms 2159: Akta sądów wójtowskich, kopie transakcji, przywilejów i dekrétów, dotyczących wsi bożogrobców miechowskich Świętoniowa w powiecie łańcuckim z lat 1662–1760 [Records of reeve's courts, copies of transactions, privileges and decrees, concerning the village Świętoniowa (in the district of Łańcut), belonging to the Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Miechów, 1662–1760].
- ms 2579: Fragment księgi sądowej wsi Nozdrzec 1558–1580 [Fragment of the court register of the village of Nozdrzec, 1558–80], in: Zbiór listów, przywilejów, mandatów, akt sądowych i in. do dziejów Polski z lat 1514–1599 (gł. pierwsze bezkrólewie) [A collection of privileges, mandates, court records, and other documents related to the history of Poland, 1514–99 (mainly the first interregnum)], pp. 265–82.
- ms 2979: Księga wójtowska wsi Tryńczy 1659–1747 [Reeve's register of the village of Tryńcza, 1659–1747].
- ms 3431: Księga bractwa różańcowego w Sieniawie z lat 1673–1830 [Register of the Rosary Confraternity in Sieniawa, 1673–1830].
- ms 3432: Skarbiec nieprzebranych nigdy łask Bożych [...] w obrazie NMP Różańcowej w kościele [...] Dominikanów Sieniawskich [...] publicznie wystawiony R.P. 1764 [The treasury of the never ending graces of God (...) in the painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary (...) in the Dominican Church of Sieniawa, (...) publicly displayed, AD 1764].
- MNK ms 276: Ciężkowice powiat Grybów: orzeczenia tamtejszego sądu (1634–1643) [Ciężkowice, district of Grybów: judicial decisions of the local court, 1634–43].

*BJ – Biblioteka Jagiellońska w Krakowie (Jagiellonian Library in Krakow)*

- ms 86: *Liber maleficorum* of Miechów, 1571–1747.
- ms 122: Pisma z w. XVI/XVIII do historii miasteczka Nowej Góry pod Krakowem [Writings dated sixteenth to eighteenth centuries related to the history of the burgh of Nowa Góra near Krakow].
- ms 274: Księga sądowa Staszkówki 1579–1839 [Rural court register of Staszkówka, 1579–1839].
- ms 909: *Acta tam advocatalia quam scabinalia in villa Olszówka in unum conscripta a. 1664–1745.*

- ms 5316: Księga urzędu gromadzkiego wsi Spytkowice pod Jordanowem z lat 1599–1740 [Register of the rural court of the village of Spytkowice near Jordanów, 1599–1740].
- ms 5317: Księga urzędu gromadzkiego wsi Spytkowice pod Jordanowem z lat 1612–1773 [Register of the rural court of the village of Spytkowice near Jordanów, 1612–1773].
- ms 5342: Księga ławnicza Rzędzińskiej Woli powiatu tarnowskiego z lat 1563–1601 [Aldermen's register of Rzędzińska Wola in the district of Tarnów, 1563–1601].
- ms 5493: *Hieremiasa Żywieckiego kronika z lat 1688–1713 pisana w Żywcu* [Hieremias Żywiecki's chronicle from 1688–1713, written in Żywiec].
- ms 5818: Księga gromadzka wsi Głębowic dziedzictwa Adama Jacka Pisarzowskiego [1670–1690] [Village community's register of the village of Głębowice, legacy of Adam Jacek Pisarzowski, 1670–1690].
- ms 7079: [Benedykt Chmielowski], Powinności chrześcijańskie albo summa, lub sama treść nauki chrześcijańskiej albo krotki katechizm dla prostych ludzi [Benedykt Chmielowski's 'Christian obligations, or the summa, or the very content of Christian teaching, or a brief catechism for simple people'].
- ms 7496: Księgi gruntowe wsi Woźniki i Ryczów w pow. wadowickim z lat 1776–1853 [Land registries of the villages of Woźniki and Ryczów, the district of Wadowice, 1776–1853].
- ms 9092: Księga gromadzka wsi Sidzina (dawniej Miłoszowa) starostwo lanckorońskie z lat 1563–1706 [Community's register of the village of Sidzina (formerly, Miłoszowa), demesne of Lanckorona, 1563–1706].

*BK – Biblioteka Kórnicka Polskiej Akademii Nauk (The Kornik Library of the Polish Academy of Sciences)*

- ms 1735: Summariusz transakcyi kościoła Częstoborowskiego. 1672 [Summary register of the transactions of the church of Częstoborowice, 1672].

*BN - Biblioteka Narodowa w Warszawie (National Library in Warsaw)*

- ms 5631: S. Morawski, Notaty do dziejów miast i wsi galicyjskich [S. Morawski, Notes to the history of towns and villages of Galicia].

*BO – Biblioteka Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich we Wrocławiu  
(Library of the National Ossoliński Institute in Wrocław)*

- ms 1444: *Confessio variarum facultatum visitatoribus dioecesis delegatis: Michael/Poniatowski/[...] dat. Varsavie 30 aprilis 1783.*
- ms 2272: *Acta iudicii banniti Zaliaszoviensis*, 1566–1635.
- ms 3598/II–III: *Acta iudicii banniti villae Barycz*, 1525–1782, Vols. 1–2.
- ms 4294: *Acta iudicii banniti Jadownicensis*, 1562–1613.
- ms 4465: S. Morawski, Pisma, t. VII: Varia [S. Morawski, Writings, Vol. VII: Varia].
- ms 4836: Księga sądowa wójta raniżowskiego 1664–1774 [Court register of the reeve of Raniżów, 1664–1774].
- ms 5724: *Liber officii consularis et advocatialis Zmigrodiensis*, 1713–54.
- ms 5725: *Acta officii consularis et advocatialis Zmigrodiensis* [1754–84].
- ms 6115 : Księga II. dekretów i komplanacji w sądzie Państwa Łąckiego od roku 1787 i dalej zachodzących [Book II. of the decrees and arrangements occurring since 1787 and thereafter at the court of the demesne of Łąka].
- ms 11714: Poremba Wielka. Sumariusz papierów Wielkoporembskich [Poręba Wielka. Summary register of the Poręba Wielka documents].
- ms 12890: A.G. Kostkiewicz, Addytament niektórych wiadomości z strony obrazu cudownego Niepokalanego Poczęcia Najświętszej Maryi Panny w ołtarzu wielkim będącego w kościele parafialnym tartakowskim [A.G. Kostkiewicz ‘Addition of some knowledge about the miraculous image of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary being in the grand altar at the parish church of Tartaków’].

*BPAU/PAN – Biblioteka Naukowa Polskiej Akademii  
Umiejętności i Polskiej Akademii Nauk w Krakowie (The  
Scientific Library of the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences  
and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Krakow)*

- ms 873: Protokoły sądu Benedyktynek Jarosławskich z lat 1729–1774 (“Sądy Mikołaiowe Jarosławskie”) [Protocols of the court of the Benedictine Nuns of Jarosław, 1729–74 (*Sądy Mikołaiowe Jarosławskie*)].
- ms 1236: Akta i dokumenty dotyczące sądownictwa kościelnego XIII–XVIII w., [Records and documents regarding the ecclesiastical judiciary in the thirteenth to eighteenth centuries].
- ms 1544/II: Księga sądowa wsi Jadowniki [1600–1792] [Court register of the village of Jadowniki, 1600–1792].

- ms 1548: Księga sądowa wsi Brzozowej pod Brzostkiem (1393–1632) [Court register of the village of Brzozowa near Brzostek (1393–1632)].
- ms 1549: Księga sądowa wsi Zagórzany w powiecie bieckim z lat 1594–1790 [Court register of the village of Zagórzany, district of Biecz, 1594–1790].
- ms 1551: Księgi zapisów i spraw prawa ptaszkowskiego i na Pławnej (1618–1794) [Registers of records and affairs of the rural court of Ptaszkowa and Pławna (1618–1794)].
- ms 1553, Vol. 1: Księga sądowa wsi Kasina Wielka pod Limanową z lat 1670–1794 [Court register of the village of Kasina Wielka near Limanowa, 1670–1794].
- ms 1554: Akta i zapisy u Prawa Obelnego wsi Jedlni, położonej w powiecie kozienickim Gubernii Radomskiej, 1572–1835 [Records at the court of forest beekeepers in the village of Jedlnia, situated in the district of Kozienice of the Governorate of Radom, 1572–1835].
- ms 1867: Księga gromadzka wsi Orzechówka z lat 1691–1767 [Village community's register of the village of Orzechówka, 1691–1767].
- ms 1873: Księga gromadzka wsi Skotniki Górne z lat 1670–1847 [Village community's register of the village of Skotniki Górne, 1670–1847].
- ms 1874: 1. Księga gromadzka wsi Torki z lat 1569–1695. 2. Akta urzędowe i listy dotyczące mieszkańców wsi Torki z lat 1581–1788 [(1) Village community's register of the village of Torki, 1569–1695; (2) Official records and letters concerning the dwellers of the village of Torki, 1581–1788].
- ms 1875: Księga sądowa wsi Pieskowa Skała z lat 1597–1791 [Rural court register of the village of Pieskowa Skała, 1597–1791].
- ms 1888: Księga do indukowania praw, zakupieństw, sprzedaży, testamentów [...] z lat 1720–1801 dotycząca dóbr Bestwińskich z lat 1720–1801 [Register for inducting the rights, purchases, sales, and testaments (. . .) from 1720–1801, concerning the demesne of Bestwina].
- ms 1943: Księga sądowa wsi Czermna z lat 1600–1810 [Rural court register of the village of Czermno, 1600–1810].
- ms 1945: Księga wójtowska miasta Ćmielów z lat 1583–1626 [Reeve's register of the town of Ćmielów, 1583–1626].
- ms 1946: Księga gromadzka wsi Bielcza z lat 1484–1785 [Village community register of the village of Bielcza, 1484–1785].
- ms 1965: Księga wizytacji kościołów na Podhalu z lat 1748–1767 [Register of the visitations of the churches in the Podhale area, 1748–67].
- ms 2011: Księga gromadzka wsi Równe z lat 1720–1803 [Village-community's register of the village of Równe, 1720–1803].

- ms 2014: Księga wójtowska wsi Świeciechów z lat 1608–1755 [Reeve's register of the village of Świeciechów, 1608–1755].
- ms 2457: Księga sądowa ekonomii szawelskiej z lat 1636–1738 [Court register of the royal demesne of Szawle, 1636–1738].
- ms 2552: Księga albo protokół do zapisowania zapisów, testamentów i innych transakcji wsi Lipnicy Górnej [1794–1809] [Register, or protocol for recording records, testaments and other transactions of the village of Lipnica Górna, 1794–1809].
- ms 3910: Księga gromadzka wsi Zawada z lat 1505–1592 [Village community's register of the village of Zawada, 1505–92].
- ms 3911: Księga sądowa wsi należących do klucza uszewskiego z lat 1601–1767 [Court register of the villages belonging to the demesne of Uszew, 1601–1767].
- ms 6559: Księga sądowa wsi Klimkówki 1485–1746 [Rural court register of the village of Klimkówka, 1485–1746].
- ms 7118: Księga spraw gromadzkich Lipnicy Górnej z lat 1753–1793 [Register of the affairs of the village community of Lipnica Górna, 1753–93].
- ms 7119: *Acta pagi Zawada bonorum cameralium Uszew* (1788–1844).
- ms 7121: Dokumenty z XVII i XVIII w. wsi Iwkowa i akta procesowe z połowy XVIII w. dotyczące sporu gromady iwkowskiej z proboszczem tamże Marcinem Szaniawskim [Documents (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) related to the village of Iwkowa and litigation records (mid-eighteenth century) regarding the dispute between the village community of Iwkowa with the Rev. Marcin Szaniawski, the local parson].

*KHPP UJ – Pracownia Wydawnictw Źródłowych Katedry Historii Prawa Polskiego Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego w Krakowie (Editorial Section of the Department of the History of Polish Law at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow)*

- Księga sądowa wsi Husów 1625–1854 [Court register of the village of Husów, 1625–1854] (transcript).
- Księga sądowa wiejska wsi Jaworsko k. Wojnicz 1514–1749 [Rural court register of the village of Jaworsko near Wojnicz, 1514–1749] (transcript).
- Włosienica. Księga spraw gromadzkich 1782–1854 [Włosienica. A register of the village community's (*gromada's*) affairs, 1782–1854] (transcript).

LNB - *L'vivs'ka natsional'na naukova biblioteka Ukrainy imeni Vasylia Stefanyka (Vasyl Stefanyk National Scientific Library of Ukraine in Lviv)*

Kolekcja Ossolineum [The Ossolineum Collection], ms 2403: *Prawo rugowe spisane wsi Drohobyczki według Prawa Maldeburskiego 1720 r.* [The written-down rug law of the village of Drohobyczka, according to the Maldeburg (sic) Law of 1720].

NML – *Natsional'nyi muzei u L'vovi imeni Andreia Sheptyts'koho (Lviv National Andrey Sheptytsky Museum)*

RkŁ–375: *Księga sądowa wsi Hańczowa, Wysowa i Blechnarka 1578–1810* [Court register of the villages of Hańczowa, Wysowa, and Blechnarka, 1578–1810].

TsDIAUL – *Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy u L'vovi (Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine in Lviv)*

- f. 21/1, Vol. 1: *Księga radziecka miasteczka Babice 1616–1777* [Town Council register of the burgh of Babice, 1616–1777].
- f. 23/1, Vol. 1: *Księga wójtowska Bzianki 1643–1843* [Reeve's register of the village of Bzianka, 1643–1843].
- f. 28/1, Vol. 1: *Księga wójtowska wsi Hłomczy z lat 1664–1803* [Reeve's register of the village of Hłomcza, 1664–1803].
- f. 28/1, Vol. 2: *Księga zapisów Hłomczy 1799–1846* [Register of records of Hłomcza, 1799–1846].
- f. 28/1, Vol. 5: *Zapisy, ugody, skargi, testamenty, dekrety itd. przed urzędem wójtowskim wsi Hłomczy dokonane z lat 1687–1849* [Bequests, settlements, complaints, testaments, decrees, etc., effectuated before the reeve's office of the village of Hłomcza, 1687–1849].
- f. 37/1, Vol. 3: *Księga wiejska wsi Odrzechowa, 1721–1850* [Rural court register of the village of Odrzechowa, 1721–1850].
- f. 48/1, Vol. 2: *Acta officii advocatialis et scabinalis v. Trześniów ab a. 1606 ad a. 1689.*
- f. 48/1, Vol. 3: *Księga sądowa Trześniowa 1686–1791* [Rural court register of Trześniów, 1686–1791].
- f. 48/1, Vol. 4: *Księga sądowa Trześniowa 1784–1790* [Rural court register of Trześniów, 1784–1790].
- f. 48/1, Vol. 9: *Akty w sprawie kościoła filialnego w Trześniowie z lat 1620–1827* [Records regarding the filial church in Trześniów, 1620–1827].

- f. 49/1, Vol. 1: Księga sądowa Tyrawy Solnej 1559–1688, 1559–1688 [Rural court register of Tyrawa Solna 1559–1688, 1559–1688].
- f. 49/1, Vol. 2: Luźne karty z księgi wójtowskiej Tyrawy Solnej z lat 1689–1782 [Loose sheets from the reeve's register of Tyrawa Solna, 1689–1782].
- f. 53/1, Vol. 1: Księga sądowa Wysokiej 1665–1792 [Rural court register of Wysoka, 1665–1792].
- f. 54/1, Vol. 1: Księga wiejska Golcowej 1601–1657 [Rural court register of Golcowa, 1601–57].
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- f. 136/1, Vol. 2: Księga zapisów wsi Czarnej 1626–1808 [Register of records of the village of Czarna, 1626–1808].
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- f. 166/1, Vol. 1373: Księga gruntowa Wysokiej 1665–1792 [Land registry of the village of Wysoka, 1665–1792].

*Józef Półciwiartek's private collection, Rzeszów*

Księga sądowa wiejska Woli Żarczyckiej (1578–1722) [Rural court register of Wola Żarczycka (1578–1722)] (transcript).

## 2. Old prints

- Antoni od św. Ducha [Wielhorski], *Zródło dla wszystkich spragnionych obfite Najświętsza Maria Panna cudownemi łask nieprzebranych strumieniami [...] na piaskach tomaszowskich płynące* [‘The spring abounding for all the thirstie, the Holiest Virgin Mary, flowing with miraculous streams of countless graces . . . along the sands of Tomaszów’], Lwów 1746.
- Z. Błędowski, *Słodki owoc drzewa gruszkowego [...] i cuda świadczone od obrazu Matki Boskiej na gruszcze zjawionego, a w kościele rzeszowskim Ojców Bernardynów będącego zebrane* [‘A sweet fruit of the pear-tree . . . and the miracles rendered by the image of Our Lady that hath appeared on a pear-tree, and collected at the Rzeszów church of the Bernardine Friars’], Lwów 1765.
- S. Brzeżański, *Owczarnia w dzikim polu [...] to jest katechyzm polski z przyczyn w informacyi wyrażonych pieśniami wydany* [‘The sheep-fold in a wild field . . . that is, the Polish catechysm by the songs published for the reasons expressed in the information’], Lwów 1717.
- B. Chmielowski, *Nowe Ateny, albo akademja wszelkiej sciencyi pełna* [‘The New Athens, or an academy full of all the science’], Part 3, Lwów 1754.
- Constitutiones synodales dioecesis Luceoriensis et Brestensis [...] ab [...] Stephano Boguslao Rupniewski [...] celebratae et promulgatae anno [...] 1726, Varsaviae [1726].*
- Constitutiones synodi archidioecesis Gnesnensis [...] Stanislao [...] Szembek [...] a. D. MDCCXX [...] celebratae, Warsaw [1720].*
- Constitutiones synodi dioecesanae Cracovien: die XX nona mensis martii celebratae, anno Domini, M. D. nonagesimo tertio, Cracoviae 1593.*
- Constitutiones synodi dioecesis Luceoriensis ab [...] D. Andrea Gembicki [...] a. D. 1641 [...] Luceoriae [...] celebratae, Cracoviae [1641].*
- Constitutiones synodii dioecesanae Cracoviensis celebratae anno Domini M. DC. I. X. Kal. iunii, Cracoviae 1601.*
- J. Dobrakowski, *Meta boleści Jezusowych serce Maryi siedmią mieczów boleści zranione* [‘The finish of Jesus’s grieves the heart of Mary wounded by seven swords of sorrow’], Krakow 1746.
- P.P. Gawlikowski, *Pustynia szczęśliwej pokuty, Bractwo św. Maryi Magdaleny w kościele zalaskim diecezji krakowskiej staraniem i kosztem W.X. Piotra Pawła Gawlikowskiego tegoż kościoła plebana ufundowane w roku 1715 solennie*



- introdukowane i do druku podane* [‘The wilderness of felicitous penance, Confraternity of St Mary Magdalene, founded at the church of Zalas, of the Diocese of Kraków, by endeavour and at the expense of Ven. Fr Piotr Paweł Galikowski, the parson of the aforesaid church, in the year 1715, solemnly introduced and submitted for printing’], Krakow 1715.
- A. Gołdonowski, *Krótkie zebranie świątobliwego żywota ś. Isidora rolnika z Madryki od świętej pamięci Grzegorza XV między święte wpisane* [‘A brief assemblee of the saintly life of S. Isidore the Plowman of Madrica, named in the register of saint ones by Gregory XV of holy memory’], Krakow 1629.
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- D. Jaguściński, *Cuda i Łaski Nayswiętszey Maryi Panny w Obrazie Kościoła Tuligłowskiego* [‘The miracles and Graces of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Image of the Church of Tuligłowy’], Krakow 1769.
- L. Janidło, *Odmalowanie obrazu leżajskiego* [‘A depiction of the image of Leżajsk’], Zamość 1646.
- J. Majewski, *Pustynia w Raj zamieniona* [‘A desert that hath been turned into Paradise’], Lublin 1753.
- M. Nowakowski, *Kolęda duchowna parafianom od Pasterzów dla wygody wszystkich od jednego sprawiona* [‘A spiritual carol, procured to the parishioners from the Pastors for convenience of all, by one’], Krakow 1753.
- M. Nowakowski, *Wety duchowne albo rozmowy Xiędza perswadującego zgodę małżonkom źle żyjącym, do Kolędy przydane* [‘Spiritual vetoes, or conversations of a Priest persuding concorde to the erroneously living spouses’], [Krakow 1753] (supplement to the preceding item).
- M. Nowakowski, *Przewodnik miłosierny w drodze najniebezpieczniejszej idących, i do spocznienia najpożądańszego wiodący* [‘A mercifull guide of those going in the most dangerous road, and leading to the most-desired repose’], Krakow 1747.
- Powinności chrześcijańskie albo reguła, którą zbawiennie sumnienie rządzić może chrześcijanin* [‘The Christian obligations, or the rule whereby a Christian may salutarily govern his conscience’], Leszno [1679].
- H. Powodowski, *Liturgia, abo opisanie Mszej świętej i obrzędów jej* [‘The Liturgy, or a description of the holy Mass and its rituals’], Krakow 1604.
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- Rituale sacramentorum ac aliarum ecclesiae ceremoniarum pro ecclesiis Regni Poloniae et Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae, Thorunii 1691.*
- Synodus dioecesana Luceorensis celebrata a. D. MDCVII, Zamoscii 1607.*
- Synodus dioecesana Posnaniensis sub [...] Stanislao de Bezdán Hosio, episcopo Posnaniensi [...] Posnaniae in ecclesia cathedrali [...] a. D. 1738, [s.l. 1738].*
- Synodus dioecesana, ab Illustirissimo et Reverendissimo Domino, Domino Casimiro a Łubna Łubiński, [...] Episcopo Cracoviensi [...] celebrata, Cracoviae, [...] Anno Domini MDCCXI, Cracoviae 1711.*
- Święta przysługa starających się o zbawienie dusz ludzkich kapłanów, tak naturalną jako też gwałtowną ze świata zchodzących niegdyś śmiercią oświadczona* [‘The holy favour of chaplains soliciting for the salvation of human souls, as testified by naturall as well as sudden death of those once-descending from the world’], Kalisz 1759.
- G. Teretius, *Confessio et instructio idiotae sive modus excipiendi confessiones sacramentales rusticorum, puerorum in peccatis inveteratorum; ac ignorantium profectum in vita Christiana, Cracoviae 1655.*
- W. Tylkowski, *Problemata święte, abo pytania około wyrozumienia św. Ewangeliej* [‘Holy problems, or, questions about the understanding of the Holy Gospel’], Poznan 1688.
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