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Book Review: Leonid Tymošenko, *Rus'ka religijna kul'tura Vil'na. Kontekst doby. Oseređky. Literatura ta Knyžnist'*. (XVI – perša tretyna XVII st.): mononbrafija, Drohobyč: Kolo, 2020, 796 pp.

Leonid Tymoshenko's new book is a summary of many years of research on the question of inter-faith relations in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. His academic studies have long focused on the Union of Brest, although his individual works often address the various forms of activity of the Orthodox Christian community in the territories of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania. It is no exaggeration to say that Tymoshenko's academic output is enormous. This latest book's bibliography refers to 91 of his works (books and academic articles) that form the foundation of the numerous and valuable summaries he provides.

The book, it should be noted immediately, would be very difficult to review in a traditional manner because the most contentious issues concern its title and construction. Tymoshenko takes as his titular subject matter "the Ruthenian religious culture of Vilna in the sixteenth century and the first three decades of the seventeenth century", and the origins of the concept of "religious culture" are extremely competently discussed in the introduction. In the erudite first chapter, he demonstrates to the reader his excellent knowledge of the subject literature, regardless of whether it was produced in Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish, or Lithuanian academic settings, or in Russian, American or Italian ones. He also leaves no doubt as to his excellent grasp of the manuscript sources of East Central and Eastern Europe that might contain material concerning the Ruthenian religious culture of Vilna (now Vilnius). Yet, this author's treatise proper demonstrates intentions broader than just placing a magnifying glass over Vilna. In fact, Chapters 3, 5 and 7 (a total of 227 of the 574 pages written by the author) focus on the capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Two extremely interesting chapters (the second and eighth) discuss selected issues from the history of the Eastern church in Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland, and then the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, concerning questions of the identity of Ruthenian religious culture. These amount to 131 pages. Both Chapter 2, "Slavia Orthodoxa and Slavia Unita", which concerns the sixteenth century, and Chapter 8, which discusses the mutual influences in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century between

the religious cultures of Lithuanian and Polish Ruthenia on the one hand, and Catholic Poland and Orthodox Muscovy on the other, are separate monographs which feature their own introductions and discuss the relevant subject literature in depth. The third “ingredient” of the book (covering 154 pages in total) is Chapters 4 and 6, which are also monographs on two hitherto little-known treasures of Ruthenian (Uniate) polemical and hagiographical literature that were published in Vilna but concern the entire Commonwealth rather than local issues.

The purpose of highlighting this “tripartite” structure is not to make critical remarks. On the contrary, I am in favour of such formal experiments, but I would argue that they should not be “hidden” behind a title promising a much narrower thematic scope than the book actually has. A suitable title would be “Studies on the history of Ruthenian religious culture in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the sixteenth century and the first three decades of the seventeenth century”.

Moving on to a discussion of the book’s distinct “segments”, Chapters 2 and 8 deserve particular attention due to the significance of the research topics they explore. The first two parts of Chapter 2, “Slavia orthodoxa and Slavia unita”, form a kind of whole based on solid source studies that presents the author’s judgements concerning the impact of Byzantine religious tradition on Ruthenian Orthodox Christianity and on the Uniate tradition (which he calls “Florentine”). Tymoshenko finds traces of strong influences of Byzantine tradition in Ruthenia, especially in the guise of obedience to the patriarchy of Constantinople. He admits, however, that this impact weakened over time and – especially after the Union of Brest – slowly gave way to the influences of Western European religious cultures (p. 76). This correct conclusion might be further reinforced by a reminder of Antoni Mironowicz’s important article on the Orthodox Church councils in the Commonwealth,¹ which Tymoshenko omits. Analysis of the infrequent references to the tradition of the Union, which is associated with memory of the Council of Florence, leads the author to the conclusion that “Florentine” propaganda was present in the religious culture of sixteenth-century Lithuanian Ruthenia, but that its effects were weak and critical judgement was dominant (pp. 88–89). One can agree with the author, but only regarding his summary of the analysis of polemical texts. If we take into account the ecclesial reality of the Commonwealth in the seventeenth century, then we must clearly recognise the strong influence of the Florentine idea in the very development of the Uniate Church.

¹ Antoni Mironowicz, ‘Typologia soborów lokalnych Kościoła prawosławnego na ziemiach ruskich i Wielkiego Księstwa Litewskiego do końca XV wieku’, *Latopisy Akademii Supraskiej*, 5 (2014), 9–38.

However, the author's interesting reflections on the concept of Orthodox patriarchy in the Commonwealth (pp. 89–91) are commendable. Tymoshenko analyses this question in the context of the autonomist aspirations of Ruthenian Orthodox Christianity, rightly noting that these aims were thwarted by "radical Cossacks". It would do no harm to add that the only alternative to this concept proved to be the inclusion (thanks to the Cossacks) of Ruthenian Orthodox Christianity in the sphere of influence of the Muscovite patriarchy, which was certainly not in the scope of the aspirations for autonomy. In the third part of Chapter 2, the author describes the organisational structure of the Kyiv Metropolitanate, mainly using subject literature with which he is very familiar. He rightly emphasises the significance of the secular parish and patronage, but perhaps his references to the question of monastical life and the networks of monasteries of the Eastern Church are somewhat too cursory. This passage does not contain original arguments but has value as a highly competent summary of the conclusions of the subject literature.

Tymoshenko reserves the most attractive content for the end of Chapter 2, where he summarises his own thoughts, which often dispute the various trends of the subject literature regarding the causes of the Union of Brest. He agrees with neither the notion that the crisis of Orthodox Christianity in the Commonwealth was the main reason for the Uniate aspirations, nor with arguments about the attractiveness of the Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation era. The author argues that the signs of a crisis of Orthodox Christianity were few and that positive developmental phenomena were clear (the role of brotherhoods, the development of theological writing). He demonstrates that the Polish Catholic Church in the late sixteenth century was in crisis and could not offer an attractive model for the Eastern Church. He in fact finds only one significant motive for the initiators of the Union of Brest: the desire to secure the same privileges enjoyed by the Catholic clergy. The author's reflections on this subject include many important and detailed arguments that should undoubtedly be considered in analyses of the causes of the Union of Brest. Yet, it is hard to agree with his main conclusion. If it was indeed the courting of the privileges of the Catholic clergy (bishops' senatorial status, the clergy's fiscal immunity) that was the main reason for the initiative of the Union, it would not have lasted longer than the few months that sufficed to demonstrate that the Uniate Church would not receive these privileges.

It is also important to note that the crisis of Orthodox Christianity in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a phenomenon encompassing more elements than those debated in Tymoshenko's work. In this respect, his otherwise interesting polemic with Borys Gudziak and the arguments

of the latter's book, *Crisis and Reform...*,² on the genesis of the Union of Brest must be seen as selective. Furthermore, it is worth discussing the author's argument concerning the supposed weakness of the model of Counter-Reformation Catholicism. Tymoshenko bases his conclusions on the premise that the Ruthenian Orthodox hierarchy's perception of Roman Catholicism was founded on a familiarity with the realities of the Commonwealth and the situation of the Polish Church. However, this theory is assumed to be correct, even though it is not based on any arguments, ignores the existence of contacts between senior Church figures and Rome (even via papal nuncios), and wrongly underestimates the Orthodox bishops' intellectual horizons and knowledge of the world. Also dubious is the description of the crisis situation in the late-sixteenth-century Polish Church, which is constructed on the basis of a memorandum of the Krakow Cathedral Chapter from 1551 (p. 145) and fragmentary quotations from nuncial correspondence (pp. 146–47). The memorandum in question described the situation from a completely different era: the difference in the state of Catholicism between the early 1550s (when the Reformation flourished most) and the late 1590s and the period of the triumphs of the Counter-Reformation was vast. The author is evidently convinced that Catholicism in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the late sixteenth century suffered a more profound crisis than Orthodox Christianity, yet this argument is hard to accept as proven. Even if we accept that using the argument of the supremacy of Russian religious-didactic literature over the Catholic variety is justified,³ this is not sufficient as *pars pro toto* evidence.

Chapter 8 is something of a continuation of Chapter 2: it uses the subject literature as well as numerous original comments to reflect on the potential interaction between Ruthenian religious culture and the “neighbouring” Polish and Muscovite ones. Regarding this interaction, the author mostly notes examples of Ruthenian influences on the Muscovite Church, while downplaying effects in the opposite direction. In terms of the impact of Polish religious culture on Ruthenia, particularly interesting are Tymoshenko's remarks on Catholic influences on the structure of the activity of Orthodox brotherhoods and cathedral chapters (*krylos*). It is a pity that he confined himself to studying this interaction of religious cultures but overlooked another extremely interesting question: the influence of the political culture of the Polish szlachta on the Ruthenians and the process whereby “Sarmatian” ways of thinking about politics permeated Ruthenian religious polemics, in which the topos of “our rights and privileges”, for example, was

² Borys A. Gudziak, *Crisis and Reform. The Kyivan Metropolitanate, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, and the Genesis of the Union of Brest* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

³ In this respect Tymoshenko cites: Marharyta Korzo, 'Porivnjal'nyj analiz pol'skoji katolyč'koji ta ukrajins'koji prašoslavnoj cerkovno-učitel'noji literatury XVI–XVII st.', *Kovčeb. Naukovyj zbirnyk iz cerkovnoji istoriji*, 2 (2000), 64–84.

widely used.⁴ In my view, it is also worth considering another topic not discussed in the book: the fact that the electoral congresses for high Church positions followed the model of regional councils (*sejmik*).⁵

Let us now turn to the key part of the book, which concerns the Ruthenian religious culture in Vilna. This comprises Chapters 3, 4 and 7. In the first of these, the author discusses the activity of Orthodox religious institutions in Vilna, concentrating on the most important ones: the Holy Trinity church and monastery and the Holy Trinity brotherhood. This is an extremely competent discussion based on primary studies, and it leads Tymoshenko to the conclusion that the Holy Trinity monastery enjoyed great “sacred authority” in the pre-Union period. He sees as similarly important the contribution of the Holy Trinity brotherhood to the development of the “new religious culture”, which, he says, formed a “Ruthenian protomodern religious-ethnic community”. One can agree with this enthusiastic appraisal of the activity of the Holy Trinity monastery and brotherhood. Regarding the “Ruthenian protomodern religious-ethnic community”, however, I would recommend greater caution. This is very much his own term, but it is not one that is yet widespread in historical research. It is more common to refer instead to a “cultural-ethnic” community which could encompass not only Orthodox and Uniate Christians but also Protestants and Catholics. The third part of Chapter 3, devoted to the output of Ruthenian printing houses in Vilna in the sixteenth century, is an important contribution to research on Ruthenian culture in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Tymoshenko argues that the Ruthenians surpassed Catholics (and also Protestants?) in terms of the publication of biblical texts. He also admits that the Vilnian “Latinites” were in the ascendancy when it came to editions of current polemics and occasional prints. Generally, the author paints an optimistic portrait of Ruthenian religious culture in sixteenth-century Vilna. Given that this era was an introduction to the sharp divides caused by the events connected to the Union of Brest, this depiction could be said to be somewhat too flattering.

This is illustrated, incidentally, by Chapter 4, which is based on analyses of sources and concerns the period from after the Union of Brest until the end of the last decade of the seventeenth century. The author compares the Uniate activity (post-Brest) of the Holy Trinity (subchapter I) and the Disuniate religious centre formed by the Holy Spirit monastery and brotherhood (subchapter II). In his view, it is the Orthodox side that emerges victorious

⁴ See, e.g., Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel's article, overlooked by Tymoshenko: “Do praw i przywilejów swoich dawnych”. Prawo jako argument w polemice prawosławnych w pierwszej połowie XVII w., in *Między Wschodem a Zachodem. Rzeczpospolita XVI–XVIII w. Studia ofiarowane Zbigniewowi Wójcikowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. by Teresa Chynczewska-Hennel et al. (Warszawa: Historia pro Futuro, 1993), pp. 53–60.

⁵ Especially the question of participation of non-Orthodox local officials in elections, see Henryk Litwin, ‘Paweł Rzechowski vel Rechowski, pisarz grodzki kijowski – adaptacja Polaka do funkcjonowania w środowisku szlachty ruskiej na Kijowszczyźnie w czasach Zygmunta III’, *Kwartalnik Historyczny*, 128:4 (2021), 899–912 (here: 908).

from this confrontation, although he bases this verdict on a rather arbitrary opinion by using the construction “it is thought” without even a reference to the subject literature. What is commendable, however, is the precision with which Tymoshenko writes about the Vilnian Orthodox-Uniate polemics in the period 1599–1632 (subchapter III) and the activity of Cyrillic printing houses between 1600 and 1631 (subchapter IV).

The author's reflections on the Grand Duchy's capital culminates with Chapter 7, which discusses the sacralisation of Vilna in Cyrillic texts in the sixteenth century and the first three decades of the seventeenth century. Tymoshenko presents examples of use of the term “bohospasajemyj grad” in reference to Vilna, referring to the background of similar terminology applied to other Russian cities in the same period. He gives it the status of topos, associating it with the existence of a “national religious-cultural code uniting Ukrainians and Belarusians” (p. 541). I must admit that this conclusion is not convincing. The author cites many quotations from various texts, and we can have no doubt that the expression “bohospasejemyj grad” was a relatively common rhetorical construction. The question of whether it was also an element of a “cultural code” which had value in terms of identity is a separate problem that should be explained with reference to the context of the examples cited; however, in my opinion, Tymoshenko fails to do this. The large number of “bohospasajemyj” towns and individual cases of usage of this term (Chełm, Śniatyń, Podhajce, Konstantynów, Rohatyn, Mohylów, Braclaw, Tarnopol, Słuck, Mińsk, Supraśl, Putywl, Hrubieszów, Stryj) also suggest that the phrase was more rhetorical than sacred. In any case, its frequency in various types of texts is not sufficient proof that it was understood and experienced in soteriological terms, as the author claims.

Two chapters in the book that are worthy of attention discuss important and hitherto little-known artefacts of Uniate polemical literature, which the author convincingly appraises highly. These are Hipatius Pocij's work about the Union of Brest, published in Vilna in 1597 (Chapter 4; edition of the complete text in the appendix), and Leon Krevza's funeral panegyric to Josaphat Kuntsevych from 1625 (Chapter 6). Both chapters in fact comprise independent, separate monographs and are ‘books within a book’. The text on Pocij's work contains an interesting historiographical introduction on the Brest Synod, a biographical sketch of the metropolitan that is mainly based on the subject literature, a discussion of selected polemical texts on the synod (the *Apokrysis*, for example, is mentioned but not discussed), and a literary description of Pocij's work, its structure and composition. Meanwhile, Tymoshenko outlines the contents of this work (preparation for the Union, a description of the Synod of Brest, the matter of the supposed “miracle”) and analyses the authorities cited by Pocij.

This presentation is followed by a discussion of the polemics prepared by the Orthodox side, particularly the previously disregarded *Apokrisis*. One must admit that this is a dubious construction. After all, the *Apokrisis* was a reaction to Skarga's text; it was not a reaction to the work of Pociiej that is discussed by Tymoshenko. The chapter concludes with a valuable but slightly artificial "tacked-on" discussion of the sources of the history of both Brest synods. The summary offers the author the opportunity to pay homage to Mykhailo Hrushevsky and his diagnosis of the status of the Orthodox and Uniate Church in the Commonwealth. This note is slightly disappointing because the subject literature that Tymoshenko himself cites provides convincing evidence that research in this respect has advanced significantly since the times of the father of Ukrainian historiography.

The chapter discussing Leon Krevza's funeral speech in honour of Josaphat Kuntsevych, published in Vilna in 1625, is something of a revelation. It begins with an introduction to historians' limited familiarity with this speech. Tymoshenko then lays out the principles of the analysis of the text, which is treated as a sermon, and also provides a note on Leon Krevza's life and work. Above all, however, he analyses narratives on Kuntsevych. The author's summary of this speech praises it, recognising its high literary merit. He also underlines the significance of Kuntsevych's death and beatification for the development of the religious situation in the east of the Commonwealth in the seventeenth century.

Let us also add that the book ends with a conclusion reiterating the arguments that summarise each chapter and also includes important and interesting appendices: an edition of Hipatius Pociiej's polemical text, which is discussed in Chapter 5 (pp. 579–604); and a complete list of the editions of Ruthenian books made in Vilna in 1523–1632 (containing 118 titles and 10 that have not survived). It also features an impressive, 90-page-long list of sources and a bibliography.

Tymoshenko's book is undoubtedly a noteworthy event in the historiography of the Union of Brest and Ruthenian religious disputes in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It is a very valuable summary of the subject literature and an extremely interesting analysis of the sources concerning the religious culture of Vilna in the period 1523–1623. It contains valuable essays analysing the sources of two little-known yet very important artefacts of religious polemics in the era after the Union of Brest that were written by Hipatius Pociiej and Leon Krevza. In my view, however, the author is somewhat hasty in certain generalisations and conclusions regarding the religious situation in the Commonwealth in the sixteenth century and the first three decades of the seventeenth century, which appear without adequate links to detailed arguments.