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“A garden enclosed, a fountain sealed”: The Song of Songs and its Ecclesiastical Significance in Seventeenth-century Ukraine

ABSTRACT

This article addresses an aspect of the seventeenth-century milieu that has not received the scholarly attention it deserves: how Ukrainian Orthodox literati received, adapted, and transformed the Song of Songs and its bridal imagery. At the crossroads between the Catholic West and the Byzantine East, seventeenth-century Ukraine is a fascinating case study of the shifts of meaning and intended audience of the particular biblical book and its exegetical tradition. In particular, I examine how some of the most influential early modern Ukrainian writers (Lazar Baranovych, Ioanikii Galiatovs'kyi, Stefan Iavors'kyi, and Dymytrii Tuptalo) used the Song as a template for meditating on the nature of the Church as they envisioned it – as an instrument for thinking about a “collective” institution. I argue that these authors brought their involvement with ecclesiastical politics and pastoral responsibility to the exegesis of this book, using the Song, often in combination with imagery from the Apocalypse, to articulate and define the boundaries of the Kyiv Church during a time of crisis.

KEYWORDS: The Song of Songs, seventeenth-century Ukraine, ecclesiological exegesis, Lazar Baranovych, Ioanykii Galiatovs'kyi, Stefan Iavors'kyi

STRESZCZENIE

„Ogród zamknięty, źródło zapieczętowane”: Pieśń nad Pieśniami i jej znaczenie ekklezjastyczne w siedemnastowiecznej Ukrainie

Artykuł dotyczy XVII-wiecznych adaptacji i przekształceń Pieśni nad Pieśniami i obecności w ówczesnej ukraińskiej literaturze obrazu zaślubin, któremu dotąd nie poświęcono należytej naukowej uwagi. Na skrzyżowaniu dróg między katolickim Zachodem a bizantyńskim Wschodem XVII-wieczna Ukraina jest fascynującym studium przypadku w odniesieniu do zmian

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znaczeń, tradycji egzegetycznej oraz odbiorców konkretnej biblijnej księgi. Szczególna uwaga została poświęcona badaniom sposobu, w jaki najślynniejsi ówcześni pisarze ukraińscy (Łazarz Baranowycz, Joannicjusz Galatowski, Stefan Jaworski i Dmytro Tuptalo) wykorzystali Pieśń jako szablon w refleksji nad naturą Kościoła. Twierdząc, że wymienieni autorzy wnieśli swoje duszpasterskie i polityczne zaangażowanie do egzegezy tej księgi, odwołując się do Pieśni nad Pieśniami; często w połączeniu z obrazami z Apokalipsy wytyczali i definiowali granice Kościoła kijowskiego w czasach religijnego i politycznego kryzysu.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: Pieśń nad Pieśniami, XVII-wieczna Ukraina, egzegeza eklezjologiczna, Łazarz Baranowicz, Joannicjusz Galatowski, Stefan Jaworski

The seventeenth century was a period of great excitement about the Song of Songs, a book redolent with sensuous imagery that had previously received limited attention in the Slavic Orthodox world. Three factors particularly contributed to the centrality of this biblical book across different Christian denominations: the new interest in affectivity through the senses, the flourishing of eroticized models of mysticism aimed at reinvigorating the devotion of the laity, and the perception of the book as a text loaded with political and ecclesiastical significance (Clarke, 2011; Kendrick, 1994; Flinker, 2000, pp. 100–159; Longfellow, 2004, pp. 18–58). This article addresses an aspect of the seventeenth-century milieu that has not received the scholarly attention it deserves: how Ukrainian Orthodox literati received, adapted, and transformed the Song and its bridal imagery. At the crossroads between the Catholic West and the Byzantine East, seventeenth-century Ukraine is a fascinating case study of the shifts of meaning in addition to the changed intended audience of the particular biblical book and its exegetical tradition.¹

As we will see, most of the authors examined in this article could scarcely write without citing lines from the Song. This fact seems especially notable when we consider that, unlike other extensively-quoted books such as the Psalms, the Song played a minor role in the Orthodox liturgy and, as a result, its use was sporadic in East Slavic writings before the seventeenth century.² How did this new popularity come about?

1 For a broad account of the use of the Song of Songs in early modern Ukrainian literature, see Maksymchuk, 2013a; 2013b; 2015.

2 The classic study on the Song of Songs in the East Slavic area before the seventeenth century is Alekseev 2002, which contains an inventory of all the occurrences of the Song of Songs in early Slavic writings before the appearance in print of the Ostrih Bible in 1581 (Alekseev, 2002, p. 130–136). However, Alekseev mainly focuses on questions of textual transmission and does

The increased use of images from the Song begins in the seventeenth century, a period shaped by intense religious, social, and political struggles and the emergence of a new concept of the individual. My central claim is that the Song and its bridal mysticism became a significant resource for the theological and devotional consciousness of early modern Ukrainian writers, who saw something valuable and rhetorically potent in the book that they could draw upon to respond to the challenges of an evolving cultural and spiritual landscape.

In the following pages, I examine how some of the most influential early modern Ukrainian writers (Lazar Baranovych, Ioanikii Galiatovs'kyi, Stefan Iavors'kyi, and Dymytrii Tuptalo) used the Song as a template for meditating on the nature of the Church as they envisioned it – as an instrument for thinking about a “collective” institution. I argue that these authors brought their involvement with ecclesiastical politics and pastoral responsibility to the exegesis of this book, using the Song, often in combination with imagery from the Apocalypse, to articulate and define the boundaries of the Kyiv Church during a time of crisis. Although this is necessarily only a preliminary effort, I hope to show that, for early modern Ukrainian literati, the Song was a key – a shared symbolic universe that could unlock many important questions.

The Song of Songs – one of the most popular and influential books of the Bible during the Middle Ages and the early modern period, especially in the Latin West – is highly problematic for its erotic language and lack of explicit references to God or the people of Israel. On its face, it may seem an extravagant book of the Bible to draw from in texts aimed at moral instruction or pastoral care. However, the Ukrainian literati read it through the filter of a long-standing exegetical tradition. The essential framework of its Christian interpretation was developed by Origen, who introduced the “allegorical, multivocal” view of the bride as either the Church or the individual soul: “vel de Ecclesia ad Christum ... vel de animae cum Verbo Dei conjunctione” (Matis, 1990, p. 31).³ This view, which differed from traditional Jewish thought, was transmitted to the West through the translations of Jerome and Rufinus and the homilies of Gregory and Ambrose, two theologians whose thought was deeply shaped by the Song (Matis, 1990, p. 26). In the Greek East, Gregory of Nyssa drew extensively on Origen’s homilies and the commentaries, establishing the use of the Song as a guide for the spiritual progress of the soul towards

not attempt an analysis that explains the exegesis and reception of this book among the Eastern Orthodox Slavs.

3 On the interpretation of the Song, see also Ohly, 1958; King, 2005; Shuve, 2016; Clark, 1986, p. 386–427; Matis, 1990.

a union with God, a view that would become common among Orthodox Slavs (Norris, 2012). However, the imagery of the Song could also apply to individuals; for instance, to the Virgin Mary, a significant twelfth-century development that emphasizes her “flexible nature” in Christian piety (Matis, 1990, p. 15). Following this threefold interpretation, Ukrainian Orthodox writers assumed at least three layers of allegorical readings (ecclesiological, moral, and mariological), identifying Christ’s spouse as the Church, the individual soul, or the Virgin Mary, respectively. It is to this first interpretation that we shall now turn.

It is probably no coincidence that the ecclesiological reading of the Song is the primary reading in Ioanykii Galiatov’skyi’s sermon collection, *Kliuch razuminiia*. Printed in Kyiv in 1659, its primary task was to educate a new class of preachers engaged in pastoral care, creating a sense of shared clerical identity. For Galiatov’skyi, who would later publish several polemical treatises in Polish against the Uniate Church, Judaism, and Islam (*Łabędź z piórami swemi...*, 1679; *Alphabetum rozmaitym Heretykom*, 1681; *Alkoran Machometow*, 1683), the fight for doctrinal correctness and against the contagion of heresy was an overriding concern.⁴ Unsurprisingly then, in the preface to the book (Galâtovskij, 1659, f. 1r), which is addressed to the parish priest (*Peredmova do sviashchennyka*), he stresses the crucial role of preaching in converting heretics (“nevirnoho chlovika, heretyka, zhyda, albo pohanyna”).⁵ Accordingly, the Song speaks to him not of a private religious experience but of a collective body, providing him with a collection of vivid, memorable images that he uses to describe the glorious figure of the Kyivan Church, an institution within which the clerical class could meditate on their place and mission. Unlike other writers we will encounter in this study, whose often elusive exegetical associations assume a working knowledge of the Song’s narrative on the part of their audience, he seeks to present the sense of the Song as clearly as possible, ensuring that his allegorical interpretation is not lost on his readers. Thus, he (Galâtovskij, 1659, f. 87r) always explicitly demarcates the ecclesiological sense of a certain verse: the Church is the “mother” of Song 3:4 (“I brought him into my mother’s house”), the resplendent bride-moon of Song 6:9 (“pienknaia iak misiats”) who

4 Galiatov’skyi (?–1688) was educated at Kyiv College. From 1657, he served as its rector and hegumen of the Kyiv Epiphany Brotherhood Monastery. From 1669, he was archimandrite of the Elets’kyi Dormition Monastery in Chernihiv.

5 Note 5: Quotations from the texts have been transliterated according to Ukrainian conventions: e.g., и and ы are both represented by y and ѣ as i.

receives her spiritual gifts by the sun-Christ (“*misiats берет iasnost’ svoiu ot solntsa*”).⁶



Figure 1. Detail of the title page of *Kliuch razuminiia*. Galiatovs'kyi, I. (1659). Kyiv: Drukarnia Kyievo-Pechers'koi Lavry.

The book's title page represents a visual gloss on this ecclesiological exegesis, drawing on the traditional patristic association between Mary and the personified *ecclesia* to show the Church's ultimate marriage to Christ at the Last Judgment. The upper layer of the page (fig. 1) shows the Coronation of the Virgin by the Trinity, surmounted by a quotation based on Song 4:8 (“Come with me from Lebanon my spouse, thou shalt be crowned” [“*budeshi uvinchanna*”]). The last portion of this verse (“thou shalt be crowned”), which is absent in the Slavonic and Greek Bible, is based on the Vulgate text (“*Veni de Libano sponsa mea, veni de Libano, coronaberis*”), or possibly on Jakub Wujek's Polish Bible (“*pójdź z Libanu, pójdź! będziesz koronowana*”). A widespread motif in the Latin West, the Coronation of the Virgin stems from this passage in the Song, in which the bridegroom summons the bride, typifying and anticipating the exaltation of the Church as the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21:2–9. In this interpretation, the Song is read according to John Cassian's anagogical sense of Scripture – as foreshadowing the eschatological kingdom that will be inaugurated by the Second Coming of Christ. Not incidentally, the image of the Coronation is flanked on the right by that of a rider holding a bow, with a verse from Revelation 6:2, which the exegesis traditionally identifies with Christ: “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.” With a typically Baroque play on words, in the

6 All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise noted. The numeration of the Song of Songs follows the Septuagint, as in the Church Slavonic Bible.

“Sermon on the Ascension,” Galiatovs’kyi (1659, f. 113r) explains that the cross is “a triumphal arc[h]” (“krest nazyvaetsia *lukom* triumfalnym” [italics mine – M.G.B.]) and therefore, in Revelation 6:2, Christ, the rider on the white horse, holds “a bow” (“luk”). The two images thus form a narrative sequence in which the proximity of the Song and the Revelation reveals the deep connection between the Church’s marriage with Christ (exemplified by the Coronation) and the expectations of the Last Judgment when Christ will return holding the cross like a “bow” against the infidels.

This thematic convergence of the Song and the Apocalypse is widespread in seventeenth-century Ukrainian writings. Ukrainian Orthodox intellectuals understood both books as ecclesiological texts that painted a vision of the Church as triumphant in Heaven but beleaguered by heretics on this earth, a most urgent matter in a land plagued by decades of interconfessional strife and internecine political struggle.⁷ For instance, in the second “Sermon on the Dormition,” Galiatovs’kyi (1959, 153v) asserts that the “woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet” of Revelation 12 is the Church (“znachyt Tserkov”), persecuted by the devil before the end of days, when the bridegroom will call her with the words of Song 4:8, “Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse.” The moon with its maculae represents the heretics (“heretyky maiut na sobi makuly eresy”), which she tramples under her feet (“Tserkov zvitiazhaet vsikh heretykov”). Passages like these, along with the increased popularity of the iconographic motifs of the Coronation of the Virgin and the woman clothed with the sun, provide further confirmation of a “softening of boundaries” between the Song and the Revelation – an exegetical connection that had become popular in the Latin West since the twelfth century, especially during periods of heightened ecclesiastical conflict, which here, equally, serves the function of demarcating the doctrinal boundaries of the Kyivan Orthodox Church.⁸

The theme of identity – of who constitutes the true people of God and who does not – is particularly relevant for other Ukrainian Orthodox writers who focus on images of purity and enclosure embedded in the Song to articulate the questions of heresy, church unity, and Christian self-definition. The Song becomes an important resource for Stefan Iavors’kyi, a vocal

7 For a survey of the ecclesiastical situation in Kyiv during the second half of the seventeenth century, see Vlasovs’kyi 1955, 2, p. 315–322.

8 On the reading of the Song in conjunction with that of the Apocalypse, see Matter, 1990, p. 14, 106; Matter, 1992, pp. 46–47; Dolbeau, 2011. On the appearance of the Western iconographic motifs of the Coronation and the woman clothed with the sun in the Ruthenian lands, see Kryzhanovskii, 1990, 2, p. 245.



Figure 2. Title page of *Paterik, ili otechnyk pecherskii* (1661). Kyiv: Drukarnia Kyievo-Pechers'koi Lavry.

advocate for the independence of the Church from the state.⁹ In the marriage sermon *Vynohrad Khrystov*, preached in 1698 to Hetman Ivan Mazepa and his courtiers, he describes the Kyivan Church and its doctrinal purity as the enclosed garden of Song 4:12, where any attempts to infiltrate it by “the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines” (Song 2:15), identified with the Protestants, are preemptively frustrated (Åvorskij, 1698).¹⁰ As early as the third century, the “garden enclosed” was used as a symbol of the Church as a community sealed off by the world.¹¹ It is a potent image, not least because a walled garden had appeared in the influential title page of the 1661 edition of the Kyiv *Paterik* (fig. 2).

Iavors'kyi's invocation of the Caves Monastery as “a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed” (“ne peshchero ale vertograde zakliuchennyi ... istochnyche zapechatlennyi”) in the manuscript of the “Sermon on Saint Feodosii” (1696) clearly builds on the rich symbolic vocabulary of that engraving, while making clear that its biblical background lies in the Song and its rhetoric of enclosure (Åvorskij, 1696, f. 1031v).

9 The problem of the relation between church and state occupied Stefan Iavors'kyi for all his life and, once he moved to Russia, it became the central cause of attrition between him and Peter I. On this, see Šerech, 1951; Zhivov, 2004, pp. 119–129.

10 A scholar well versed in neo-Latin and Polish literature and culture, and a churchman of distinguished service in the Hetmanate and Petrine Russia, Iavors'kyi (1656–1722) studied as a Uniate Catholic at the Jesuit Colleges of Lublin and Poznań before returning to the Orthodox fold in 1689. He wrote homiletic, dogmatic, polemical, and panegyric works.

11 On the “enclosed garden” as an ecclesiological metaphor, see Shuve (2016, p. 23–24), who focuses on the use of the Song in the construction and negotiation of boundaries in the early Latin Church.

Unsurprisingly, then, the Song figures in the Kyiv *Pateryk*, whose visual apparatus helped crystallize the connection between Song 4:12 and the purity of an ecclesial community for the Ukrainian reader. The book's preface, which contains a long confutation of the "calumnies" ("khule-niia") pronounced by Catholics and Uniates against the monks of the Caves, compares the two founders of the monastery, Feodosii and Antonii, to "the two wings of a great eagle," given to the woman clothed with the sun in Revelation 12:14, and to the "two breasts" of Song 4:5. What we witness here is, again, a "softening of boundaries" between the Song and the Apocalypse, both read as allegories of the true institutional Church. Moreover, the use of a bodily image (the "two breasts") that belongs to the field of nurturing and parenting makes it clear that the true Church is not only a pure bride ("a garden enclosed") but also a fecund mother – the very "mother" seen by Galiatovs'kyi in Song 3:4, who could nurture and protect her faithful at a time of instability, providing the "milk" of spiritual teaching (*Paterik*, 1661, f. 13v).

Of still greater importance for understanding the Song's pivotal place in the seventeenth-century Ukrainian ecclesiological discourse is another little-studied source. In 1672, a translation into Church Slavonic of the Commentary on the Song (*Commentariorum in Cantica Canticorum*) by the French Benedictine monk Robert of Tombelaine (d. 1090) was commissioned in Novohorod Sivers'kyi at the behest of the local archbishop, Lazar Baranovych.¹² Transmitted in the manuscript tradition as the end of the unfinished commentary of Gregory the Great, whose exposition of the Song was the most important medieval source for later exegetes, Robert's *Commentariorum* became a medieval classic.¹³ Interpretations such as the "breasts" of Song 4:5 as the "teachers of the church," which echo in the preface to the Kyiv *Pateryk*, were first established by Gregory and popularized, among others, by Robert's text, which became the main source for the amply-circulated *Glossa ordinaria* (*Patrologia Latina*, 79, col. 509cd). Largely ignored by scholars, the existence of a Slavonic translation of the *Commentariorum* offers important proof of the vitality of Song exegesis in seventeenth-century Ukraine. It is, if nothing else, a strong indicator of interest in a text that was deemed worthy of close, systematic study – of a desire to appear on par with other Christian denominations in its interpretation. What drove Baranovych to the *Commentariorum*?

12 On this translation, see Petrov, 1904, p. 37. For the identification of this author as belonging to the circle of Lazar Baranovych, see Temčinas, 2016.

13 See *Patrologia Latina*, 150, cols. 1361–1370 for the text under the name of Robert; *Patrologia Latina*, 79, cols. 493–548 for the text under the name of Gregory. For a treatment of Robert's commentary, see Ohly, 1958 p. 95–98 and Quivy and Thiron, 1956.

Robert’s reading of the Song is full of apocalyptic expectations about the final wedding between Christ and the Church, revealing an underlying preoccupation with the reform of the earthly Church and the threat of heresy that must have appealed to an Orthodox church leader such as Baranovych. Like Robert, he was deeply concerned with the well-being of his Church in a time of growing anxiety: in 1666, when his first sermon collection, *Mech dukhovnyi*, appeared in print, the Kyiv Metropolitan See had been vacant for almost ten years with no immediate solution in sight. Robert’s militant ecclesiology must have helped him make sense of the destiny of a Church that, as he asserts in the “Sermon on the twenty fourth Sunday after Pentecost,” is “bleeding” like the “woman with an issue of blood” healed by Christ in Matthew 9:20–22 (Baranovič, 1666, f. 181r).¹⁴ Thus, in the “Sermon on the thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost,” he uses Gregory’s reading of Song 4:4 as an allegory of preachers (“the tower of David ... whereon there hang a thousand bucklers, all shields of mighty men”) to paint a soothing picture of the “vineyard” of the Church, zealously protected by the “mighty men” working in it. The laborers of this vineyard are compared to the bride of Song 6:9 who “looketh forth as the morning” (Baranovič, 1666, f. 176r), in an unusual and yet markedly “Gregorian” interpretation of this verse as a reference to those hired “early in the morning” in the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1–16). Also clearly belonging to the Gregorian tradition is his praise of active life – the pastoral work in the vineyard of the Lord that is carried out from the very “morning.” In this respect, the Song gives him an interpretative framework for understanding his role – and, by extension, that of a whole new trained clerical class – in guarding the integrity of his community during what he calls “these ferocious times” (“liutykh nyneshnykh vremen”). The association of Song 4:4 with the four beasts of the Apocalypse in the frontispiece of his subsequent sermon collection, *Truby sloves propovidnykh* (1674), further underscores the proximity of his ecclesiology to that of the *Commentariorum*, especially in the rhetorical elaboration of the image of a militarily-fortified church battling enemies from within and without.

Baranovych, like his contemporary and close associate Ioanykii Galiatovs’kyi, fought vigorously against the evils of heresy. The printing press Baranovych established in Novhorod Sivers’kyi during his tenure as archbishop issued several anti-Muslim, anti-Jewish, and anti-Catholic

14 Lazar Baranovych (1620–1693) was educated at the Mohyla College and the Jesuit colleges of Vilnius and Kalisz. He was rector of the Mohyla College (1650–1657), hegumen of the Theophany Confraternity Monastery in Kyiv, and later archbishop of Chernihiv (1667). A practical and ambitious personality, involved in many a political intrigue, he acted as an intermediary between the Ukrainian clergy and the Moscow government during the turbulent decades between 1657 and 1686.

pamphlets. One of them is Galiatovs'kyi's *Stary Kościół Zachodni nowemu Kościołowi Rzymskiemu* (1678), an anti-Catholic treatise that relies upon images, traceable to Gregory's Commentary, to articulate its ecclesiology. For instance, Song 6:12 ("Return, return, O Shulamite"), which for Gregory represents the Church begging the Synagogue to come to recognize Christ ("id est Synagoga ad fidem convertatur"), here becomes the voice of the Eastern Church, begging Rome to "return" within her boundaries – within her welcoming "maternal" embrace – by abandoning its erroneous position on the matter of the Filioque (Galátovs'kij, 1678, f. 105).¹⁵

All these ecclesiological interpretations rest on what E. Ann Matter calls the use of the Song as an "insider/outsider text": if the earliest Christian commentaries identified Jews as the enemy, in our examples, the outsiders prevented from trespassing the boundaries of the Kyivan Church – from touching her most precious "breasts" – are the main "confessional others" of the time, Protestants, Uniates, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims (Matter, 1990, p. 14). To borrow the words of Dymytrii Tuptalo, who uses an image that can be traced back to Augustine, the Church is "a lily among thorns" (Song 2:2) who suffers from the attacks of "zhidy, elliny, eretiki i vsi nevirnye liudy" (Rostovskii, 1894, p. 629).¹⁶

Readings like this one, which bears some of the urgency and sense of imminent judgment so characteristic of the Apocalypse, have a hortatory power: they would encourage people to coalesce around a Church oppressed by the presence of innumerable "thorns," guard her vineyard against the attacks of the "little foxes," and, with her, prepare for the eschatological reunion with Christ. In this respect, they also encapsulate the very meaning of the reforms brought about by Metropolitan Petro Mohyla in the 1640s, which were as much an effort on the part of the Kyivan Church to get its own house in order – to tend to one's "enclosed garden" – as they were a summoning of forces against other confessions.¹⁷

One reason that the bond with Christ embedded in the drama of the Song meant something to these writers and their readers and listeners lies, I believe, in its perception as a living force, one that is projected towards lofty realities, yet grounded in a concrete theological and institutional setting – in the ideals and anxieties of their age. In a time of heightened conflict, the Song offered a space for answering religious and political questions about the communal boundaries of the Kyivan Orthodox Church, which saw itself as the true and intangible bride of Christ. The parallel

15 For Gregory's comment on Song 6:12, see *Patrologia Latina*, 79, col. 533.

16 For the suffering church as a "lily among thorns," see Augustine's *De baptismo* (*Patrologia Latina*, 43, col. 195).

17 On Peter Mohyla's church reforms, see Thomson, 1993.

with Apocalypse that is especially evident in the ecclesiological reading of this book is, in this respect, illuminating. Both books functioned as a “key” to those anxieties and expectations, providing a glimpse and foretaste of the anticipated union with Christ. Like the Apocalypse, the Song provided a narrative that helped address one crucial question: How might one talk about the true Church in a time and place shaped by the threat of heresy and confessional disunity? If we want to recover something of the power that these texts had for their original authors and audience, we must reconstruct this process – the actual encounter between biblical exegesis and the lives of those who crafted, received, and consumed it.

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