

## CHAPTER 1

# The Social Question in the Austrian Context (1899–1914)

In this chapter, we survey four areas of Metropolitan Sheptytsky's social reflection in the pre-World War I period of his episcopate: his teaching on the social action of the church, the political involvement of priests, church-state relations, and Polish-Ukrainian relations.

The Metropolitan's reflection on Christian social action was an attempt to apply Catholic social teaching to the principal socio-economic concerns in Galicia. As elsewhere in Europe, the church in Austrian Galicia interpreted the rise of socialism as both an economic and an ideological challenge. In the spirit of Pope Leo XIII's teachings, Metropolitan Sheptytsky sought ways of reaffirming his church's commitment to the advancement of the social and economic welfare of Ukrainian Catholics without yielding to secularization. His second concern was with political activism among priests. In the Austrian context, political participation by the clergy and hierarchy had a long history. But the proliferation of political parties in the latter part of the nineteenth century engendered an unprecedented form of divisiveness and, in the absence of clear limits on acceptable clerical involvement in political life, that divisiveness extended into the internal life of the church. The Metropolitan therefore set out to delineate the nature and limits of acceptable political involvement by priests. The third issue was church-state relations. From the church's perspective, secular tendencies in the Vienna and local Galician parliaments at the turn of the century were undermining the traditional harmony between church and state. In response, Metropolitan Sheptytsky adopted a more assertive stance in order to defend the Christian social values that he felt were threatened. Finally, a social issue specific to the Galician context was the question of Polish-Ukrainian relations. This question, too, had a long history, and in the first sixteen years of Metropolitan Sheptytsky's episcopate it continued to arouse social tensions. As one who had been raised a Polish Roman Catholic but later chose to return to his Eastern Christian and Ukrainian roots, Metropolitan Sheptytsky brought a unique perspective and original ethical proposals to the issue of conflicting patriotisms in Austrian Galicia.

## The Social Question and Socialism

Whereas what came to be known as the social question in western Europe had sprung from industrialization and the attendant processes of social and economic change, the situation in Austrian Galicia was significantly different. Austrian policy had not favoured industrial development in the province, but instead perpetuated a quasi-colonial agricultural economy that was subservient to the interests and priorities of the empire.<sup>1</sup> In western Europe, according to Pope Leo XIII, the condition of the working classes was “the pressing question of the hour,” but the social question facing the Greek Catholic Church in pre-industrial Galicia was that of the endemic peasant poverty that had led to economic unrest and to a massive wave of emigration at the turn of the century.

In order to address the social question in Galicia, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky first gave a contextual diagnosis in his pastoral letter *On the Social Question* (1904), the first serious attempt by a Greek Catholic hierarch in Austrian Galicia to grapple with the socioeconomic problems of the region.<sup>2</sup>

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1. See Andrii Zhuk, *Suspil'no-ekonomichni vidnosyny v Halychyni i kul'turno-ekonomichna pratsia halyts'kykh ukraïntsiiv* (L'viv, 1911); and Illia Vytanovych, “Sotsiial'no-ekonomichni ideï v zmahanniakh halyts'kykh ukraïntsiiv na perelomi XIX-XX vv.,” *Naukovi zapysky Ukraïns'koho tekhnichno-hospodars'koho instytutu* 21 (1970): 3–70.

2. Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, *O kwestii sotsiial'nii* (Zhovkva, 1904). All references are to this edition, cited hereafter as *OSQ*, with page numbers followed by paragraph numbers.

*OSQ* stands out as perhaps the single most studied and cited work of Metropolitan Sheptytsky. See Iosyf Botsian, “Pastyrs'ki lysty Mytropolyta Andreia,” *Bohosloviia* 4, nos. 1–4 (L'viv, 1926): 117–18; Anatol' M. Bazylevych, “Pysannia na suspil'ni temy,” in his “Vvedennia” to [Andrei Sheptytsky], *Tvory Sluhy Bozhoho Mytropolyta Andreia Sheptyts'koho: Pastyrs'ki Lysty*, vol. 1 (Toronto, 1965), pp. B/191–B/231 (hereafter 02–65); Iurii Rybak, “*Rerum Novarum* ta Mytropolyt Sheptyts'kyi,” *Dzvony* 3–4 (114–115) (1980): 75–84; Iurii Rybak, “Kyr Andrei u hromads'ko-ekonomichnomu dovkilli (ohliad plianiv i diial'nosti),” *Al'manakh “Provydinnia”* (Philadelphia, 1984), pp. 219–236; and Andrii Krawchuk, “Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky and the Ethics of Christian Social Action,” in *Morality and Reality: The Life and Times of Andrei Sheptyts'kyi*, ed. Paul R. Magocsi with the assistance of Andrii Krawchuk (Edmonton, 1989), pp. 247–68.

The best-known critique, made from a socialist standpoint, is Ivan Franko, “Sotsiial'na aktsiia, sotsiial'ne pytannia i sotsiializm,” *Literaturno-naukovi vistnyk* 28, no. 10 (1904): 1–23; reprinted in full in Bohdan Kravtsiv, ed., *Ivan Franko pro sotsiializm i marksyzm (retsenzii i statii, 1897–1906)* (New York, 1966). Soviet researchers' studies considered this critique definitive, although Franko's article was never published in its entirety in the former USSR. See Vasyli L. Mykytas', *Ivan Franko—doslidnyk ukraïns'koï polemichnoi literatury* (Kyiv, 1983), p. 218; and Mykola Virnyi, “Kinets' odniiei mistyfikatsii,” *Vidhomin mynuloho* 32, no. 7 (Kyiv, 1954): 139–40.

Inspired by Leo XIII's social teachings, and particularly by those enunciated in the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891), Sheptytsky applied them to the specific needs of the situation in Galicia. He was aware that the changes European society had undergone were traceable to the industrial revolution; that in the new social order, capital was taking precedence over labour; that capital and power were concentrated in the hands of a few; and that the result was hatred between social classes.<sup>3</sup> In Galicia, this problem was further complicated by other factors. As the Metropolitan observed: "The situation in our region is becoming even more difficult: this is because of the insupportable economic situation of the entire land, endless political struggles, excessive taxes, and a level of education among the peasants that is lower than anywhere else."<sup>4</sup> Sheptytsky felt that the search for an effective solution to this socio-economic crisis required concerted practical reflection; facile solutions would only exacerbate the lot of the poor.<sup>5</sup> The social question was real, not metaphysical; its solution would likewise have to be tangible and concrete.

The pressing socio-economic issues in Galicia were closely tied to external challenges that faced the church. A secularizing tendency had arisen in the form of a politically effective Ukrainian intelligentsia. The emergence of socialism had introduced a compelling program for social change and more equitable economic relationships, yet it was perceived by the church as a threat to its hitherto exclusive moral hold on the popular mind.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, by the turn of the century, the movement had made significant advances in promoting and representing the main social stratum among Galician Ukrainians—the peasantry—and thereby loosened the clergy's grip on the population. This gave rise to fears of apostasy on a massive scale. The church therefore made efforts to forestall any such movement, and it did so with particular vehemence in the press. Religious periodicals published polemical tracts directed against the "enemies of the church," seeking to expose their methods and alleged goals to the public.<sup>7</sup> During the fifteen years immediately preceding World War I, there was a sense of urgency in the Greek Catholic Church about dealing with socialism. In a prophetic tone, the Ukrainian bishops warned in 1906 that a spiritual polarization

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3. *OSQ* 7: 14–15.

4. *OSQ* 7: 16.

5. *OSQ* 8: 19.

6. See John-Paul Himka, *Socialism in Galicia: The Emergence of Polish Social Democracy and Ukrainian Radicalism (1860–1890)* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983).

7. The semi-monthly catechetical journal *Misionar* (Zhovkva, 1897–1944) published a lengthy series of articles in 1899 under the title, "Pro vorohiv tserkvy i narodu." Although these articles were unsigned, it is quite possible that their author was one of the founding editors of the periodical, the Reverend Andrei Sheptytsky, OSBM.