

Ethical Foundations in the Pastoral Thought of Bishop Josaphat Kotsylovsky¹

Andrii Krawchuk

Abstract

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Bishop Josaphat Kotsylovsky (1876–1947) served for three decades as ordinary of the oldest Ukrainian Greco-Catholic eparchy – Peremyshl'. Extending the limits of our knowledge of the bishop beyond the brief biographical sketches that have been published to date, the author studies, for the first time, over fifty of Kotsylovsky's pastoral letters and unpublished archival materials. The result is a ground-breaking description of his moral vision.



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In the first half of the twentieth century, the story of the Peremyshl' Eparchy was bound up closely with the life of its bishop, Josaphat Kotsylovsky, who served from 1917 to 1947. But unlike his contemporary, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, whose life and work has been studied in considerable detail, the legacy of Josaphat Kotsylovsky remains largely unknown. The primary sources still await their day in the L'viv and Peremyshl' archives, and so, for now, the dearth of secondary source studies preclude a synthetic overview and preliminary assessment.² What we propose here is an ethical analysis of the bishop's pastoral letters. Certainly, the historical context of this pastoral thought and work will require a fuller treatment in the future: in particular, a thorough study of the archival sources, especially correspondence and documents of the interwar period, and of World War II up to the bishop's death in 1947.

Our aim is to reconstruct the theological underpinnings of Kotsylovsky's pastoral thought and to identify some of the key principles and conceptual categories that guided his ethical reflection and decision-making. The end result may serve as a preliminary description of Bishop Josaphat's ethical thought and prepare the way for an interpretative assessment of its place in the history of the Church.

² Studies of the life and work of Bishop Josaphat Kotsylovsky are limited to a few brief surveys, including: I.G., "Двадцять літ на Владичім Престолі," *Ювілейний Альманах Українських Католицьких Богословів Перемиської Єпарсії* (Перемішль, 1937), 37-86; Irenaeus Nazarko, "Josaphat Kotsylovskij OSBM – Episcopus Peremyshiensis (1917-1947)," *Записки Чину Св. Василя Великого* 7: 4 (1953), 473-88; Іриней Назарко, Йосафат Коциловський, ЧСВВ. *Єпископ перемиський, 1916-1946* (Торонто: Видавництво і Друкарня ОО. Василяни, 1954); [Степан Шах], *Пам'яті перемиського владика кир Йосафата Коциловського. Спомин* (Мюнхен: В-во "Християнський Голос," 1956); and "Ісповідники і Мученики: Коциловський, Йосиф-Йосафат," *Богословія* 49 (1985): 222-28.

Biographical Outline

Joseph Kotsylovsky was a Lemko from the Sianok region of Austrian eastern Galicia. Following his secondary education, he enlisted in the military (1895) and advanced through the ranks to the level of artillery captain. In 1901, at the age of twenty-five, he apparently underwent a personal crisis as a result of which he quit the service and set out to Rome to study theology. Completing his studies in 1907, he returned to Galicia where he was ordained and entrusted with teaching dogmatics at the seminary in Stanyslaviv.

In 1911, Joseph entered the Basilian novitiate in Krekhiv and took the monastic name Josaphat. After the outbreak of the war, he served for a while in Vienna, and in 1915 was appointed rector of the Greco-Catholic Seminary in Kroměříž, Moravia. In September, 1917, Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky and three other bishops consecrated him bishop at the Greco-Catholic cathedral in Pere-myshl'.

Despite divergent appraisals of his life and work – ranging from Ukrainian nationalism to the betrayal of the national cause in favour of latinizing tendencies – the circumstances of Bishop Josaphat's death at the hands of the Soviet NKVD have put his name on the list of those currently being proposed for possible beatification and canonization by the Catholic Church.

The Struggle between Good and Evil

Kotsylovsky's ethical worldview was articulated from a fundamental belief in a confrontation between the material, natural world and the supernatural, spiritual world. Throughout his episcopal tenure, his understanding of social reality and his pastoral teaching were imbued with this vision of a dialectical tension between the forces of good and evil. As will be shown, such a worldview had more in common with the theological tradition expressed by Augustine than with the Thomistic interpretation of Aristotle. I will propose that the metaphysical duel on the spiritual plane is where the originality of Kotsylovsky's contribution is to be found.