



SPREADING THE CULT

Saint Josaphat Kuntsevych and Spanish Baroque Spirituality

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Summary. The study focuses on a close reading of the *Prologue*, which was composed by Miguel Pérez, a Spanish Basilian monk and intellectual who taught at the University of Salamanca. In 1684, he published a book in Madrid which contained his translation of Yakiv Susha's *Life and Martyrdom of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych*, which had been published in 1665 in Rome in the Latin language. This 1684 edition opened with the *Prologue*, also written by Pérez, an outstanding theological treatise which used the sophisticated stylistic devices of Baroque literature and rhetoric in order to demonstrate the spiritual authority of the *Rules of St. Basil the Great*. The result is amazing: in his *Prologue*, Pérez creates a myth concerning St. Josaphat, and skilfully inscribes it in the cultural space of the Spanish Golden Age. Together, the translation of Susha's *Life and Martyrdom of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych* and Pérez's commentaries have remained an unknown episode in the history of St. Josaphat's veneration.

Keywords: the myth of St. Josaphat in Golden Age Spain; Spanish Basilians; Miguel Pérez; Baroque rhetoric; visual effects in verbal arts.

1. An Unknown Spanish Episode in the Veneration of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych

Josaphat Kuntsevych (born c. 1580) is the main saint of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. He was born in Volodymyr, Volhynian Voivodeship, and baptized into the Eastern Orthodox faith but later joined the Uniate Church. In 1604, he became a monk, and, in 1617, he was consecrated as the Greek Catholic Bishop of Polatsk. A year later, he became the Archbishop of Polatsk. On 12 November 1623, during one of his visitations, he was killed by Orthodox rebels of Vitsyebk. His beatification took place in 1643, but he was not canonized until 1867. In the long and dramatic history of his “transnational and trans-denominational veneration”,¹

1 K. S. Jobst, 2012.

there is an unknown Spanish episode connected with a book published in Madrid in 1684.² It contains a work known as the *Prologue* and a Spanish translation of Yakiv Susha's *Life and Martyrdom of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych*, originally written in Latin and printed in Rome in 1665. The translation of the text and the *Prologue* were created by Miguel Pérez, a theologian and a monk of the Order of Saint Basil the Great. These documents have not yet been studied, and I have found only two references to the book. The first one is in Roman Lukan's 1967 publication,³ whereas the other one is in Oleh Romanyshyn's article from 1987.⁴ In both cases, the reader is informed about the existence of the book, however, no detailed analysis of its content is provided. The current study is an attempt to present the book as a whole and to interpret the *Prologue* in the context of Spanish church rhetoric and Baroque art.

The hermeneutic approach is based on an idea put forward by Stefan Rohdewald, who emphasizes the importance of taking into consideration the power groups which made the decisions about canonizing the saints. Another factor which has determined my model of interpretation is the regulations concerning hagiographical production, established by the Vatican and put into practice by the 17th-century Spanish Catholic Church. Besides the *Prologue*, I will consider the whole book as one of the tools used in competition among the Spanish monastic orders for spiritual authority in Spain. This idea has been articulated by Francisco J. Cornejo, who focused on studying the Basilian artistic practices and books used to promote the name of Saint Basil the Great in Spain during the first half of the 17th century.⁵

Ángel Bento y Durám indicates⁶ that the Spanish Order of Saint Basil the Great only appeared on the Iberian Peninsula during the last two decades of the 16th century. By the end of the following century, it had three provinces along with some important monasteries and universities, and some influential groups of monks. One of the centres of 'the Basilian religion' was the University of Sala-

2 Jacibo Suzca, *Vida y martirio del B. San Iosaphat Kuncevicz, arzobispo de Polocia del Orden de San Basilio Magno / escrita por la pluma del Señor Iacobo Susza, monge de la misma Orden; aora fielmente traducida de latin en castellano, è ilustrada con algunas consideraciones y notas por ... Miguel Perez de dicho Orden de San Basilio Magno*, Madrid por Iuan Garcia Infançon, 1684.

3 P. Лукань, 1967, с. 219.

4 O. Romanyshyn, 1987, p. 50.

5 F. J. Cornejo, 2008.

6 Á. Benito y Durán, 1974.

manca.⁷ However, the Spanish Basilians were not as numerous or as powerful as the Jesuits, the Dominicans, or the representatives of some other orders who had already developed a longer history and tradition in Spain. As a result, the Basilians had to undertake special methods to disseminate information about themselves, and so they used arts and book production as a form of propaganda. As Francisco J. Cornejo has proved, the allegorical images printed on the title pages of Basilian books can be divided into three groups: 1) symbols emphasizing the identity of the Order (images of Saint Basil with his attributes as the founder of the Order rather than as an archbishop or Father of the Oriental Church, the coat of arms with a column of fire, and images of Basilian saints); 2) the heraldic signs of benefactors of the Order; and 3) emblems of prosperity, abundance, and multiplication, such as plants, flowers, etc., which expressed the idea of the fertility found in St. Basil's teachings.⁸

The book containing both Pérez's *Prologue* and the translation of Susha's text was released close to the end of the 17th century. Meanwhile, in Spain, the task of spreading the word of the Order of Saint Basil the Great had not lost its urgency. This provides a hint to understanding why Pérez had decided to create a Spanish language version of Susha's *Life and Martyrdom of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych* and to write his *Prologue*: in the person of the assassinated monk from Ruthenia, he had found convincing evidence for the enormous spiritual authority possessed by their common teacher, Saint Basil the Great. This is my supposition, and it will determine my strategies in the reading of the book as a whole, and the *Prologue* in particular. In my opinion, the latter is an excellent example of Basilian Baroque theology, which successfully inscribes the story of Saint Josaphat onto the spiritual cosmos of the 17th century Spain.

2. Miguel Pérez, his Readers and Censors

I would like to start my analysis by comparing the book to those editions studied by Francisco J. Cornejo. Some of the elements coincide: on the title pages one can read information about the authors, censors, and publishers. All editions contain dedications to the benefactors or sponsors of the publications. At the same time,

7 Á. Benito y Durán, 1966.

8 Fr. Cornejo, 2008, p. 527.

the design of the 1684 book looks less artistic or decorative. It is visually modest in comparison to the Basilian editions from the first part of the 17th century. There are no engravings with allegories or symbols of Saint Basil the Great on the title page. However, in the middle of the book (p. 106), one can find an engraving which represents St. Josaphat. Two more images, of flowers, designate the endings of the *Prologue* and of the translation of *Life and Martyrdom*. Pérez combines both Basilian visual propaganda and skilful use of rhetoric resources: as a result, the book not only contains an icon with the face and the body of the saint printed on paper, but also his verbal portrait.

Information about those who created and censored the book, and who gave permission for its publication was also used as propaganda for the Order of Saint Basil the Great. This was the general practice of all monastic orders of that time. In the 1684 edition, Pérez is presented as a monk of the Order of Saint Basil the Great and as a church provincial of two Castilian Basilian provinces. His academic titles are also mentioned: he was a doctor and the chairperson of the Department of Theology of the University of Salamanca, one of the most prestigious schools in Spain.

More information about Pérez is provided by A. Benito y Durán.⁹ The researcher writes that Pérez lived a long life (1629–1729) and graduated from the University of Salamanca, and that, besides being a professor and the chairperson of that university, he was also, twice, the *abad* (abbot) of the College of St. Basil the Great. He was famous for his profound knowledge of philosophy and theology. Father Benito J. Feijoo calls him the “son of St. Basil the Great, a living library (biblioteca animada), and an oracle of the Academy of Salamanca”.¹⁰ Benito y Durán mentions a number of books written by Pérez, in particular, *Tractatus theologico-biblicus* (*Theological Biblical Treatise*, Salamanca, 1708) and *Respuesta sobre la proposición de nueva cátedra de Teología por la Universidad de Salamanca* (*Response to the Proposal of New Department of Theology by the University of Salamanca*, Salamanca, 1718). To the list of Pérez’s works I would like to add *Oración funebre en la real, y solemnisísima parentación al rey católico de las Españas, y Nuevo Mundo Carlos II Nuestro Señor (Que de Dios goze), que en la Santa Iglesia Cathedral celebró la ciudad de Salamanca* (*Burial Praying at the Royal and Most Solemn Funeral of Carlos II, the Catholic King of Spain and of the New World, Our Lord (Blessed by*

9 Á. Benito y Durán, 1966.

10 Ibid., p. 286.

God), Which Was Pronounced at the Cathedral of the Saint Catholic Church in the City of Salamanca, Salamanca, 1700).¹¹

On the title page of the 1684 edition of *Life and Martyrdom*, a dedication is written to Marianna of Austria, the Queen-consort of Spain. The introductory part of the edition also contains a letter addressed to the Queen. Another important document included by the publisher is a translation of the verdict of Pope Urban VIII about the beatification of Josaphat Kuntsevych (1643). The selection of censors is impressive. Among them one can find Diego Ordóñez, a monk from a monastery in Madrid. Here, the publisher is actually referring to the Monastery of Saint Basil in Madrid, the centre of the Basilians' publishing activities. Ordóñez is introduced as being the general procurator for the entire Order in the *Curia Regia* (Royal Council); he was the abbot of the monastery at the time when the book was being created.¹² Another censor was Doctor Pedro Gregorio y Antillón, a well-known figure in the history of the Spanish Catholic Church during the last decades of the 17th century and the beginning of the 18th century, a prolific Christian writer,¹³ and the *canónigo de la Iglesia de Nuestra Señora del Pilar en Zaragoza, Vicario de Madrid* (Canon of the Cathedral-Basilica of Our Lady of the Pillar in Zaragoza, Vicar of Madrid), and the future bishop of Huesca. The last two censors are representatives of the Jesuits and the Dominicans, the two most influential monastic orders in Spain: they were Reverendísimo Juan de Palazol, *de la Compañía de Jesús, Predicador de su Majestad* (Of the Society of Jesus, Preacher of His Majesty) and P. M. Fray Francisco de Ayllon, *de la Orden de Predicadores, Examinador Sinodal del Arzobispo de Toledo, Prior del Convento de Nuestra Señora del Rosario de Madrid* (Of the Order of Preachers, Synodal Examiner, Prior of the Convent of the Rosary in Madrid). The constellation of names and titles collected in the book was aimed at convincing its readers that the doctrinal component of the edition, based on the *Rules of Saint Basil*, had been unanimously approved by key persons in the Spanish Monarchy and Spanish Catholic Church.

The 1684 edition of *Life and Martyrdom* finishes with poems composed by Father N. Cienfuegos, professor of theology of the Jesuit College of Salamanca, in order to imitate the Latin poems created by Yakiv Susha about Josaphat Kuntsevych.

11 Miguel Pérez, *Oracion funebre en la real, y solemnissima parentacion al rey catolico de las Españas, y Nuevo Mundo Carlos II Nuestro Señor (Que de Dios goze), que en la Santa Iglesia Cathedral ... celebrò la ... ciudad de Salamanca*, Salamanca: por Gregorio Ortiz Gallardo, 1700.

12 Á. Benito y Durán, 1990.

13 J. L. Barrio Moya, 1980.

The cycle of rhymed texts glorifies the heroic death of St. Josaphat in a variety of poetic forms (stanzas) which were widely printed in books published during the Spanish Baroque period; in particular, Father Cienfuegos wrote *sonnets*, *endecasílabas*, *silvas*, *romance*, *décimas*, *quintilla*, *liras*, *octavas*, *redondilla*, and *canción*.

The last poem in the cycle (in the form of *décima*)¹⁴ is dedicated to Pérez. Father Cienfuegos praises his outstanding qualities, by saying that Pérez was a man of culture (*tu culta elegante pluma*).¹⁵ At a certain moment in his life, Pérez could have been connected with Toledo or the area near the Tajo (Tagus) as “*pluma [...] bebió del Tajo sonoro/ todo el numen de su espuma*” (“his talent as a writer drank from the Tajo”). It is important to stress that, in his poem, Father Cienfuegos points out that Pérez’s verbal art was supposed to produce visual associations. He is named as *the illustrator* and the translator of the book (“*ilustrador y traductor de esta obra*”), and it is suggested that “*pluma pincel discreto, el pincel tan bañado de piedad*” (“His pen is a smart brush which takes its colours from mercy”). Father Cienfuegos also includes some biographical facts which confirm the information mentioned in this paper: Pérez was an outstanding professor of the University of Salamanca (“*En la Cátedra elocuente*”). He became famous as an excellent preacher who was listened to with great attention (“*dulce suspensión*”). Those tourists who come to visit Salamanca today will easily recognize the places described in the poem – the Tormes River and the Roman bridge (“*Del Tormes sobre el cuadal/ al Ponto vuela tu llama/ y en riza espuma tu fama/ arde el baxel de cristal*”).¹⁶

3. St. Josaphat, a Spiritual Son of St. Basil the Great

One of the main rhetorical strategies used by Pérez when writing about Saint Josaphat in his *Prologue* was the glorification of Saint Basil. The name of the latter has been cited more than 50 times. Moreover, Pérez also includes fragments of writing of other Fathers of the Church, such as St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory of Nazianzus. Indeed, he uses his *Prologue* to disseminate the main principles of monastic life as codified in the *Rules*. He calls Saint Basil the Great “the nightingale of the Church”¹⁷ and “the most outstanding incarnation of Virginity and Captain of

14 J. Suzca, *Vida y martirio*, p. 264–265.

15 The translations from the Spanish original cited in this paper are mine – O. P.

16 J. Suzca, *Vida y martirio*, p. 264–265.

17 Miguel Pérez, “Prólogo del traductor”, in: *Vida y martirio del B. San Iosaphat Kuncevicz, arzobispo de Polocia del Orden de San Basilio Magno / escrita por la pluma del Señor Iacobo Susza*,

Asceticism”.¹⁸ In many fragments of the *Prologue*, the *Rules* itself is praised as being the “religion of Saint Basil the Great”. “It fascinates people like a valuable treasure; it sparkles with the beauty of its precious stones. “Only God knows the quantity of those stones. No one can count the number of saints of even one monastery (the example for us is the monastery at Mount Sinai)”.¹⁹

Josaphat Kuntsevych was the best imitation of Saint Basil the Great. Pérez emphasizes St. Josaphat’s perfection in his simultaneous practicing of the three main models of holiness postulated in the *Rules*: he is a virgin, a doctor, and a martyr. In this respect, he is different from other saints who became famous for one specific virtue but not for three incarnated in one person. Pérez dedicated a separate chapter in his *Prologue* to each virtue.

In the chapter titled *Virgin*, which tells about the practice of asceticism, he paraphrases in Spanish and cites in Latin numerous fragments from the *Rules of Saint Basil*. In particular, Pérez reminds the reader that Saint Basil considers those people who do not reject carnal delight and who do not preserve “untouched, the virginal flower of the body”,²⁰ to be dead. In another fragment, Pérez writes: “Saint Basil teaches that the highest degree of virginity comes from the soul to the body, but not vice versa. The soul provides the body with wings so that the body could fly together with the soul”.²¹ “Saint Basil directed his disciples with the following words about virginity: “The Virgin (the person who practices asceticism) has to revere his Guardian Angel who is standing near him/her. The Virgin should take the Guardian Angel as his/her *paranimphum*”²² (*‘el paraninfo’* is a person who opens university courses – O. P.). The cited examples of Saint Basil’s writing are addressed to all people and do not contain any direct references to St. Josaphat Kuntsevych. In many other cases, Pérez cites St. Basil’s thoughts and phrases from St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory of Nazianzus, as if they had approved of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych. Pérez names the martyr from Ruthenia by using the same words which had been used by St. Gregory of Nyssa to name St. Basil the Great. In his *Prologue*, the Spanish Basilian author constantly repeats that, in his

monge de la misma Orden; ora fielmente traducida de latin en castellano, è ilustrada con algunas consideraciones y notas por Miguel Perez de dicho Orden de San Basilio Magno, Madrid: por Iuan Garcia Infançon, 1684, p. 27.

18 Ibid., p. 24.

19 Ibid., p. 254.

20 Ibid., p. 29.

21 Ibid., p. 29.

22 Ibid., p. 32.

ascetic practices, St. Josaphat imitates his great teacher and even becomes the Second Basil: “He mortified his flesh every day and lived exclusively a spiritual life as the Second Basil”.²³ The unbreakable spiritual affinity between St. Josaphat and St. Basil in practicing virginity and mortification of the flesh, transformed the Ruthenian monk into an angel.²⁴ Pérez, in his praise of St. Josaphat, goes to the extent of calling him ‘the new Basil’.²⁵

One of the most interesting fragments in the chapter titled *Virgin* compares St. Josaphat’s and St. Basil’s practices of dreaming and keeping vigils: the former perfectly imitates the latter as St. Josaphat neither sleeps nor dozes, in order not to lose control over his emotions. The section relates that St. Josaphat “did not sleep nor doze, following, literally, the words which St Basil said about sublime virginity: “I am dreaming but my heart is keeping vigil””.²⁶ According to Pérez, this phrase from *Song of Songs* would have been quoted by Basil, the Holy Father, if he had seen Josaphat.²⁷ The dreams of St. Josaphat were influenced by reading St. Basil’s teachings: “When following the words of St. Basil, Josaphat kept performing his holy duties within his numerous dreams, which he saw when he was keeping vigils, and his heart was having a rest in those dreams”.²⁸

The next group of citations of Saint Basil made in the *Prologue* concerns St. Josaphat’s characteristics as a model Christian learner, teacher, and preacher, that is, Doctor and *Dushekhvat*, the Robber of Souls. These are collected in the chapter titled *Doctor*. The main quality of St. Basil’s educational doctrine is docility. Pérez states that St. Basil warns against the incorrect use of the mind, against twisting Christian concepts and making them too complicated: “Those who twist the truth do not submit their mind to the Holy Scripture, on the contrary, they try to adjust the Holy Scripture to their will”. That is why Saint Basil the Great teaches his spiritual disciples to obey the principles of the doctrine and insists that those principles are not his own inventions but were inherited from the ancestors: “I will teach you not the new knowledge but the truth which I have learned from my fathers”.²⁹

It was from St. Basil that St. Josaphat learned the art of being docile. Pérez repeats that St. Josaphat was never afraid of being defeated in his ambitions and he

23 Ibid., p. 28.

24 Ibid., p. 32.

25 Ibid., p. 33.

26 Ibid., p. 35.

27 Ibid., p. 37.

28 Ibid., p. 37.

29 Ibid., p. 73.

was always ready to carry the burden of docility. In this respect, he was a perfect copy of Saint Basil, about whom Gregory of Nazianzus said the following words: “He did not usurp power as he did not want glory, he was looking for honour which was not human”.³⁰

In his *Prologue*, Pérez pays much attention to St. Josaphat’s successes in learning Christian wisdom – as all these successes were due to docility. It was another dimension to imitating St. Basil, who taught his followers to focus on the most important things and to skip details: ““Listen with the ears which hear, but do not see. My sheep hear my voice,” teaches St. Basil, “they are listening because they are not contradicting””.³¹ The highest merit of this wisdom is folly. Pérez points out that Basil the Great wrote about folly in his *Rules* “in order to condemn the vainglorious rationality of the world”.³² Josaphat comes to embody the folly-wisdom of Christ following St. Basil’s word, and becomes the Incarnated Verb. The final result was amazing: St. Josaphat became an outstanding preacher, and the Robber of Souls, who, without a doubt, would have deserved the praise of St. Basil the Great, his teacher.

In the third chapter, titled *Martyr*, Pérez focuses on identifying St. Josaphat with Jesus Christ as being the highest exemplar for all martyrs. This postulate plays an important part in numerous Christian texts, including St. Basil’s writings. In particular, he taught that Christ had died in order to reunite the human nature which had been broken into pieces by the crime of Adam’s disobedience. This reunification is the supreme goal of the Eucharist and of Christ’s death: “All those (says our Father, Saint Basil the Great) who were resurrected in flesh by our Saviour have to serve the supreme goal of reuniting human nature and to eliminate the wrong caused by its division and to recover the integrity and unity of the body; he acted as a perfect doctor who treated the patient with the best medicine and brought the defragmented body together by putting on bandages”.³³ This commentary concerning Christ’s death, as suggested by St. Basil, serves Pérez as a justification for the central idea of the *Prologue* – that St. Josaphat Kuntsevych is a martyr of the Union. He writes that the Church must be reunited through the sacrifice of St. Josaphat following the example of human nature being reunited through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. St. Josaphat was a perfect copy of the Saviour and the best

30 Ibid., p. 73.

31 Ibid., p. 48.

32 Ibid., p. 48.

33 Ibid., p. 87.

follower of St. Basil, and his role as the martyr of the Union was predetermined by Providence and the *Rules* of St. Basil: “St. Basil orders all cenobite monks to imitate the Incarnated Verb in the case of unification, as the goal of this case is to eliminate the division of nature by bringing many people to one community directed by one Prelate and led by one will”.³⁴

Thus, Pérez, in his ‘Prologue’, takes every opportunity to disseminate the ideas of St. Basil the Great when he interprets the *Life and Martyrdom of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych*, converting Yakiv Susha’s original translation into Spanish into a textbook of the ‘Basilian religion’.

4. St. Josaphat Kuntsevych Reflected in the Mirrors of Baroque Conceits

The *Prologue* is a baroque theological treatise full of conceits – sophisticated allegories and metaphors which visualize Josaphat Kuntsevych’s actions and death, and his perfect virtues. The first group of conceits can be defined as ‘Basilian’, because they are taken from St. Basil’s writings. One of them compares St. Josaphat to a ‘well’ (*pozo*), as juxtaposed with a ‘lake’ (*lago*). This juxtaposition was suggested by St. Basil himself. He points out that “the Holy Scripture does not look upon a ‘lake’ with complete trust, while ‘wells’ have a positive reputation. The word ‘lake’ is used in those parts of the Holy Scripture which contain negative information, while the word ‘well’ appears in those fragments which tell of something good”.³⁵ Both words are conceits which metaphorically designate two different categories of people: those who give and those who receive. The ‘well’ is a symbol of generosity and creativity; the ‘lake’ represents a lack of generosity and imagination, and spirituality. Josaphat, the real son of St. Basil the Great, belongs to the first type of human being – he imitates his teacher by sharing with others all the treasures which he possesses. In this sense he is a well, but not a lake “with its dead water”.³⁶

Another ‘Basilian conceit’ used by Pérez is the beautiful allegorical emblem of the dove as a representation of St. Josaphat.³⁷ The image of the dove appears in the Bible as a sign of the new agreement between God and Abraham. Pérez demon-

34 Ibid., p. 88.

35 Ibid., p. 55–56.

36 Ibid., p. 56–57.

37 Ibid., p. 67–68.

strates his erudition when he interprets this allegory. Taking into account that the ‘dove’ symbolizes innocence, he states that it is more appropriate to speak about a ‘baby pigeon’ than an adult dove or pigeon. The argument is surprising and it is based on the study of scholastic etymology. Pérez cites one interpreter of the Bible, who points to the fact that, in the Hebrew language, ‘dove’ is ‘*Gozal*’. And, in turn, “this word is derived from the verb *Gazal*, which means ‘to rob’”. By stating this, the interpreter suggests that, in the Hebrew language, the primary source of the Bible means not an adult dove, but rather a baby pigeon “which gets food directly from the beak of his mother. Thus, the word *Gozal* is used to name not just any kind of dove, but a baby pigeon which is inseparable from the mother. “I accept this interpretation””, writes Pérez.

Another argument for this decision is St. Basil’s words which express the idea that ‘dove’ in the Bible means a baby pigeon. In one of his writings, St. Basil tells of an amazing fable about using some doves as bait to catch other doves: hunters take a quiet bird and pour expensive and fragrant oil on its wings and then let it fly so that it can attract other doves through the smell of the oil. When the bait dove returns home, the other birds follow the fragrance and are trapped. St. Basil confesses that he has used the same trick: “I poured divine oil on the wings of the soul of Dionysus, my son, and sent him to Yulita because I wanted the people, who would be attracted by the noble fragrance, to give their lives to Christ. Thus, a good dove (not a predatory bird) robs food from its mother when it is a baby pigeon in order to become an adult and to rob many other doves”.³⁸

It is easy to guess that Pérez means St. Josaphat Kuntsevych when he relates these allegories: “In his childhood he was an innocent pigeon chick. In his young age he learned to rob the generous, sacred knowledge which came out of the wound on the right side of Christ’s body” to catch other doves (i.e., other people’s souls) when he grew up. “He took the sacred food of the Holly Doctrine from the beak of the Roman Catholic Church, his Mother, the Immaculate Dove, in order to catch the lost souls with the help of the marvellous fragrance of the Divine doctrine”.³⁹

From the works of St. Basil the Great, Pérez took a comparison made between St. Josaphat and the twelve-wired bird-of-paradise (*Seleucidis melanoleucus*), which consumes locusts, and symbolizes heretics and the followers of the schism. “In the *Book of Apocalypse*, sectarians are named locusts of the abyss”,⁴⁰ they come out to

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., p. 80–81.

the surface from the abyss and the smoke. The allegories of ‘smoke’ and the ‘abyss’ tell us that the right path has been lost, and that the people cannot find their way in the cold climate in the middle of a space covered with smoke and mist. This sad image refers to Ruthenia – a land absolutely unknown to the Spaniards of the 17th century.

The ‘Basilian conceits’ in the *Prologue* include allegorical verbal imagery representing the fertility, abundance, power, and resilience of St. Basil’s doctrine. They are the precious stones mentioned above, pieces of jewellery like crowns, and they are flowers. In their most concentrated form, these stylistic devices are gathered together and used in the description of the glory of St. Josaphat. He is represented as being decorated with three crowns: “The crown of his Virginity is made of Roses. Stars form the crown of Doctor, Master of the Divine Light. The crown of Martyr of the Saint Union is made of Pearls. The Union and the Daisy are one and the same thing. All three crowns turn him into a reincarnation of Spring”.⁴¹ Pérez insists that the identification of St. Josaphat with the daisy and the Union was borrowed from Yakiv Susha’s writings, but I have not yet found the textual evidence for this statement. However, the cited fragment contains all the allegorical elements which can be found on the title pages of the Basilian books studied by Francisco J. Cornejo.

Pérez, himself, proves to be skilful in finding conceits to describe St. Josaphat’s contribution to reconverting schismatics to the Roman Catholic Church. These conceits can be divided into several groups.

1. Conceits borrowed from the Christian mystical tradition, both occidental and oriental.

St. Josaphat’s spirit is compared to “the uncreated and the purest fire” and to “the coal which makes fire but does not make smoke”.⁴² Another well-known Christian conceit is the blood spilled by the martyr as it becomes the fire which emits light and saves the city and the Church.⁴³ The body of St. Josaphat is metaphorically represented as “a house with five windows-senses which are to be kept under strict control, because vice penetrates through them into the soul”.⁴⁴ St. Josaphat’s voice is a spear which conquers the followers of the schism by wounding them directly in their iron hearts and which opens their stone ears. The conceits related to the

41 Ibid., p. 86.

42 Ibid., p. 69.

43 Ibid., p. 22.

44 Ibid., p. 27.

body describe the process of creating sacred writings: blood is ink, the skeleton of St. Josaphat (and of Jesus Christ himself) is the Incarnate Word written down as the Divine Book: “Read his bones – they glow with wisdom”.⁴⁵

2. Scientific conceits from the vocabulary of the exact and natural sciences and the humanities.

Among these, one can find rhetorical conceits: spiritual practices are represented as rhetorical figures, tropes, and devices. St. Josaphat’s dialogue with God before his assassination does not need any words – it is an anagogical reticence (*reticencia anagógica*), it is a silent communication with God, also known as aposiopesis, “which overwhelms us by the perfect bounty of conceits”.⁴⁶ Many sophisticated allegories in the *Prologue* come from the exact and natural sciences: God is the centre of the circle of the spiritual interests of St. Josaphat (geometry); atoms of human vices grow as high as mountains, Jesus Christ and St. Josaphat are magnets which attract people, laws of gravitation determine the dynamics of the spiritual and material worlds, the three-colour rainbow is an allegorical symbolization of St. Josaphat (physics); St. Josaphat is the rare mineral *amiantas* – chrysotile asbestos (geology).⁴⁷ To the metaphorical imagery representing St. Josaphat Kuntsevych, Pérez adds geographical conceits: the martyr from Ruthenia is compared to the divine Etna and to the fertile subsoil of Elba island as it was described by Strabo, “the more we extract from it, the richer it becomes”.⁴⁸ There is a statistical prevalence of conceits connected to the life sciences, such as entomology, zoology, and botany, in the *Prologue*. The people who give birth but do not educate their children are similar to spiders which weave webs out of their entrails, while St. Josaphat, the father of adopted children, is “a bee, building honeycomb out of the assurances which he extracts from flowers”.⁴⁹ The baroque imagination of Pérez finds a malacological conceit when he compares the twisted, schismatic mind to a labyrinth populated by molluscs “which emit ink to hide the truth”.⁵⁰ I have already cited two ornithological conceits borrowed from St. Basil’s writings. Another bird which St. Josaphat is compared to is the eagle. And, among the emblems representing St. Josaphat, one can find the wolf and the lion.

45 Ibid., p. 86.

46 Ibid., p. 97.

47 Ibid., p. 45.

48 Ibid., p. 52.

49 Ibid., p. 70–71.

50 Ibid., p. 69.

3. The third group of conceits are metaphors related to people's professions and trades. The leading role is given to pedagogical allegories. Christ's death is compared to studies at a university: the Cross on Golgotha is a tribune from which God, the Divine Professor and Examiner, speaks to his students, and St. Josaphat is the best of them. The crown of the martyr is an unusual textbook, as its thorns are made of characters taken from the three sacred languages in which the Holy Bible was written. Another very common profession in the allegorical baroque vocabulary of Pérez is the robber. This word itself is a conceit because its meaning has nothing to do with criminal activities. It represents the skills of St. Josaphat as a preacher or *Dushekhvat* (Robber of Souls).

This list of conceits found in the *Prologue* is not exhaustive, but the above-mentioned are enough to come to the conclusion that Pérez was an excellent Christian writer who brilliantly wielded the stylistic devices of Spanish Baroque church rhetoric. He applied his mastery to the construction of a labyrinth of mirror-conceits which reflected the glory of St. Josaphat and of his great teacher and spiritual father, St. Basil the Great.

5. Allegories Borrowed from Antiquity

The same effect is achieved by using another rhetorical strategy which gained great popularity in the Renaissance and Baroque culture: this is the citation of Ancient Greek and Roman mythology, philosophy, and literature, reinterpreted in a Christian way. Pérez was an outstanding expert in this art. He created a great number of allegories concerning St. Josaphat based on references to pagan authors and mythological heroes approved by the Church. He mentions the names Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Propertius, Pliny the Younger, Seneca, Strabo, Ovid, Virgil, and others. Pérez interprets their words scholastically – as illustrations of the Christian doctrine as it was practiced during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Baroque. Moreover, the author of the *Prologue* created allegories based on very well-known clichés from Antiquity, which were widely disseminated in the Spanish and European art and literature of the Early Modern period.

In particular, the famous typology of love proposed by Plato opens the list of those clichés. The Greek philosopher, as Pérez states, distinguished between two types of love, which are two different fruits of two juxtaposed reincarnations of Venus: the first one, carnal and dirty, was given birth by the voluptuous goddess of

the sea, while the other was a child of the divine Urania. Pérez describes St. Josaphat as the perfect monk, who glows with the fire of love ignited by the second Venus. St. Josaphat was so pure that he was protected by God “from taking carnal desire for spiritual love”.⁵¹

The ability of St. Josaphat to persuade the schismatic people of Ruthenia to join the Uniate Church is why he was called the Christian Socrates: “In other cases, with the help of many selected Sages, he planted healthy doctrine in those hard souls. From this viewpoint it is relevant to compare him to Socrates”.⁵²

Pérez compares St. Josaphat to popular characters found in ancient Greek and Roman anecdotes. In one fragment of the *Prologue*, St. Josaphat reminds readers of the son of a Spartan woman. The young man was wounded in his leg and suffered from pain. To support him, his mother said: “Do not feel discouraged, my son! It is a lesson taught to you, and it means that every time you feel pain in your leg, you will have another confirmation of your courage”.⁵³ In the case of St. Josaphat, the place of the mother is taken by God, and, as a result, the pain of the wounds Josaphat received in the moment of his death as a martyr are proof that he was chosen by God. In another fragment, Pérez cites a well-known story about a fall that Julius Caesar had while in Africa. The Roman warlord was stepping out from a boat, stumbled, and fell down. In order to pretend that it was a sign predicting his future victories, he exclaimed: “Oh Africa, you are mine!”⁵⁴ This anecdote was widely known to Spanish readers of the Baroque period. In particular, it is cited in *The Constant Prince*, a hagiographic play written by Pedro Calderón de la Barca in 1629. In the *Prologue*, Pérez presupposes that St Josaphat could have said something like “Oh Vitsyebesk or Ruthenia, you are mine” when falling to the floor before he was assassinated.

Some of the allegorical and mythological characters cited by Pérez to praise St. Josaphat Kuntsevych are depicted in the works of Baroque artists. It is Tantalus who appears on one of the canvases painted by Jusepe Ribera which is stored in the Museum of El Prado. Pérez invents two Tantaluses. The first is a despised creature living in misery because he suffers from thirst which he is not able to quench. He collects treasures, only to become a slave of these useless treasures. The other Tantalus is a heavenly saint, “he personifies ‘fertile virginity’ and enjoys an

51 Ibid., p. 24.

52 Ibid., p. 66.

53 Ibid., p. 37.

54 Ibid., p. 87.

unquenchable thirst to give what he possesses”.⁵⁵ Thus, St. Josaphat is this second divine, Christian Tantalus.

Another popular reference used in the *Prologue*, borrowed from the history of the arts, is Zeuxis, a Greek painter from the 5th century BCE. Pérez states that St. Josaphat imitated the famous artist when he was choosing models for holiness. Zeuxis brought together the most beautiful girls in Agrigento in order to create the ideal image of Juno. St. Josaphat acted in the same way: he overlaid, in his mind, examples of the most distinguished saints and martyrs, starting with Jesus Christ, to turn himself into the most impeccable and the most perfect personification of the Christian spirit.⁵⁶

The third ‘artistic citation’ from Pérez’s *Prologue* needs a more detailed commentary. In the second chapter, *Doctor*, St. Josaphat is named ‘Hercules of the Catholic Church’ or ‘Hercules of Galicia.’ This association is supported by the words of Lucian of Samosata, who described the mythological hero as a physically strong man wearing a crown made of gold and electrum. In his right hand, Hercules wields the club, while his left hand is occupied with a bow; in his mouth he has the chains which are used to conquer the souls of other people. Pérez stresses that the allegory represents St. Josaphat as *Dushekhvat*, the Robber of Souls, the perfect preacher. In some cases, he applied force and a weapon, but, more often, he captured the spirit of the followers of the schism by using his eloquence, which punctured their hearts with arrows of sermons and enchanted them with the beauty of speech, represented by the chains.⁵⁷ It is important to stress that Pérez could have found this image in Lucian’s writings, but he could also have seen it in the fresco on the vault of the library of the Escorial. The fresco represents Rhetoric. Besides, naming St. Josaphat the Galician Hercules has special meaning, because Spanish Galicia, for many centuries before Columbus discovered America, had been considered the end of the world. The North, the lands of Ruthenia, for Pérez, was the other end of the world; at least, it was the frontier of the Christian territories which were protected by the other Hercules. Thus, two pillars of faith demarcated the borders and indicated the lands to which the authority of the Roman Catholic Church extended.

I want to finish this study of the verbal allegories which were created with the help of references to Antiquity, by using Pérez’s ambitious statement that he had

55 Ibid., p. 57.

56 Ibid., p. 21.

57 Ibid., p. 57–58.

found the solution to the famous riddle of Damoetas and Menalcas⁵⁸ from Virgil's *Eclogue 3*. Damoetas asks Menalcas: "*Dic quibus in terris (et eris mihi magnus Apollo) / Tres pateat Coeli spatium, non amplius ulnas?*" ("In which country is the extent of the sky only three *ulnae* ['cubits' or 'fathoms']?") Menalcas replies by asking another question: "*Dic quibus in terris inscripti nomina Regum / nascantur flores*" ("Where in the world are flowers born inscribed with the names of kings?").

Pérez's interpretation of this fragment is a typical example of scholastic thinking. First, he (as well as many other Christian authors of the Middle Ages and Early Modernity) had accepted the presupposition approved by the Church that Virgil's *Eclogues* was a prophetic text predicting the birth of Jesus Christ. In Pérez's opinion, the riddle of Damoetas and Menalcas concerns the death of the Saviour on the Cross. Second, Pérez introduces a risky hypothesis which interprets the etymology and semantics of some of the words in the riddle. In particular, Pérez insists that '*tres ulnas*' must be understood not as a measure of length, but as a measure of time which is equal to the three hours which Jesus Christ spent on the Cross before dying. Another hypothesis proposed by Pérez is no less extravagant. He believes that the words 'Jesus of Nazareth', written on the plaque affixed to the Cross, could be understood in two different ways. He states that some interpretations use the spelling 'Nazareno', which means 'saint and scarified to God', while others preferred the spelling 'Nasareno' (a red rose, a flower or blooming branch; it symbolizes the glory of the people which gave birth to Jesus Christ). Pérez suggests that both versions are correct and coexist at the same time, and this gives him the clue to the riddle. The exchange of questions should be read as follows: "In which country was the mystery of Christ's (*Nazareno*, the king) death seen for three hours?' The reply is: 'Was it where flowers are born inscribed with the names of kings?' Pérez wants to say that the words "Jesus Christ, the king 'Nasareno' is 'Nazeareno', the flower of his lineage". All these intellectual efforts were undertaken with one purpose – to persuade the reader that St. Josaphat Kuntsevych was both 'Nasareno' and 'Nazeareno': he was the most perfect disciple of Jesus Christ and St Basil the Great and the flower of Ruthenia and his family.

58 Ibid., p. 96–97.

6. Conclusions

The book which contains the Spanish variant of Yakiv Susha's *Life and Martyrdom of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych* and especially the *Prologue* was used by their creator, Miguel Pérez, to glorify St. Basil the Great. Pérez reinterpreted St. Josaphat's biography as a convincing illustration of the spiritual authority of St. Basil's doctrine, and created a baroque treatise decorated with rhetoric and stylistic devices, such as allegorical images based on conceits and the citation of ancient Greek and Roman culture. As a result, the myth of St. Josaphat which was given birth by Pérez's imagination impresses the reader by its bright colours and sophisticated metaphors. Without any doubt, the book itself and the literary texts which it includes are an inseparable part of the Spanish Golden Age culture. I have found proof that it was involved in the propaganda disseminated by global Catholicism during the 17th and 18th centuries. However, this is a subject for another study, which will help to discover new information about the veneration of St. Josaphat Kuntsevych in Latin America and all over the world.

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