

Metropolitan Andrei and the Orthodox

Archbishop Vsevolod of Scopelos

Abstract

(Українське резюме на ст. 56)

Orthodox Archbishop Vsevolod briefly reviews the history of the Church in Ukraine, concentrating on the various ecclesiastical and geopolitical separations that allowed Greco-Catholics and Orthodox to be indifferent to one another, a situation that Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky was to challenge throughout his life. His early travels to Eastern Ukraine, Russia, Bukovnya (with its Old Ritualists) and the Holy Land gave him a sense of the breadth of Orthodoxy and a desire to overcome estrangement with them. This desire would be manifest later in his archpastoral ministry by: instructing his clergy to offer the sacraments to Orthodox faithful who asked for them; offering hospitality in 1919 to Orthodox hierarchs, who made use of the chapel in Sheptytsky's palace for Divine Liturgy; working on the creation of a superlative Studite *Typicon*; creating liturgical books based on the best Orthodox sources and still in use today by some; setting up the Ukrainian National Museum in Lviv; erecting the Russian Greco-Catholic Exarchate; and defending Orthodox who were persecuted in Eastern Poland. Kyr Vsevolod concludes with a detailed study of Sheptytsky's 1941 open letter to Orthodox hierarchs, which reveals him as decades ahead of his time in ecumenical thought.



Introduction

Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, looking decades ahead, foresaw that goal which we today still try to achieve, viz., the unity of the one Church of Jesus Christ. In thinking of his pre-science, I am reminded of the words of the Prophet Habakkuk: “And the Lord answered me ‘Write the vision! Make it plain upon tablets, so he may run who reads it. For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end – it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay” (Habakkuk 2:2–3).

Background in Ukraine

In the early nineteenth century, more than 200 years after the Union of Brest-Litovsk, the Orthodox and Greco-Catholics in Ukraine were mostly separated by boundaries of nation-states. There were a few exceptions in Bukovnya (where there was a mixed population) and a long-standing Orthodox parish in Lviv (formed by the members of Stauropegion Brotherhood who had not accepted union with Rome). These were rare. The separation was generally territorial, with well-sealed borders and no direct contact between Greco-Catholics and Orthodox, especially on any official level.

There are still remnants today of this geographical separation. Many continue to believe that the former area of Galicia in western Ukraine “should” be Greco-Catholic and the rest of Ukraine “should” be Orthodox. They also feel that an arrangement of this type would solve all the problems between the two groups. This approach to the present situation is similar to the policy of Tsarist Russia and does not recognize an individual’s freedom of choice; this separatist approach does not help with our desire for Christian unity or allow for the recognition of Ukrainian national identity. As Lubomyr Cardinal Husar has written: “the state of mind within the Ukrainian Catholic community at the turn of the century was such that if the Orthodox had entertained a pro-union desire, they would

not have found fellow Christians in the Eastern-rite Catholic Church willing to follow them.”¹

Metropolitan Andrei understood that indifference to one another was causing serious damage to both Greco-Catholics and Orthodox. Even before entering monastic life, he sought first-hand knowledge of Orthodoxy, especially by his visits to central Ukraine and Russia. He made his first visit to Tsarist Russia – lasting six weeks – in October and November of 1887. In his travels, he visited the Monastery of the Caves in Kiev and met with Vladimir Soloviev in Moscow. For a young man in late-nineteenth century Ukraine, this was a rare and unexpected departure from the norm.

In 1891, Brother Andrei (as he was then known) travelled to Bukovyna and visited the Old Ritualists at their centre in Bila Krynytsia. It may have been during this visit that he came to appreciate the pre-Niconian liturgical tradition, some of which can be seen in the Ukrainian Greco-Catholic Church. He maintained contact with the Old Ritualists early in his career. He corresponded with their hierarchs,² arranged a chapel in Lviv on Peter Skarga Street, and visited Nizhni Novgorod while he was interned in Russia during World War I.³

When he visited the Holy Land in 1906, he again came into contact with Orthodox Christians. There he witnessed the same Orthodox theology, spirituality, discipline and liturgy which he had seen among the Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Russians, but which are practiced in quite a different cultural environment. This experience demonstrated to Sheptytsky the universality, the *sobornost'*, of Orthodoxy, which he knew in theory from Soloviev and others, but which he now ex-

¹ Lubomyr Husar, “Sheptytsky and Ecumenism,” in *Morality and Reality: The Life and Times of Andrei Sheptytsky*, ed., Paul Robert Magocsi (Edmonton, Alberta: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, 1989), 185–200.

² Cf. his letter of 1 July 1997 to the Old Ritualist Bishop Innocent in *Publicationes Scientifical et Litterararum* (Studion Monasteriorum Studitarum), No. III–V, 770–71.

³ Cyril Korolevsky, *Metropolitan Andrei (1865–1944)*, ed. and trans., Serge Keleher (Lviv: Stauropegion, 1993), 290.