

INTRODUCTION

Historians of Ukrainian immigration in Canada are unanimous in their view that it was the Metropolitan of Halych, presently Servant of God Andrew Sheptytsky (1864-1944) who contributed most to the establishment of the Ukrainian Catholic hierarchy in that country. When on July 15, 1912, Rev. Nicetas Budka (1877-1949) was appointed by Pope Pius X the first Ukrainian Catholic Bishop of Canda, this act crowned many long efforts on the part of Ukrainians, in the old country and in Canada, to have their own hierarch and, at least a rudimentary church organization for the Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholic community, settled there since the 1890's.

It was the "Address on the Ruthenian Question" (1) sent by Metropolitan Sheptytsky to the Canadian Catholic hierarchy on March 18, 1911, (written in English and French) which finally became instrumental in the decisive move of the Canadian episcopate to consent to the "novelty" of having a bishop of another Rite for newcomers, mostly peasant settlers, who proved to be unmeltable in the Latin Rite Catholic Church.

Archbishop Adelard L. Langevin of St. Boniface moved by the arguments of Metropolitan Sheptytsky acceded to the plea of Ukrainian Catholics, and ultimately the Holy See appointed the second (after the nomination of Bishop Soter Ortynsky for the Ukrainians in the U.S.A.) hierarch of the immigrant church. Both actions became landmarks in the development of Eastern Rite Ukrainian Catholic communities in the New World. Sixty-five years after that event, the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Canada numbers over two hundred thousand faithful and constitutes an ecclesiastic province divided into five eparchies with its own Metropolitan. Winnipeg, the seat of the first bishop for immigrant Ukrainians, has become the Metropolitan See.

The road to the establishment of a separate bishopric for Eastern Rite Catholics was not an easy one. Metropolitan Sheptytsky's letter traces in detail all the difficulties and peculiar circumstances encountered by Ukrainians in their endeavor to get their own bishop from Rome. At the same time the author of this historic letter brilliantly exposes arguments in favor of a Ukrainian bishop, and analyzes complex issues of the Ukrainian community in Canada at the beginning of this century. In that sense, the "Address" possesses also an intrinsic value in understanding the life and overall problems of Canadian Ukrainians. It is a fitting initiative of the Canadian National Council of Ukrainians Organizations for the Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Catholic Church to make this document available to the broader reading public as well as to specialists in the Church history.

A perceptive observer, scholar and pastor, Metropolitan Sheptytsky, after his first visit to Canada in 1910, clearly exposed to Canadian archbishops and bishops all aspects of the life and spiritual situation at the time, of a 120-150 thousand strong Ukrainian community. He submitted to the honourable addressees his report and recommendations (as had been suggested by some of them) in "clear conscience" and without "any prejudice based on the nationality or rite." The "good of the souls" of the people concerned and the "great Catholic cause", as Sheptytsky wrote, were the sole motives which inspired him in presenting his judgement and observations. The entire document attests to the intellectual integrity and pastoral concerns of the great churchman.

(1) Ruthenia, Ruthenian — an old term for Ukraine, Ukrainian.

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Already as a young bishop of Stanislaviv, Western Ukraine, Andrew Sheptytsky expressed his concern about the fate and spiritual needs of Ukrainian immigrants in Canada. He was informed about their religious conditions by French speaking Canadian priests visiting Western Ukraine in 1900. At the time, Rev. A Lacombe extended to Bishop Sheptytsky an invitation from the Western Canadian hierarchy to visit Canada and to help in solving religious problems of Canadian Ukrainians. Sheptytsky could not make the trip in 1900 or in 1901 because the Roman Congregation of Propaganda Fide objected to such a visit. He respected congregational order but later on he regretted this "mistake" of not undertaking a voyage to Canada, and suggested that he did not realize the seriousness of the immigrants' situation, as well as not doing enough in preparing secular clergy for Canada. Already as Metropolitan of Halych, he wrote two pastoral letters to Canada Ukrainians (in 1901 and 1902) (2) In both letters, he urged his countrymen to preserve their "ancestral faith", and exposed, in the possible simplest way, the foundations of the Catholic religion. At the same time, he sent Rev. Vasyl Zholdak, his personal secretary, to serve as Visitor (with the prerogatives of Vicar General) of the Ukrainian Catholics in Canada and as a liaison between the Latin Rite bishops and the few Ukrainian Rite priests in that country.

Not until 1910 did Metropolitan Sheptytsky pay his first visit to Canada on the occasion of the International Eucharistic Congress in Montreal. He spent over two months in the Canadian West among the Ukrainian settlers, visited their villages and individual homes, celebrated the liturgy for them, preached the Gospel, baptized children, spoke to their many benefactors among the Latin Rite hierarchy and clergy, and studied their problems on the spot. "I have had at heart to go everywhere that the missionaries go . . ."

It was an unusual experience for the Head of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. He learned many things about the situation and the plea of his dispersed flock in Canada since he felt it was his duty and right to represent their cause and to "speak in their name". Certainly, the Ukrainian Metropolitan did not fail to express his gratitude to the Latin Rite churchmen for whatever good they had done for his countrymen.

The "Address", also called a "memorandum", was a realistic document of unusual insight. In many respects, it proved also to be prophetic. It resulted from the industrious on-the-spot study of the problem, and even more so, from a serious assessment of what had to be done, along with the projection of perceptive observations on Eastern Rite Catholicism and the Ukrainian national character in general. Some of Sheptytsky's ideas have not lost their relevance to present-day problems.

Metropolitan Sheptytsky reviewed at the beginning the factual situation of Canadian Ukrainians, their numerical strength, family life, social and cultural conditions and, obviously, their religious problems. The Metropolitan aptly corrected official figures on immigrants suggesting that their actual number was many times higher than it appeared from official records. They had an unusually high birth rate, but avoided any "registration", this being reflection of the attitude in the old country, where the Galician peasant equated census and registration, even in the parish, with taxation and draft.

Ukrainian immigrants attended the rare services conducted by the few Catholic priests of Eastern Rite working among them. In the absence of their own religious

(2) Pastoral letter of November 7, 1901, entitled "To the Ruthenians settled in Canada" was published in *Tvory Sluhly Bozhoho Mytropolyta Andrey Sheptyts'koho. Pastyrs'ki lysty (1899-1901)* vol. 1. Opera Theologicae Societatis Scientificaе Ucrainorum - XV. Toronto 1965; pp. 259-266.