

The Ukrainian Museum and Library of Stamford

APOSTLES OF TRUTH AND LEARNING by *Lubow Wolynetz, Curator*

Important national and religious leaders bequeath to their people a legacy. It is a legacy which consists of teachings, instructions, directives, admonitions, pleas, encouragement, and most of all wise guidance for the development of their national and religious well-being. Although this legacy may lay dormant for years, and perhaps even for decades, or barely kindling among its people, there still comes a moment when circumstances provoke the people to act upon the ideals of that legacy.

With this thought in mind let us ask: Is it a coincidence or a timely and long overdue phenomenon that has been taking place in Ukraine during the year 2014 and continuing into 2015? Have the truths and teachings of great Ukrainian personages surfaced from the collective national subconscious, and that the people were strong enough and determined enough to live up to these ideals?



The year 2014 was proclaimed the Taras Shevchenko Year in which we celebrated the bicentennial of his birth. The year 2015 is dedicated to commemorating the 150th year of birth of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky. It was precisely on the eve of Taras Shevchenko's bicentennial that the MAIDAN came to be where Ukrainian people stood united and voiced their truths, and made their rightful claims to a truly democratic freedom without a foreign overseer. The right to a life of dignity. The whole world watched the MAIDAN, and the whole world saw how this foreign overseer killed, maimed, burned, and trampled the united and peaceful Ukrainian protesters. This butchery and carnage is continuing in other regions of Ukraine, instigated, supported, and actively engaged in by this foreign overseer who calls himself our elder brother. These unbelievable events have brought numerous acts of

courage, heroism, devotion, and self-sacrifice to which there is still no end in sight.

What inspired the young generation of Ukrainians of the 21st century to stand up, stand strong notwithstanding the consequences, and fight for their rights? Did Shevchenko's words "get up and break your chains" finally hit home?

In a four line poem which Shevchenko wrote in 1860, he asks "why isn't the apostle of truth and learning coming"? Perhaps the Apostle of truth and learning was already among us. But did we not hear or listen to the messages he sent through his chosen spokesmen?

Taras Shevchenko revealed the bitter truths about us: our ignorance of our history and its glorious past; our inferiority complex; our selfishness, indifference, and disregard for our enslaved or less fortunate brethren; our lack of knowledge and respect for our cultural achievements; our passive willingness to silently submit to insults, enslavement, and destruction; our perpetual division and dissonance in critical moments; and even our fear of

standing up straight on our own two feet. He admonished and pleaded with us to change our ways. Although his voice was silenced by the tsarist regime, his legacy continually reminds us of our shortcomings. In commemorating in this momentous Year for Ukrainians, the 150th anniversary of the birth of Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky, let us reflect upon some aspects of his legacy. For over forty years, he devoted his life to work for the good of his Church, his flock, and his nation. This dedication with which he faced his duties, his farsightedness and undertakings in religious and Church life, education and culture, politics, eco-

nomics, and social welfare, which he carried out for the benefit of his Church and his people is unparalleled and his accomplishments have few equals.

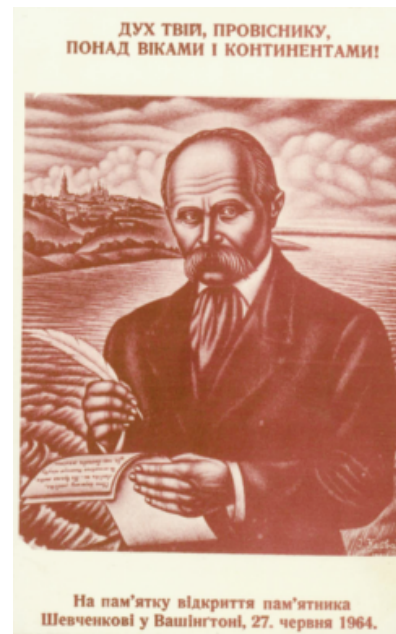
From the beginning of his Primacy, Metropolitan Sheptytsky faced many challenges that he had to overcome, mainly because of the political situation in which western Ukraine found itself. Restrained in religious and political rights and freedoms, its population endured an inhibited educational and cultural development.

Metropolitan Sheptytsky knew that for a successful and healthy national growth, people must not only lead their lives according to specific religious and moral standards but also through education. They needed to become aware of, value, cherish, and preserve the cultural accomplishments of their glorious past. On this subject, he said "Neither in the external situation nor the political constellations lie the solution to great historical assignments of a nation, but only in the inner strength of its culture. The cultural downfall of a people and their creative power is a greater tragedy to a nation than the downfall of its statehood which is only the means for the development of its culture. To recover statehood is sometimes easier than to resurrect the power of its culture. We might lose the political battle yet conquer our enemies culturally..."

With such deep convictions, Metropolitan Sheptytsky concentrated and placed an enormous amount of effort in the rebuilding of a strong foundation for the further cultural development of his people. He founded the National Museum to preserve and to make the cultural riches of the past available to wide circles of the population for study, research, and appreciation. He placed great importance on educating and making lay people, and especially the clergy and religious, aware of the fact that culture and cultural achievements have

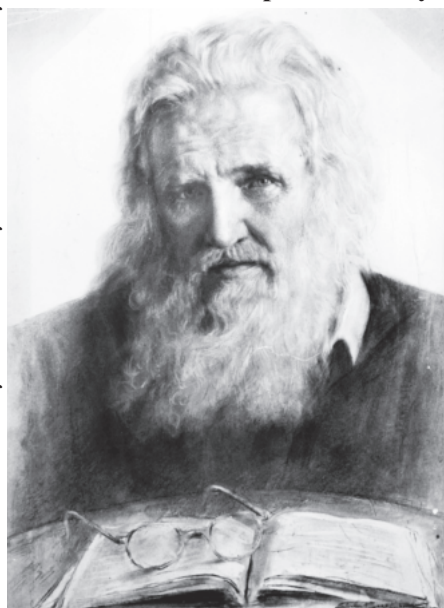
an important role in our lives. There is a need for learning about them, preserving them, and continually supporting them in an ongoing development. It is precisely that these ideas and teachings which were carried across the ocean to America by Ukrainian immigrants, and especially by the Ukrainian Catholic clergy. **Our Ukrainian Museum and Library is a direct result of this legacy.**

Adherence to and preservation of one's cultural heritage is what sustains a people as a separate entity. It gives them their identity. It safeguards them against annihilation and destruction. And Ukrainians are the best example of the power that culture has had upon our survival. Culture is a powerful weapon which conquerors,



tyrants, and oppressors fear and try to destroy. The Ukrainian people have gone through many such destructive periods brought about by our enemies and nevertheless has survived. But the more tragic kind of cultural destruction is not necessarily caused by an enemy, but by our indifference, neglect, ignorance, and superficial attitude towards our heritage.

At this momentous and critical time for the Ukrainian people in Ukraine and in the Diaspora let us review the legacy which Taras Shevchenko and Metropolitan Andrei Sheptytsky have bequeathed to us. It behooves us to heed their words, for they are our very own **Apostles of Truth and Learning!**



Explore and Experience Our Past