

Athanasius D. McVay. *God's Martyr, History's Witness: Blessed Nykyta Budka, the First Ukrainian Catholic Bishop of Canada*. Edmonton: Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton and the Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, 2014. xxvi, 613 pp. Illustrations. Timeline. Bibliography. Index. C\$25.00, paper.

The book by Athanasius D. McVay is quite remarkable. It gives a comprehensive account of the life and work of Nykyta Budka, the first Ukrainian Catholic bishop in Canada. At the same time, it provides more than just the biography of a person, however illustrious; it historicizes a troublesome epoch ranging from the beginning to the middle of the twentieth century and covers different milieux—Austria-Hungary, Poland, Ukraine, Canada, the United States, and the Soviet Union. It is a tremendous task to weave a large “cloth” with a temporal warp and geographic weft, and it is especially difficult if one has to use thousands of “threads” of varying colours and thicknesses. However, the author has managed to realize what seems only possible as metaphor. He has woven together thousands of details and facts about Bishop Budka, his place and time, and has created an epic, and yet entertaining, story. Even if one is not particularly interested in the main character of the story, the book is worth reading because it describes with precision the many sides of life of the Ukrainian Catholic community in various places and circumstances.

In order to assemble his story, the author searched through many archives, including Archivio della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali; the Vatican Secret Archives (Archivio Segreto Vaticano); Archivio della Sacra Congregazione degli Affari Ecclesiastici Straordinari; Archivio dell'Ordine Basiliano di San Giosafat (Rome); Diözesanarchiv Wien; Corporation Archiépiscope Catholique Romaine de Saint-Boniface; Archives of the Eparchy of Edmonton; Archives of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia; Archives of the Eparchy of Toronto; Archives of the Archeparchy of Winnipeg; Archives of the Redemptorists of the Yorkton Province; Citizenship and Immigration Canada; Library and Archives Canada (formerly the National Archives of Canada); Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie; Archiwum Państwowe w Przemyślu; Archive of the Institute of Church History (Lviv); Branch State Archives of the Security Service of Ukraine (Kyiv); State Archives of Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast; State Archives of Ternopil Oblast; Central State Historical Archives of Ukraine (Lviv); Central State Archives of Public Organizations of Ukraine; State Archive of the Russian Federation; and the Archive of the President of the Russian Federation. Many documents from these archives were unearthed for the first time during this process. Several thousand references to hundreds of unique archival documents constitute almost half of this voluminous book, which numbers over six

hundred pages. They make the book a valuable research instrument for scholars.

The author knows his material and has great affection for it. He hails from the community that he describes and understands well its strengths and weaknesses. For instance, he approaches with caution and insight the delicate issue of Ukrainian identity as it developed in the first half of the twentieth century and became particularly sensitive within the Ukrainian diaspora. He explains how “Ruthenians” became “Ukrainians” and how they became divided along ecclesial and ideological lines and struggled to reconcile with their own kind, as well as with the wider Canadian community.

At the same time, the narratives and judgments of the author sometimes tend to reflect old stereotypes of the Ukrainian Catholic community in Canada about those outside of the community. Noteworthy in this regard is an almost black-and-white portrayal of the community’s relationship with the Orthodox Ukrainians. Statements like “Ukrainians were seen by Protestant and Orthodox missionaries as ripe for conversion” (224) imply that all Ukrainians in Canada were Catholics, which is incorrect. One feels the same chill of alienation in the description of relations with the Canadian Presbyterians. Also, the Ukrainian Orthodox and communists in Canada are, surprisingly, placed under one umbrella and treated as interrelated entities (234). Many Ukrainian Catholics from Bishop Budka’s flock may have believed in such ideas, but a person examining such beliefs should treat them critically. This study essentially undermines the Canadian Orthodox community’s *raison d’être* during the time of Bishop Budka and describes its ideology as primarily being influenced by Socialist ideas and secularism (279).

The author provides a comprehensive and correct frame of Bishop Budka’s ministry through examination of his relationship with the Roman Curia and his fellow hierarchs in Ukraine and Canada. This description is based on knowledge of what was going on inside the Vatican during that period. At the same time, however, observations regarding more general concerns of the Catholic leadership at that time—such as its struggle with modernism and attempts at tackling nationalist and autonomist movements—would have improved the narrative and would have provided clearer background information regarding the rationales underlying the Curial motions relating to Bishop Budka.

The book would have greatly benefited from a more nuanced description of political relations between states. For instance, it is an oversimplification to say that “no political conflict existed between the Austrian and British empires” at the beginning of 1914 (243). Similarly simplistic and apologetic are the author’s explanations regarding the suspicions of the Canadian

authorities concerning Bishop Budka's loyalty, which led to his arrest in 1918. Also, more critical light should have been shed on the participation of Bishop Budka in the culture wars that affected the Ukrainian-Canadian community of his time, including his relationship with organizations such as Sich.

The author balances between a critical biography and a vita. Sometimes he is overly apologetic and encomiastic when a more sober critique is required. This is the case, for instance, when the political loyalties of Bishop Budka are explored. Nevertheless, at the end of the reading, especially after the account of the sufferings of Bishop Budka and his Ukrainian Catholic fellows at the hands of the Soviet regime, this solid volume inspires compassion and sympathy toward its main character.

Cyril Hovorun
Sankt Ignatios Theological Academy, Sweden

