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PENTECOSTALISM IN WESTERN UKRAINE: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND CURRENT THEOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

By Roman Soloviy

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is twofold: firstly, to examine the origins and historical development of Christians of the Evangelical Faith (Pentecostals) in Western Ukraine from 1920 until today; secondly, to give an account of current theological problems of Western Ukrainian Pentecostalism and to explore its theological renewal, which began after the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014). In doing so, the socio-political, ethnic, and religious contexts of the birth of Pentecostalism in Western Ukraine will be studied; these include the living conditions of Ukrainians in the Second Polish Republic, religious situation in Western Ukraine between the First and Second World Wars, historical development of the Pentecostal movement in this region, as well as the most significant theological influences that informed its doctrinal features and ethical patterns. Concerning the contemporary theological issues Pentecostalism faces in Ukraine, special attention will be paid to the process of the search for theological identity and worldview, development of educational institutions, and dramatic transitions in articulations of Pentecostalism in contemporary Ukraine. Discovering the heritage of other Christian traditions, through participation in the practical ecumenical initiatives and critical study of Pentecostal theology in a university setting, initiated a theological renewal among the younger generation of Pentecostals. Its features are concern for socially responsible theology, promotion of political activism, struggle for justice, and economic liberation. Theological and ethical search Pentecostalism in Ukraine was also stimulated by the dramatic events of the recent Ukrainian history.

Keywords: Pentecostalism, Christians of Evangelical Faith, Western Ukraine, theology, theological education, ecclesiology.

Introduction

In 2020, the Pentecostal movement in Ukraine celebrates its 100th anniversary. It was in 1920 that the first Pentecostal groups were organized in the Ternopil region, then under jurisdiction of the Second Polish Republic. This event initiated the development of Pentecostalism in Western Ukraine. In 1929, the numerous scattered Pentecostal communities within Galicia, Volhynia, and Eastern Poland formed the Christians of Evangelical Faith Assemblies Association, which was active until the outbreak of the Second World War. Despite its short existence, the Association has launched an extensive missionary, educational, and publishing activity, laying the doctrinal and institutional foundations of the movement. The disastrous events of the Second World War and the subsequent annexation of Western Ukraine by the Soviet Union radically changed the circumstances of the existence of the Pentecostal churches. The repressive, atheistic Soviet regime deliberately sought to limit the activities of churches to liturgical practice, depriving believers of any opportunities for educational, missionary, and charitable activities, and creating a stereotype of Pentecostals as religious fanatics. In 1945, the Pentecostal communities of Western Ukraine were forced to join the Baptist Union. The imposed inclusion of the Pentecostals in the Baptist Union had significant negative consequences. In particular, the Union leadership's attempts to limit Pentecostal spiritual practices led to a split in Pentecostalism and the emergence of "unregistered Pentecostals," comprised of those who left the Baptist Union. Only in 1989 were Ukrainian Pentecostals able to establish the All-Ukrainian Union of Christians of the Evangelical Faith, which brought together the majority of the Western Ukrainian Pentecostal congregations.¹ The purpose of this research is to explore the social context of the emergence of the Pentecostal movement in Western Ukraine and to analyze its main theological problems. Although the study is geographically limited to Western Ukraine (Eastern Galicia, Western Volhynia, Kholmshchyna, and Pidliashshia), much of the issues it addresses relate to the whole of Ukrainian Pentecostalism.

¹ The Union also included Pentecostal communities of the Eastern Ukrainian Pentecostal movement. History of the Christians of Evangelical Faith started in 1921 when pastor Ivan Voronaeu and other Pentecostal leaders returned to Soviet Ukraine from the USA. First Congress of the movement in 1926 established the All-Ukrainian Union of Christians of Evangelical Faith that by 1929 had more than 350 churches numbering about 17,000. In 1929-1930 Soviet authorities had forbidden the Christians of Evangelical Faith, the Union was dissolved, and many pastors and ordinary believers were persecuted.

Historical and Socio-Political Context of the Rise of Pentecostal Movement in Western Ukraine

The Western regions of Ukraine were under Austro-Hungarian Empire since the late 18th century. After the collapse of the Empire at the end of WWI, they were divided among the neighboring states. The Second Polish Republic gained control of Eastern Galicia, Western Volhynia, Kholmshchyna, and Pidliashshia. Under the Treaty of Saint-Germain (1919), Bukovina and Northern Bessarabia were ceded to Romania, and Transcarpathia became part of the newly formed Czechoslovakia.

To clarify the features of the development of the Christians of the Evangelical Faith (CEF) movement in Western Ukraine, it is essential to analyze its social and ethnic context. The most active development of the Ukrainian CEF movement took place in the Second Polish Republic; therefore, we will focus our attention on the living conditions of Ukrainians in this region. The Polish Republic was a multinational state, and Ukrainians were its largest national minority. During the last census in 1931, there were 13.8 percent ethnic Ukrainians in the interwar Poland.² Regrettably, the Polish-Ukrainian relations at that time were not harmonious. Ukrainians were going through a process of a rapid national and cultural emancipation. However, their aspirations for independence contradicted the state's attempts to assimilate Ukrainians both politically and culturally. The dissatisfaction of Ukrainians with the policy of the Second Polish Republic that regarded Galicia as a part of the indisputable Polish historical heritage caused continuous unrest in this part of the country, as well as the growth of the Ukrainian nationalist movement. The discontent of Ukrainians also had social motivations, since interwar Poland was economically an underdeveloped country, which affected the Western Ukrainian territories profoundly. In the early 1920s, 76 percent of Poland's population was still engaged in agriculture.³ The majority of Ukrainians belonged to the rural population. The severe living conditions of the Ukrainian rural population deteriorated due to overpopulation and scarcity of land. These factors led to a rapid rise in unemployment, social tensions, and a new wave of labor emigration. From 1921 to 1939, about 190,000 people emigrated from Western Ukraine, while Polish settler-colonists inhabited the region.

In their ethnic territories Ukrainians made up the vast majority of the rural population, but they were a minority among the urban population. In particular, in Eastern Galicia, the

² A. Gella. *Development of Class Structure in Eastern Europe: Poland and Her Southern Neighbors*. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 23.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

share of the rural population among Ukrainians reached 80%.⁴ Among the inhabitants of large and medium-sized cities, the percentage of the Ukrainian population did not exceed 15 to 20 percent. In general, the Ukrainians of Galicia in the interwar period were characterized by weak development of urban culture, and distrust of the city and urban civilization. According to Orest Subtelny, an outstanding Canadian historian of Ukrainian descent, in those years, the Ukrainian intellectuals accounted for about 1% of the total working-age population of Western Ukraine, while among Poles, the same figure reached 5%. The attainment of higher education for Ukrainians was complicated. In particular, the share of Ukrainians at Lviv University barely reached 10%.⁵

The Ukrainian population of the Second Polish Republic was not homogeneous. The Ukrainians of Galicia (60% of the total), led by the politically active intelligentsia, had developed a national consciousness. The Ukrainians of Volhynia, in contrast, remained politically inactive. The religious situation in these two regions of Western Ukraine was also different. However, both in Galicia and Volhynia, traditional churches remained important centers of religious, cultural, and social life. The Greek Catholic (or Uniate) Church of Galicia, led by Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky, had a significant influence in the region since its clergy identified itself with the Ukrainian national movement. Through a network of religious institutions, publishing houses, cultural, educational, and philanthropic institutions, the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church had a strong impact on religious and social life of the region. Under the influence of the Church, such characteristics of the Ukrainian population of Galicia as a Christian-conservative worldview, strong national consciousness, respect for traditions, and willingness to take an active social and political position were formed. At the same time, Galicians to some extent are characterized by a "church-centric" image of the world, a tendency to replace spirituality and piety with "ritualism" and belonging to the traditional church.

The most influential religious institution in the Volhynia region was the Orthodox Church of Poland. Despite the fact that it has received autocephaly by the *Tomos* (decree) of Patriarch Gregory VII of Constantinople, all its activities were under a strict governmental control. Polish was the language of administration, sermons, and teaching in theological seminaries, even though the church consisted mainly of Ukrainians and Belarusians. Also, in the 1920s and 1930s, the Orthodox Church in Poland became the scene of a struggle between

⁴ О.С. Охріменко. “Західноукраїнські землі в 1920-1939 рр. Аграрна політика та становище українського населення у складі Польщі.” *Вісник аграрної історії*, 2012. № 4, р. 88.

⁵ О. Субтельний. *Україна: історія*. (Київ: Либідь, 1993), р. 375.

the Russified clergy, led by Metropolitan Dionysius, and the Ukrainian intelligentsia that demanded Ukrainization of the church. In the late 1930s, the Church also underwent a process of "revindication" (forced conversion of Orthodox population to Catholicism).

Attention should also be paid to the broader socio-economic challenges, since they are important for understanding the emergence of evangelical groups in the interwar Volhynia. According to Ukrainian historian Roman Skakun, the expansion of evangelicals in this region was caused by radical changes in the socio-economic situation. Earlier the most separate agricultural province of the Russian Empire, it experienced a disintegration of traditional forms of life and economics after its incorporation into Poland. Among the key factors which led to that were extreme impoverishment, overpopulation, scarcity of land, post-war destruction, and tax pressure. Challenging economic conditions required an expansion of contacts with the outside world, a departure from the established socio-cultural models and institutions of the previously closed conservative rural community. There was a gradual involvement of peasant farms in the capitalist economy, and the rural population increasingly fell into the sphere of influence of the national culture. These processes were accompanied by the disintegration of the traditional view of the world and related customary and legal norms, encouraging the rural population to seek new worldviews and religious experiences.

The gradual disintegration of the rural communities and patriarchal families was accompanied by a transformation of the established patterns of religious life. The traditional religious faith of the peasants was ritualistic in nature and had a pragmatic orientation. In other words, the content of religious beliefs and practices was not connected to theological dogmas or moral norms, but to the ability of the transcendent factor to ensure well-being. For this reason, "in the eyes of the peasant the priest was not a moral or spiritual authority, not a teacher of religious truth, but above all, a provider of certain ritual services."⁶ Thereby, conformism in relations with the authorities, and the low moral level of the clergy of the Orthodox Church destroyed its authority among the population and at the same time led to the growing popularity of various Protestant movements, including the Pentecostal communities.

⁶ Р. Скакун. *Будівничі Нового Єрусалиму: Іван Мурашко і "мурашківці."* (Львів: Видавництво Українського католицького університету, 2014), р. 10.

Historical Development of the Pentecostal Movement in Western Ukraine (1920-1930)

Pentecostal churches emerged in Western Ukraine in 1920 with the return to the region of such Ukrainian migrant workers as Porphyry Ilchuk, Trokhim Nagorny, and Yosyp Antonyuk. Working in the USA, they became exposed to Pentecostal teaching and experience. After the end of the war, they decided to share their faith with their compatriots. As a result of their dynamic evangelistic work, many Pentecostal communities were established in Western Ukraine. Initially, various Pentecostal congregations were autonomous although they had close contact and developed various aspects of cooperation. To consolidate fragmented communities into one denomination with a unified doctrinal teaching, the leaders of the movement instituted the Evangelical Faith Christian Assemblies Association in 1929. The association included not only Ukrainians, but also Poles, Belarussians, and Germans. This denomination confessed classical Pentecostal doctrines, including concern for immediate encounter with God, emphasis on the baptism by the Holy Spirit, and the restoration of the practice of spiritual gifts such as divine healing. A leading role in training newly appointed preachers and other church leaders, solidifying theological identity of the movement and promoting Pentecostal message, was played by the Bible Institute. The Institute was opened in 1930 in the Free City of Danzig (today Gdansk in Poland) by Gustav Herbert Schmidt, the director of the Eastern European Mission of the Assemblies of God. He was the first Pentecostal missionary that arrived in Poland from the USA in 1920. Until the beginning of the Second World War, the Institute trained Pentecostal ministers from various countries of Eastern Europe. Among its instructors were renown Pentecostal theologians from Europe and North America. In 1939 the Evangelical Faith Christian Assemblies Association, led by Arthur Bergholc, had almost five hundred congregations and about twenty-five thousand members.⁷ The denomination was active in publishing. Since 1929 Evangelical Faith Christian Assemblies Association published the Russian journal *Primiritel (The Reconciler)*, edited by Gustav Schmidt. There were also the Polish journal *Przystep (Access)* and the Ukrainian *Evangeliskii Golos (The Evangelical Voice)*. The publishing of these journals ceased with the beginning of the Second World War.

It is noteworthy that the Ukrainian adherents did not mechanically assimilate the Pentecostal doctrine imported by Gustav Schmidt and other returning emigrants. Its seeds fell on the ground of another defining factor—the tradition of Slavic God-seeking and influence of radical Protestant ideas. This was cause for the break of the Ukrainian Pentecostals with the previous church tradition, which was understood as the history of constant spiritual degradation

⁷ В. Франчук. *Просила Россия дождя у Господа: Т. 1.* (Київ: Світанкова зоря, 2002), р. 627.

and apostasy from ideal apostolic Christianity. Complex theological considerations and academic theorizing were seen as a dangerous "reasoning," useless for the living faith, which was interpreted primarily as a personal encounter with God, achieving spiritual union with God among fellow believers. All extra-church life was interpreted as "secular," spiritually hostile and dangerous, as a mission field that should be reached by preaching, while maintaining a safe spiritual distance.

For this reason, the CEF believers were mostly critical of civilization and culture's achievements as manifestations of the "world," a spiritual reality hostile to God. That is why there are practically no publications on the pages of the periodicals that would touch upon issues of socio-political life, culture, or art. All this was regarded as a sinful domain doomed to the destruction, from the influence of which it is necessary to isolate as much as possible. The CEF churches tried to protect their believers from the impact of the hostile secular environment by developing a strict system of regulations and prohibitions on appearance, clothing, participation in cultural and social events, smoking, and alcohol consumption. The initial counter-cultural imperative, which in the postwar period was reinforced by the Soviet government's purposeful policy to limit the churches' activities, led to the introverted life of Pentecostal communities, their isolation, and social pessimism. This tendency was also exacerbated by the permanent oppression of the Soviet period, which stimulated the CEF communities' self-identification as a persecuted minority, a "faithful remnant" whose election is confirmed by the very fact of persecution.

The pessimistic stance toward the world was intensified by the fundamentalist premillennial eschatology embraced by the Pentecostal movement. Premillennialism as the system of literal interpretation of Biblical texts originated at the beginning of the 19th century as a reaction to the destruction of traditional forms of social order during the French Revolution. For many Christians, unprecedented revolutionary events in Europe marked the end of the age. In search of answers about the further course of events, many theologians turned to the Bible's prophetic books. Among those who tried to find the key to biblical prophecy was the Presbyterian pastor Edward Irving, known for his efforts to restore the practice of spiritual gifts in the church. Irving believed that the Second Coming of Christ would take place soon, and that to prepare the church for this event, God intended to pour out the Holy Spirit.

The idea of the imminent second coming of Christ was picked up, deepened, and successfully promoted in the prophetic studies of the 19th century by the British theologian John Nelson Darby. All the major themes of his theology--the infallibility and authority of the Bible, pessimism about the current world order, and the emphasis on the imminent bodily

return of Christ—are of a seminal influence on the fundamentalist and Pentecostal hermeneutics and eschatology. A central component of Darby's theology was the concept of dispensationalism. He understood human history as a sequence of dispensations where God dealt with humanity in special ways. Darby taught that the present age was a parenthetical period, in which God was establishing the church. In the near future Christ would return in secret to take the church to the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ's second coming would be a catastrophic event to complete the contemporary "age of the church" and destroy the existing world order. Christ's return was portrayed as a sudden, unexpected event, for which all Christians must prepare diligently. After the second coming of Christ, a millennial kingdom would come to earth. Although dispensationalists did their best to defend the authenticity of the biblical miracles, they refused to recognize supernatural events in modern times. In the dispensation of the church, they singled out a particular period that began after the New Testament completion and was characterized by the cessation of supernatural actions. Even though dispensationalists denied the Pentecostal movement the right to claim the resurgence of supernatural gifts in modern times, most Pentecostal theologians supported dispensationalist eschatological scheme, modifying it to the specifics of their teaching.

The influence of Protestant fundamentalism on the formation of the theology of Pentecostalism in Western Ukraine is not limited to premillennial eschatology. Protestant fundamentalism originated in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century as a conservative reaction to the expansion of liberal theology characterized by the reductionism of the doctrines of classical Christianity, the rejection of the supernatural, and the shift of attention from God to human. In response to modernist attempts to adapt Christianity to the conceptions of rationalism and Darwinism, fundamentalist theologians established the intellectual foundations for defending the doctrines of the divinity and resurrection of Christ, the infallible authority and divine inspiration of the Bible. The line of a future confrontation between the fundamentalists and the Pentecostal movement was drawn by Benjamin Warfield in his famous *Cessation of Charismata*. The author insisted on the authenticity of the biblical miracles (such as the resurrection of Christ), but at the same time distanced himself from the arguments for the possibility of miracles in modern times. To avoid identifying the biblical miracles and claims to possible supernatural actions today, Warfield argued that the apostolic age chronologically limited the manifestations of spiritual gifts. Since the formation of the New Testament, the church no longer needed supernatural gifts. In his other work, *Counterfeit Miracles* (1918), he concluded that after the last of the apostles had died, no documented miracle occurred. Miraculous spiritual gifts passed away with the apostolic times.

The effect of Princeton theology (Charles Hodge, A. A. Hodge, B. B. Warfield) on the Pentecostal movement was manifold. On the one hand, based on the theory of the chronologically limited nature of spiritual gifts, practically all fundamentalists reacted sharply to Pentecostalism, one of the constitutive doctrines of which was the principle of the restoration of spiritual gifts before the second coming of Christ. On the other hand, despite criticism from fundamentalists, the Pentecostal movement inherited most of its defining ideas from it, supplementing them with the doctrine of the baptism by the Holy Spirit with the sign of tongues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Pentecostals adhered to such components of fundamentalism as the doctrine of the infallibility of the Scripture, the divinity of Christ, the sinfulness of human nature, the intercessory death of Christ, dispensationalism, premillennialism, and rigorous moral standards. The central vein of influence of the fundamentalist theology on the CEF in Western Ukraine movement was the Eastern European mission, in particular, its educational and publishing activities.

The Second World War suspended the natural development of the Pentecostal churches in Western Ukraine. The Eastern European Mission and Evangelical Faith Christian Assemblies Association terminated their operation; the publication of the theological journals ceased. The communication lines between the leadership and the local churches were interrupted. Individual communities exerted every effort to survive in the turmoil of the Second World War, Soviet and German occupations, and civil conflicts. In 1939-1941 the Soviet secret police murdered some of the active pastors and sent others to labor or concentration camps. In 1944 Pentecostal congregations in Western Ukrainian were forcibly merged with the All-Union Council of Evangelical Christians-Baptists (AUCECB), which functioned under strict governmental control. During the Soviet regime of totalitarian persecutions, many Pentecostal congregations were closed while others continued to operate underground. Part of Pentecostal churches soon left the AUCECB, because the Baptist leadership of the Union tried to imitate such distinctively Pentecostal practices as speaking in tongues and other spiritual gifts. A few times, these groups made attempts to register their denomination officially, but were thwarted by the Soviet police, who arrested the leaders of those initiatives. Only on May 25-26, 1990, the All-Ukrainian Pentecostal Congress took place in Korosten, which resumed the activities of the All-Ukrainian Union of Christians of the Evangelical Faith that existed in Soviet Ukraine in 1925-1930. It included the Pentecostal congregations from the AUCECB along with the autonomously registered and unregistered communities and missions. Most of the churches that belonged to the Western Ukrainian Pentecostal tradition joined the Union.

Current Theological Challenges of the CEF Movement

The first problem of the CEF churches in Western Ukraine is that the movement is still in the process of search for its theological identity and worldview. The fragmentary theological stance of the Ukrainian Pentecostalism is to some extent conditioned by the relatively short period of existence of the denomination, mainly in context of its suppression. Also, at least at the initial stage, the CEF communities in Western Ukraine involved a small number of intellectuals. The mission focused mainly on disadvantaged groups with low intellectual needs. This situation intensified in the postwar period, as the Soviet authorities deliberately restricted the access to education, trying to form a stereotype of believers as uneducated and superstitious people. The confrontational nature of relations with the authorities and the dominant cultural paradigms led the believers to escapism, social isolation, internal and—if possible—external emigration. Displaced to the margins of socio-cultural life, the believers sought to limit the influence of secular culture by forming their pietistic subcultures with specific patterns of behavior, unique language, and often legalistic ethical prescriptions. The long period of confrontation with the atheistic culture shaped a particular worldview in the churches, which continued to determine the mentality of the believers after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The underdevelopment of the theological system is connected not only to historical and sociological factors, but also to the Pentecostals' unique understanding of their place in history. Since the true Church of Christ existed only implicitly from early Christianity to the beginning of the Pentecostal movement, the whole history of Christianity is seen as a tragic sequence of events that turned the church away from the New Testament ideals. For example, the head of the Eastern European Mission, Gustav Schmidt, wrote: "For hundreds of centuries, Christianity has been in decline because the masses who called themselves Christians lacked an awareness of the need for a holy life. Christianity has deteriorated so much that there is nothing left of it, but religious rites and ceremonies."⁸ Such a view of history led to a break with much of the history of Christianity (at least its pre-Reformation period) as a departure from evangelical simplicity. Early Pentecostals denied classical Christian theology as the heritage of Catholic or Orthodox Christianity, instead perceiving themselves as the immediate heirs of Early Christianity.

Another critical factor that hindered the development of a clear theological identity of the movement was the premillennial eschatology and the expectations of the Parousia.⁹ Many

⁸ "Христианская жизнь." *Примиритель*, № 11–12. (1932), p. 105.

⁹ For instance, analyzing the current situation in the world, G. Schmidt, in 1933, stressed that the political and economic crisis would not be resolved, the world is facing a terrible day of grief, which will pave the way for the

Pentecostals believe now that history is approaching its final stage, as evidenced by the revitalization of the Holy Spirit's gifts. Premillennial restorationism and apocalyptic expectation of destruction of the world motivated Pentecostals not to waste time developing unnecessary theological constructions, but to instead devote all efforts to preach the gospel and achieve personal pietism in the Spirit. In the early days of Pentecostalism, the newly formed communities saw themselves as a spiritual movement of end times, initiated by God to spread the gospel and share the gifts of Holy Spirit baptism to existing Christian churches. Only later, as a reaction to the devastating criticism from the traditional Protestant denominations, did Pentecostals move into the phase of institutionalization and development of at least minimally necessary theological markers. The first attempts to turn the Pentecostal movement into a denomination in North America and Western Ukraine led to the formulation of theological creeds, which usually repeated the dogmas of classical Protestantism, supplemented with the doctrine of the baptism of the Holy Spirit, divine healing, and an emphasis on the urgent importance of evangelism. From the very beginning, Pentecostalism prioritized action over theorizing. Due to the premillennialist understanding of end times, this pragmatic approach often led to the pathos of anti-intellectualism, mysticism, and separation from worldly cultural patterns. The apocalyptic worldview of the CEF believers intensified during the postwar Soviet repressions and the growth of atheistic propaganda. The educational aspect should also be considered. The production of theological knowledge requires a particular environment for an intellectual dialogue and open discussions. Traditionally, theological schools served such purpose. In the Ukrainian situation, prior to Ukraine's independence, the only educational institution was the Bible Institute of the Eastern European Mission in Gdansk. Its activity ceased, however, with the outbreak of World War II. Due to the lack of a standing tradition of theological education, the Ukrainian Pentecostals treated theology with distrust, as a non-spiritual issue, a product of a proud mind. They believed that the Scripture contained direct answers to all questions and did not require interpretation. The tendency to emphasize the importance of the faith and subjective spiritual experience led to an ambiguous attitude towards academic theology. Here is an eloquent quote from *The Reconciler*: "Our doctrine is not based, like the teachings of the major Christian churches, on hundreds of years of tradition, but solely on the Scripture, which contains the plans and commandments of God that we need to know."¹⁰ In general, Pentecostal epistemology is characterized by transrationality—knowledge which is

coming to power of the antichrist. The responsibility of believers is to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ and to announce this coming. ("Знаменія близкого пришествія Христа." *Примиритель*, № 1–2. (1933), p. 1
¹⁰ "Во что мы верим и чему мы учим." *Примиритель*, №. 7–8. (1935), p. 66.

relative and not limited to causality. Theological truth appears not merely as gained through logical speculation, but as a result of the individual's direct encounter with God, an exceptional experience that is difficult to convey in dry formulations of traditional theology. In the Pentecostal sense, the Bible is a living book, in which the Holy Spirit is always active. That is why Pentecostalism is distrustful of attempts to convey the living experience of the encounter with the supernatural by the language of human expressions and the critical-analytical methodology inherent in Western theology. Wolfgang Vondey correctly argues that "Pentecostals shy away from conceptualizing their experiences in fear of losing the dynamism of the actual experience and of turning the uninhibited encounter with God into a mere object of doctrinal reflection distanced from a personal and communal transformation."¹¹

This trend was intensified in the Soviet times, when Christians of Evangelical Faith existed under severe propagandist and administrative pressure. The movement was cut off from the world Pentecostal centers, deprived of theological literature and periodicals. The Pentecostals in Ukraine at that time did not have any opportunity to create the educational system and formulate a holistic theological tradition. Many believers were wary of education, especially in religious institutions. Some viewed these institutions as a means of manipulating the church by the state. Still others approached the issue of education quite pragmatically. A pastor from the Ternopil region, Fedir Roshchenyuk, gives a conventional reasoning of that time: "What will the school give? It is necessary for a cow to graze—there will be milk; you have to go to the field to plow, sow, reap—there will be bread."¹²

The new conditions of religious freedom in independent Ukraine, however, exacerbated the need of the theological formation of pastors and other active believers. Formalization of the doctrine and systemization of its elements prompted the development of the Pentecostal system of theological education. The lack of original educational traditions forced Christians of the Evangelical Faith to implement different foreign programs. Among the first were the courses of the International Correspondence Institute and the International Bible Institute. Later, the program of the Russian-Ukrainian Bible Institute was implemented. The introduction of these programs in the 1990s filled the educational vacuum in the newly established Pentecostal churches. They provided basic theological knowledge to all interested church members. The first institutions of higher education of the All-Ukrainian Union of Christians of the Evangelical Faith were the Rivne Bible Institute and Korosten Bible College, founded in

¹¹ Wolfgang Vondey. *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel* (New York: Bloomsbury, Bloomsbury T&T Clark, An imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017), p. 20.

¹² Ф. Рошенюк. *Перша Тернопільська церква християн віри євангельської* (Тернопіль, 2003), p. 107.

1991. In 1993, in cooperation with the US Assemblies of God the Kyiv Bible Institute was established. In 1998, the official registration of the Lviv Theological Seminary took place. These four educational institutions teach students from all over Ukraine. However, there are many regional education centers. These are, in particular, Ternopil Bible Seminary, Chernivtsi Bible Seminary, Dnipropetrovsk Bible College, as well as missionary schools in Odessa, Lutsk, Slovyansk, and Kremenets. The Evangelical Theological Seminary in Kyiv trains Pentecostal pastors and educators for the entire region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The increase in the number of theological centers was not part of the Union's strategic planning, but rather often the result of individual enthusiasts and pastors, who received academic and other support from Western evangelical educational institutions. Most new theological centers lacked comprehensively developed curricula, qualified faculty, textbooks, and a clear vision for the future. The need to coordinate the work of educational institutions was significant. An attempt to establish cooperation between schools through educational departments' work was ineffective because they could not offer any methodological, educational, or financial support for the theological seminaries and colleges. Consequently, most of the Pentecostal institutions joined the Euro-Asian Accrediting Association (EAAA). Since 1997, the Association's work has been aimed at developing theological education of evangelical learning centers, introducing international standards of theological education into their work, and providing schools with the necessary resource assistance. The partnership with the Association provided Pentecostal schools with the resources needed to improve the quality of education, implement standards of the Bologna Process, expand educational and international connections, and attain international recognition of diplomas.

Nevertheless, the Pentecostal educational institutions that emerged in the 1990s have not yet become influential intellectual and theological centers. It is worth noting that the Western Pentecostal denominations that initiated the establishment of those seminaries had a certain distrust of the local theological potential, and considered new educational institutions primarily as centers for rapid training of ministers, rather than as research institutions. Thus, in newly formed educational institutions, the dissemination of conventional beliefs still prevails, rather than the comprehension and production of theological knowledge. The vast majority of teachers are not involved in research work. A similar situation is in publishing—the main focus is printing liturgical literature, educational and instructional publications, collections of sermons, and Christian fiction. In the absence of its own academic and theological centers, and with insufficient attention to the formation of theological personnel, it is natural that the

Pentecostals still do not have an academic theological journal that could serve as a platform for a dialogue.

The unsatisfactory level of systematization of theological tradition of the CEF leads to theological eclecticism, fragmentation, uncritical borrowing of elements of the doctrine and liturgical practices of traditional Christian denominations, as well as to theological heterogeneity of the movement. Without relying on the generally accepted religious texts that would substantiate and thoroughly explain the church's attitude to the challenges of today, the CEF churches often act situationally, responding more to the circumstances than purposefully influencing their formation. This situation highlights the need to develop theological documents that would take into account the features of Pentecostalism and the current social and moral challenges.

The second area of theological problems of the CEF churches is ecclesiology. The general theological fragmentation of the movement causes insufficient delineation of ecclesiological issues. Since the original goal of Pentecostal revival was restoring New Testament Christianity, the movement initially sought to develop models of church life based solely on the texts of the Scripture. The problem of such an ecclesiological method is that it often does not take into account the cultural and social distance between the early church and the modern realities. Also, the attempt to transpose the New Testament patterns of church life to the present day overlooks the diversity of forms of church life in the New Testament. These dynamics were connected to the transition of Christianity from the Judaic to the Hellenistic world, as well as to the gradual transformation of the weakly structured communities, founded by the Apostle Paul during missionary journeys, to more formalized communities. Of course, the biblical teaching, its ideas, models, and metaphors should remain a central component in the formation of ecclesiology—but it must take into account the specific historical conditions in which the church is built, and understand that there is no ideal church life that could be used in all contexts with equal success.

The Pentecostals' emphasis on believers' subjective experience of the Holy Spirit led to a particular understanding of the church as a dynamic missionary community, in which God dwells. Pentecostals were usually wary of defining the church in terms of form and structure, fearing that such systematization would lead to spiritual stagnation and the failure of the church to perform its God-given function of preaching the gospel by the power of the Spirit. Admittedly, the two millennia of church history has partially confirmed the Pentecostals' fears—in the tense relationship between form and freedom, ritual and charisma, organization and

movement, the Spirit of awakening that brings change and new life is often absorbed by rituals and formality.

The Ukrainian CEF churches are also undergoing a complex process of finding a successful ecclesiological model that would combine the Pentecostal pneumocentric understanding of the church's nature with the need for a clear church structure. If the movement was initially dominated by the idea of the autonomy of the local community as a spiritual entity, in recent years, we have seen a tendency towards centralization, eloquently reflected in the renaming of the All-Ukrainian Union of CEF Churches to the CEF Church in Ukraine. The approach to the church leadership is also changing. Under the influence of traditional Christian denominations in Ukraine, the initial charismatic interpretation of leadership is replaced by a tendency towards a hierarchy. The democratic principles of Protestantism give way to more authoritarian models of church administration. The question here is, does the observed tendency to hierarchize and institutionalize Pentecostalism corresponds to its initial impulse as an exceptional movement of the Holy Spirit to prepare the world for the coming of the Kingdom of God. Is it possible to combine the structural rigidity of the denomination with the dynamism of the missionary community? How is the desire for recognition and respectability reconciled with the task of a prophetic critique of social and religious disorders? Can Pentecostals return to their original vision of not organizing their institutions, but serving as a blessing and catalyst for spiritual renewal for the whole church?

One of the most striking examples of the lack of attention to the development of ecclesiological theology is the differences in understanding of the Lord's Supper. In the liturgical practice of the CEF churches, one can find almost the whole range of existing approaches to this Lord's commandment—from sacramentological to symbolic. In this sense, an indicative factor is the active borrowing by Pentecostals of elements of liturgical terminology of traditional churches. The widely used terms of the priesthood, requirements, sacraments, etc., which were previously unknown to the CEF churches, are intended to compensate for the lack of elaboration of their theological terminology, and to show respect in relations. The threat of the hierarchization of the traditional structure of the CEF churches on the one hand, and the danger of remaining captive to a purely spiritual understanding of the nature of the church on the other hand, also often gives room for a manipulative and authoritarian leadership, and brings to the fore the task of developing a consistent system of church government that combines the priesthood of believers with the order, transparency, and the missionary imperative.

The third problematic area is the social theology and missiology of the CEF churches. Although related courses are taught in most Pentecostal seminaries, there are still no national textbooks to cover ministry specifics in the local context. The insufficient level of reflections on social theology and spiritual formation of ministers leads to superficial and situational responses to moral challenges (e.g. divorce, illnesses, the war and military service, the right to a social protest). Without proper pastoral care and reasonable answers to their intellectual and moral challenges, some skeptical believers leave the CEF churches for the sake of other Christian churches or become "internal immigrants," only formally belonging to the denomination. In this regard, it is necessary to realize the importance of developing and implementing a program of preparation for pastoral ministry, which would pay special attention to the psychology of pastoral care and current moral and social challenges.

Developing a new model of Pentecostal missionary service in the post-Soviet context is an urgent task. Although the CEF churches have long been in transit from imposed self-isolation to Christian presence in all spheres of society, many communities are still driven by a tendency toward self-preservation rather than the development of more sophisticated practices and a missionary presence. To a large extent, the CEF communities remain traditionalist and respond too slowly to the challenges of new social conditions. For example, the usual missionary work methods are directed mainly at the inhabitants of villages or small towns. The "rural" character is inherent in many large city churches, which is one of the reasons for the low level of interest of creative and intellectual urban youth in the Pentecostal churches.

Active missionary orientation is an essential aspect of the Pentecostal identity. The most important feature of Pentecostal ecclesiology is the presence in the community of the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, which testifies to the Church's message that the Kingdom of God is near. Spirit testifies through signs and wonders, as well as by reproducing in believers the values of the Kingdom. The Holy Spirit transforms the Church into a sign that the Kingdom of God came at the first coming of Christ and will achieve its fullness at the second coming of Christ. The purpose of the Church is to continue God's work of transforming both individuals and the communities to which they belong. Thus, authentic Pentecostal ecclesiology always sees the Church as a "church on a mission." All aspects of church life—worship, teaching, evangelism, and the planting of the new churches—should be aimed not at self-preservation and isolation from society, but the proclamation of the full gospel of Jesus Christ as savior, sanctifier, Spirit baptizer and healer. This approach requires sensitivity to the Holy Spirit and the ability to change the usual forms and structures of church organizations if they do not allow God's mission to be carried out effectively in the new environment.

Despite the weak tradition of Pentecostal theological reflection, we can observe dramatic transitions in the contemporary Ukrainian Pentecostal articulations. To some extent, new developments reflect the recent tendencies of the global Pentecostal movement. As W. Vondey indicates, the worldwide expansion of the movement, discovering the richness of other Christian traditions through the participation in the ecumenical movement, and critical study of Pentecostal theology in academy initiated the theological renewal among younger generations of Pentecostals.¹³ Essential features of the new paradigm are concern for more socially and ethically responsible theology, advocacy of political activism, the struggle for justice, and economic liberation. The theological and ethical search of Ukrainian Pentecostalism was also stimulated by the dramatic events of the recent Ukrainian history. The turning point of the modern history of Ukraine, the Maidan Revolution inspired the process of self-understanding in the Ukrainian Pentecostals. The protest, initiated to force the Ukrainian government to sign a trade agreement with the European Union, became a civil resistance against corruption and violence. It set before the Pentecostals, as other Evangelical denominations, the task of finding a theological justification for their presence in Ukraine as part of God's providential plan. The events of Maidan, the subsequent Russian occupation of the Crimea and the Russian-Ukrainian war in Donbas helped the Pentecostals to get rid of the 'post-Soviet' system of values, denominational isolationism, and indifference to social and political problems of the country.

The crisis in the fields of state security, military events in eastern Ukraine, and humanitarian problems related to refugees require cooperation and interaction of representatives of all Ukrainian religious communities. These circumstances allowed the Pentecostals to discover other Christian traditions in Ukraine and learn to see in their representatives not only fellow citizens, but also people who share with them fundamental theological and ethical values. This practical ecumenism and participation of Pentecostals in joint projects for the common good provide a basis for overcoming past prejudices and learning to communicate with other Christians against historical stereotypes. If previously historical churches were viewed by many Protestants as apostate religious institutions that disobey God and the truth of the Bible, they now begin to regard them as legitimate expressions of Christian faith.

¹³ Vondey. *Pentecostal Theology: Living the Full Gospel*, p. 8.

Conclusions

During their century-long history, the Western Ukrainian Pentecostal churches have demonstrated their commitment to active missionary work, an ability to survive the severe conditions of the Soviet repression, and faithful adherence to Pentecostal theological and moral standards. The current social, political, and cultural context, however, poses challenges that have not previously been encountered. In order to move from the Soviet-time strategy of self-preservation and withdrawal from the world, which is still obvious in many congregations, to the practice of a missionary participation in the world and presentation of imagination of hope, the Pentecostals need to start reflecting on some urgent issues. What constitutes the theological identity of the CEF movement? What should Pentecostal churches be like in order to ensure the freedom of expression of believers, to effectively carry out the prophetic mission in the world, to present to society the values of the Kingdom of God, to effectively advocate the ideals of interreligious and social reconciliation, justice, and peace? Is it possible to find such a model of church organization that would not restrict the freedom of action of the Holy Spirit, and at the same time, protect from false spiritual manipulation and authoritarian claims? How can the church return the mission to the its life, which spreads the message of God's love not only in religiously oriented rural areas, but also in the densely populated large cities with all their opportunities and risks? Honest answers to these questions determine the direction in which Pentecostalism in Western Ukraine will proceed.

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