

PART IX
CHAPTER 26
POSTSCRIPT

And so, we come to the end of our current story, of how millions of believers escaped Russian persecution and Soviet Union oppression in the 20th century to come to a land of freedom to practice one's religion without fear of persecution, imprisonment, and oppression. These believers came mainly from Ukrainian lands, even though they spoke Russian, and they joined other families to form groups that had a mutual interest of worshipping their Lord freely. They came to America (USA), and to other countries, and they formed churches of like-minded believers. Most of them had come from Orthodox roots but were transformed by a new religious movement instituted by evangelists from the Baptist-Pentecostal Evangelical Faith. Their unique form of worship and belief in God caused them to leave behind their forefathers' orthodox faith and cling to the biblical promise of "a new heaven and a new earth," which they began to create wherever they lived. Such was their story.

The following article delves into the future of this movement in the land where it all began – Ukraine-Rus':

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Pentecostalism in Western **Ukraine: Historical Development and Current Theological Challenges**

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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. 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.

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.

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

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. OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON RELIGION IN EASTERN EUROPE (SEPTEMBER 2020) XL, 7 93 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 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.

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 OCCASIONAL PAPERS ON RELIGION IN EASTERN EUROPE (SEPTEMBER 2020) XL, 7 94 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 schemes, modifying it to the specifics of their teaching.

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 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.

Early Pentecostals denied classical Christian theology as the heritage of Catholic or Orthodox Christianity, instead perceiving themselves as the immediate heirs of Early Christianity.

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.

Due to the lack of a standing tradition of theological education, the Ukrainian Pentecostals treated theology with distrust, as a nonspiritual 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 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

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 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?

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.

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.

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 selfpreservation 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 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.