

Studying Ukrainian Evangelical Communities in Poland Through Missionary Biographical Narratives

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ABSTRACT

By focusing on missionary narratives, the article offers a short description of the Ukrainian evangelical communities that have developed in Poland since 2014. Arguing that the outbreak of the war in Donbass was a decisive moment that shaped the waves of migrations from Ukraine, the article tries to analyze the strategy of reconstructing the biographies of Ukrainian evangelicals in the Polish cultural context. Using the categories of migrants and missionaries as biographical types, the article contextualizes the meaning of evangelicalism through its Ukrainian and Polish variations, and at the same time refers to the processes that are occurring in evangelical Christianity globally.

KEY WORDS: evangelical Christianity, Ukraine, Poland, missionaries, migrants, biographical narratives

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: ewangelikalne chrześcijaństwo, Ukraina, Polska, misjonarze, migranci, narracja biograficzne

The religious changes that have been occurring in Poland since 1989 show some similarities to the processes typical of the post-socialist countries that were facilitated by the new state regulations that guaranteed freedom of religion, greater people's mobility and the international exchange of religious ideas¹. As a result of the political and social changes as well as of the inflow of foreign missionaries, the number of Christians in Poland identified as evangelicals increased². Evangelical Christians in Poland, though insignificant in number, attracted scholarly attention as the main non-Catholic type of Christianity that constituted the "churches of choice"³. Such communities have been studied through the prism of history, systematic theology, or anthropology so far⁴. Nowadays, however, we can observe deeper integration of Polish evangelicals with Global Evangelicalism, which may be characterized in terms of trans-denominational, translocal, and transnational tendencies⁵. In this sense, the evangelical churches in Poland face something that has been noticed on the global scale – the rearrangement of world Christianity in national and local environments.

The main purpose of this article is to present a brief description of the evangelicals from Ukraine that have come to Poland since 2014. Undoubtedly, their appearance was challenging for the Polish churches at first, but soon it turned out that Ukrainian Christians became involved in the process of the reconfiguration of the Polish

¹ M. Pelkmans, *Introduction: Post-Soviet Space and the Unexpected Turns of Religious Life* [in:] *Conversion after Socialism: Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union*, M. Pelkmans (ed.), New York–Oxford 2009, p. 1–16; Z. Pasek, *Wspólnoty ewangelikalne we współczesnej Polsce* [in:] *Ewangelikalny protestantyzm w Polsce u progu XXI stulecia*, T.J. Zieliński (red.), Warszawa–Katowice 2004, p. 18–20 (13–49); W. Włoch, *Modele organizacyjne wspólnot pentekostalnych w Polsce po 1989 roku* [in:] „*Kolana zginaj tylko przed Panem*”. *Wkład protestantyzmu w kulturę Zachodu*, Z. Pasek (red.), Kraków 2017, p. 199–227.

² N. Modnicka, *Małe świąty polskiego ewangelikalizmu. Studium z antropologii interpretatywnej*, Łódź 2013, p. 118–120.

³ *Eadem*, *Specyfika polskiego ewangelikalizmu* [in:] *Ewangelikalizm polski wobec wyzwań współczesności*, S. Smolarz, S. Torbus, W. Kowalewski (red.), Wrocław 2013, p. 41–43.

⁴ J. Mironczuk, *Ruch ewangeliczny na Białostocczyźnie w XX wieku*, Warszawa 2015; N. Modnicka, *Małe świąty...*; *Ewangelikalny protestantyzm w Polsce u progu XXI stulecia*, T.J. Zieliński (red.), Warszawa–Katowice 2004;

Ewangelikalizm polski wobec wyzwań współczesności, S. Smolarz, S. Torbus, W. Kowalewski (red.), Wrocław 2013.

5 M. Hutchinson, J. Wolfie, *A Short History of Global Evangelicalism*, Cambridge 2012, p. 244–274.

6 K. Muranty, *Lotnik ewangelista*, Warszawa 2000; M. Hydzik, *Księga mojego życia*, Cieszyn 2015; J. Bałuczyński, *Nie bój się, tylko wierz*, Szczecin 2019.

7 Cf. K. Pędziwiatr, P. Trzeszczyńska, D. Wiktor-Mach, *Wieloreligijny Kraków a procesy migracyjne*, Raport OWIM, Kraków 2020, p. 57–58, <https://owim.uek.krakow.pl/wp-content/uploads/user-files/reports/Wieloreligijny%20Kraków%20a%20procesy%20migracyjne%20FINALrev30.03.21.pdf> [access: 16.08.2021].

religious landscape, as they actively participated in the local evangelical communities providing evangelization campaigns among the Polish people. We may assume that the migration processes conditioned by the political or geopolitical factors had a decisive influence on the quantitative and qualitative changes within evangelicalism in Poland. Regarding the Ukrainian evangelicals that found their way to Poland, one should mention at least such factors as: Poland's membership in the European Union (2004) and the war in Donbass (2014). The events have influenced the international position of Poland and made the country a migratory destination for people from Ukraine and other countries. We should not forget that, beside Ukrainians, Christians from African countries, the Middle East, South America, and India also chose Poland as a place of life and activity. They came for different reasons: as refugees, migrants, businessmen and, finally, missionaries planning to convey their mission to migrants, expats and Polish people.

The presented article offers rather preliminary findings, and by insisting on further studies, it limits its scope to the analysis of the selected biographical narratives of those who presented themselves as missionaries. Raising a question on the value of personal and biographical materials in the study of evangelicalism in Poland, it draws our attention to the growing tendency among Polish evangelicals, leaders, evangelists, or missionaries to publish memories and life stories⁶. Such materials might also be useful in reconstructing the historical connections between Polish and Ukrainian evangelical communities and the interethnic relationships in Churches. Nowadays, it is well-documented that Ukrainian believers can be found, practically, in all evangelical Churches in Poland⁷.

Methodological considerations

Despite the fact that the evangelical Ukrainians seem to work locally in Poland as the members of Polish churches

or of their own communities where Russian or Ukrainian languages are used during service, they constitute translocal and transcultural communities integrated into the Global Evangelical form of Christianity. Their activity is framed by migratory experience, which is reflected in both the individual autobiographical narratives and the understanding of the idea of Church. Having emphasized the importance of migratory and mobility experiences in shaping the Church life of the Ukrainians in Poland, it is hard to avoid the comparison between the local transformations and the changes that are occurring globally in Christianity at present. In her prolific study of Ukrainian evangelicalism, Chatherine Wanner sees global Christianity as “part of the cultural matrix into which economic practices, political orientations, and moralities were integrated”⁸. Referring to the situation of the post-communist Christian communities in Ukraine, she notices the process of integration of the Global Christian ideas and challenges into the local communities that were reshaped by new knowledge, and social, cultural, and religious practices. We may assume that the concept of world/global Christianity may be useful to categorize Ukrainian evangelical communities in certain socio-cultural Polish religious environments. Understanding the category of World Christianity as both an object of study and a methodological orientation⁹, we should identify the contexts, such as national, transnational, translocal, global, that shape or reshape the Ukrainian evangelical self-categorization. The problem of multiple centers of authority and multifaceted connectivities that determine the actions undertaken by the local Churches is of no lesser importance. The socio-cultural context, in fact, resonates with the way in which the narrative of a certain representative of Ukrainian evangelical Christianity is constructed and expressed in Poland. In this regard, a missionary autobiography, based on biographical reconstruction of the transforming and processual religious experience, should be perceived as a kind of evangelical

8 C. Wanner, *Communities of the Converted. Ukrainians and Global Evangelism*, Ithaca–London 2007, p. 13.

9 M. Frederiks, *World Christianity: Contours of an Approach* [in:] *World Christianity. Methodological Considerations*, M. Frederiks, D. Nagy (eds.), Leiden–Boston 2021, p. 16.

¹⁰ H. Gooren, *Conversion Narratives* [in:] *Studying Global Pentecostalism. Theories and Methods*, A. Anderson, M. Bergunder, C van der Laan (eds.), Berkely–Los Angeles–London 2010, p. 93–112.

¹¹ J. Straub, M. Arnold, *Acting as Missionaries: The Religious Self in Intercultural Practice: An Approach from Action Theory and Cultural Psychology* [in:] *Autobiography and the Psychological Study of Religious Lives*, J.A. Belzen, A. Geels (eds.), Amsterdam–New York 2008, p. 326.

¹² T. Löfstedt, *Megachurches in Russia and other Parts of the Former Soviet Union* [in:] *Handbook of Megachurches*, S. Hunt (ed.), Leiden–Boston 2020, p. 290.

¹³ Among them should be counted M. Sliazin, *Gdański projekt integracji. Jak zyskać nową tożsamość w Boży sposób*, Warszawa 2016; С. Потапов, *Инкультурація українських общин в церквях Християн Баттистов в Польше*, Варшава 2021 [unpublished dissertation].

¹⁴ The chosen Ukrainian leaders and pastors of the communities affiliated in Poland to the Church of God (two pastors), the Pentecostal Church (two pastors), and the Baptist Church (four pastors) were interviewed in that period in the languages preferred by the interviewees, whether the Polish, Russian, or English. Unless otherwise stated, I provide it in my own translation. It should be added that the interviews with Polish pastors as witnesses of changes and the growth of the Ukrainian communities have been conducted since 2014. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Wojciech Włoch for his assistance in obtaining information.

self-narrative sharing the same structure and pattern with a “conversion narrative”¹⁰.

Arguing that missionary activity is always shaped by culture¹¹ – evangelical culture defines the requirements and obligations for a missionary – we may assume that the missionary narrative reflects a kind of standardized biography. The culturally shaped idea of mission defines everyday attitudes of a person who calls himself/herself a missionary. Consequently, the question of what it means to be a Ukrainian evangelical missionary in Poland should be taken seriously in the study of Ukrainian evangelical communities. Torsten Löfstedt, a specialist on evangelical/pentecostal Christianity in the former Soviet Union states that the history of the local neo-charismatic Churches quite often overlaps with the biographies of their leaders and founders¹². In a broader sense, however, biography is a form of religious communication and serves as a base for establishing a biographical society that institutionalized biography through the Church service, giving space for life-stories, conversion narratives and sermons abundant in examples from a preacher’s life. The presented research is based on a variety of narratives: sermons and recorded services as well as published interviews and analyses made by the representatives of the Ukrainian evangelical communities in Poland¹³. The main source, however, are the biographical interviews with pastors that were collected in the period between November 2020 and September 2021¹⁴. Their self-presentation as missionaries influenced their narratives focused on mobility, activity, and responsibility that was associated with pastoral care and integration of the new members both with the old ones and with the Polish believers. Although the main idea was to collect the life stories during the conversations, some dispositions were introduced that embraced 1) the reasons for coming to Poland; 2) forms of activity; 3) challenges for Ukrainian-Polish relationships and 4) understanding of what it means to be a missionary. The missionary narratives,

as it has already been mentioned, are religious in content and argumentation, which is manifested for example in an emphasis on providential God's guidance. They are also immersed in Christian evangelical (Ukrainian) culture that insists on every believer to be a missionary¹⁵. Avoiding such a broad category of a missionary we should rely rather on the formal and institutional recognition of such a person, who additionally obtained special training¹⁶. It seems that the combination of research on institutional changes and on biographical narrations is unavoidable. Within the Ukrainian missionary narratives, we may distinguish additional subcategories that play a role of signifiers in biographies. They are associated with the experience of being a refugee, a migrant, or an (un)formal member of a certain Polish evangelical Church. We may assume that the formal and informal membership indicates both the problem of (auto)identification of the Ukrainian Christians and the question on temporality and variability, or rather hybrid affiliations resulting from loosening denominational boundaries or, on the contrary, from strengthening the differences – structural and theological – between communities. The missionary status may coincide with the experience of migration, which is well seen in the declaration of the Ukrainian pastors from Crimea or Donbass. But their former status and engagement in a certain evangelical type of Christianity, in this regard Pentecostal, neo-Charismatic or Baptist determine not only the work but also the cooperation on the institutional level and, finally, the recognition of a group headed by a Ukrainian leader as part of Polish Church or rather as an independent one.

Contextualization of Evangelicalism: Polish, Ukrainian, Global

The most accepted definition of evangelicalism is the one given by David Bebbington, who points out the four characteristics of the movement: 1) biblicism, which

¹⁵ C. Wanner, *op.cit.*, p. 136.

¹⁶ М.Н. Черенков, *Кадры Церкви: проблемы и задачи христианского образования на выходе из постсоветского транзита* [in:] *Традиция подготовки служителей в братстве евангельских христиан баптистов. История и перспективы, Сборник статей*, А. Синичкин, М. Черенков, В. Новаковец, С. Рахуба, А. Мельничук (ред.), Москва 2013, p. 254–261.

17 D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicals in Modern Britain. A history from the 1730s to 1980s.*, London–New York 1989, p. 2–3.

18 T.J. Zieliński, *Protestantyzm ewangelikalny. Studium specyfiki religijnej*, Katowice, 2014, p. 253–267.

19 *Religious denominations in Poland 2015–2018*, Warszawa 2019.

means devotion to the Bible as God's word; 2) cruci-centrism, which emphasizes the centrality of the cross of Christ in evangelical teaching and preaching; 3) activism, which simply means that every believer is a missionary; 4) conversionism, which means the conviction that every person has to convert, repent for their sins, to be "born again"¹⁷. Although Polish evangelicalism is highly fragmented, these core ideas are commonly accepted and used to identify evangelicals as well as to differentiate them from the dominant religious group in Poland – the Roman-Catholics. As it has already been mentioned, the fragmentation of the evangelicals in Poland along with the different appellatives used by the groups, communities and Churches blur the whole picture. Additionally, the evangelicals represent a variety of organizational and doctrinal entities with different forms of Church belonging¹⁸.

According to the statistics provided by the Central Statistical Office in Poland, the evangelicals constitute around 0.1 percent of the population¹⁹. The statistical research, however, does not allow us to see the whole picture of the religions and religious groups in Poland. The reason is that some organizations have not completed the process of registration, some, despite having been registered, changed their names, and some have experienced further divisions. It seems obvious that, from the perspective of an ordinary member, formal membership loses its value. The list of religious denominations in Poland published in the Central Statistical Office's report of 2019 consists of 203 records. Among the churches and religious organizations in Poland, the evangelical ones constitute a significant number. Among them, the Pentecostal Church (Kościół Zielonoświątkowy), with more than 25,000 members, is the biggest. However, there are considerably more denominations that place themselves within the Pentecostal tradition. Again, what we should keep in mind is the fact that the study of the churches and organizations is seriously challenged in terms of both

statistics and classification criteria. Pentecostalism (and in a broader sense evangelicalism) in Poland is represented by Churches of different origins with various organizational structures, and with what would be described here as “religious memory”.

The socio-cultural background of evangelical Churches that includes their history and memory plays an important role in self-identification and in creating the confessional borders. It seems important when we talk about the new Evangelicals/Pentecostals who have resettled in Poland over the last decade. The so-called classical Pentecostals represented by the Pentecostal Church trace their history from the religious revivals that occurred in the Western part of the-prewar Poland – which is part of Ukraine now. Nevertheless, history may be used for establishing a platform between the Polish and Ukrainian “classical” Pentecostals. Using the word “classical”, we should be aware of its arbitrary meaning. Leszek Jańczuk proposes the classification of Pentecostals in Poland based on the “revival waves”. Such an approach gives us an idea of both the diachronic changes and the ideological disruptions faced and assimilated by various Polish Pentecostal groups²⁰. The third revival wave, which is associated with “the faith movement” and “the prosperity gospel”, is represented by neo-Charismatic Churches. Again, the Polish Churches that based their practices on such values may communicate relatively easily with their Ukrainian counterparts. Of course, the problem becomes far more complex when we consider the divisions within the denominations caused by the congregational models they are based on. It means that the local churches are autonomous and loosely connected to one another. The churches that have appeared recently under the influence of the missionaries from Sweden, the United States and Australia are the most problematic for classification since they represent new forms of service. A good example might be the local Churches in Poland and Ukraine which belong to Hillsong Family churches.

²⁰ L. Jańczuk, *Wspólnoty pentekostalne w Polsce i ich klasyfikacja*, “Łódzkie Studia Teologiczne” 2016, t. 25, nr 4, p. 29–42.

21 K. Chech, *Polish Evangelical Churches Contribution to Building a Civil Society*, "Forum Pedagogiczne" 2015, t. 2, nr 1, p. 213–225.

22 *Релігійні організації в Україні*, https://risu.ua/religiyni-organizacii-v-ukrajini-stanom-na-1-sichnya-2019-r_n97463 [access: 16.08.2021].

23 А. Мелешко, К. Тетерятников, М. Черенков, *Миссия в Евразии: опыт и новые инициативы евангельских церквей*, т. 1: *Обзор*, Киев 2017, p. 25.

24 J.E. White, *Factors Behind the Ukrainian Evangelical Missionary Surge from 1989 to 1999*, Eugene OR 2020, p. 31–32.

25 C. Wanner, *op.cit.*, p. 147.

26 T. Löfstedt, *op.cit.*, p. 287. C. Wanner, *op.cit.*, p. 210–248.

Again, they represent the global transformation of the evangelical style of praying and worshiping and a move toward establishing a common evangelical culture. In Poland, the project "Evangelical Poland" (Ewangeliczna Polska), with its strategy to gain a greater attention among the Polish people, should be included among the unifying initiatives undertaken by various Churches. Another important aspect concerning the evangelicals is their social engagement manifested for instance in their assistance to the homeless or in rehab centers²¹.

We may assume that the main beliefs and practices are universally accepted by the evangelicals from Poland and Ukraine. But what makes Polish and Ukrainian evangelicals differ is their culture and the cultural patterns that have been shaped by the dominant religious systems, Catholicism and Orthodoxy respectively, the level of integration or assimilation of liberal values and historical experiences. In contrast to Poland, evangelicalism in Ukraine seems to be more visible and developed. Evangelicals constitute around 2 percent of the population²² and are divided into four main denominations: Evangelicals-Baptists, Evangelical-Pentecostals, Charismatics, and the rest that are referred to as Evangelicals²³. In the 1990's they experienced a huge increase in Church membership and a high rate of baptism²⁴. That resulted in the mushrooming of the Bible colleges and missionary institutions making Ukraine "an exporter of pastors and a training ground of clergy who will serve in the former Soviet Union"²⁵. At the time the Ukrainian evangelical missionary movement began, the country also became an attractive missionary field. Significantly, some of the churches established in the early 1990's transformed into megachurches. Among the vibrant evangelical congregations there were the ones established by Africans – the Embassy of God, established in 1994 by Sunday Adelaja, a Nigerian, and the Victory Christian Church founded in 1994 and headed by Henry Madava, who came to Ukraine from Zimbabwe²⁶. Again, it should be emphasized that

the Ukrainian evangelical movement developed under the influence of foreign missionaries yet at the same time created its own missionary idea and prospect of evangelization beyond the Ukrainian borders. In religious imagination Ukraine, situated between the West and the East, became a center of missionary enterprises that shaped its specifics. It is well seen in the statement by a Ukrainian evangelical scholar:

Ukraine is a hub country, a donor country. It was from here that the spread of Christianity in Old Rus began. It was from here that hundreds of missionaries spread across post-Soviet Eurasia. Also, here religious freedom that was unthinkable for neighbors flourished. Ukrainian evangelical Christians are open to the West and the East, they are ready to learn from everyone and serve everyone. Even the war could not dampen their missionary passion to serve their aggressive neighbors. We can say that this is an outpost of evangelical Christianity in Eurasia²⁷.

What seems to be important in defining Ukrainian evangelicalism is the political context and support that evangelical expressed to the democratic changes during the Orange Revolution and Euromaidan. Mykhailo Cherenkov sees the Maidan uprising as a turning point in the reformulation of the Ukrainian missionary ideas and an impact upon Ukrainian theological thinking²⁸. Explaining the specificity of the post-Maidan Cherenkov says that:

“Maidan theology” is narrative and biographical theology. It is a sum of the experiences, intuitions, and reflections of the people who actually took part in the events. The “little stories” of “little leaders” are not organized into a single text, and yet they are united by the same values and

²⁷ А. Мелешко, К. Тетерятников, М. Черенков, *op.cit.*, p. 24.

²⁸ М.Н. Черенков, *Миссиология после Майдана: шанс для украинских протестантов*, “Христианская мысль” 2014, № 8, p. 127–141.

²⁹ *Idem*, *Theologizing on the Maidan: "Maidan theology" in the Experience and Reflections of the Younger Generation of Ukrainian Protestants*, "Acta Missiologiae" 2017, vol. 5, p. 87.

³⁰ С. Потапов, *op.cit.*, p. 20–21.

connotations as well as by the relationships of civil and Christian solidarity²⁹.

While studying the Ukrainian evangelical communities in Poland, we should bear in mind what, in fact, influences missionary self-expression and what shapes missionary biographical narratives. The biographical signifiers would be the concept of Ukraine as a missionary state, the experience of Maidan and migration or, in a broader sense, mobility as integral part of missionary ethos. The various experiences of Maidan and the post-Maidan situation in Ukraine, especially the war in Donbass, are rationalized as an impulse for missionizing.

Ukrainian Evangelicals in Poland: migrants and missionaries

The growing number of Ukrainian evangelical Christians in Poland has been associated with the war in Donbass and the worsening of the economic and social conditions in Ukraine. As a result of migration, several years after 2014 migrants from Ukraine can be found practically in all evangelical churches in Poland. The year 2014 generally indicates an enormous growth of the number of migrants in Poland. According to different statistics there were around two million Ukrainians in Poland in 2019. The estimations were based on different data, like permission for work or a resident card issued for temporary or permanent stay. Regarding Ukrainian evangelicals in Poland, it is impossible to give a proper number. The estimations are made by pastors and leaders. Among the evangelical churches in Poland, the Baptist Church offers probably the most valuable data³⁰. From the very moment of the arrival of Ukrainians, the church has taken measures to integrate the migrants with Polish culture. That is why the most recent practical and theoretical studies have been published by the representatives of that church. Concerning the

Baptists, the official reports state that their total number does not exceed 6,000 but, according to the Church statistics, the number should be higher because of the Ukrainians that seemingly constitute at least 10 percent of all the Baptists in Poland. The first Baptist Ukrainian communities within the Polish Baptist Church were established in 2014 by a Ukrainian refugee from Donbass Maksim Sliazin. Soon, however, the Church authorities launched a program for training Ukrainians to become missionaries among the Ukrainians in Poland. Sliazin, who serves as pastor in the Baptist Church in Gdansk, explains his arrival to Poland in 2014:

So, it is probably necessary to start from the very beginning to explain how we appeared here as it had influenced what we did next. We were an ordinary Christian family, we lived in Donbass, and I was strongly engaged in musical ministry...

...the war came, it came suddenly, there was Maidan in Kyiv, so, Maidan was Maidan, there had been one, the second, and next came the third, we didn't take Maidan seriously in Donbass... but when they started shooting on the Maidan, it was already a little scary, but it also ended quickly, and Yanukovich lost the power. It was February, and in March the Russians took Crimea, and then serious problems began in Donbass, because Donbass is, well, a very pro-Russian region...

Everything became worse when some people arrived, I don't know, who they were, but they started riots, they were our people, Ukrainians, but they were Russian curators, when they arrived in the city, they began to spread a rumor that the spies were in the city and that they were Americans' spies, which means Baptists, the American agents who should be destroyed...

³¹ Interview with Maksim Sliazin, 30 August 2021 (originally in Russian).

And serious threats toward our church began and when the first person was killed in our city, I came home and told my wife to pack all our belongings and leave, so, then our daughter was five months old then, so we thought we would go to Lviv to visit our relatives there... we understood that we had to go to Europe to a neutral state, I didn't think about Poland but the message came that Poland opened the borders for refugees. We came to Poland in May 2014³¹.

The moment he arrived in Poland as “the first believing [it means a Baptist] refugee”, while he was still in a refugee camp, he contacted the Polish Baptist Church. Soon he took responsibility for organizing help for other refugees and organized the first Ukrainian Baptist community in Gdansk. Sliazin's life-story has a lot in common with other narratives told by pastors from Crimea and Donbass who seemingly came to Poland unintentionally, they were forced to leave their homes because of the war. They understood, however, their work and position as the implementation of “God's will” and the realization of “a missionary call”. Another interesting aspect is how they try to contextualize their mission whether by focusing on the local Polish/Ukrainian community or the much broader Slavic or European community. It seems that Maksim Sliazin contextualizes his autobiography not only to expose his personal experiences but also to make it clear that the cultural differences between Polish and Ukrainian evangelicals really matter. As such, his life-story is highly instructive because by presenting himself in cross-cultural contexts he depicts the cultural values that determine a group's behavior. Concerning the church culture, he indicates that Ukrainian one is more hierarchical, and being a pastor is a sign of prestige. When asked to evaluate the changes among the evangelical Ukrainians in Poland, he pointed out the qualitative transformation of

the Ukrainian community, which at the beginning had been attended by temporary workers but soon became a community attended by the whole Ukrainian families. It indicates a kind of feeling of stability and necessity to integrate with the Polish community but also raises another problem of possible intergenerational tensions when the children would become more deeply integrated with the Polish culture than their parents.

32 M. Sliazin, *op.cit.*, p. 23–24.

Analyzing the changes occurring among the evangelicals in Poland as a result of migrations, it is worth mentioning the difference of experiences between the Polish and Ukrainian Christians related to the functioning of the churches. Sliazin, referring to the Ukrainian Baptists, emphasizes that they are more conservative than the Polish ones³². Additionally, many Ukrainian pastors as well as the ordinary members seem to have experience of working or belonging to large communities or megachurches. As it has been already mentioned, one of the differences between evangelicals in Poland and in Ukraine is their position in the country of origin. Sometimes it also plays a significant role in missionary activity. Nevertheless, some Ukrainian missionaries have intentionally chosen to work in Poland. As one of the pastors says, emphasizing at the same the different situation of Polish Ukrainian evangelical communities:

I am a little different from the others. I had been a pastor in Ukraine for 20 years and I came here as a missionary, as a practicing pastor, but other missionaries came here either because of the war or for economic reasons. My approach, I would say, is a bit different from the others’.

Ukrainians here are in need, they are looking for help, but they carry the word of God with them, and may give something that the Polish churches are missing. Polish [evangelical] churches are small, for me they are small churches, if there are 50–80 people there, they

33 Interview with Mykola Glavnyk, 8 September 2021 (originally in Polish).

34 K. Pędziwiatr, P. Trzeszczyńska, D. Wiktor-Mach, *op.cit.*, p. 67–71.

are tiny churches. We have thousands of believers in churches. An ordinary church is around 500 people. And at every place where there are people there must be a church, and here... a man calls me, he wants to attend a service, I ask him where he lives, 150 kilometers from my church, and he must drive 150 kilometers to me to attend a service. It is obligatory for every place where the believers gather to have a church³³.

The study of the evangelical communities in Poland oriented on missionaries' biographies helps to reconstruct the beginnings of Ukrainian churches or congregations and their developments. A good example is the Church of Jesus Christ in Krakow affiliated to the Church of God³⁴. It is a Church of Pentecostal character. Although the Church had maintained contacts with various international churches inviting preachers and missionaries, it was not until 2014 that the community experienced a change caused by the inflow of Ukrainians. Referring to that moment the pastor of the Church states that: "The Polish Church members were not prepared to become a minority in their own Church". It caused some problems. However, when the Ukrainian community within the church became larger, they started to conduct their own service. They constitute a group of Russian-speaking Ukrainians from the Donbass region and, in addition to preaching the gospel, share their memories and experiences. However, again, when the Ukrainian community grew larger and some Ukrainians from Crimea joined, they experienced a division. As a result, quite different Ukrainian evangelical communities appeared. One of them consists of Ukrainians who try to assimilate with the Polish Church and basically with the Polish culture, the second one comprises the Russian-speaking Ukrainians with a global aspiration to work among the Russian-speaking people worldwide, and another one is formed by Ukrainians

who try to maintain their identity using Ukrainian/Russian in the Polish cultural context.

Conclusions

To conclude, we may assume that evangelical Christianity in Poland is on the eve of change. It may develop in two directions: 1) to make Polish church members aware of the truly global form of Christianity, which is imposed by migrants and missionaries from abroad, and 2) to affect the local forms of Christianity brought or exported by migrants and missionaries, making them, paradoxically, also more global. Globality in this sense means a process of negotiation of practices and creating a kind of synthesis, or a hybrid form, as we can see watching Polish – Russian services, a church meeting with the Polish members only led by a Ukrainian pastor.

Studying evangelicalism in Poland through the missionary narratives we observe that:

1. The evangelicals in Poland are experiencing the same structural and cultural transformations that are occurring in Global Evangelicalism there are caused by migrations and greater people's mobility. Moreover, the global changes connected to the local transformation create a new form of membership and cause the reorientation of church belonging and understanding of authority.
2. The changes in Polish evangelicalism are the result of broader political, geopolitical, and economic developments. They include Poland's membership in the EU and its impact on the creation of translocal communities of Polish evangelical Christians, and its influence upon the process of redefining the self-identity in reference to the growing transcultural evangelical communities represented by Ukrainians. It should be mentioned that the events in Maidan (2013–2014) and the outbreak of the war in Donbass played a decisive role in the appearance and

- growth of the Ukrainian evangelical communities in Poland. On the one hand, the events became collective memories of evangelical Ukrainians, and on the other, they were personalized and served as an initiatory experience of missionary work among the migrants, who turned out to be missionaries and missionaries who, at the same time, are migrants.
3. The migrations have a great impact on reshaping the local evangelical communities in Poland by influencing the personal identity of the Church members. Such an impact can be measured by studying a single biography with reference to the group identification within evangelical yet transcultural Churches (Ukrainian, Polish, Polish-Ukrainian) in Poland. In this regard, biography and autobiography should be categorized as a persuasive tool and a source for constructing a new transcultural, translocal, global evangelical identity.

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