

Hilarius Schebetz, Bohorodczany

Das Evangelium in der Ukraine (The Gospel in Ukraine)

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(translated from German with Google Translator)

Foreword

The author of this document, Pastor Schebetz, is the chairman of the Ukrainian Evangelical Lutheran Church. mission council.

We German Lutherans can be very grateful that, for the first time, a clear description of the evangelical movement in East Galicia is being presented here from the competent pen of a Ukrainian leader. It is high time that the events that are currently affecting the Ukrainian people in the Polish state became known to evangelical Christianity in Germany, but also in other countries. When the gospel begins to conquer a whole, large nation, then the motherland of the Reformation must not remain apathetic [impassive]!

Pastor Schebetz fought as a freedom fighter in the Ukrainian People's Army from 1918-1920 and fought for the independence of his fatherland. He was taken prisoner by the enemy, escaped in an adventurous escape to Czechoslovakia and Germany. Here, however, the fighter for the political independence of his country became a fighter for the religious and ecclesiastical liberation of his people.

He, who used to belong to the Greek-Catholic Church, is now one of the most zealous and faithful Ukrainian-Lutheran pastors, having returned to his homeland. It can't be any other way. For Christ says: "Whoever believes in me, as the Scriptures say, streams of living water will flow out of his body."

The undersigned had the great joy of lecturing with Pastor Schebetz in central Germany for four weeks on the cause of the gospel in the Ukraine. These thirty days of closest fellowship in work and prayer with the Ukrainian brother in faith were richly blessed by the Lord and brought with them inalienable spiritual gain. I don't want to miss her in my life anymore.

Now may the ever-rich God also bless this little scripture so that it awakens an echo in the hearts on its way through the hands and homes of the German evangelical Christians, awakens the conscience, creates a willingness to help and makes a reminder of the word of Christ: "You shall be my witnesses be to the ends of the earth!"

Erlangen, July 1932

Dr. Gottfr. Werner (first full-time Secretary General of the Martin Luther Association when the central office in Erlangen was set up before and after 1935.)

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The Gospel in Ukraine.

By Hilarius Schebetz, Ukrainian Evangelical Lutheran Preacher in Bohorodczany (Eastern Galicia)

"Our faith is the victory that has overcome the world." 1. Joh. 5,4

The Ukrainians are among the nations that were cheated of the much-vaunted "right of peoples to self-determination" after the World War. This people, which numbers about 44 million and inhabits an area of 850,000 square kilometers, ranks fourth among the peoples of Europe after the Russians, Germans and English, and second among the Slavic peoples after the Russians.

Before the World War, Ukrainians were divided between two states, Russia and Austria. In Russia they were called Little Russians, in Austria Ruthenians. By using these different and misleading names, the ruling states managed to hide the existence of a large people with their own language and literature, and their own history, dating back to the eighth century. So it happened that the German public knew little or nothing at all about the existence of this nation for a long time.

Who in Germany knows anything about the fact that almost a thousand years ago, under a Germanic ruling family, the Ruriks, the Ukrainians formed the most powerful and largest empire in Eastern Europe, an empire that stretched from the Black Sea to the Don and from the Carpathians to the Caucasus ? Who else knows that this people, after centuries of oppression by Poles and Lithuanians, made a large-scale attempt at the turn of the 17th and 18th centuries to regain their independence in alliance with Sweden? And who knows that after the collapse of tsarist Russia, Germany and its allies in the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty recognized the Ukrainian state as independent? Finally, who knows that from 1918-1920 a Ukrainian national army defended its laboriously won independence against Poles and Bolsheviks as well as against the White Guard General Denikin in a tough fight and that all this was ultimately in vain, because the League of Nations admittedly pulled out all possible Slavic tribes from obscurity out and made independent, but didn't think he had any reason to do justice to the great German-friendly people of the Ukrainians?

Today this people belongs to four states: Soviet Russia, Poland, Romania and Czechoslovakia. In the present paper, the focus should primarily be on the Reformation movement in the areas that are currently controlled by Poland and on the young Evangelical-Lutheran Ukrainian congregations located there.

In terms of religion, the majority of the people have so far belonged to the Greek Orthodox faith, which the Ukrainian prince Vladimir the Great introduced in 988. A smaller portion of about 4 1/2 million, residing in so-called Galicia, were forced into union with the Roman Catholic Church by the ruling Poles in 1569 and are still referred to as "Greek Catholics".

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The Reformation did not leave the Ukrainian people untouched at that time. The chronicles show about 100 evangelical Ukrainian congregations, which existed in the second half of the 16th and in the first half of the 17th century, albeit without denominational unity. But there were no men who would have led the people to the gospel as one body, and no missionaries who would have had the power to make the gospel faith a permanent property of the Ukrainian people. So it came about that the existing evangelical communities gradually disappeared again, especially since the Polish nobility knew how to drive the evangelical faith out of the hearts of the Ukrainian people. Only two parishes were able to hold their own until the first half of the last century, when they finally succumbed to the onslaught of the Catholic Church.

Of course, it must not be forgotten that Protestantism has managed to influence Ukrainian culture to this day and to leave its evangelical stamp on entire epochs of Ukrainian history. Since then, the Bible has never completely disappeared from the minds of the Ukrainian people. The most outstanding Ukrainian poets, scholars and philosophers were grouped around the Bible. In the 19th century, a group of evangelical people founded the "Association of Saints Cyril and Methodius", which set itself the task of spreading the Holy Scriptures among the Ukrainian people, establishing schools and raising the cultural level of the Ukrainian people. The greatest poet of the Ukrainian people, Taras Szewczenko, passed through this circle.

The Bible has had a strong influence on his literary work. In particular, it was the Old Testament prophets to whom he owed the enrichment and fruitfulness of his work. The translator of the Bible into the living Ukrainian language, Pantelejmon Kulisz (1819-1897), came from the same circle.



Photo: Pantelejmon Kulisz

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Panteleimon_Kulish_Bible.jpg

He worked on the translation of the Bible for a total of twenty years. When his house and manuscript (1872) burned down after twelve years of work, he started all over again and completed the translation with restless zeal. His work was only printed after his death by the British Bible Society in Vienna in 1903.

Kulisz's translation of the Bible found its way among the Ukrainian people in a very strange way. It did not make its way directly east from the printing place of Vienna to the Ukraine, but first came across the ocean to Canada and to the United States of North America, and only from America via the Adriatic port of Trieste to the Carpathian country! About 760,000 expatriate Ukrainians live in Canada, the United States and Brazil. There, far away, these emigrants came into contact with the Bible in their mother tongue for the first time. The number of Ukrainian emigrants who have become evangelicals is estimated at around 40,000 today.

After the World War, many of these emigrants returned to their original homeland and brought the book they loved and valued, the Bible, with them. Everything was wonderfully prepared here at home. Masses of Austrian, Hungarian, German, Turkish, Ukrainian, Polish,

Tsarist and Bolshevik troops rolled through the country during the war. In six horrific years, this area has shuddered under three bloody wars. Plagues, hunger and homelessness had done their part to awaken the old longing for eternity in the souls of the people.

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The emigrants from America now gather around them large circles of their fellow tribesmen, interpret the Word of God for them, and the fire that seemed to have died out in the 17th century begins to flare up again. An exchange of letters between the returnees and their past pastors in America led to two pastors of the Ukrainians who had emigrated to Galicia being called in the early summer of 1925 to explore the situation here. It turned out that the gospel had already put down strong roots, and the strange thing was that this movement grew out of the people all by itself in the most diverse places that had no connection with one another.

When the two pastors from America mentioned held Ukrainian evangelical services in two larger cities in eastern Galicia, the turnout was surprisingly large. She was in the thousands. The rooms that the Germans gladly made available were by no means sufficient to shelter all those who were starving for the Word of God. Worship services had to be held outdoors the following Sunday. After the first service, delegations came from many towns and asked that Protestant congregations be founded in their area. At the same time, two Catholic priests, one of whom had been in the service of the Greek Catholic Church for about twenty years and the other of whom was the personal secretary of Archbishop Szyptycki of Lemberg, volunteered for the ministry of the Gospel.

This was the public outburst of a spiritual movement which had hitherto been developing quietly among the Ukrainian people and which has since gripped larger and larger sections of the population. It is obviously God's will that this revival takes place in two separate reformatory directions, one in the spirit of the great German reformer Dr. Martin Luther, the other in the spirit of the Swiss reformers Zwingli and Calvin. Both branches, the Lutheran and the Reformed, certainly work together and side by side, but they are aware that only a clearly defined, unambiguous confessional standpoint can form the immovable basis of a truly evangelical church, and that a church can only depend on this able to defend itself against the onslaught of opposing powers (Rome, sects, atheist movement).

We Ukrainian Lutherans are very grateful that our young congregations were able to develop in close accordance with the "German Evangelical Church A. and H. Confession in Lesser Poland" and thus stand in organic connection with the Evangelical Churches of the rest of the world.



Photo: Theodor Zöckler

<https://kulturstiftung.org/personen/zockler-theodor>

The well-known and esteemed church pastor Superintendent D. Theodor Zöckler in Stanislau, together with his son-in-law, Pastor Lempp, the rector of the Stanislau institutions, rendered very grateful services to the Ukrainian evangelical communities of both directions. The same must be said of the German pastor Lic. Weidauer in Kolomea. There were moments when the Ukrainian evangelical cause owed its existence to these men. This should remain unforgettable from our side!

World Lutheranism, which in a highly gratifying manner repeatedly provides us with resources without which we might no longer exist today, will hopefully soon be able to help our so bitterly poor individual congregations to constitute themselves as an independent Lutheran church

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and thus cease to be a financial burden felt to be oppressive for the Stanislauer Anstalten D. Zöckler or the German Evangelical Church A. and H. Confessions in Lesser Poland.

Allow me now to delve into the history of the individual Lutheran congregations and to paint a vivid picture of how their young ecclesiastical life developed and is still taking place.

It is understandable that one of the first Lutheran congregations was founded in the center of German-Protestant life in East Galicia, in the city of Stanislau. This city, about two hours by express train southeast of Lemberg, has about 70,000 inhabitants, including 2,000 Germans. Here is the center of Evangelical-Lutheran Ukrainian life. Of course we don't even have our own building here! In addition to the apartment of the pastor Theodor Jarczuk, the headquarters of the movement are located in two rooms in a rented house.



Photo: Theodor Jarczuk

https://benio123o-pl.fandom.com/pl/wiki/Teodor_Jarczuk

Leaflets and pamphlets are published here, and Ukrainian preachers gather here monthly for their deliberations and decisions. The congregation does not have its own church. She is

dependent on holding her services on Sundays in the German evangelical church, which is kindly made available to her by her German fellow believers. The German services take place at 10 a.m., the Ukrainian ones at 12 p.m.

The current pastor of the Ukrainian parish of Stanislau, Pastor Jarczuk, first studied Catholic theology in Rome for four years. In 1926, when he was about to be ordained a priest, he was given leave to ask his parents for the parental blessing necessary for ordination. The path led him through the town of Stanislau, past the German Evangelical Church. Suddenly he heard Ukrainian songs ring out. It drove him into the church, and here he noticed that it was an evangelical Lutheran church. Ukrainian worship acted.

The service made such an impression on him, who was disgusted by the conditions prevailing in Rome, that he did not return to Rome, but turned to D. Zöckler and asked for its use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church. movement asked. After a few semesters of study in Posen and Tübingen, he was accepted into work and today works in blessing among his people.

In him we have an employee who, among other things, does important things for our cause, especially through his literary activities (e.g. publishing the leaflet "Prozry", i.e. "Augen auf!" and the youth leaflet "Nowy Swit" i.e. "Neuland"). He is also the secretary of the Ukrainian Evangelical Lutheran Church mission council. This missionary council, which the brethren have entrusted to me to chair, meets every three months, or more frequently if necessary. It consists of us pastors and preachers who are at work and of the representatives of the individual congregations, who are elected from among the congregational representatives.

Its task is to spread the Holy Gospel among the Ukrainian people, to strengthen the existing churches and to make important decisions in the interest of the well-being of the individual churches and their entirety. The church leadership of the "German Evangelical Church of the A. and H. Confession in Lesser Poland" will be informed about the decisions and resolutions that have been made. The municipality of Mykitynce, which was founded in the spring of 1926, is located three kilometers east of Stanislau.

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Unfortunately, this congregation is not yet in the fortunate position of being able to call its own little church or even a modest house of prayer its own. The services take place in a small farmhouse, which of course has far too small rooms to provide even a reasonably suitable and sufficient accommodation option. As early as 1927, the parishioners wanted to build a modest chapel from their own funds, but the authorities were by no means friendly to the matter. The construction plans that were repeatedly submitted were not approved, so that the foundations, some of which have already been completed, are still there today as witnesses of "justice".



In spite of these difficulties, the congregation is in constant growth both internally and externally.

Another community was established in 1927 in Krechowce, a few kilometers south of Stanislau. At first, a few people from this village went regularly to Stanislau to attend the Evangelical Lutheran service there and repeatedly gave testimonies in their village of what moved them inwardly. Gradually, I gathered around her an ever-increasing number of followers of the gospel.

Eventually there were so many that separate services had to be set up, which for a time, as is always the case initially, are held in a farmhouse. This little church has been in use for years now, but is still not finished! With its raw brick walls, it is not plastered either on the outside or on the inside. The actual ceiling is also missing, which has been replaced by a provisional made of weak slats and the floor is missing.

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Volumes are also not in the church. This has the great advantage that many people can be accommodated even in a small space.

Since January 14, 1932, the church in Krechowce has served a second congregation, which came into existence not too far away in the village of Pacykow. On Sundays, the church members of this village come to Krechowce to take part in the service there.

A little further away, about 20 kilometers from Stanislau, there is a town called Bohorodczany, which is the summer residence of the Greek-Catholic bishop and which, with its two thousand inhabitants, was the seat of the district administration. Not far from this town is Old Bohorodczany, which boasts no less than five Catholic churches. There the seed of the Gospel fell on fertile ground, and in August 1927 an Evangelical-Lutheran congregation was constituted there, too, which was immediately joined by about two hundred families.

It didn't take long for a simple Lutheran church to rise up alongside the five Greek Orthodox churches. It was erected in nine days, hewn together from plain $\frac{3}{4}$ inch planks that were not planed or jointed, and the building authorities were presented with a fait accompli. The

municipality did not want to run the risk of being put off by the Polish authorities with the building permit for years. Everyone can imagine that this construction, which was completed in nine days, is not exactly outstanding in terms of durability and resistance. Four years later, the inner casing is still missing. You can see the skeleton of beams inside.

The ceiling is only made provisionally. The windows are nailed to the beams without window frames. The door frames are also missing. The floor is made of pounded clay, and of course there are no volumes. The building offers only makeshift protection against inclement weather such as storms, rain, snowstorms and the like. The simple planks that make up the walls have dried up over the years and branches have fallen out, leaving large holes and gaps for the wind to whistle through worryingly! As a result, the little church is not usable during the winter months for the elderly and children who - as is very often the case - do not have warm clothing.

The children's services take place in a farmhouse during the cold season. Next to this building there is a somewhat consumptive wooden scaffolding, which is supposed to represent the bell tower. The small bell attached to it may only be struck by moving the clapper to either side. The usual ringing of the bell by pulling a rope would cause the belfry to collapse. Next to the bell hangs the steel shell of an aircraft mine from World War I, which is also "ringed" to reinforce, not to say beautify, the ringing.

A small parish of Nywocyn, which is located in the foothills of the Carpathians and was founded in 1928, belongs to the parish district of Old Bohorodczany, which was just mentioned. This community suffers from very great poverty. Today, their members are even deprived of their earning potential. The main source of income for them was that they cut down wood in the large forests in the area, bought wood and processed it into building material and sold it on. For some time these forests have belonged to the Greek-Catholic bishop, who bought them from Count Schönborn.

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Since then, the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Communities neither find employment in it nor buy wood. They are turned away at the forest barrier with the words: "The evangelical truth has no place here in the forest!" All those of other faiths, even Jews, may benefit from the forests, except for the evangelical Ukrainians. As a result, many church members are exposed to misery and even have to suffer from hunger.

The congregation gathers for their services in a farmhouse, the room of which is not even completely finished. The windows could only be installed last year in late autumn. The great poverty of the congregation does not allow building a modest house of prayer.

Die Größe der Armut des ukrainischen Volkes in meiner Heimat ist schwer zu beschreiben. The poverty of the Ukrainian people in my homeland is difficult to describe. In the Carpathian region today there are many families of eight to ten people who only own one pair of boots. For many, the diet consists of potatoes and home-mashed sauerkraut. For many months not a piece of bread is put on the table! The living conditions are extremely primitive. The camps are often just wooden, self-made bunks on which long straw is spread, which is covered with a self-woven blanket.

In the mountain regions the people don't even have straw on their beds, but sleep on the bare boards. Beds and pillows are only found in the wealthier families. The great majority of the population of the Carpathian country uses the folded fur vests, which they wear in summer and winter, as pillows, and the larger furs, which are put on at funerals or on trips, serve as covers. The elderly as well as the children sleep on the back part of the oven, which is

specially developed for this purpose. The oven is not only used for baking bread, but primarily for cooking everyday food.

The opening of the oven opens into a chimney. The pots with the food are placed at the mouth and brought to a boil by the flame that erupts. Only recently have real cooking stoves with hotplates been found in the new buildings. The furnishing of the only room, which serves as a cooking, living and sleeping area at the same time, is formed by the above-mentioned wooden bunk, benches set up along the wall, a table and, if things go well, a simple wooden chest or even a kitchen cupboard. The walls are very often decorated with colorful deep plates. The Catholics possess a very rich adornment of sacred images. In addition, the living room is "embellished" a lot with self-made paper flowers. Again, only the very wealthy have wooden floors in their homes.

Most of the time you only find the clay soil that is brushed twice a week with clay water. The old houses don't even have a chimney. The smoke is directed through an opening onto the floor of the house and from there it has to find its way outside. One must often have the impression that such a house is on fire, especially since the smoke penetrates from all joints of the thatched roof to the outside. Due to the special construction of the oven, the risk of fire is almost impossible. The thatched and wooden roofs are practically preserved by the smoke, and in a certain sense one can say the same of the inhabitants of such houses, because in oppressive and foggy weather a lot of smoke stays in the living room.

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A few things can probably also be said about the clothes here. The Ukrainian population must be careful to make their own clothes as much as possible. Coarse canvas and coarse wool fabric made on the hand looms are used for this. Cut and fashion play no role here. The women and girls dress very brightly; especially the latter like to wear a necklace in the form of glass beads or glass coral necklaces. The fabric of the clothes we buy is about the same as very cheap, simple satin. From the clothing of girls and women it is easy to determine from which area, even from which town, the population comes. The men often wear their shirts over their trousers. In Germany, of course, such a costume would cause quite a stir. Big city fashion is also trying to find its way into the rural districts of eastern Galicia.

But the boundless shortage of money is putting a hitherto insurmountable obstacle to the advance of fads. The bridal outfit of a wedding couple generally consists of the existing clothes and, in the case of the bride, also of a long, white linen cloth, which is draped in front like a shawl. This is intended to represent or replace the veil. The bridal jewelry consists of a wreath of artificial, often only paper flowers, which are lined with many colorful ribbons that hang down the back. In most cases, not only the groom wears long boots, but also the bride!

It would go too far within the scope of this little book if we wanted to describe the state of culture of the Ukrainian people in more detail. One thing is certain, however, that the cultural backwardness of large sections of the population is due solely to the Greek Catholic Church and especially to its priesthood. Again and again people in the pulpit fought against the rural population sending their children to secondary schools wherever they could. My deceased father, who gave us three sons an academic education, also had to find out that the priest treated him with the greatest reproaches and hostility because of this.

We see clear proof that the Ukrainian Lutheran movement is a thing willed by God in the fact that despite the bad cultural and today particularly critical financial conditions, God's holy fire is kindled and blazes brightly in more and more new congregations. On January 24, 1932,

with the help of Pastors Jarczuk and Pyszczuk, I was allowed to hold the first solemn service in the large town of Maniawa, which is 20 kilometers from my home in the Carpathians and is a well-known Catholic pilgrimage site. There are the ruins of the ancient monastery of Skyt Maniawski.

For centuries, the monks of this monastery successfully defended themselves against the union with the Roman Church. Due to a decree by the Austrian Emperor Josef II, the monastery was finally destroyed and has since been the destination of pilgrimage for many devout Catholics. Every year in July, the crowds flock and this opportunity is exploited for a large sale of indulgences. About 50 families already belong to the young evangelical congregation, and it is making giant strides in its development. In any case, for us Lutherans, this evangelical base means the spiritual predominance in the entire south-west of eastern Galicia.

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Photo: The Evangelical Lutheran Kamienna church under construction (due to lack of funds, the building remained in this state for a long time).

Thanks to the friendly mediation of influential personalities in the political community, the young community is in the fortunate position of having a suitable room for worship purposes in an old school across from the Catholic Church. The property has already been offered to us for purchase at a very reasonable price; the building lends itself well to conversion into a modest chapel. God the Lord help that it soon becomes a property of the Evangelical Lutheran Municipality of Maniawa.

In order to still the almost unprecedented hunger for the unadulterated gospel, we held an evangelical prayer week in the Maniawa congregation, as in others. This not only strengthened and strengthened the newly won members of the congregation, but also brought the gospel to the widest circles that had been distant from us. We actually rang a very big bell by establishing the Maniawa Church! The repercussions spread very quickly across the country.

A few days later, two new communities reported for conversion, Lazarowka and Werbiatyn, not too far from the district town of Buczac, in which the Catholic missionary school and a Basilian monastery are located. We Lutheran mission workers didn't have enough strength to take care of these congregations that were applying for conversion, and we therefore had to direct the Reformed preachers there, who also took on the work vigorously. Prayer weeks were immediately held in both churches and our leaflets and brochures were widely distributed. As a result, other new communities immediately applied for conversion, namely: Ldzkie, Nyzkolozy, Korostiatyn, Jezierzany-Barysz. Even Zarvanica, the most famous place of pilgrimage, where major pilgrimages with indulgences take place twelve times a year, sent its delegates to the Evangelical Ukrainian Week of Prayer to establish an evangelical congregation there. The necessary preparations for this have been made, as in the already mentioned town of Buczac.

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In the parish of Pacykow, the first service was held by Pastor Jarczuk on February 14, 1932. The community there has made a remarkably good start in its development. She has suffered greatly from persecution by the Catholic Church. One of the few parishes that is fortunate to have a small church today is the parish of Kamienna. At first she suffered greatly from the

lack of suitable accommodation. She had to change the worship room three times. One of them was even the site where a Catholic couple kept their chickens, which didn't help the room look dignified or solemn. With the greatest sacrifices, the congregation was able to erect a simple little church built of wood, which is still awaiting completion, but is already being used for worship purposes. In addition, it must not be concealed that a debt burden of 2,500 zloty (1,200 marks) weighs heavily on the members of the congregation.

Hard cash, even in small coins, cannot be seen in many houses for months, and there are enough people who do not know the value of the money in circulation at all! Anyone who thinks about this will not be surprised that most of the evangelical-luthic population are unable to buy a Bible in their mother tongue or even buy a New Testament or parts of it for their children who attend our children's church services . - In the near and far surroundings of Kamienna, the proclaimed gospel has become so effective that a number of localities have the urgent desire to also go to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. belonging to the Ukrainian Church. Unfortunately, they have had to be turned away or put off for later, because our strength and resources are not remotely sufficient to look after so many communities!

One of our largest municipalities is Palahicze. Pastor Wladimir Demczyszynm, who received his education and passed his exams at the German University of Erlangen, works in this place. Before converting to the Evangelical Lutheran faith, he had studied Greek Catholic theology for a while. He comes from an old priest family. (As is well known, priests in the Greek-Catholic Church were allowed to marry.) From the outset, the services in Palahicze were attended by such a large crowd that it was not possible to find a room in the whole place that would have offered enough space in the long term. In winter the so-called reading hall was used. In many villages, a Ukrainian society that has set itself the task of raising the state of culture, with the participation of influential and well-funded circles, has set up "reading halls" where the population likes to meet.

The reading hall in Palahicze was admittedly too small for the worship purposes of the Evangelical Lutheran congregation. Many had to stand outside the open windows and doors to listen to the preaching of the word. No matter how cold and rainy the weather was, those outside insisted on patiently holding out until the end. In the summer, weather permitting, the services were held outdoors, often gathering thousands or more people.

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Who would blame this congregation and its pastor for striving with all their might to build a house of God. With great enthusiasm and a lot of joy, but also with unimaginable sacrifices, it was achieved that the building could be realized. At the end of August 1931 the ceremonial consecration of the new church took place. A considerable debt still weighs on the building, one sometimes wants to rear one's head threateningly with concern, and the situation has sometimes been almost desperate. The Catholic priests immediately found out about the building debt for the Evangelical Lutheran The situation that had arisen in the congregation was orientated and had incited the Catholic construction workers, who still had a demand to demonstratively turn to Pastor Demczyszynm and ruthlessly demand from him the payment of all wage debts at once.

Incited workers gathered on October 28, 1931 and marched to Pastor Demczyszynm's apartment in Tluacz. Shouting profanities, they rushed into his apartment and began shouting, "Scammers, pay us for our work!" No excuses or pleas from the beleaguered minister helped. He was forced to call the police to disperse the angry people. Some of the church leaders who were in the pastor's apartment saw these incidents and were so touched that they burst into

tears. They stood there helpless and were unable to help because the community had already done the utmost that it could do and can do absolutely nothing more to clear the debt for the prevailing economic crisis.

Something else needs to be said here. Shortly before the consecration of the church in Palahicze, the Catholic bishop Chomyszyn made his last attempt to ruin the upcoming consecration and possibly the entire congregation. He had a big "mission" announced. Priests with their processions and residents were summoned to Palahicze from 27 Catholic villages. Two services were held daily, in which the monks of the Basilian and Redemptorist orders took part. Basically, their sermons were nothing but invective and diatribes against the evangelical faith. The reformers were dragged into the mud. During the event, a severe storm suddenly set in. The thousands and thousands of people who had gathered in the place looked for shelter and found it with the evangelical tribesmen.

The evangelical tribal brothers took the opportunity and accommodated their catholic compatriots in the evangelical sense by doing the utmost possible to make the stay as pleasant as possible for those who had come from far away. They sat with them until the morning hours and read them the Holy Scriptures in the living Ukrainian language. This made such an overwhelming impression on many that they burst into tears of joy. During this fourteen-day Catholic "mission" probably four thousand evangelical leaflets and other writings were distributed. Success was not lacking. In a very short time after this "mission" we were able to host two more Evangelical Lutheran churches in the immediate vicinity of the Palahicze congregation. Municipalities establish Bratyszow and Cazarnolocze.

During the aforementioned "mission" a Catholic funeral took place. A man had died who, although a follower of the evangelical faith, had not yet officially converted to the Evangelical Lutheran congregation. He was therefore buried by the Catholic priest.

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He gave the following funeral speech: "Dear brothers and sisters! Look at that coffin! There is a man in him that you all know. This man didn't die, he croaked. Yes, croaked like a dog, and his body fell apart in the dust. In the end nobody helped him, neither the evangelical pastors, nor Stanislau, nor America. It will be the same for every one of you who sticks to the evangelical cause and takes part in its service." This funeral speech also had an effect, but in a different way than the one who held it thought. In the days that followed, several families converted to the Evangelical-Lutheran community! –

On Sundays, children's services are held in Palahicze, which are regularly attended by more than 70 children. As early as September 1931, our church leadership (Sup. D. Zöckler) submitted an application to the school inspectorate for the purpose of giving religious instruction in the school. We have a legal right to do this, since religious instruction in our school is given by the responsible clergyman. However, due to delays by the authorities, this matter has not yet been settled in Palahicze to this day.

Now (mid-April 1932) a second Catholic "mission" was held in Palahicze, but it was much gentler than the one described above. The municipality of Jezierzany is located near Palahicze. The history of its origins is similar to that of most parishes: Some residents of this place had taken part in the Evangelical Lutheran service in the parish of Palahicze. They reported about it in their home town, and the result was that the people of Jezierzany did not rest until they, too, received the first evangelical service in their place. The following Sunday, 78 members declared themselves in favor of converting to the evangelical faith.

Our fellow believers in Jezierzany have suffered a lot from the hostilities of the Catholics. For example, it happened once that a fanatical Catholic decided to throw a large stone at the head of the Ukrainian pastor who was supposed to be conducting the service. He also carried out his plan. But the stone he threw through the window of the worship room did not hit the officiating minister, but a young girl who was standing nearby in the face, injuring her severely. With a broken nose, the girl had to be taken to the hospital in Stanislaw. Here began a real martyrdom for the girl. The Catholic nuns who were entrusted with the care of the sick treated her very unkindly, which was particularly noticeable when the bandages were changed every day.

Again and again it had to be accused of its evangelical faith. With the most varied of means one seeks to lead the "lost" little sheep back to the "solely saving" Church. But the young girl was not fooled by anything. It remained true to its Evangelical Lutheran faith. Loyalty was soon rewarded. A short time after her recovery and after her return home, despite her major blemishes, she got a very good and competent husband and is today a happy, exemplary young wife.

The parish of Jezierzany suffers particularly from the fact that to this day it has neither a small church nor even a house of prayer. Until a few months ago, services were held in the village reading hall.

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However, after the windows of the reading hall were repeatedly smashed by the Catholic tribesmen in the winter of 1931/32 in order to prevent the holding of Protestant services, and after this repeatedly caused greater damage to the house, the society that owned the reading hall resigned belonged to the lease. Today the congregation is left without even remotely satisfactory accommodation, without a room in which to hold services and Bible studies. It goes without saying that this very poor congregation would thank God on their knees if there were a way to get hold of a place of worship.



Photo: A Ukrainian peasant family in front of their house.
"The gospel is preached to the poor"

In April 1931 we faced the urgent need to start an evangelical church in the town of Jezupol, 22 kilometers from Stanislaw, as well as in the village of Pobereze, 6 kilometers from the city. These two communities have also developed very positively to this day. Especially in Jezupol there is a lively and deep community life. The members of the church are all possessed of a tremendous zeal and strive to win as many new members as possible for the gospel. Both

congregations are regularly looked after on Sundays by Pastor Jan Pyszczyk, who works there, who puts his full effort into doing his job with a love-infused zeal.

The Jezupol community has leased a simple farmhouse for many years and had it renovated so that it can be used as a prayer house for services, children's services and Bible studies. Participation in church services, especially children's services, is very large. – For a long time there has been no Catholic religious instruction in the town school. The religious lessons taught by the Catholic priest had gradually turned into pure debate lessons. The children keep asking the priest questions, which he often couldn't answer. There it was said, for example: "In the Holy Scriptures it is written like this, but the Catholic Church teaches quite differently!"

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One day this became too much for the priest and he began to scold: "What the pastors are telling you is not the Holy Scriptures at all, they thought it up and wrote it down themselves." A boy of about ten years spoke up old, and asked the priest: "They say that what the pastors teach us is not scripture. But what about the following: in the Catholic Church there is a large wooden statue. The sculptor who made this statue is now evangelical today! Catholics pray to this statue and say it is Saint Nicholas. How can this statue be holy when it was made by an evangelical sculptor." That was too much for the priest. He beat the boy and threw him out the door. And that was the last religion lesson that the Catholic priest held in this school. From October 24 to November 7, 1931, a Catholic "mission" was also carried out in this Jezupol parish and personally led by the Catholic Bishop Khomyschyn. Our young congregation passed this test fire very well. Neither the Catholic speeches nor the pamphlets distributed by the Catholic Church helped. The "mission" was very poorly attended, so Bishop Khomyschyn publicly expressed his astonishment. He's surprised that the residents aren't even that curious and don't even come just to see and get to know him. After the Catholic mission, another 17 new members declared in writing that they would convert to our church. The municipality of Pobereze, which, as already mentioned, was also allowed to come into being in April 1931, experienced a period of stagnation. The reason for this was offered by political struggles which took place in the community. Today, however, the municipality of Pobereze is a lively municipality and a witness to the near and far surroundings. The following is clear proof of this: A Baptist congregation that has existed in the neighborhood for a long time has declared itself to convert and join the Ukrainian Evangelical-Lutheran congregations due to the influence of the Evangelicals in Pobereze. The Pobereze congregation is fortunate to have a house of prayer which they have leased for about ten years (a reading hall which they finished building themselves).

The closest commune is the commune of Czornołozce, which is located in the Tlumacz district, eight kilometers from the city of Tlumacz. On April 13, 1931, three delegates came to Stanislaw and took part in the Ukrainian Evangelical-Lutheran service there. On May 2nd, the first evangelical service was allowed to take place in a residential building in Czornołozce. A man named Demjanyk made a special contribution to founding the community. He became acquainted with the evangelical faith during his stay abroad in Canada. After his return he gathered people around him who were hungry for the Word of God.

Today they are in the fortunate position that the Holy Gospel is being preached to them in their mother tongue. Approximately 2-300 people take part in the services on Sundays. Until then there had been an immense intellectual and spiritual darkness in the place, which was nurtured not only by the Catholic priests, but also by the landowner and the Roman Catholic crèche. From 13th to 22nd The Protestant Week of Prayer took place there in December. At the end of the week of prayer, 473 people took part in Holy Communion.

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In the Catholic Church, the custom is that after each mission that has taken place in a place, a large wooden missionary cross is solemnly buried in front of the church, which is often hugged and kissed by the Catholics. After our week of prayer, a Catholic asked an evangelical brother: "Where do you want to bury your evangelical missionary cross? You don't have an evangelical church, do you?" He got the answer: "We have engraved the cross of our Lord and Savior in our hearts, and it shines out into the wider area." - The evangelical faith has here despite the persecution that the community has to endure on the part of the above-mentioned bodies, has taken root quite deeply and is expressed in the everyday life of the community. One can hope that one day it will become a powerful church.

The village of Antonovka was organized by the resident Seman Solonyna, who is known in the whole area for his zealous work in every field for the benefit of the Ukrainian people. On April 14, 1931, he appeared with a delegation in the parish of Palahicze and asked for an evangelical parish to be established in his town. Pastor Chomiak was visiting the Palahicze parish that day. As a result of the request he went to Antonovka and held the first evangelical service there in the house of the named person. The entire church choir, as well as many other members of the Catholic community, have declared their conversion to the Protestant faith in writing. Due to the large crowds, the services were held outdoors until late autumn.

The last service was held on September 8, 1931, due to the cold weather. A week of prayer was also held during the winter. To our greatest regret, the building site on which the services took place is no longer available to our congregation. A reading hall is currently being built there. As a result, the congregation finds itself in a very difficult situation, not only that it has no accommodation for its services, it has also lost the free space where it used to gather for the services. Here, too, the Lord God will find the way and let the right help come at the right time, especially since the community is a very hopeful area and a center for the whole area and neighboring towns.

The neighboring parish of Baryszow, which is not too far away from Antonowka, began evangelical-Lutheran services as early as May 3, 1931. This community was organized by the blacksmith Gregor Paluga. At first they came to church services after the Antonovka congregation on Sundays. From January 17 to 24, 1932, the week of prayer took place in the church. The congregation also developed very positively. Unfortunately, difficulties and coercive measures imposed by the authorities have recently brought its development to a standstill. The Ukrainian cooperative has leased a large, beautiful house for the purpose of worship. There is good hope that the difficulties that now exist in this church will become glories.

Pastor Demczyszyn has been living in the town of Tlumacz for a year. His zealous work, which he unfolded in the church, has borne many good fruits. On February 10 of this year, an Evangelical-Lutheran Ukrainian congregation was founded in Tlumacz itself. The first Bible study was held by Pastor Demczyszyn in the large reading hall with the participation of around 200 members and supporters. The Catholic Church finds this hard to bear and is preparing for a serious confrontation.

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But God is our confidence and strength, a help in the greatest need. – The beginning of evangelical life in the town of Tlumacz went as follows:

Pastor Demczyszyn's milk supplier bought a book about the life of Dr. Borrowed from Martin Luther. However, this book did not remain in the hands of this one man, but passed from hand

to hand and the contents from heart to heart. And one day Pastor D. was invited to give two information evenings in the reading hall, which also took place. Since March 1, 1932, Pastor D. has moved into another apartment in which there is also the possibility of using a large room for Bible studies. And so, on March 25, 1932, the first Bible study took place with 150 participants. Now a regular Bible study is held every Friday in the home of the named person.

The evangelical movement was also joined by the professor of the teachers' college, Dr Osyp Turjanskih, a Ukrainian writer in Tlumacz, who also agreed to give literary support to the evangelical movement. The development of the Evangelical Lutheran movement in such a difficult economic time is the clearest proof that it is a God-given cause. Not only East Galicia, but also Volhynia, cries out for Evangelical Lutheran pastors and preachers. The remnants of the student movement of the time have been influenced by our literature for a long time. The German-Evangelical-Lutheran pastors are so friendly and convey the same to the Ukrainian environment.

Unfortunately, today it is not even possible for us to send even one Ukrainian pastor to Volhynia. The harvest is great, but the workers are very few. Exactly the same call came to us from the Stryj district in eastern Galicia. It is terribly difficult to have to renounce the desire for the unadulterated gospel.

And now I would like to give a modest insight into the situation in Volhynia:

Volhynia is a country that was under Russian rule until the World War; after World War II it came under Polish rule. The population is 80% Ukrainian and belonged to the Greek Orthodox Church by religion. Up until World War I, the Greek Catholic Archbishop of Lemberg was tasked with converting the people to union with Rome. After World War II, when Eastern Galicia was ruled by Poland, the task was entrusted to the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Lublin. Since that time, Rome has created what is known as the Eastern Union, which has the specific task of winning the ruins of the Greek Orthodox Church for union with Rome. For this purpose, the so-called Collegium-Ukrainum was created in Rome, which is financed by the Greek-Catholic Bishop Chomyszyn.

A second training center for Eastern Union theologians was established in the town of Luck, Volhynia, headed by Bishop Czarnecki, a former Redemptorist monk. Rome is mobilizing all the forces at its disposal on the frontier of the Soviet Ukraine and is preparing combat troops among the Ukrainian people in order to invade the interior of the Greater Ukraine with these combat troops at the moment when the frontiers of the Soviet state fall and a corresponding one to salvage harvest.

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And now let us cross the border between Poland and Soviet Russia and direct our eyes to Greater Ukraine, where the Bolsheviks (ungodly movement) have now pitched their tents.

Before the war, dissatisfaction with the ruling state church, as well as the longing for the unadulterated word of God and the powerful example of immigrated German settlers, led to major revival movements within the Ukrainian people from about 1870. As a result, important ecclesiastical splinter groups came about. Stundist as well as Baptist ministers have spread interest in the Scriptures among the people. Entire governments were gripped by ardent religious interest. The persecutions by the state authorities and the state church were happily endured.

There was even no lack of martyrs. After the World War, when the Soviet government asserted itself in the Ukraine, these two currents received religious toleration. The Soviet government even encouraged it with an official decree on the separation of the state from the

church and used it as a welcome new element of decomposition within the old state-church remnants. The group of Stundists active before the war has multiplied and now appears under the name of the so-called gospel writings. The group of Baptists has also increased and is conducting its propaganda throughout the Ukraine.

Here I would also like to mention the so-called Ukrainian Orthodox Autcephalic Church. It adhered to orthodox dogma but introduced numerous forms that were very reminiscent of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. She allowed the liturgy in the Ukrainian mother tongue, as well as the sermon. She introduced Bible studies and also brought the lay element into accountability in church leadership. In 1929 this church had about 3000 congregations with about 30 bishops. The metropolitan was Archbishop of Kyiv, who was banished to the Soloviev Islands in 1928 at the age of 80.

A sinister phenomenon that has come to fruition in the territory of Eastern Ukraine is the idea of Bolshevism, godlessness. It brought many measures that led to the annihilation of every religion. The methods used to fight were three principally: force, law, and corruption. Where bishops and clergy resisted the expropriation of churches and monasteries, they were imprisoned by the government, sent or killed. Many churches were closed, turned into theaters, cinemas, proletarian clubhouses, dance halls, bathhouses, etc. The killing of the clergy of all denominations was and is very numerous. As another method of struggle, the law was used. In 1929 a law was passed which brought tremendous difficulties and burdens to the churches.

In addition to these two types, all believers must daily put up with the final test imposed on them by the Bolshevik state. Bolshevism already began to destroy bourgeois morality in the family, about which much has already been reported and written.

As we can see, three intellectual movements are now alive in Eastern Europe, mostly on the territory of Ukraine. The question involuntarily arises: Which of these three intellectual movements will prevail? The Reformation, Rome or the Revolution? The future will answer this question for us.

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We evangelicals can be reassured by the victory of the Holy Gospel. But we might be anxious about the question of whether the Holy Gospel will win its victory with us, without us, or even against us.

This modest portrayal of the situation in the Far East would like to be a cry for help to the entire evangelical world, to take note that the decisive battle is raging there and not to fail to support the victorious holy gospel and the Ukrainian Evangelical Lutheran congregations with all their might.

God grant us that!