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**Charisma and Institution in the History of the
Pentecostal Church in Romania (1922-1989)**

(Summary)

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The main objective of the present thesis is the presenting, through theological and historical research, historical process of development of the Pentecostal Movement in Romania during the years 1922-1989, the anonymous group stage, and the illegal stage, to the point of worship recognized by the State, which has different characteristics from one period to another, theology and practice regarding baptism with the Holy Spirit and the way in which the charismatic gifts were modified, influenced or changed, how it occurred and what were the factors that caused or which attempted to determine these changes.

To achieve this goal, besides historical writings on Romanian Pentecostal, the author used many archival documents: The National Archives of Romania, The State Secretary for Religious Archives, The Archives of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives, and the archives of local churches or individuals magazines, both published by Pentecostals and other magazines that referred to Pentecostals, brochures, newspapers, and manuscripts. Verifying the information was accomplished through interviews with active members in the Pentecostal Movement who could testify about the work of Pentecostal leaders or could clarify the context of events.

The structure of the thesis consists of four chapters, as follows:

1. The Charismatic Pentecostal Theology in Romania during 1922-1989

In this first chapter, using publications and manuscripts belonging to Pentecostals in Romania during the years 1922-1989, it was studied that the Romanian Pentecostal perspective on spiritual gifts may not have a native corresponding (reference to 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10), the report among these charismatic gifts and the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the fruit of the Holy Spirit and the spiritual manifestations. Analyses conducted of the Romanian Pentecostal conception regarding the manifestation of these spiritual gifts today and how they are obtained. Errors in connection with the work of the charismatic gifts were, presented in the Pentecostal writings,

which included abuses and fraud that may have arisen. A chapter analyzes the rules that were promoted in Romanian Pentecostal practice in relation to the manifestation of the gifts.

In the second part of this chapter is presented the Romanian Pentecostal conception on each of the nine charismatic gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12: 8-10.

2. The Pentecostal Movement in Romania in Search of Official Recognition

At the beginning of this chapter there is an analysis of the information about the date and place where the first Pentecostals in Romania were registered. There are discussed three major possibilities.

One of them, that becomes more and more insistent lately, places the area of the beginning of the Romanian Pentecostalism in Bucovina. About this area as being the early stage of developing Pentecostalism. Several versions are supported, from the moderated ones that present the years 1922, 1920, 1918 to the immoderate claiming variants as 1911 or 1908. As early villages Vicovu de Sus and Udești are considered.

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A touchstone for the accuracy of such information on emerging Pentecostal groups in Bucovina is Eugene Bodor, a prominent Pentecostal leader in Romania, who joined Pentecostalism in 1929, living at that time in Burdujeni (then a suburb of Suceava, Suceava neighborhood today) supports having as opponent George Bradin, anteriority German Pentecostal group in the Medias to the Arad area, being completely ignorant about earlier Pentecostal groups in Bucovina, which if they had information certainly would have used it to dispute with George Bradin.

Another serious problem that appeared in the indicated period is that of three leaders of Bucovina Pentecostals, Arcade Coroamă, Constantin Pătraș and Pavel Coroamă, published in 1972, an article in the Pentecostal Bulletin, stating that the first person in the area who had experienced the baptism with the Holy Spirit was Cristian Gavrila who had joined the Pentecostal faith in 1928, hearing about the faith from Augustin Buta, in Transylvania.

Regarding the appearance of Pentecostalism in Romania among the Germans in Sibiu, in the villages Dârlos or Curciu by 1919 or 1921, is much better documented. Although the Pentecostal faith did not spread throughout the country, but remained within the German community.

The fact is that in 1922 the group appeared at Păuliș (now placed in Arad, then placed in Timișoara region), whose main characters, the Bradins, Gheorghe and Persida, were from whom Pentecostalism spread across the country.

The first chapter presents the spreading of the Pentecostal doctrines across the country.

In 1924, the Pentecostal group in Păuliș tried several times to obtain official recognition from the Ministry of Religious Affairs, but without any positive results.

In 1929, a quite large group of Pentecostals developed in the Brăila-Galați region. Thus, a new strategy to be recognized as an official religious cult was tried. Pentecostals took the name of Apostolics, the location of the headquarter was no longer Păuliș, but Brăilița (a suburb of Braila), and leaders replaced with others: Mihai Radu and Ion Bododea. First the ministry sent an ambiguous response, followed by several negative responses. Finally, they understood that Apostolic and Pentecostal denominations refer to the same group.

In all the decisions of the Ministry of Religious Affairs that followed, the Pentecostal religious groups were included in the prohibited list.

In the interwar period Pentecostalism, was a relatively new religion, there were some reactions from other Christian denominations in Romania. Their attitude may be observed from the articles published in some magazines and even in some books and brochures. Such criticism may be noticed from Baptists, Evangelicals and the Orthodox. Within the interwar period reactions were

analyzed, but only that of the bishop Grigorie-Gheorghe Comşa, is the most extensive and, one might say, the most documented.

Among the articles written by the Baptists regarding the Pentecostals one may detach points of view ranging from cessation to accepting gifts in current times, having only some objections about the Pentecostals, such as public manifestation of the glosolaly if there were no interpreter present .

In articles written by the Evangelicals there are described some facts committed by Eugen Bodor when he was an Evangelical and certain charges to other leaders: George Bradin and Ion Bododel, nicknamed Bododea.

The resistance of Bishop Grigorie-Gheorghe Comşa against the Protestant denominations, especially Baptists, but also Pentecostals is revealed in many books and pamphlets which he published on the subject. In Bishop Comşa`s opinion, otherwise a widespread idea in the interwar period, sometimes supported today, a Romanian must be an Orthodox Christian. The belief of the Bishop was that the emergence and development of religions such as Baptists, Pentecostals and Advents were due to actions initiated by Hungarians and Romanians aiming at denationalization. He also feared that these confessions could have been used by the Communists to take over Romania.

There is a positive side of the resistance of the Bishop Comşa against "sects": the missionary organizing of the priests.

In continuing the chapter there are presented a series of persecutions experienced by the Pentecostals in Romania in the interwar period. Information about these were preserved in the

publications of that time. In addition of the abuses they suffered, in this period there are recorded three Pentecostal believers who died during the persecutions of that period; Partenie Pera from Lipova, who died in 1927, Gabriel Cârștian (or Cristian) died in 1935, and an anonymous martyr who died in December 1936, while he was imprisoned for his Pentecostal faith.

At the end of this chapter there is presented the controversies and schisms that occurred in the Pentecostal Movement in Romania in the interwar period. The biggest controversy of this period was related to the practice or act of foot washing after the Lord's Supper (communion). This controversy is discussed in detail. The group that did not practice foot washing appeared after the mission carried out by missionaries belonging to the Mission to Eastern Europe and Russia based in Danzig (now Gdansk). The separations that had occurred between Pentecostals in that period were preserved and after World War II.

Also from that period is recorded the reaction of a group from Moldova that was opposed to the hierarchical organization of the Pentecostal denomination, probably under the influence of Evangelicals.

3. Reconfiguring Institutional Identity. Underground Versus Integration in the Baptist Church (1938-1945)

In 1938, because of the tightening of the persecution a compromise was tried. Many Pentecostals joined the "Association of the Independent Baptists", association that received recognition from the Austro-Hungarian state before 1918, also having the recognition of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Romania and a small number of members. The collaboration with this group was short-lived, because of differences arising between Gheorghe Bradin, the leader of the Pentecostals and Alexander Szaday the leader of this association.

After the failure of the collaboration with Alexander Szaday, Gheorghe Bradin negotiated with Iosif Iacob, who was the president of the Arad Branch of the Baptist, resulting in the inclusion of many Pentecostals in the branch. Joining the Baptist Church became a model followed by the Pentecostals from other parts of the country, although not all of them accepted this compromise, some preferring clandestinely.

The recourse in the Baptist Church proved to be temporary because on December 28, 1942, by Decree-Law no. 927, the Baptist, Adventist and Evangelical denominations were abolished because it was believed that, through their connections with Great Britain and the U.S. the believers contribute to the dissolution of the national unity of the Romanians. Following this decree, many Pentecostal believers who did not renounce their belief, along with believers from other Evangelical denominations, were convicted and usually sent to 25 years in prison. Among them, it is the known martyr, Voicu Rusin, from Lascar Catargiu, Covurlui County (now Schela, Galați County), who died on the 24th of August 1944, when the prison was hit by a grenade.

4. The Communist Period (1945-1989)

In the first chapter, which examines the evolution of the Pentecostal movement in Romania during the communist period, was studied the evolution of the three Pentecostal groups that took shape after World War II. The conditions imposed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs for the final recognition of the Pentecostals were the unification and the entrance into "The Federation of Evangelical Cults" with Baptists, Adventists and Evangelicals. This centralization was done after the Soviet model for the state to have a better control over these confessions.

In the second chapter, there was analysis of the ways in which the Communist state attempted the interference in the internal affairs of the Pentecostal Church, seeking to influence leaders and believers, both on the perspective of society and on the terms of doctrine, aiming at stopping the

growth of the number of Pentecostals thus reducing their number and even destroying this confession.

The first aspect analyzed in this chapter is the collaborating with the Security. The Security's objectives are fulfilled by forming the Pentecostal agency, in which there were recruited many pastors and believers to whom were added and infiltrated people from outside, how they were recruited and the way the believers and pastors related to Security requirements.

Further analysis of how the ministry sought the uniformity and the standardization of the Pentecostal church services, thus prohibiting the manifestation of the charismatic gifts. There is also identification of the reasons why some Pentecostal songs from the repertoire were forbidden to be sung by the Communist censorship in 1952. Some of them were reinstated, with some modifications, in the edition of 1970.

Further studied is the political propaganda that the Pentecostal believers were subjected to and how the Pentecostal Bulletin magazine was politicized by conditioning its appearance by publishing certain articles.

In the fourth section of this chapter there is study of some internal actions of the cult generated by the coercion of the Communist state. These actions consisted of promoting and marginalization of people in leadership positions, ordering divine services only on Saturday evening and Sunday morning to up to 2 PM, assignating of smaller communities to larger ones to prevent the growth of small communities by dissolution and of large ones by overcrowding. The most important goal that was pursued by the ministry in the Pentecostal communities was the "strengthening of discipline", an expression that can be understood as prohibiting the manifestation of charismatic gifts.

Further it is considered the perspective of the Cults Department on Pentecostalism. Although it was a religion recognized by the State, the Pentecostals were considered by the staff from the Department of Religious Affairs as "an infection", "sickly mysticism", "fanatics", "bigoted" and against culture.

The last section of this chapter we review examples of direct persecution borne by Pentecostals in Romania during the Communist period. These were discriminations; at work and in school, dismissals, fines, up to investigation, imprisonment and convictions for illegal religious activities or for trafficking Christian literature.

In the third chapter there are explorations into the ways in which Pentecostal believers resisted the actions of influencing and limiting religious freedom that the Communist state tried to impose on churches, in our case the Pentecostal church

An immediate reaction to the limitations imposed on the Pentecostals during the Communist period was the formation of the dissident groups. Their multitude determined the Security to speak of an illegal religious group that was named by them "Pentecostals Dissidents". Some of the groups formed had the merit to transform themselves into a genuine anti-Communist resistance. Others reached to some doctrinal deviations because of certain false prophets. In time, many believers who were attending the official meetings were also attending the underground religious meetings, where the charismatic gifts could be practiced without restriction.

Then, with the help of some Western organizations, were organized clandestine Bible studies and also was very well organized illegal Christian literature trafficking. Although the information about these illegal activities is difficult to recover, some information about these activities was found in the Security's files. Partly, they can be recovered from the testimonies of some people involved, but because of the clandestine, these people do not know details.

Also, in this section is researched information about illegal acts of worship performed in the Romanian Pentecostal churches. In the context of the Communist authorities` control and limit to the number of those who were baptized, the clandestine practicing of this act of worship was a common situation in the Pentecostal Cult.

In addition there may be noticed illegal ordinations made without the permission of the Department of Religious Affairs.

There was a direct resistance to the constraints of Romanian Pentecostals coming from the Communist state, resistance that consisted of; certain public statements, letters of protest sent to authorities of the native country or to foreign organizations or radio stations, resistance to enrollment in the “colectiv”, community building or expansion of houses of worship without authorization, etc. Information concerning these events there is presented in the last section of the thesis.

Conclusions

In the first quarter of the century of their existence in Romania, Pentecostal believers carried out their activity underground, totally or partially – it is the case of those who integrated themselves in the Baptist Cult between 1938-1945. The group that has spread the most in the country was the group that had appeared at Păuliș, having Gheorghe Bradin as its main leader; this group was the first that sought for official recognition from the State.

The prohibition of the Pentecostal`s activity in Romania by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in the interwar period was caused by social attitudes of the period, attitudes characterized by a radical religious nationalism. More specifically, in the context of the unification of Transylvania with Romania, it appeared a real phobia about possible actions that other states could pursue to disintegrate the Romanian state. So often, Pentecostalism was seen either as an attempt of

Hungarians to make Romanians to forget their religious traditions - Eastern Christianity type - either as an infiltration with imperialist aims of the British or Americans. The slogan "To be a good Romanian means to be an Orthodox " was uttered axiomatically by some personalities at that time. Another concept, which is the opposite to the above one, is the idea that Pentecostals were Communists who were making political propaganda under religious covering.

Actually, Pentecostals were often persecuted, at the pleasure of some local authorities, even though it could not be proven that Pentecostal doctrine would have affected any organization of the Romanian state and its institutions, or that it would be contra vented to public policy and morality.

Pentecostals are preachers of Christianity that must resemble the apostolic identification. Besides, the Christian doctrines recovered by Protestantism - salvation by grace only, not by merit, but by faith, not by deeds, but by Christ, not through the intercession of saints, Scripture as the only authority in matters of faith, holiness living and spiritual discipline for all believers, not only for monks - Pentecostals bring attention to the manifestation of all gifts, faith and baptism with the Holy Spirit, their way of performing must be identical to the one described in the New Testament.

In the interwar period in Romania, although Pentecostals were persecuted, their number increased at a rapid pace, so that in 1931, ten years after converting the first Pentecostals in Romania, the statistics show a number of 3,560 Pentecostal believers throughout the country, that seven years later it reached the figure of 7,270.

Since 1938, because the persecution increased, most Pentecostals in Romania found refuge in the Baptist movement, meeting all legal forms to become members of the Baptist Church. This period lasted until 1945 and culminates with the removal of Baptists outside the law which did not lead to the disappearance of Pentecostals in Romania. Instead, in 1945, there were 15,000 Pentecostals in Romania.

After World War II, Pentecostals in Romania gave up the clandestine, organizing themselves into three groups seeking official recognition. This reorganization period of Pentecostals coincides with the accession to power of the Communists in our country, when a new context is created with specific situations, different than before.

It is obvious that the Communist atheism could not find a good home with a Christian denomination. One of the goals of the Communist state was to destroy faith in God. This goal was reflected in some clear objectives that Security had during this period. For their work to be better monitored by the Communist State, Pentecostals would need to be removed from the clandestine.

At the same time, it also was necessary for centralization, according to the Soviet model, on one hand of the Evangelical denominations by federalization and on the other hand, Pentecostal believers would need to be forced to unify the three groups existing at the time.

The official recognition of Pentecostals in Romania as a religious organization by the Communist state was a trap for many Pentecostal leaders, in particular Gheorghe Bradin - at that time the main leader of Pentecostals in Romania - who, during the interwar period, suffered many beatings by policemen because of his Pentecostal faith. Those beatings could not make him deny his faith, was completely unprepared, both intellectually and morally, mentally and spiritually, to distinguish the new way established by the totalitarian Communist State. This trap did not require a direct apostasy, but it tried, little by little, to model every religion in the image of Communism, for this purpose, the resorting to such means as: the recruitment of employees of security (leaders and ordinary believers who form an agentura inside the cult), the politicization of publications, the control of staff and offices held in the Pentecostal Cult, the religious services regulation, the assignation of the community of believers, the attempt to prohibit the charismatic experiences, the fight against the dissidents, etc.

A Pentecostal net disadvantage in its dealings with the Communist state was the fact that, unlike the other three evangelical denominations; Baptists, Evangelicals and Adventists, the Pentecostals were first officially recognized by the People's Democratic regime after a quarter-century of the clandestine. This has led to a helpful speech to the regime for the favor it had made to Pentecostal believers,- giving them religious freedom. In this context, it explains the easy acceptance, by George Bradin, of the actions of the Security to promote or remove leaders in leadership positions, actions that constituted a pattern perpetuated by the Revolution in 1989.

A legacy of the communist era is the suspicion hanging over many Pentecostal ministers, that they collaborated with the Security. As the verdict of collaboration must take into account more than just signing a pledge, the assuming of solving this problem requires to be made about institutional by the Pentecostal Cult in Romania.

The believers` resistance of the Communist regime involvement in religious activities of the Pentecostal Cult materialized in various actions, including: organizing illegal groups or clandestine meetings for prayer or Bible study of individuals who were members of Pentecostal church, faithful involvement in clandestine traffic with religious literature, etc. All these actions led to persecution by the Communist totalitarian state.

From the perspective of the Communist state influences on the Pentecostal movement in Romania, one may say that, in terms of doctrine, this was not a negative one. The Communist state failed to influence the Pentecostal doctrine, even as persecution interwar period or integration in the Baptist movement failed to do; the context characteristic of these periods led rather to temper some extremes in Pentecostalism arising in the Pentecostal practice, but not reflected in publications published in a recognized institutional framework.

Traces of this period can be seen particularly at the level of mentality as that of maintaining in the Pentecostal Institution of an innovation implemented by the Communist regime - "the pastoral branch". According to this one, a person shepherds four, five to ten communities that sometimes have a large number of members. The Communist regime sought overstressing of the pastors and lower quality.

There was also perpetuated a serious aversion to the institutional structures, many Pentecostal groups choosing independence even after the 1989 Revolution. This aversion appeared because, in the context of the early years of the Communist period, Pentecostal teaching on charisma was implemented greatly in the clandestine dissident conditions. Because of some theological and practical errors occurred among these groups was difficult to be controlled, but easily influenced and during the last decades of Communist dictatorship developed increasingly in Romanian Pentecostalism semi-clandestinely. Many people who belonged to the recognized religious groups, were participating in clandestine meetings of prayer and Bible study, also where were in practice the charismatic gifts.

Although it can be noticed some different interpretations about the baptism in the Holy Spirit and charismatic gifts, official theology of these is static, the Romanian Pentecostal doctrine of charisma in the period 1922-1989, is in line with the actual creed.