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Petros Vassiliadis

University of Edinburgh, ir_vassiliadis@csl.edu

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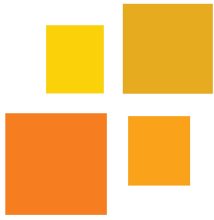
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Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series

VOLUME 17



Orthodox Perspectives on Mission



Edited By
Petros Vassiliadis



REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES
Volume 17

Orthodox Perspectives on Mission



REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES

The Centenary of the World Missionary Conference of 1910, held in Edinburgh, was a suggestive moment for many people seeking direction for Christian mission in the twenty-first century. Several different constituencies within world Christianity held significant events around 2010. From 2005, an international group worked collaboratively to develop an intercontinental and multi-denominational project, known as Edinburgh 2010, and based at New College, University of Edinburgh. This initiative brought together representatives of twenty different global Christian bodies, representing all major Christian denominations and confessions, and many different strands of mission and church life, to mark the Centenary.

Essential to the work of the Edinburgh 1910 Conference, and of abiding value, were the findings of the eight think-tanks or ‘commissions’. These inspired the idea of a new round of collaborative reflection on Christian mission – but now focused on nine themes identified as being key to mission in the twenty-first century. The study process was polycentric, open-ended, and as inclusive as possible of the different genders, regions of the world, and theological and confessional perspectives in today’s church. It was overseen by the Study Process Monitoring Group: Miss Maria Aranzazu Aguado (Spain, The Vatican), Dr Daryl Balia (South Africa, Edinburgh 2010), Mrs Rosemary Dowsett (UK, World Evangelical Alliance), Dr Knud Jørgensen (Norway, Areopagos), Rev. John Kafwanka (Zambia, Anglican Communion), Rev. Dr Jooseop Keum (Korea, World Council of Churches), Dr Wonsuk Ma (Korea, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies), Rev. Dr Kenneth R Ross (UK, Church of Scotland), Dr Petros Vassiliadis (Greece, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), and co-ordinated by Dr Kirsteen Kim (UK, Edinburgh 2010).

These publications reflect the ethos of Edinburgh 2010 and will make a significant contribution to ongoing studies in mission. It should be clear that material published in this series will inevitably reflect a diverse range of views and positions. These will not necessarily represent those of the series’ editors or of the Edinburgh 2010 General Council, but in publishing them the leadership of Edinburgh 2010 hopes to encourage conversation between Christians and collaboration in mission. All the series’ volumes are commended for study and reflection in both church and academy.

Series’ Editors

Knud Jørgensen	Areopagos, Norway, MF Norwegian School of Theology and the Lutheran School of Theology, Hong Kong. Former Chair of Edinburgh 2010 Study Process Monitoring Group
Kirsteen Kim	Leeds Trinity University College and former Edinburgh 2010 Research Co-ordinator, UK
Wonsuk Ma	Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, Oxford, UK
Tony Gray	Words by Design, Bicester, UK

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Volume 17

Orthodox Perspectives on Mission

Edited by Petros Vassiliadis

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FOREWORD

Since the 2010 centenary celebrations of the famous World Mission Conference at Edinburgh in 1910 and the subsequent meeting of the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches at Manila 2012 the ecumenical discussion on mission has entered a new phase. A new ecumenical affirmation on mission and evangelism “Together towards Life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes” will be presented to the forthcoming 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Busan/Republic of Korea. It has clearly benefitted from the broadening of the circle of partners in the discussion on mission, including now not only recognized Orthodox and Roman Catholic, but also Pentecostal and Evangelical representatives from all world regions.

It is in this context that the present publication on “Orthodox Perspectives on Mission” comes as a welcome and timely contribution to the renewed efforts to articulate a common understanding of the missionary vocation of the Christian community. The editors of the Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, and Petros Vassiliadis as the editor of the volume, deserve grateful recognition for making this valuable compilation of Orthodox voices on mission available. For too long the Orthodox churches with their particular and very rich history and tradition of missionary outreach have remained on the side-lines of Christian efforts for cooperation in mission and evangelism.

This has changed during the last 40 years, not least thanks to initiatives of the World Council of Churches with the aim to encourage Orthodox participation in the missiological discussion through a series of Orthodox consultations on various mission topics and by establishing a special desk for Orthodox studies and relationships in mission in the secretariat of its Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. The fruits of these efforts have been shared in several earlier publications. These include e.g. “Martyria/Mission. The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today”, ed. by Ion Bria (Geneva 1980); “You Shall be My Witnesses. Mission Stories from the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches”, ed. by George Lemopoulos (Katerini 1993); and “The Liturgy after the Liturgy. Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective”, ed. by Ion Bria (Geneva 1996).

The present volume can therefore build on an already relatively consolidated consensus regarding the specific Orthodox perspectives on mission. In his extensive introductory remarks the editor, Petros Vassiliadis, explains the genesis and purpose of the publication and offers an initial exposition of the parameters of the Orthodox perspectives. As he points out, the understanding of mission in the context of the Orthodox tradition is intimately related to the ecclesiological self-understanding of

the Orthodox churches, especially the central significance attributed to the Eucharistic liturgy. He further underlines that an adequate explanation of the Orthodox perspectives has to consider the sense of a living tradition as well as the trinitarian basis of all Orthodox theology and should further take full account of the pneumatological, eschatological and cosmic dimensions. This means that any attempt to offer Orthodox perspectives on mission inevitably leads into the very core of the Orthodox ecclesial tradition.

It is this conviction which has guided the selection of papers and articles by eminent Orthodox theologians for *part one* of the present volume, entitled the “Orthodox Heritage”. Most of these titles have been published previously and some of them have been included in earlier collections of significant Orthodox contributions to the ecumenical movement (e.g. “The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement. Documents and Statements 1902-1975”, ed. by Constantin Patelos. Geneva 1978). However, this present compilation is particularly valuable since it includes classical titles, like the essay by George Florovsky on “The Church: Her Nature and Task” or the address by Nikos Nissiotis on “The Witness and Service of Eastern Orthodoxy to the One Undivided Church” presented to the WCC assembly at New Delhi (1961), as well as contemporary voices by Emmanuel Clapsis, K.M. George or Petros Vassiliadis. It reflects the positions of senior hierarchs, like the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew and Catholicos Aram I and embraces both the Eastern and the Oriental Orthodox tradition. While any such selection will remain subjective and incomplete (unfortunately the Russian Orthodox Church is not represented), it is particularly important that the presentation of Orthodox perspectives on mission opens with the magisterial paper by Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos), the pre-eminent Orthodox missiologist and member of the presidium of the WCC, and that the addresses by Gorge Khodr, John Meyendorff and John Zizioulas have been included which have had a lasting impact on the ecumenical discussion.

Part two of the volume groups the main Orthodox presentations to the centenary conference at Edinburgh 2010 as well as papers that had been prepared as part of the study processes leading up to the Edinburgh event. The authors include many younger Orthodox theologians, both men and women, and their contributions allow the reader to take a closer look at some internal critical dialogue and analysis within the Orthodox community. This is true in particular with regard to the issues of mission among other faiths, the approach to theological education and the question of inculturation. While it is clear that these voices do not yet represent a dominant position in their respective churches, they clearly show that Orthodoxy has found its distinctive place in the ecumenical discussion on the missionary vocation of the church.

The publication of this volume just prior to the WCC assembly at Busan constitutes a well deserved tribute to the substantial contribution that the ecumenical discussion on mission and evangelism has received from

Orthodoxy. The editor, Petros Vassiliadis, represents and continues in his own person the long tradition of this active Orthodox participation. It is hoped that his thoughtful preparation of this present volume will serve as an incentive to carry this tradition forward into the future.

Konrad Raiser, former General Secretary of the WCC
Berlin, August 2013



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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Petros Vassiliadis

Orthodox Perspectives on Mission is both a humble tribute to some great Orthodox theologians, who in the past have provided substantial contribution to contemporary missiological and ecumenical discussions, and an Orthodox input to the upcoming 2013 Busan WCC General Assembly. There is a long history of similar contributions by the Orthodox before all the major ecumenical events.

Given this last remark the three components of the title (“Orthodox”, “mission” and “perspectives”) need some further clarification.

(i) “Orthodox”, “Orthodoxy” or “Orthodox Christianity” is normally defined in confessional or denominational terms, that is, as the eastern branch of Christianity, which was separated from the West around the beginning of the second millennium CE. In the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* the Orthodox Church is described as “a family of Churches, situated mainly in eastern Europe: each member Church is independent in its internal administration, but all share the same faith and are in communion with one another, acknowledging the honorary primacy of the Patriarch of Constantinople”. These *autocephali* (headed by a Primate) churches are, in the following order, the four ancient patriarchates (the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople – the “New Rome”, and the Patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem), the newer Patriarchates of Russia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria, the ancient churches of Georgia and Cyprus, the churches of Greece, Poland, Czech and Slovak lands and Albania. In general, most textbooks of church history with a western perspective make little or no reference to Eastern Orthodoxy after the Great Schism between Eastern and Western Churches in 1054 – or at least after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. In ecumenical discussions, however, especially in WCC parlance, the adjective “Orthodox” applies to both the major streams of Eastern Christianity: the above group as described by the *Oxford Dictionary*, which is normally referred to as “Eastern Orthodoxy”, and the other group, consisting of the churches in Syria, Egypt, Ethiopia, Armenia and India, normally referred to as “Oriental Orthodoxy”. The latter are also known as non-Chalcedonian because they did not accept the Christological definition of the Council of Chalcedon (451).¹

(ii) The book was originally prepared as an Orthodox contribution to the major missionary event of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, the international conference which is normally convened between two General Assemblies of WCC. However, this time the period

between the 2006 Porto Alegre and the 2013 Busan General Assemblies of WCC coincided with the centenary of the first – ecumenical in character – missionary conference of Edinburgh in 1910. It was for this reason that the traditional CWME conference became a “pre-Assembly mission event” (Manila 2012) and more space was given to the Edinburgh 2010 conference and centenary celebrations. Some of the material of this volume was taken from that occasion.

(iii) The term “perspectives” needs a more detailed explanation. What can be an Orthodox perspective, when the very attribute “Orthodox” is widely understood as having more or less negative connotations? Not to mention, of course, that Orthodoxy always appears as something “exotic”, an interesting “eastern communitarian phenomenon” vis-à-vis the “western” individualistic mentality, provoking the curiosity and enriching the knowledge of western believers and theologians. According to an eminent Orthodox theologian, this role has been played too much up to now.² Some people identify Orthodoxy with a kind of Roman Catholicism without the Pope or with a kind of Protestantism with episcopacy. To some others *Orthodoxia* (Orthodoxy) has come to signify either stagnation in church life, strict dogmatic confessionalism, inflexibility and unreadiness to adapt to modern situations, at best an “eastern phenomenon” vis-à-vis the “western mentality”.³

Almost half a century ago S McCrae Cavert, a pioneer in the Ecumenical Movement, gave this kind of introduction to his own high appreciation of the Orthodox tradition:

“My textbooks in church history made little or no reference to Eastern Orthodoxy after the Great Schism between East and West in 1054 – or at least after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. I assumed that the Orthodox Church was static and impervious to renewal, weighted down under the dead hand of the past. I thought of it as preoccupied with an endless repetition of ancient rituals unrelated to the ongoing currents of life in today’s world. The practice of involving all the saints and reverencing icons appeared to me expressions of unenlightened credulity. The ascetic and monastic forms of life looked like outmoded medievalism. The long centuries of subservience of church to the state struck me as intolerable. A sacramental mysticism seemed to me to have taken the place of prophetic mission in contemporary society.”³

More recently David J Bosch, in his book *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, concludes his chapter on the mission paradigm of the Eastern Church with a similar assessment:

“The church adapted to the existing world order, resulting in Church and Society penetrating and permeating each other. The role of religion – any religion – in society is that of both stabilizer and emancipator; it is both mythical and messianic. In the Eastern tradition the church tended to express the former of each of these pairs rather than the latter. The emphasis was on conservation and restoration, rather than on embarking on a journey into the unknown. The key words were ‘tradition’, ‘orthodoxy’, and the ‘Fathers’ (Küng), and the church became the bulwark of right doctrine. Orthodox

churches tended to become ingrown, excessively nationalistic, and without a concern for those outside (Anastasios Yannoulatos)... The church established itself in the world as an institute of almost exclusively other-worldly salvation.”⁴

One needs, therefore, to redefine the above understanding of the Orthodox perspective, which is after all very misleading with regard to the identity of Orthodoxy. *Orthodoxia* (Ὁρθοδοξία) means the wholeness of the people of God who share the right conviction (ὀρθή δόξα = right opinion) concerning the event of God’s salvation in Christ and his Church, and the right expression (Ὁρθοπραξία) of this faith.⁵ *Orthodoxia* leads to the maximum possible application in ὀρθοπραξία of charismatic life in the freedom of the Holy Spirit in all aspects of daily life. Everybody is invited by Orthodoxy to transcend confessions and inflexible institutions without necessarily denying them. Nikos Nissiotis has reminded us that Orthodoxy is not to be identified only with us Orthodox in the historical sense and with all our limitations and shortcomings. “We should never forget that this term is given to the One (Holy, Catholic and) Apostolic Church as a whole over against the heretics who, of their own choice, split from the main body of the Church. The term is exclusive for all those, who willingly fall away from the historical stream of life of the One Church but it is inclusive for those who profess their spiritual belonging to that stream.”⁶ Orthodoxy, in other words, has *ecclesial* rather than *confessional* or even *historical* connotations.

Another issue that makes the presentation of any issue, especially mission, “from an Orthodox perspective” an extremely difficult task is that of the Orthodox Church’s foundation sources. On what ground and from what sources can one really establish an Orthodox perspective? The Roman Catholics have Vatican II to draw from; the Orthodox do not. The Lutherans have an Augsburg Confession of their own; the Orthodox do not. The only authoritative so-called “sources” the Orthodox possess are in fact common to the rest of Christendom: the Bible and the Tradition. How can one establish a distinctly Orthodox perspective on a basis which is common to non-Orthodox as well?

Some Orthodox⁷ insist that Orthodox theology is not a matter of drawing from special sources, but of interpreting the sources the Orthodox share with the rest of Christendom; in other words, it is a matter of theological presuppositions, which suggests a certain problematic and method not always familiar to the non-Orthodox. Naturally then, all their theological viewpoints come only as the logical consequence of these presuppositions. However, the essence of Orthodoxy, vis-à-vis western theology in its entirety, that is Catholic and Protestant, is even beyond such theological presuppositions: I would dare to say it is a way of life, hence the importance of its *liturgical* tradition. Of course, the theological presuppositions and liturgical experience are very closely connected to each other. It is exactly for this reason that the Orthodox have placed the Liturgy on such a

prominent place in their theology. It is widely held that the liturgical dimension is perhaps the only safe criterion, in ascertaining the specificities of Orthodox theology. The Church is first of all a worshipping community. Worship comes first, doctrine and discipline second. The *lex orandi* has a privileged priority in the life of the Christian Church. The *lex credendi* depends on the devotional experience and vision of the Church, as George Florovsky put it.⁸ The heart of Orthodox Liturgy, as in all or most Christian traditions, is the Eucharist, which is called the Divine Liturgy by the Orthodox. The most widely held criterion among the Orthodox of our time for determining Orthodox theology is undoubtedly the Eucharistic approach to all aspects of theology, and especially to ecclesiology. It is in the Eucharist only that the church becomes Church in its fullest sense. Closely connected to, in fact as a consequence of, the liturgical-Eucharistic criterion, Orthodox theology is also determined by the following criteria: (a) the idea of the living tradition; (b) the trinitarian basis for all theologies; (c) the pneumatological dimension; (d) the eschatological perspective; and (e) the cosmic dimension of its identity.⁹

a. Tradition. The reverence by the Orthodox of the Tradition underlines a sense of living continuity with the Church of the ancient times, of the apostolic period. Behind it lies the same determination that kept the unity of the two Testaments against the Gnostic (Marcionite) attempt to reject the OT. The Orthodox, of course, do not consider Tradition as something in addition to, or over against, the Bible. Scripture and Tradition are not treated as two different things, two distinct sources of the Christian faith. Scripture exists within Tradition, which although it gives a unique pre-eminence to the Bible, also includes further developments – in the form of clarification and explication, not of addition – of the apostolic faith.¹⁰ What is even more important is that the Orthodox conception of Tradition (to be distinguished from the various local or regional or even temporal traditions) is not a static entity but a dynamic reality, not a dead acceptance of the past, but a living experience of the Holy Spirit in the present.¹¹ In G. Florovsky's words, "Tradition is the witness of the Spirit; the Spirit's unceasing revelation and preaching of the good news... It is not only a protective, conservative principle, but primarily the principle of growth and renewal."¹²

b. The Trinitarian Basis. All fundamental aspects of Orthodox theology, creation of the entire cosmos by God, redemption in Christ and salvation through the Church, but beyond her boundaries in the power of the Holy Spirit, and so on, are all conceived as the natural consequence of the inner dynamics of the Triune God, that is of the communion and love that exists within the Holy Trinity. Applied to mission, this trinitarian basis had tremendous effect in helping the Church to avoid imperialistic or confessional attitudes.¹³ "The Trinitarian theology points to the fact that God's involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion with God's very life. The implications of this

assertion for understanding mission are very important: mission does not aim primarily at the propagation or transmission of intellectual convictions, doctrines, moral commands, etc., but at the transmission of the life of communion that exists in God.”¹⁴

c. Pneumatology. The Orthodox churches are generally respected for their spirituality. But very often this spirituality is understood in the western sense, as an idealistic philosophical category, as a way of life distinct from, or in opposition to, the material life; as if it referred to the spirit of “human beings” and not to the Spirit of “God”, which in the biblical sense (2 Cor 13:12) is by definition conditioned by the idea of communion. The Holy Spirit is incompatible with individualism, its primary work being the transformation of all reality to a relational status.¹⁵ In the Orthodox tradition Christ has never become the exclusive point of the Church’s attention, relegating the Spirit to an ancillary role (agent of Christ, inspirer of the prophets and the authors of the Bible, helper of the Church to listen, apprehend and interpret the word of God, etc.). However, this placing of Pneumatology on an equal footing with Christology has never taken the form of a “Pneumatomonism”. It rather led to an understanding of Christology conditioned in a constitutive way by Pneumatology. And this was historically shown by: (a) the rejection of the *filioque* theology; (b) the importance of the *epiklesis*, that is the invocation of the Holy Spirit in all liturgical practices, especially in the Eucharistic anaphora; and (c) the understanding of all the Church’s ministries always within the context of the community, something that makes the Church not a mere institution – something which is given, but a charismatic community. Without denying that Christ *has instituted* the Church, the Orthodox strongly believe that it is the Holy Spirit that constantly *constitutes* her.¹⁶ With the actual relegation of the Holy Spirit in western Christianity “the charisma is made subordinate to the institution, inner freedom to imposed authority, prophetism to juridicism, mysticism to scholasticism, the laity to the clergy, the universal priesthood to the ministerial hierarchy, and finally the college of bishops to the primacy of the Pope”.¹⁷

d. The Church as an eschatological reality. The ecclesiological problem, which is so important an issue in today’s ecumenical discussions, is a matter not so much of church organization and structure, as it is a matter of eschatological orientation.¹⁸ The whole Christian tradition from Jesus preaching the coming of the Kingdom of God (the already inaugurated, but not yet fulfilled, new heaven and new earth), through the Ignatian concept of the Church as a Eucharistic community (with the bishop as the image of Christ), and down to the later Orthodox tradition (which, by the way, understands the Eucharist as the mystery of the Church and not a mystery among others), reveals that it is the eschatological and not the hierarchical (episcopal, conciliar, congregational, etc.) nature of the Church that it has stressed.¹⁹ In Orthodox theology and liturgical praxis the Church does not

draw her identity from what *she is* in the present, or from what *was given* to her as institution in the past, but from what *she will be* in the future, that is from the *eschaton*. Thus, the vision of the Church is always understood as an institution portraying the Kingdom of God on earth; in fact as being a glimpse and foretaste of the Kingdom to come. Hence the episcopo-centric structure of the Church as an essential part of that vision. The bishop as presiding in love in the Eucharist is not a vicar or representative, or ambassador of Christ, but an image (*eikon*) of Christ. So with the rest of the ministries of the Church: they are not parallel to or given by, but identical with those of, Christ.²⁰ That is also why the whole of Orthodox theology and life are centred on the resurrection. The Church exists not because Christ died on the Cross, but because he is risen from the dead, thus becoming the *aparche* (beginning) of all humanity. Eschatology constitutes the beginning of the Church, the foundational point that gives her identity, sustains and inspires her.

e. The cosmic dimension of Orthodox theology. Orthodox theology has by and large articulated a holistic approach to salvation, in the sense of a balance between the horizontal and the vertical, between the human and the cosmic, dimension of the divine gift of life. As a consequence, the Church is not understood as a communion of human beings unrelated to creation. Through their sacramental theology, which underlines the significance of the Mysteries/Sacraments, and especially of the Eucharist, sometimes above even the preaching of the Word,²¹ the Orthodox believe that in the Eucharist humanity acts as the priest of creation, referring it (*anaphora*) to God and allowing it to become part of the body of Christ and thus survive eternally.²²

These are only some of the basic aspects of the Orthodox vis-à-vis the western tradition. There are, of course, other aspects widely identified nowadays with Orthodoxy, like asceticism, icons, monasticism; but all of them are the theological consequences of the above briefly analyzed principles. If in the above brief presentation the differences were overemphasized, this was done because mainstream Orthodoxy firmly believes in a synthesis of the two divided Christian traditions, the eastern and the western.²³ The authentic catholicity of the Church must include both East and West. To recall just one area of the above analysis, western theology tends to limit ecclesiology to the historical context. The Church ends by being completely historicized; thus it ceases to be the manifestation of the *eschaton*, becoming an image of this world. At the other end, eastern theology with its vision of future or heavenly things runs the danger of disincarnating the Church from history, thus neglecting her missionary praxis. It is for this reason that many Orthodox believe that a dynamic encounter will enrich both traditions.

This last remark has obviously some bearing upon the connection of Orthodoxy with Mission, two terms that at first glance seem quite incompatible, at least to the western historians of mission. When in 1910

the historic gathering of missionaries across denominational boundaries took place in Edinburgh, in order to launch interdenominational missionary co-operation (quite distinct from undenominational or extra-denominational action), Orthodoxy was completely marginal. In their deliberations there were only scattered references to the Oriental (sic) or Greek churches, always within the framework of western (mainly Protestant) mission. Even in the following generation no article on the importance of mission was written by Orthodox theologians. The initiatives of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the dawn of the twentieth century, which invited all Christians to address together the great challenges of the twentieth century, were only later brought to Christian public attention.

The encounter of the Orthodox with western Christianity, originally with Protestantism in the field mission within the framework of the activities of WCC, and after Vatican II also with Catholicism, has awakened the missional dimension of their Church. Most significant, however, was the contribution of Orthodox theologians to the development of a contemporary mission theology (*missio Dei*). It was not only the appeal of the greatest Orthodox missiologist of our days, Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos, to his fellow Orthodox to realize the missionary nature of their church;²⁴ it was also the engagement of great theologians from the East in the ecumenical and missiological reflection that completely changed the picture in today's "witness" (*martyria*) to the gospel. Gleaning from the richness of the Christian tradition, as well as from the wealth of their missionary heritage (especially St. Cyril and Methodius' evangelization of the Slavs, and of Europe in general), the Orthodox not only explained their different approach to mission, which was to a certain extent difficult for western missiologists and missionaries to understand; they also became invaluable players in the field of modern missiology.

In quite a number of areas (the ecclesial aspect of mission, the liturgical and Eucharistic approach, the trinitarian and pneumatological dimension of a mission theology, the environmental and inter-faith consequences of an authentic Christian witness), Orthodox reflections not only enhanced ecumenical awareness but they were also widely acknowledged as significantly contributing to the titanic effort of world Christianity to meet the great challenges of today. To mention just one such area, the peculiar understanding of Pneumatology, another great living Orthodox theologian, Metropolitan of Pergamon John Zizioulas, has convincingly argued, that from the time of the New Testament and the early patristic writings, even to the present ecumenical era, two types of Pneumatology, almost contradictory to each other, have co-existed in Christian theology: one "historical" and one "eschatological".²⁵ The first one is familiar in the West to the present day and understands the Holy Spirit as fully *dependent on* Christ as being his agent to fulfil the task of mission; the second which, more consistently developed in the East, understands the Holy Spirit as the *source of* Christ. Consequently, the Orthodox understand the Church in

terms more of *coming together* (i.e. as the eschatological *synaxis* of the people of God in his Kingdom) than of *going forth* for mission. It was inevitable, therefore, for the Orthodox to develop their understanding of mission as a Liturgy *after* the liturgy.²⁶ Furthermore, the importance of inter-faith dialogue (instead of an aggressive and triumphant mission), on the basis of the *economy of the Spirit* (side-by-side, of course, with the *economy of Christ/the Word*) was suggested, and the *integrity of creation* with the ensuing environmental missional ethos became almost characteristic of Orthodox theology, and resulted in the ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople Bartholomew becoming known as the “Green Patriarch”.

One hundred years after the historic mission conference in 1910, world Christianity met again in Edinburgh to celebrate the centenary of the beginning of the Ecumenical Movement – which incidentally the Orthodox place almost a decade earlier, in the encyclicals of the renowned Patriarch Joachim III of 1902 and 1904²⁷ – and to reflect on the theme “Witnessing to Christ Today”.²⁸ On this occasion the participation of the Orthodox, especially by the younger generation, was significant, and their involvement in the preceding ad hoc and ongoing study process quite substantial. Nevertheless, their theological point was not easily understood by the majority of their colleagues, mainly because of their distinct theological presuppositions.

It was for this reason that the General Council of the Edinburgh 2010 Mission Conference, as well as the Commission for World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, have encouraged a collection of Orthodox missiological and general theological contributions on quite a number of issues, both published and unpublished, in the period between the two Edinburgh meetings. It is the intention that these will be presented – together with the *New Mission Statement* adopted in the latest General Committee of WCC – as the traditional (in the WCC circles) Orthodox missiological input to its next General Assembly to be held in Busan, South Korea, in 2013. To *Regnum Books International*, who accepted this volume into their *Edinburgh 2010 (Centenary) Series*, I express my sincere gratitude.

The collected volume is divided into two parts: **Part I** under the subtitle *The Orthodox Heritage* consists of a limited number of representative Orthodox missiological contributions of the past, whereas **Part II** includes all the papers presented in the Plenary of the recent Edinburgh 2010 conference, as well as the short studies and contributions prepared during the Edinburgh 2010 ongoing study process.

As a leading chapter of the first part of the book (*Chapter 1*), in the form of a general introduction of the Orthodox missiology, we decided to place an earlier study on “Orthodox Mission-Past, Present, Future”, by the Archbishop of Albania **Anastasios Yannoulatos**, the greatest Orthodox missiologist. We kept the numbers of the Orthodox missionary communities outside the traditional eastern European setting of Orthodoxy

as they appear in the original version, noting that their actual size today has doubled, in some cases even tripled: an indication of the fast growth of contemporary Orthodox mission.

Chapter 2 is the foundational ecclesiological study by the late Russian priest **Georges Florovsky**, “The Church Her Nature and Task”. The ecclesiological nature of the Christian “witness” (the Orthodox term for mission familiar to most people), as well as its theological understanding, became catalytic to all future missiological studies of the Orthodox.

Chapter 3 deals with perhaps the most widespread missiological notion: The “Liturgy after the liturgy”. Based on the Florovskian “liturgical-Eucharistic” understanding of the Church, and further elaborating Archbishop Anastasios’ missiological views on the liturgical dimension of mission, the late Romanian theologian and priest **Ion Bria** headed his article “Liturgy after the Liturgy” (probably after the famous phrase *Byzance après Byzance*, launched by one of his compatriots).

The next two chapters (*Chapters 4 and 5*), by Fr **Emmanuel Clapsis** (“The Eucharist as Missionary Event in a Suffering World”) and **myself** (“The Missionary Implications of St. Paul’s Eucharistic Inclusiveness”), further develop the social and ecumenical dimension respectively of the understanding of mission as the real “Liturgy” after the conventional liturgy. Using the Patristic, Systematic and Biblical evidence respectively, these short studies show how unjustified is the accusation of an alleged narrowing of the prospects of mission by linking it with liturgy.

The following two chapters (*Chapters 6 and 7*) present some of the most theologically profound recent articles by two of the leading theologians of our time: “The Witness and the Service of Eastern Orthodoxy”, by the late Greek theologian **Nikos Nissiotis**, and “The Self-Understanding of the Orthodox and their Participation in the Ecumenical Movement”, by the Metropolitan of Pergamon **John Zizioulas**. These arguments are quite radical but at the same time faithful to the Orthodox tradition.

Chapters 8 and 9 try to tackle the perennial issue in world Christian mission of the connection between mission and unity, as well as between the unity of the Church and the unity of humankind. The late American Orthodox priest **John Meyendorff**’s presidential address to the Faith and Order Commission on the theme “Unity of the Church-Unity of Mankind” was the first serious attempt to relate ecclesiology and mission and how the quest for Church unity affects Christian mission. The Indian Oriental Orthodox theologian **KM George**, in his short study, “Mission for Unity or Unity for Mission”, further elaborates this problem.

Chapter 10 is perhaps the most challenging to the traditional missionary ethos of the Orthodox contribution. Antiochian Metropolitan **George Khodr** of Mount Lebanon at a very crucial and turning point in world mission argued in favour of the legitimacy of the inter-faith dialogue in Christian mission on the theological basis of the “economy of the Holy Spirit”.

Chapter 11 is unquestionably the Orthodox contribution that has acquired the most general acceptance even beyond the conventional religious sphere. The Ecumenical **Patriarch Bartholomew's** ecological concern is here presented in "The Wonder of Creation and Ecology". With his profound theological arguments he expands the scope of Christian mission to the entire creation. It is followed, as *Chapter 12*, by an article by the former Moderator of the Central Committee of WCC, Armenian (Oriental) Orthodox Catholicos **Aram I**, entitled "An Ecumenical Ethic for a Responsible Society in a Sustainable Creation", which gives a broader ecumenical treatment of the subject.

The last chapter (*Chapter 13*) is a quite recent study on the itinerary of the Orthodox churches in the ecumenical missiological field. Dr **Athanasios N Papathanasiou**, a Greek missiologist and editor of a missiological journal *Synaxis*, analyses the Orthodox presence in the *International Review of Mission* (the "daughter of Edinburgh 1910"), and highlights its decisive contribution in issues such as salvation, Pneumatology, and Christ's cosmic activities, as well as worship and social concern.

Part II is divided into two sections: The four plenary Orthodox presentations of the Edinburgh 2010 Conference, and all Orthodox contributions to the Study Process. They include the Orthodox contributions to (a) Foundations of mission, (b) Mission among people of other faiths, (c) Mission and power, (d) Theological education, (e) Youth and Mission, and (f) A theological input on a regional study process consultation, emphasizing the incarnational aspect of mission.

Chapter 1 is the keynote presentation of the Moderator of CWME, Bishop **Geevarghese Mor Coorilos**, in the opening plenary of the Edinburgh 2010 Conference. It has the title "The Mission as Liturgy *before* Liturgy and as Contestation", and is a further elaboration of the concept "Liturgy *after* liturgy", bringing the oriental and western understandings of mission somewhat closer to each other.

Chapter 2 is a very thoughtful homily to the conference by the Romanian Metropolitan of Targoviste **Nifon Mihaița**, Dean of the Theological Faculty of the University of Targoviste, to which we gave the title "A Biblical Message for Today", underlining the trinitarian, ecclesial and sacrificial dimension of the Christian witness throughout the centuries.

Chapter 3 is another plenary Orthodox presentation on "Ecumenical Charity as Christian Witness", this time by an Eastern Orthodox, Dr **Antonios Kireopoulos**, Associate General Secretary of Faith and Order, and of Interfaith Relations, at the National Council of Churches, USA. Here the importance of care, concern, and even affection of one church for another is underlined.

The Orthodox plenary presentations in the Edinburgh 2010 Conference were concluded with a "Reflection" from the young generation by

Anastasia Vassiliadou, which is published here as *Chapter 4* of the second part.

The remaining chapters (5-10) are all registered collective or individual contributions to the various study process themes.

Chapter 5, under the title “Theological Foundation for Mission: An Orthodox Perspective”, is my input to the first study process of Edinburgh 2010, based on some specific characteristics of the Orthodox Church: her *ecclesiological* awareness as the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”, her peculiar *Pneumatology*, and her *anthropology*, i.e. her characteristic teaching of *theosis*.

Chapter 6, under the title “Mission among Other Faiths: An Orthodox Perspective”, is a joint Eastern and Oriental Orthodox short study by Fr **KM George**, **Petros Vassiliadis**, **Niki Papageorgiou**, and **Nikos Dimitriadis**, on the implications of the above Orthodox theological characteristics for the Christian witness among people of other faiths.

Chapter 7 consists of “Two Orthodox Comments on the Study Process on Mission and Power”, prepared by the African (Eastern) Orthodox theologian Fr **Anastasios Elekiah Kihali**, who was denied a visa (and therefore entry to Scotland), to join the Edinburgh 2010 conference and celebration. It is both a prophetic stance over against the world economy and a reminder of the Byzantine “symphony” in Church-State relations.

Chapter 8, the most extended in this volume under the title “Theological Education in the Orthodox World”, was the joint Orthodox contribution by myself, **Pantelis Kalaitzidis** and **Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi**, to the study process theme “Mission and Theological Education”. Beyond the theological foundations of the traditional Orthodox theological schools, it also covers a self-critical examination of some of the current theological trends in modern Orthodoxy, and the interesting issue of the importance of women’s contribution to Orthodox theological education.

Chapter 9 was Fr **Vineeth Koshy’s** contribution to the Transversal (to all study process themes) “Youth and Mission”. This (Oriental) Orthodox priest and Executive Secretary of the Commission on Youth of the National Council of Churches in India, is cautioning us regarding the kind of mission the youth are envisioning for the future: the major shifts the ecumenically oriented Christian mission must take, are toward contextual, communitarian and compassionate mission.

Finally, *Chapter 10*, Fr Dr **Kosmas (John) Ngige Njoroge’s** keynote address at a regional consultation organized by the Orthodox Mission Network in Bulgaria within the Edinburgh 2010 Study Process, expresses the African Eastern Orthodox longing for an incarnational Orthodox mission, embracing the traditional faith but fully inculturated and Africanized.

¹ The late Indian (Oriental) Orthodox Bishop Paulos Mar Gregorios, an undisputed authority of his tradition, believes that “many Oriental Orthodox theologians are

disposed to accept the formal confession of faith in the definition of Chalcedon as in basic agreement with their Christological tradition, with insistence however on one textual variant... The textual variant is 'of two natures' (*ek duo physeon*), in place of 'in two natures' (*en duo physessin*). 'Of' is acceptable to the Oriental Orthodox, 'in' is difficult. But the Greek text of the minutes of the Council has 'of'... But many Western scholars have assumed the latter to be the original – without sufficient grounds, it seems". *Eastern Orthodox Review* 1-2 (1968), 138ff. Cf also P Gregorios, WH Lazareth and Nikos A Nissiotis, *Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite? Towards Convergence in Orthodox Christology* (Geneva 1981).

² John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (SVS Press: Crestwood, New York 1985), 26.

³ S McCrea Cavert, *The American Churches and the Ecumenical Movement 1895-1961* (Geneva 1966), 36.

⁴ David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York, 1991), 212-13.

⁵ More in my "Orthodoxy and Ecumenism", *Eucharist and Witness: Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (WCC/Holy Cross, Geneva/Massachusetts 1998), 7-28, 9ff.

⁶ Nikos A Nissiotis, "Interpreting Orthodoxy", *ER* 14 (1961) 1-27, 26.

⁷ Cf e.g. Zizioulas, "The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition", *One in Christ* 24 (1988), 294-303, 294.

⁸ George Florovsky "The Elements of Liturgy", in C Patelos (ed), *The Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva 1978, 172-182, 172.

⁹ There are of course other significant aspects of Orthodox theology, e.g. the teaching about the Theotokos, etc., but they are all consequences of Christology, i.e. of trinitarian theology. That is why the Orthodox have never articulated a "Mariology", but a teaching on the "All-Holy Theotokos" with extremely important anthropological significance (cf Alexander Schmemmann, *The Presence of Mary*, Santa Barbara, 1988).

¹⁰ The Orthodox Church has never dogmatized a teaching which does not appear in some form in the Bible.

¹¹ Cf (Metr. of Ephesos) Ch. Konstantinidis, "The Significance of the Eastern and Western Traditions within Christendom", in C Patelos (ed), *The Orthodox Church*, 220ff.

¹² George Florovsky, "Sobornost: The Catholicity of the Church", EL Marschal (ed), *The Church of God*, London 1934, 64ff.

¹³ Cf my "Biblical Consideration of Christian Mission" in Ion Bria and P Vassiliadis, *Orthodox Christian Witness*, Katerini 1989, 119-40 (in Greek).

¹⁴ Ion Bria (ed), *Go Forth in Peace. Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, Geneva 1985, 3.

¹⁵ Cf Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 209ff.

¹⁶ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 140.

¹⁷ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, quoted from Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: Crestwood 1978.

¹⁸ "The Legacy of St. Luke for Christian Mission", *Bulletin of Biblical Studies (Deltio Biblikon Meleton)*, 9 (1990), 5-9.

¹⁹ Cf P Vassiliadis, "Episkope-Diakonia-Apostole", *Biblical Hermeneutical Studies*, Thessaloniki 1988, 364-90 (in Greek).

²⁰ Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 163.

²¹ Cf J Breck, *The Power of the Word in the Worshiping Church*, New York, 1986, for a careful and balanced consideration of the relationship between worship and the Gospel.

²² Zizioulas, “The Mystery...”, 302.

²³ Cf also Chr. Konstandinidis, “The Significance of the Eastern and Western Traditions within Christendom”, in C Patelos (ed), *The Orthodox Church*, 220ff.; Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, 26.

²⁴ *TER*, 23 (April 1971, No. 2), 118-28. 1. (Archbishop) Anastasios Yannoulatos, “Mexico City 1963: Old Wine into Fresh Wineskins”, *IRM*, 67 (1978), 354-64. Until very recently the only handbook on Orthodox mission in English was the work of a non-Orthodox, JJ Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, New York 1986. Now Archbishop Anastasios’ *Mission in Christ’s Way*, HCOP/WCC Massachusetts/Geneva 2010, has become the most reliable handbook of Orthodox missiology.

²⁵ Zizioulas, “Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie”, *Communio Sanctorum : Mélanges offerts à Jean Jacques von Almen*, Labor et Fides, Geneva 1982, 141-54.

²⁶ Georges Khodr, “Christianity in a Pluralistic World: The Economy of the Holy Spirit”, *TER* 23 (1971), 118-28.

²⁷ More in Thomas E FitzGerald, *The Ecumenical Movement: An Introductory History*, Praeger Publishers: Westport CT 2004. He stated that “even before the Edinburgh Conference, the Orthodox Church of Constantinople, known as the Ecumenical Patriarchate, began a new series of discussions on issues related to church divisions as early as the year 1902. On June 12 of that year, Patriarch Joachim III addressed an encyclical...” (82).

²⁸ For a full report and most of the papers see Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (eds), *Mission Today and Tomorrow*, Regnum Edinburgh 2010 Series: Oxford 2010.

PART ONE

THE ORTHODOX HERITAGE



ORTHODOX MISSION: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos)

Orthodox witness is imbued with the desire to carry out God's will in a loving and heroic manner. The "living in Christ" and the "following in his footsteps" has always been the ideal, the heart of Orthodox spirituality. The central longing of Orthodox worship is expressly stated in the supplication of the liturgy of the Pre-sanctified Gifts, when the faithful pray to the Father: "*That partaking... of these divine gifts, and receiving new life through them, we may be united unto thy Christ himself...; that with thy Word, O Lord, dwelling in us, and walking in us we may become the temple of thy Holy and ever venerated Spirit...*" The transforming glory and power of the trinitarian God must shine forth in time, in every manifestation of human life, and throughout the creation, through the mission of the Church.

Since the key word "mission" – around which our discussions will revolve – is often used with different nuances, it is necessary to state that by this word we mean witness to the living trinitarian God, who calls all to salvation and binds human beings together in the Church, who otherwise would not belong to it or who have lost their tie to it. This characteristic distinguishes it from mere pastoral care, which is directed towards those already incorporated in the Church. The field of Christian mission today is both the distant geographical regions of the third world (more precisely, of the world of two-thirds of the total population), and the rest of the inhabited world. It is henceforth a question of mission to all six continents. For every local church, mission is "inward" or "internal" when it takes place within its geographical, linguistic and cultural bounds, and "outward" or "external" when it reaches beyond these bounds to other nations and lands.

The Church, "the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church," is obliged to witness to those near and afar, and to show interest in the whole human being, both on a personal and a social level, for the progress of the whole world. Nothing relating to human existence is out of the scope of interest for Orthodox mission.

1. A Quick Glance at the Past:

Basic Principles of Byzantine and Russian Missions

A. When, more than thirty years ago, there was a revival in contemporary Orthodoxy of the ideal of an external mission – especially following the *Porefthentes* movement, which sprang from the Fourth General Assembly of "Syndesmos" in Thessaloniki (1958) – we had to face two difficulties:

the amazement of westerners, who thought the Orthodox Church was introspective and uninterested in mission; and a pathetic internal opposition from Orthodox, who considered such an interest as something imported. For this reason, during the first decade, not only was external mission stressed as an Orthodox theological and ecclesiological necessity, but a special attempt was made to study its history.

From the relevant documents published during these last decades, it has become ever clearer that the “apostolic” duty is a basic element of being “Orthodox”, even if, under certain historical circumstances, the evangelicalistic activity of certain local churches has slowed down and interest in mission has become lethargic.

The anniversary of the millennium of the Baptism of Rus’ sheds further light both on the missionary initiatives of the Byzantine and on the apostolic activities of their Russian disciples in later centuries.

Throughout the millennium of its existence, Orthodox Byzantium concerned itself with the broadcasting of the Christian faith, either to the heathen within its boundaries, or to the pagan tribes pouring into the Empire, as well as to neighbouring countries. More particularly, we can distinguish two periods of intense missionary zeal: (a) from the fourth to the sixth century, culminating at the time of Justinian, and (b) during the ninth and eleventh centuries, under the Macedonian Dynasty. In the first and second periods, apostolic activity was combined with a deeper theological search and a spiritual blossoming.

During the first period, the missionary task fell to enlightened bishops, such as St. John Chrysostom (+407), and to holy monks, such as the Saints Hilarion (+371), Euthymios (+473) and Sabbas (+532). The Byzantines took an interest in the evangelization of peoples bordering on the Empire, such as the Goths, the Huns, the Iberians and certain tribes of Colchis mid-Caucasus. Following the Christianization of the Ethiopians, they even took an interest in the evangelization of Nubian tribes to the south, and to the northern reaches of what is today Tunisia. Because this missionary activity took place in areas where there was later to be a great mingling of populations, little is known about this first period.

The second period, linked to the conversion of the Slavs, has been better investigated; especially during the last few years, worldwide interest has focused on the 1100th anniversary of the missions of the Saints Cyril and Methodius, as well as on the aforementioned millennium.

The Byzantine mission was based on certain clear-cut and essential principles. At the forefront was a desire to create an authentic local Eucharistic community. Thus precedence was given to translating the Holy Scriptures, the liturgical texts and the writings of the Fathers, as well as to the building of beautiful churches which would proclaim – with the eloquent silence of beauty – that God had come to live amongst humanity. The importance attached by Byzantine theology in a life of worship and “divinization” did not prevent direct interest in the social and cultural

dimensions of life. Together with the gospel, the Byzantines transfused into their converted peoples the whole of their experience – political, artistic, economic, and cultural – permeated by evangelical principles and the Christian vision of life. They contributed to the self-awareness developed by the young nations, along with their own culture.

Together with the power of the gospel, which it infused into the waves of uncultured people's overrunning Europe, Christian Byzantium brought them a completely new life: spiritual, social and political.

The flexibility and understanding with which the Greek missionaries adapted the Byzantine liturgy and tradition to local circumstances gave them an ecumenical character and caused them to serve as a bond among the various Orthodox peoples. At the same time, the development of the vernacular and of a national temperament among these peoples – for which many Byzantine missionaries toiled with such reverence and tenderness – helped preserve the personality of the converted peoples. Far from indulging in an administrative centralization and a monolithic conception of the Church, the Byzantine missionaries saw the unity of the extended Church in its joint thanksgiving, with many voices but in one spirit, and in the sacramental participation of all in the cup of life, *“For as there is but one bread, so we who are many, are but one body.”* Finally, missionary work in Byzantium was not carried out by a handful of “specialists”. Bishops, priests, monks, emperors – whether of great or of medium stature – princesses, diplomats, officers, soldiers, merchants, mariners, emigrants, travellers, captives,¹ were all involved. The modest and patient heroism shown in this direction by thousands of known and unknown Byzantines during the centuries-long life of the Empire, forces the student of history to agree with what Diehl wrote concerning the conversion of the Slavs: *“Missionary work was one of the glories of Byzantium.”*²

B. The Russian missionary epic is also fascinating and extraordinarily rich: during the first period, which extends from the baptism of the inhabitants of Kiev to the Mongol conquest (988-1240), monasteries and convents sprang up, and there was a great missionary impulse as enlightened bishops, priests, and monks worked heroically for the evangelization of the Slavic tribes to the north. In the second period, from the Mongol invasion to roughly the end of the fifteenth century, a great number of monks retired to the forests and built hermitages that became centres of missionary and cultural activity. Prisoners of war became the first “apostles” of the Tartars. Apart from the anonymous bearers of the gospel, this period is famous for its great missionary personalities, such as Stephen of Perm (+1396). During the third period, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, hundreds of thousands of Muslims from the local population around Kazan entered the Church. As the Empire extended into Siberia, where Christianity was, until then, unknown, churches and monasteries mushroomed, yet their number was insufficient to cover the local needs. At that tune, state policy was often hostile to mission.

Nevertheless, great missionary figures, such as St. Trifon of Novgorod (+1583), who brought the gospel to the Lapps, Bishop Filotei of Tobolsk (+1727) and others, through their missionary zeal, drew thousands to Christ. The fourth period, lasting from the nineteenth century to the Russian Revolution (1917), bears a more ecclesial stamp and is most fruitful. The missionaries are numerous: bishops, priests, monks, laypersons – people like the monk Makary Glukharev (+1847), apostle of the warlike tribes of the forbidding Altai mountain range; Bishop Innokentiy Veniaminov (later Metropolitan of Moscow), who worked among the Aleutians, the Eskimos and other Alaskan tribes; St. Herman, also in Alaska; the merchant Sidenikoff among the Samoyeds; the philologist and theologian Ilminsky, who introduced new methods of translation and missionary work among the Tartars. Many were the tribes towards which the Russian missionary effort was directed; many were the languages into which the gospel was translated.

In all this, a great contribution was made by the Orthodox Missionary Society, which was founded in Moscow in 1870 and which undertook to give financial support to the Russian missionaries. Another great contribution was made by the Kazan Academy, which became a centre of missionary studies; its department of translations published books in dozens of languages belonging to such regions as the Volga, Siberia, the Caucasus, etc.

Russian missionaries were active, too, outside the Empire, in China, Korea and Japan; their number included such champions of mission as Bishop Innokentiy Figurovsky in China and Archbishop Nikola Kasatkin (1836-1912) in Japan.³

The Russian missionaries were inspired by the principles of Byzantine Orthodoxy and developed them with originality and daring: the creation of an alphabet for unwritten languages; the translation of biblical and liturgical texts into new tongues; the celebration of the liturgy in local dialects, with systematic philological care; the preparation of a native clergy as quickly as possible; the joint participation of clergy and laity, with an emphasis on the mobilization of the faithful; care for the educational, agricultural, and artistic or technical development of the tribes and peoples drawn to Orthodoxy. Continuing the Orthodox tradition, they gave importance to liturgical life, to the harmonious architecture of the churches, to the beauty of worship and to its social consequences. Certain fundamental principles, only now being put into use by western missions, were always the undoubted base of the Orthodox missionary efforts.

C. Many Orthodox churches, forced to live under Islamic regimes – four centuries of Turkish occupation in the Balkans and thirteen centuries of Arab domination in Egypt – were, of course, not in a position to organize missions abroad. On the contrary, in order to ward off the terrible danger of the conversion of the Christian population to Islam, they were obliged to fight hard to keep control of their flock and to win back, from time to time,

those who had strayed. This lengthy effort, which amounted to an heroic resistance to varied and powerful non-Christian pressures, added thousands of new martyrs to the Church.⁴

Even in the twentieth century, in countries where fanatical anti-religious regimes have taken power, the Orthodox Church has lived its missionary task in the form of *resistance* – firmly, calmly, in accordance with the ethos of the early Christians. It has provided some of the most heroic and authentic chapters of church history, which await a systematic study.

D. We should look, however, at another aspect of the past. When we Orthodox find ourselves in a western setting, we automatically tend to describe our Church in glowing colours. We often have also a tendency to compare our own achievements with the shortcomings of others. It is now time, when analyzing the past, to become more objective. This is, moreover, imposed by the Orthodox ethos, which is guided by the light of the Holy Spirit. Studying historical facts in such an “Orthodox” spirit, we need to pay attention not only to the high-water marks of Orthodox mission, but also to periods of bleakness and lethargy. The former led to new creations, such is the baptizing of numerous peoples, and especially the Slavs.

In the hours of lethargy and omission, historical evolutions and socio-religious upheavals were provoked that were unbelievably costly for Orthodoxy. The lack of interest in Byzantium for a proper consequential and perpetual outward mission contributed to the evolution of a spiritual vacuum that encouraged Islam in the Arabian world, and finally helped to bring down the Byzantine Empire. If, in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries, the Byzantine Church had made a proper translation of the scriptures into Arabic, to foster a cultural identity among the Arabs, as it did later – in the ninth and tenth centuries – for the Slavs and the Russians of the north, developments in the south, and its own fate, would have been quite different. Later on, too, the lukewarm “internal mission” of the Russian steppe, the lack of sensitivity to social developments and to the application of Christian ideals in the social and political spheres, contributed to the development of Marxism-Leninism, which has taken hold of most of the Orthodox countries in our century. Both of these utterly divergent socio-political realities – Islam and Leninism – sprang from geographical, and also frequently cultural, areas in which Orthodoxy had developed and which allowed them to blossom out, each eclectically absorbing diverse elements of it. One could even be so bold as to see in these two systems radical “heresies” of the Orthodox East. Islam adopted fragments of Orthodox Christianity, twisting them into odd shapes, while Lenin’s socialist ideology transformed other characteristics of the Russian Orthodox mentality, such as the heroic ideal of the spiritual struggle and the eschatological vision of a brotherhood of humankind.

2. Contemporary Period: Development of New Orthodox Churches

Socio-political conditions, such as have developed in many local Orthodox Churches, and the danger of deviation on the part of the people, have, in our time, brought about a particular emphasis on “internal mission” (that which is carried out within the geographical, linguistic and political confines of the local church). We can distinguish three separate settings in which the local Orthodox Churches have been obliged to live and give their witness today: (a) the Muslim setting, in which move chiefly the bishoprics belonging to the ancient Orthodox Patriarchates; (b) the socialist-Marxist setting, in which many churches continue to develop in eastern Europe; (c) the new, secularized, pluralistic and technocratic setting, with its swollen agnostic current, in which the Orthodox Churches of the “Diaspora” find themselves in western Europe, America and recently in Greece.

All these settings exercise a wide variety of pressures, often with pulverizing results, on certain local churches. Other speakers at our consultation have taken it upon themselves to present the particular circumstances and problems of the local, traditional Orthodox Churches. Here I shall restrict myself to mentioning some facts relative to the new churches formed in our day and age, in Africa and Asia, and the centres responsible for supporting external missions.⁵ The missionary Orthodox churches of Africa and Asia, though numerically small, have opened up an important chapter in the history of Orthodoxy. They are contributing to the transplantation of Orthodoxy into new regions, although their number is not impressive. Compared to other churches, the results are poor. But in comparison with the past, they show serious growth, and are a hopeful “nursery” for the future.

(a) We shall start with the mission being carried out under the immediate ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the *Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople*. The Orthodox Church in *Korea* today has four church buildings and parishes in relatively big cities, two Korean priests and about 2,000 members. They are supported by two missionary priests, two laymen and three nuns, all from Greece. To prepare native staff, a seminary functions three afternoons a week. In recent years, many Orthodox books have been translated into the Korean language, both liturgical and of a more general, historical or edifying nature. Orthodox groups have also been developed in *Hong Kong* and *Singapore*. In *India* recently two Orthodox parishes in *Arabal*, 100 km from *Kolkata*, have been created. Two Indian priests have been ordained, and a missionary is working there.

(b) More extended is the missionary effort undertaken under the jurisdiction of the *Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa*. The first Orthodox groups have been formed in East Africa through the initiative of the Africans themselves. Today there are roughly 210 Orthodox parishes and small communities there, served by 75 African clergy and fifty reader-catechists. The main body of Orthodox is to be found in *Kenya*, where there

are 85 parishes and 67 smaller communities. They run ten nursery schools, five primary schools, one secondary school and three dispensaries. The number of faithful exceeds 60,000. The missionary team consists of the bishop, a priest, two nuns and eight lay people, sent and financed by the churches of Greece, Finland, America and Cyprus. This inter-Orthodox collaboration is a new trait in the history of Orthodox mission.

The Orthodox Church in *Uganda* has 29 parishes, served by an African auxiliary bishop and fourteen African priests. The number of faithful is roughly estimated to be 10,000. Quite a number of Ugandans have studied abroad. The mission runs two secondary schools, ten primary schools and a polyclinic managed by a doctor who has studied in Athens. There are also four dispensaries. The country has suffered from civil war, and many plans for rebuilding churches and other centres are behind time.

The Orthodox Church in *Tanzania*, which has taken shape in the last 8 years, has nine parishes, 21 small communities and nine church buildings. The number of faithful is put at 8,000. Recently three dispensaries were built and equipped. The African clergy totals four priests and two deacons.

In Nairobi, the "Orthodox Patriarchal Seminary Makarios III, Archbishop of Cyprus" has been functioning since 1982. At present it has 12 teachers and 47 students.

The Orthodox of East Africa belong to different tribes. To meet liturgical needs, the Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom has been published in Swahili, Kikuyu, Luya and Luganda; other liturgical translations have also been made into these languages, as well as into Haya and Lufo, and translations with a view to publication are being made into Nandi and Lango.

In Central Africa, two big missionary centres have been established, one in Kanaga and the other in Koluwezi, *Democratic Republic of the Congo*. There are 49 parishes and roughly 9,000 Orthodox in the country, served by 22 indigenous clergy. The local church is assisted by two Greek archimandrites and twelve lay people. There are also a secondary school, a primary school, a small seminary for future priests, a hostel for young people and a foreign medical service. For purposes of worship and catechism, French, Swahili and local dialects are used.

In West Africa there exist: in *Cameroon*, one Orthodox community with two native priests; in *Ghana* (since 1977), twelve Orthodox parishes, with nine church buildings served by five native priests and two deacons. The Divine Liturgy, a summary of church history, and the services of baptism, marriage and burial have all been translated into Fanti. In *Nigeria* there are sixteen parishes served by one missionary priest and nine native priests, with twelve church buildings, four primary schools and a number of nursery schools.

The spectrum of missionary work is wide. And it grows ever wider, for example, when we meditate on the responsibility that every local church has for helping the people in matters of sanitation, education and culture.⁶

All the expressions of human life need to be transformed through the grace of the trinitarian God.

The prayer and vision of all of us is to see the establishment of true local African churches, capable of assuming by themselves the preaching of the gospel, self-governing and self-supporting. But in order to consolidate these churches, there needs to be given, during the coming decades, serious and continuous assistance from the older Orthodox churches, coupled with theological and pastoral guidance.

(c) The Churches of *Alaska*, *Japan* and *China* are special cases. The first one is now within the USA, and is mainly concerned with mission as an internal affair, consolidating the population there (Aleutians, Eskimos and others) in the Orthodox faith, resisting the technological current of American society which is undermining their racial tradition and, with it, their Orthodoxy. The church there is served by 26 native priests under a Russian bishop. The training of native clergy is carried out by St. Herman Seminary, which has been functioning on Kodiak Island since 1972 and has close ties with St. Vladimir's Seminary.

The Church of *Japan* is already a hundred years old. The leadership and all the activities are in Japanese hands. Like a tiny islet amid the archipelago of Japanese society – so dynamic, hastening so dizzily towards the new era of electronics – it has also to face the great technological provocation upsetting the western world. At the moment, the Japanese Orthodox Church has in its bosom some 30,000 Japanese Orthodox, who attend to the upkeep of 150 church buildings and are served by an archbishop-metropolitan and 35 Japanese priests. It is certain that co-operation with the older, bigger Orthodox churches will contribute to its development. The type of spiritual assistance required will be decided on by itself.

The case of the Church of *China* is more complicated. All that is left of the endeavours of the Russian Orthodox missionaries is a flickering candle-flame. Most of the Orthodox Church buildings have been pulled down (Peking, Tien-Tsin, Harbin). In 1983 a church building was inaugurated in Harbin, and it is now served by a Chinese Orthodox priest. Recently there have been rumours of another Orthodox community in Urumchi. The most immediate problem is the preparation and ordination of new Chinese Orthodox clergymen to look after the "small remnant" of Orthodox in this vast country, allowing that the installing of foreign missionaries is strictly forbidden. It may be that the new candle of Orthodoxy lit in Hong Kong will prove valuable for preserving the flame of Orthodoxy in China.

(d) In many local Orthodox churches, alongside a growing interest in biblical studies, patristic texts and liturgy, we are still living a simple flowering: first, a longing for monasticism with, at its peak, the renewal taking place on Mount Athos and, second, a revival of missionary zeal. Its first goal has been "internal mission", and during the last few years it has been complemented by the return of "external mission". The resurgence of

the monastic ideal, with its insistence on personal *metanoia* (transformation) as a way of life, expresses the need for a closer adherence to the spirit of the gospel; it is doubtless contributing to the coming of God's Kingdom and the carrying out of his will both in personal living and in the world at large.

The missionary revival, with its accent on the apostolicity and catholicity of the Church, is a reminder that the gift of *metanoia* and salvation should by no means be turned into a private, individual affair. Our duty is to live a life centred on the Church, making its horizons our own – and these horizons extend worldwide, “ecumenically”. It is a gift destined for the whole world, to everybody, given so as to transform all things. Christ was crucified for the sake of the whole world. And those who are crucified with him, are crucified for the sake of all. They are set apart from the world, but their prayer, attuned to the prayer of Christ, embraces the suffering and the hopes of all humanity and all creation. “*Blessed is the monk who is separated from all and in harmony with all,*” maintain the first books of the Philokalia.⁷

I believe that from those two currents, and especially from the combination of the monastic rebirth and the revival of the Orthodox missionary awareness, fruits will ripen to maturity and be of benefit to contemporary Orthodoxy. The whole world is secretly longing for an authentic presentation of the gospel of truth, of freedom, of love and of new life in Christ. It is yearning for holiness.

More particularly, during the past thirty years, great strides have been made in the development and support of external mission. Centres and groups have been created with this as their sole aim. The oldest of these associations, *Porefthentes*, is an offshoot of the Orthodox youth movement *Syndesmos* – as we have already stated. It blossomed out at the beginning of 1959 with the publication in Greek and English of a magazine of the same name, which continued to appear for ten years. For its irreproachable collecting and managing of funds, it received legal recognition in Greece (1961), but never lost its Inter-Orthodox approach to matters. Later its example was followed, on a local level, by *Hoi Philoi tes Ougandas* (The Friends of Uganda) in Thessaloniki (1963), which later on took the name *Hellenike Adelphotes Orthodoxou Exoterikes Hieraposiotes* (Greek Brotherhood of Orthodox External Mission), and by *Ho Protokletos* (The First-Called) in Patras (1974). Recently smaller groups have been formed in various Greek towns.

From its inception, *Porefthentes* declared that it was not aiming at founding a separate movement, but was putting all its efforts, projects, programmes, research, publications and personnel at the Church's disposal, for the creation of a wider ecclesiastical missionary activity. So, with members of the *Porefthentes* staff as pioneers, the *Grapheion Exoterikes Hieraposiotes* (Bureau of External Mission) was founded in 1968 within the framework of the *Apostoliki Diakonia* of the Church of Greece, and a Week

of External Mission was adopted by all the Dioceses of Greece. In 1969 its director was invited to assist in the creation of the “Desk for Research and Relations with Orthodox” at the World Council of Churches. In 1971, the *Kentron Hierapostolikon Spoudon* (Centre for Missionary Studies) was organized, with the collaboration of the Holy Synod and the Theological Faculty of the University of Athens, and functioned up to 1976. In 1972, the first ladies’ monastic group was set up, which later developed into the Convent of St. John the Precursor, Kareas, with the aim of serving and supporting missionary work; in 1976, at Athens University, there was created a Chair of Missiology. Since 1981 *Porefthentes* has taken on the editing of the official missionary magazine of the Church of Greece, *Panta ta Ethne* (All Nations).

At the beginning of the 1960s, efforts were made to extend the organization of *Porefthentes* to other Orthodox churches too, and similar groups of *Syndesmos* were created in Finland, America and other countries where there were Orthodox youth movements. However, the well-known autonomy of the ecclesiastical jurisdictions did not favour this effort at co-ordination and, finally, in each local church there developed other structures, in accordance with local conditions. In Finland, a “Mission Office of the Finnish Orthodox Church” (Mlodosinen Lahetysry) has come into existence (1981), while in the Americas there exists the “Mission Center of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America”; the latter was organized on a permanent basis in 1985, systematically extending the work of the old “Commission for Mission” which had begun in 1963.

In the realm of theoretical investigation into mission in the Orthodox tradition, a significant contribution has been made by the “Desk for Research and Relations with Orthodox”, named later on “Desk for Orthodox Studies and Relationships” of the World Council of Churches, which has organized a series of consultations on specific themes.⁷ Thus an opportunity has been given both to Orthodox circles making a systematic study of mission, and to ecumenical missionary bodies, with a view to enriching their experience through contact with Orthodox concepts.

(e) In spite of the facts mentioned so far, we have to admit that the missionary work of the Orthodox Church on new frontiers in non-Christian regions remains very limited. Of course, we have never stopped confessing our faith in the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church”. Yet, it would not be an exaggeration to say that, in many cases, Orthodox identification with the catholic and apostolic aspects of the Church is expressed rather weakly. The fault lies, to some extent, with the excessive nationalism of the local churches. Certainly, every nation that has become Orthodox owes a lot to Orthodoxy, which has strengthened not only its sense of personal dignity, but also a sense of the value of its nationhood. But this national gratitude and self-consciousness has often led to a turning inward, to a dangerous deviation theologically, and to a nationalistic, psychological

imperviousness. There is thus a syndrome that often inhibits Orthodox mission: the idea that our own responsibility is restricted to our own area, and that the problems of others are “none of our business”. But on this planet, no people and no social unit can live in isolation. There is a reciprocal influence. And in our times, interdependence is growing rapidly.

The lack of continuity in Orthodox missionary endeavour has been and remains another of our basic weaknesses. Frequently the call to mission appears as the sudden spiritual exaltation of an era, as an exception, which does not leave in its wake structures and institutions on an inter-Orthodox basis, to ensure an Orthodox presence on difficult fronts. It is time we asked ourselves why the Orthodox mission to China, after centuries of hard struggle, has had such poor results. As the snows of persecution are melting in China in our days, and while, like ears of corn, hundreds of Protestant and Roman Catholic communities are sprouting again, among the Orthodox there are only two. Was the Orthodox mission perhaps tainted with too much nationalism? Why, in these twentieth-century trials, were not other Orthodox moved to carry on the relay and rush in to help? That happened, for example, when the German Lutherans in East Africa turned over the responsibility for continuing their mission to the Scandinavians. Also: why, while the Orthodox mission began almost simultaneously with the Protestant in Korea, do the Protestants in that country today number five and one-half million and the Orthodox a bare two thousand? Still other painful questions need to be asked when we review sixty years of Orthodox Church presence in Uganda. Can its development be considered satisfactory in comparison with the progress of the other churches? We should stop generalizing, simplifying and embellishing the facts. Clear-headedness is needed, and a unbiased study of the past. Not, of course, in order to judge or to condemn others. But to set out aright on the path to the future, with a sense of responsibility, with sufficient seriousness of purpose, and in accordance with our potential.

Finally, there is the danger of thinking that the missionary task is fulfilled when the faithful indulge in mutual support. Mission, however, is not accomplished by just attending to “our own folk”. It is not synonymous with pastoral care,⁸ though it is closely linked to it. It is not right to call every spiritual effort “mission”, and to reassure ourselves that our missionary duty ends with church activities. Mission is principally the binding of “non-believers” to the Church; those who have become indifferent or hostile to the faith; those who refuse, in theory or in practice, the teaching and principles of that faith. The type of sensitivity needed is one that leads the bishops, priests and frequent church-goers to another attitude towards those outside the faith. Not an attitude of antipathy or of crossing swords with them, but an effort to understand their language, problems, reservations, temptations, questionings, sinfulness, even their enmity. It leads, finally, to an attempt to overcome existing barriers through the strength of truth, prayer and love.

3. Towards the Development of Orthodox Mission

For the growth of Orthodox mission in the future, two things are of fundamental importance. First, the development of missionary thought and awareness by all members of the Church that mission is not a supplement or an appendix, but rather a basic expression of our ecclesiastical self-understanding and self-conscience, and it is necessary that this be transferred to our ecclesiastical structures.

Second, a sober study of the modern world, the new, electronic, universal civilization that emerges from the setting of the second millennium and the understanding of its pluralistic character.

(1) The theological understanding of mission is not a necessity for the theologians only. It is of decisive importance for the whole Church. For this reason, we must briefly underline some fundamental theological truths.⁹

(a) A firm basis of every missionary effort is taking into consideration and moving in the light of the Revelation and especially of *the mystery of the Trinity*. The starting point of any apostolic activity on our behalf, is the promise and order of the Risen Lord in its trinitarian perspective: "*As the Father has sent me, even so I send you ... Receive the Holy Spirit*" (John 20:21-22). The love of the Father has been expressed through the *sending* of the Son. "*For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son... For God sent the Son into the world*" (John 3:16-17).

The Son then sends his disciples, with the power of the Holy Spirit, to call all the children of God, who were dispersed, in his Kingdom. All, men and women, created in the likeness of God, must return to the freedom of love, and share in the life of love of the three persons of the Holy Trinity. God's glory, which radiates upon all creatures, has to transform all things, and "*to be raised upon the earth and upon the heavens*".

The sending of the Son forms the beginning, and defines more especially Christian mission. The work of the Son is not simply an announcement, it is an event. The Incarnation, which is the "assuming" of human nature, is the most predominant event in the history of the universe, the re-creation for its regeneration within the life of the Holy Trinity. It opens the way for the *eschaton*, the fulfilment of the world's evolution.

This "assuming" in love, the continuous transfer of life in love, the transfiguration of all things in the light of God's glory is being continued in space and time through the mission of the Church, the body of Christ.

The conjunction "as", which is found in John 20:21, remains very decisive for Orthodox mission. It is the "I" who always remains your model, Christ stresses. You must walk in my footsteps and follow my example. Christological dogma defines the way of the mission of the trinitarian God, which the faithful continue. The most crucial point in mission is not what one announces, but what one *lives*, what one *is*. Humankind is "becoming" as much as they remain in Christ. "Being in Christ" forms the heart of mission. "*He who abides in me, and I in him, he*

it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

From the very beginning, the Holy Spirit shares in the sending of the Son. The Incarnation is realized "by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary". The Spirit co-operates with the one who is the best of humankind: the all-Holy Virgin Mary, who without reservation and with much joy submits herself to the will of God, for the realization of the mission of the Son. It is the Spirit in the form of a dove, who at the Jordan River seals the beginning of the public ministry of the Son. In the form of tongues of fire and "like the rush of a mighty wind", the Spirit creates the Church, transforming the scared disciples into brave apostles, full of divine light, knowledge and power. It is the Spirit that unceasingly gives life to the Church and all members within, transforming them into a living temple of the mystical body of Christ, enabling them to share in the safeguarding of Christ's mission for the salvation of the whole world. The energies of the trinitarian God are always personal, "from the Father through the Son in the Spirit". This trinitarian faith is to be found in the depth of our thoughts and actions.

(b) The strengthening of the Orthodox missionary conscience brings about a deeper understanding of Orthodox *ecclesiology*, and vice versa. In the era of the New Testament, when so many terms had defined the different religious communities, groups and societies, the first faithful, in order to define and express their self-awareness, chose the word *ecclesia*, a word that means the gathering of the people of the whole city. In this new reality, in the new eschatological "city" which was erected upon the Cross and the empty tomb of the resurrected Lord, God is calling upon us, the city, which is the whole *oecumene*, the inhabited earth. During the reigns of the various empires and kingdoms, the new community gathered by the Triune God, choosing the term *ecclesia* as a name of identity, wanted also, through it, to underline the responsible participation of all its members. We cannot forget that we belong to the "catholic" church, which embraces all things (*ta panta*), the whole of humanity.

We Orthodox often stress the tradition of the ancient Church, according to which, when speaking about the Catholic Church of a concrete city, is meant "the Church" which is present in its fulness in each Eucharistic local gathering. As the whole Christ is present in the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, in the same way the Church, his mystical body, keeps its fulness in the local "catholic" church.

Nevertheless, this basic thesis does not abolish the other great truth that, from the beginning, the apostles' perspective and aim had been to spread the gospel "to the ends of the earth", to invite all nations to enter the Church. "*Go ye and make disciples of all nations*" (Matt. 28:19). No person is excepted. No local church has the right to individually enjoy the Christian gospel and keep it exclusively as its own treasure. The basic duty of every local "catholic" church remains therefore to live the whole tradition and offer it *catholicos* in its fulness; in peace, but decisively, in a

universal perspective. The word “Orthodox” was first used as an adjective: “Orthodox Catholic Church”, that is, a truly “catholic” church – having a true faith and a true worship – with the two meanings previously mentioned. The understanding of these two sides of the “catholicity” of our Church must be stressed more and more.

Furthermore, it is time for us to experience this “apostolicity” in a more consequent way, not only placing emphasis on the “apostolicity” of the tradition and the apostolic succession, but also by living the apostolic dynamic and self-conscience of the Church and strengthening the apostolic mind and apostolic responsibility of all the faithful. When we confess our belief in the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church”, we simultaneously declare our duty to share in her “apostolic” mission.

The centre of Orthodox spiritual and missionary life is the Holy Eucharist by which we become “one body with Christ”. Thus, by sharing in his life, we share in his mission. The “being” in Christ is not expressed through a mystical or emotional escape, but rather in continuous following his steps. “He who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked” (1 John 2:6).

(c) By participating in mission we share in a divine plan, which is still in evolution and has *cosmic dimensions*. We are already moving within the *eschatological era*.

Through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the formation of the Church, and through the continuous presence of the Spirit, a process of transfiguration of human life has begun, which raises humanity and transforms the universe. Mission is a presupposition of the coming of the Kingdom. “*And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come*” (Matt. 24:14).

Within the eschatological era all things have universal dimensions. A basic element of this is surprise, the breaking down of things conventionally accepted. Neither “*those who have done good*” nor “*those who have done evil*” had ever thought that the basis of the Last Judgment would be how much they had been able to recognize Christ in the humble and poor of the earth with whom he identifies himself... *As you did it not to one of the least of these...*” (Matt. 25:45). Our participation in the suffering of people who are in need is essentially meeting the Lord who suffered for us. This view makes Christian eschatology ever and ever revolutionary, missionary and opportune at the same time.

According to Orthodox thought, the world is led to a transformation. The whole universe has been invited to enter the Church, to become the Church of Christ, in order to become after the end of centuries the heavenly Kingdom of God. “The Church is the centre of the universe, the sphere in which its destinies are determined.”¹⁰

The thought that has been developed mainly by the Greek Fathers, that the human person must comprise the whole world in his/her ascent towards

the personal God, designates the Orthodox respect not only to every human person, but also to nature. All things (*ta panta*) will find their own *logos* (reason), which is Christ. “*All things in heaven and things on earth.*” It is in this “*mystery of the will of God*” (Eph. 1:9-10) that we participate when we work for mission. This perspective frees us from any individualistic piety, any tendency to marginalize the apostolic effort.

(2) In the Gospel of St. Mark, mission is connected more intensively with “the whole world” and “the whole creation”. “*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation*” (Mark 16:15). We Christians must take this *world* and *creation* into serious consideration and study it continuously, in its evolution, multiformity, pluralism and dynamism.

(a) Absorbed many times by the marked historical conscience that characterizes our Church, many Orthodox have very often oriented themselves towards the past. Nevertheless, the eschatological dimension, which we have already spoken about, remains a basic aspect of the Orthodox theological inheritance. The head of the Church is he “*who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty*” (Rev. 1:8). Consequently, the future should be for us another basic field of vision.

In this scope, the serious theological study of the new emerging civilization and new means of communication, which combines together the whole of humankind and contributes to the interdependence and interpenetration of thoughts, insights and customs, is necessary. It is incumbent on us to face seriously the tremendous revolution which is pushing humanity from the old industrial era to a universal electronic culture, to a world society of interdependence. The old passage from the *oral word* to the written one, formerly offered tremendous possibilities to humankind for storing knowledge and experience, and decisively accelerated human progress and evolution. The new passage from the written word to the “*electronic word*” has opened infinite possibilities for accumulating universal knowledge and created a new human intelligence. The gospel must also play a crucial role in the forthcoming new culture.

Closely related to this is the new type of life experienced in big cities. Today, city dwellers comprise about one half of the world’s population and there are about 3,050 cities having a population of more than 100,000, and about 296 “*megacities*”, each with over one million in population.¹¹

But parallel to the search for the ways to spread the gospel of hope within these new situations and new languages is the need for an understanding of the new existential problems that are created by modern atheism, agnosticism, secularism: the being absorbed by everyday earthly activity, which pushes every spiritual interest into the shadow of indifference. The responsible and serious dialogue in modern currents of thought, which allows the accomplishments of science, is a fundamental task for us.

In many instances, the leadership of the Orthodox Church has been limited to a marginal, “*worshipping only*” role and has been indifferent to

approaching the intellectuals and artists, who easily catch the vibrations of modern problems and then send them forth, thus creating new ones. This is a difficult area, which needs special sensitivity, patience and endurance. In any case, the Church cannot be indifferent to this field. The word of life, freedom, justice and hope, which it continues to transfer through the centuries, has to reach, in a dynamic way, the thought and heart of its most restless children.

(b) As our planet is becoming a “megapolis” of which Christians constitute a minority – less than one third – the need for unity among Christians and the dialogue with people of other religious convictions are taking on new dimensions and special importance. In particular, the need for unity among all Christians is more direct and imperative. We Christians are now aware that we cannot offer our witness in a convincing manner as long as we are divided. Reconciliation and unity of Christians has direct missionary dimensions and consequences.

For the Orthodox, priority has to be given to a closer collaboration with the Ancient Churches of Africa and Asia, which lived throughout history being faithful only to the three first Ecumenical Councils. These are churches of resistance and martyrdom. Miraculously they survived, in spite of the terrible conditions they endured during several centuries. And yet, they are today fervently involved in spreading the gospel in Asia and Africa.

The last forty years have shown that we Orthodox have the possibility, and also the obligation, to contribute in a decisive way to the ecumenical quest, using the richness accumulated through twenty centuries of theological experience in various historical and social circumstances. But also, our participation in the relative conferences and consultations of the World Council of Churches has proved fruitful, not only for the others, but also for us, due to the new insights for our theological problems, new issues coming from the experience, and the successes or the mistakes of the West.

(c) In the case of the religious searches, we observe not only indifference but also explosive situations. Islam and the religious systems emerging from Indian thought express their points concerning the coming new era, and so they propose interpretations and solutions. The issues of Christian mission and dialogue with people of other faiths acquire new dimensions and new challenges.

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In the new inter-religious dialogue, which has already begun, the Orthodox are given the opportunity to practise another kind of “Orthodox witness”; through a positive and clear unfolding of our Church’s theology and experience, which often helps to transcend the one-sided trends that have been developed in the thought and the ethos of the western churches. A serious study in the science of religion is to the general missionary effort what mathematics is for the growth of the physical sciences. In addition, we Orthodox, with our experience of the weaknesses and trials of the past, can counter-balance the accusation expressed towards Christianity, that it has

been aggressive and colonial. We Christians of the Orthodox churches have to give – as a counter-weight to the pressure and the mistakes of western Christianity – the weight of our own experience and our martyrdom in the long history of sufferings of and pressures by Muslim states and majorities (Middle East, Balkans, Egypt and Syria).

Concerning the theological understanding of non-Christian religious beliefs from an Orthodox point of view, I will confine myself to a brief exposition of the following thoughts. According to biblical history, several “covenants” between God and humanity took place early in time and still keep their importance and validity. The first was made with Adam and Eve, that is, with the representatives of the whole of humankind. The second was with Noah and the new humanity who were saved from the flood (Gen. 8). The third covenant was made with Abraham (Gen. 12), the head of a race of people who were to play a basic role within God’s plan for the salvation of the whole human race. The last and final, the ever “New Covenant”, took place in Jesus Christ, the new Adam. But all human beings, created “in the likeness of God”, are in a relation to God through a covenant that he sealed.

Acknowledging the presence of inherent important values in the religious experience of others, even spermatic word, we also admit that they possess certain possibilities for a new flourishing from within. Justin Martyr concluded his brief reference to the *logos spermaticos* with a basic principle which, strangely enough, is not stressed by those referring to his position. He emphasizes the difference between seed (*sperma*) and the realization of the fulness of the life inherent in it; and he also differentiates between inherent “force” (*dynamis*) and “grace” (*charis*). “Because a seed of something, a type given according to the inherent force, is not the same with this, through the grace of which the transformation and copying (of it) is realized” (II Apol. 13:6).

Religions are organic wholes but, as they are experienced by living human beings, they are “living wholes” in development and evolution. They have their own internal dynamism and *enteleheia* (actuality). They receive influences, absorb new ideas coming to their environment and adapt themselves to new challenges.

In view of this, Christian truths are penetrating and developing in various religious searches all over the world, through other challenges. Here, the contribution of dialogue can be decisive.

To conclude: in today’s existing search by the entire human race, the Orthodox Christian experience and ethos are condensing a unique richness for humanity. Our mission is to assimilate it, to live it creatively within the new situations, in deep love with our brothers and sisters of other traditions. Always keeping our antennae sensitive to the messages that the world sends forth, or better yet, God, through the world and creation, which are his. Investigating them seriously with realism, we are called to re-estimate our

position and life in a trinitarian, ecclesiological and eschatological perspective.

Mission, as everything in Orthodox life, is not only realized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit”, but mainly, it is a participation in the life of the Holy Trinity, an expression of this love with all the power of existence, “with all (our) hearts, and with all (our) souls, and with all (our) minds”. Mission is an essential expression of Orthodox self-conscience, a cry in action for the fulfilment of God’s will “on earth as it is in heaven”. I would like to stress here what we have been stressing for the past twenty-five years; that indifference to mission is a denial of Orthodoxy.

Orthodox mission, internal or external, is through its nature “ecclesiastic”. It cannot be understood as an individual or a group activity, separated from the body of Christ. Those who work for it, it is the Church that they serve, the Church that they represent; it is the life of the Church that they transplant. No one is saved alone; no one offers Christ’s salvation alone. We are saved within the Church, we act within the Church, and what we transfer is in the name of Church.

All that the Church possesses is for the sake of the whole world. The Church radiates it and offers it, transforming all things (*ta panta*). “The whole world”, “the whole creation”; not only humanity, but the whole universe participates in the restoration, which has been realized by the redeeming work of Christ, and finds again its destination in glorifying God.

Mission is the extension of the love of the trinitarian God, for the transformation of the whole world.

¹ See further in our study “Byzantion ergon evangelismou” (Byzantium, Missions), in *Threskeviti ke Ethike Enkyklopædia* (Encyclopaedia of Religion and Morals), Vol. IV (1964), col. 19-59. Cf F Dvornik, *Les Slaves, Byzance et Rome au IXe siècle* (Paris: 1929). M Lacko, *Saints Cyril and Methodius* (Rome: 1963). Matthew Spinka, *A History of Christianity in the Balkans* (Hamden, CT: 1968). A Yannoulatos, “Monks and Mission in the Eastern Church during the Fourth Century”, in *International Review of Mission* 58 (1969), 208-26. By the same author, “Les Missions des Eglises d’Orient”, in *Encyclopaedia Universalis* (Paris: 1972), Vol. II, 99-102.

² Ch. Diehl, *Les grands problèmes de l’histoire byzantine*, Paris 1943, 17.

³ Cf Eu. Smirnov, *A Short Account of the Historical Development and Present Position of Russian Orthodox Missions* (London: 1903). Ous Cary, *Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox Missions*, Vol. I: *A History of Christianity in Japan* (New York: 1909). S Bolshakoff, *The Foreign Missions of the Russian Orthodox Church*, (London: 1943). J Glazik, *Die russisch-orthodox Heidenmission seit Peter dem Grosse* (München: 1954). J Glazik, *Die Islammission der russisch-orthodoxen Kirche* (Münster: 1959). A Yannoulatos, “Orthodoxy in China”, in *Porefthentes – Go Ye 4* (1962), 26-30, 36-39, 52-55. By the same author, “Orthodoxy in Alaska”, in *Porefthentes – Go Ye 5* (1963), 14-22, 44-47. By the same author, “Orthodoxy in the Land of the Rising Sun”, in *Orthodoxy 1964: A Panorthodox Symposium*

(Athens: 1964), 300-19, 338-40. E Widmer, *The Russian Ecclesiastical Mission in Peking during the Eighteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: 1976). PD Garret, *St. Innocent, Apostle to America* (Crestwood, NY: 1979). Michael J Oleksa, "Orthodoxy in Alaska: The Spiritual History of the Kodiak Aleut People", in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 25 (1981).

⁴ Chrysostomos Papadopoulos, *Hoi Neomartyres* (The New Martyrs), 2nd ed (Athens: 1934). J Perantonis, *Lexikon ton Neomartyron* (Dictionary of the New Martyrs), 3 vols. (Athens: 1972). D Constanтелos, "The 'Neomartyrs' as Evidence for Methods and Motives Leading to Conversion and Martyrdom in the Ottoman Empire", in *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 23 (1978), 216-34.

⁵ The following reviews constitute an important source of information about recent developments in missionary churches. Greek and English: *Porefthentes – Go Ye* (Athens) Vols. I (1959) to X (1968), Greek: *Phos Ethnon* (Patras), *Exoterike Hierapostole* (Thessaloniki), *Panta ta Ethne* (Athens). English: *Hierapostole-Mission*, St. Augustine, Fl. Finnish: *Lahetysviesu* (Helsinki).

⁶ Nilus the Ascetic, Homily on the Prayer 124, *Philokalia ton hieron nepton*, Vol. I, (Athens: 1957), 187.

⁷ For a good synthesis of the results of these consultations cf Ion Bria (ed), *Go Forth in Peace Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Geneva: WCC), 1986.

⁸ A Yannoulatos, "Theology, Mission and Pastoral Care", in Savas Agouridis (ed), *Deuxieme Congrès de Théologie Orthodoxe* (Athens: 1978), 292-310.

⁹ Other theological aspects of the same subject have been developed in certain of my previous studies, such as: "A la redécouverte de l'ethos missionnaire de l'Eglise orthodoxe", in *Aspects de l'Orthodoxie* (Strasbourg: 1978), 78-96; "Culture and Gospel: Some Observations from the Orthodox Tradition and Experience", in *International Review of Mission* 74 (1985), 185-98; "Remembering Some Basic Facts in Today's Mission", in *IRM*, 77 (1988), 4-11.

¹⁰ Cf VI Lossky, *Théologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient* (Paris: 1944), 175. Eng, trans. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood, NY: 1976), 178.

¹¹ David Barrett, "Annual Statistical Table on Global Mission: 1987", in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11 (1987), 24. Elias Voulgarakis, "Mission and Unity form the Theological Point of View", in *International Review of Mission* 54 (1965), 298-307. A Yannoulatos, "Réflexions d'un Orthodoxe sur la coopération interconfessionnelle dans la Mission", in *40e Semaine de Missiologie de Louvain* (Louvain: 1970), 101-10. John Meyendorff, "Unity and Mission", in *Worldmission* 26 (1975), 3, 39-42. More on this subject: L Filippidis, *Religionsgeschichte als Heilsgeschichte in der Weltgeschichte* (Athens: 1953). N Arseniev, *Revelation of Life Eternal: An Introduction to the Christian Message* (Crestwood, NY: 1965). G Khodre, "Christianity in a Pluralistic World – The Economy of the Holy Spirit", *TER*, 23 (1971), 118-28. A Yannoulatos, "Towards World Community", *TER*, 26 (1974), 619-636, with additions in SJ Samartha (ed), "Towards a 'koinonia agapes'", *Towards World Community*, The Colombo Papers (Geneva: 1975), 45-64. By the same author, *Various Christian Approaches to the Other Religions: A Historical Outline* (Athens: 1971). By the same author, "Emerging Perspectives on the Relationship of Christians to People of Other Faith: An Eastern Orthodox Contribution", in *IRM*, 77 (1988), 332-46. I Karmiris, *He pankosmiotes tes en Christo soterias* (The universality of the salvation in Christ) (Athens: 1981).

THE CHURCH: HER NATURE AND TASK

Georges Florovsky

The Catholic Mind

It is impossible to start with a formal definition of the Church. For, strictly speaking, there is none which could claim any doctrinal authority. None can be found in the Fathers. No definition has been given by the Ecumenical Councils. In the doctrinal summaries, drafted on various occasions in the Eastern Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century and taken often (but wrongly) for the “symbolic books”, again, no definition of the Church was given, except a reference to the relevant clause of the Creed, followed by some comments. This lack of formal definitions does not mean, however, a confusion of ideas or any obscurity of view. The Fathers did not care so much for the *doctrine* of the Church precisely because the glorious *reality* of the Church was open to their spiritual vision. One does not define what is self-evident. This accounts for the absence of a special chapter on the Church in all early presentations of Christian doctrine: in Origen, in St. Gregory of Nyssa, even in St. John of Damascus. Many modern scholars, both Orthodox and Roman, suggest that the Church itself has not yet defined her essence and nature. “Die Kirche selbst hat sich bis heute noch nicht definiert,” says Robert Grosche.¹ Some theologians go even further and claim that no definition of the Church is possible.² In any case, the theology of the Church is still *im Werden*, in the process of formation.³

In our time, it seems, one has to get beyond the modern theological disputes, to regain a wider historical perspective, to recover the true “catholic mind”, which would embrace the whole of the historical experience of the Church in its pilgrimage through the ages. One has to return from the schoolroom to the worshipping Church and perhaps to change the school dialect of theology for the pictorial and metaphorical language of Scripture. The very nature of the Church can be depicted and described rather than properly defined. And surely this can be done only from within the Church. Probably even this description will be convincing only for those of the Church. The mystery is apprehended only by faith.

The New Reality

The Greek word *ekklesia* adopted by the primitive Christians to denote the New Reality, in which they were aware they shared, presumed and suggested a very definite conception of what the Church really was. Adopted under an obvious influence of the Septuagint use, this word

stressed first of all the organic continuity of the two Covenants. The Christian existence was conceived in the sacred perspective of the messianic preparation and fulfilment (Heb. 1:1-2). A very definite theology of history was thereby implied. The Church was the true Israel, the new Chosen People of God, “*a chosen generation, a holy nation, a peculiar people*” (1 Pet. 2:9). Or rather, it was the faithful Remnant, selected out of the unresponsive People of old. And all nations of the earth, Greeks and Barbarians, were to be co-opted and grafted into this new People of God by the call of God (this was the main theme of St. Paul in Romans and Galatians, cf Ephesians ch. 2).

Already in the Old Testament the word *ekklesia* (a rendering in Greek of the Hebrew *Qahal*) did imply a special emphasis on the ultimate unity of the Chosen People, conceived as a sacred whole, and this unity was rooted more in the mystery of the divine election than in any “natural” features. This emphasis could only be confirmed by the supplementary influence of the Hellenistic use of the word *ekklesia* meaning usually an assembly of the sovereign people in a city, a general congregation of all regular citizens. Applied to the new Christian existence, the word kept its traditional connotation. The Church was both the People and the City. A special stress has been put on the organic unity of Christians.

Christianity from the very beginning existed as a corporate reality, as a community. To be Christian meant just to belong to the community. Nobody could be Christian by himself, as an isolated individual, but only together with “the brethren”, in a “togetherness” with them. *Unus Christianus – nullus Christianus* (“One Christian – no Christian”). Personal conviction or even a rule of life still do not make one a Christian. Christian existence presumes and implies an incorporation, a membership in the community. This must be qualified at once: in the *Apostolic* community, i.e. in communion with the Twelve and their message. The Christian “community” was gathered and constituted by Jesus himself “in the days of his flesh”, and it was given by him at least a provisional constitution by the election and the appointment of the Twelve, to whom he gave the name (or rather the title) of his “messengers” or “ambassadors”.⁴ For a “sending forth” of the Twelve was not only a mission, but precisely a commission, for which they were invested with a “power” (Mark 3:15; Matt. 10:1; Luke 9:1). In any case, as the appointed “witnesses” of the Lord (Luke 24:48; Acts 1:8), the Twelve alone were entitled to secure the continuity both of the Christian message and of the community life. Therefore, communion with the apostles was a basic note of the primitive “Church of God” in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42: *koinonia*).

Christianity means a “common life”, a life in common. Christians have to regard themselves as “brethren” (in fact, this was one of their first names), as members of one corporation, closely linked together. And therefore charity had to be the first mark and the first proof as well as the token of this fellowship. We are entitled to say: Christianity is a

community, a corporation, a fellowship, a brotherhood, a “society”, *coetus fidelium*. And surely, as a first approximation, such a description could be of help. But obviously it requires a further qualification, and something crucial is missing here. One has to ask: in what exactly is this unity and togetherness of the many based and rooted? What is the power that brings many together and joins them one with another? Is this merely a social instinct, some power of social cohesion, an impetus of mutual affection, or any other natural attraction? Is this unity based simply on unanimity, on identity of views or convictions? Briefly, is the Christian Community, the Church, merely a human society, a society of men? Surely, the clear evidence of the New Testament takes us far beyond this purely human level. Christians are united not only among themselves, but first of all they *are one – in Christ*, and only this communion *with Christ* makes the communion of men first possible – *in him*. The centre of unity *is the Lord* and the power that effects and enacts the unity *is the Spirit*. Christians are constituted into this unity by divine design; by the Will and Power of God. Their unity comes from above. They are one only in Christ, as those who had been born anew in him, “*Rooted and built up in him*” (Col. 2:7), who by One Spirit have been “*Baptized into One Body*” (1 Cor. 12:13). The Church of God has been established and constituted by God through Jesus Christ, Our Lord: “*She is his own creation by water and the word.*” Thus there is no human society, but rather a “Divine Society”, not a secular community, which would have been still “of this world”, still commensurate with other human groups, but a sacred community, which is intrinsically “not of this world”, not even of “this aeon”, but of the “aeon to come”.

Moreover, Christ himself belongs to this community, as its Head, not only as its Lord or Master. Christ is not above or outside of the Church. The Church *is in him*. The Church is not merely a community of those who believe in Christ and walk in his steps or in his commandments. She is a community of those who abide and dwell in him, and in whom he himself is abiding and dwelling by the Spirit. Christians are set apart, “born anew” and re-created; they are given not only a new pattern of life, but rather a new principle: the new life in the Lord by the Spirit. They are a “peculiar People”, “the People of God’s own possession”. The point is that the Christian Community, the *ekklesia*, is a *sacramental community*: *communio in sacris*, a “fellowship in holy things”, i.e. in the Holy Spirit, or even *communio sanctorum* (“communion of the holy things”) (*sanctorum* being taken as neuter rather than masculine – perhaps that was the original meaning of the phrase). The unity of the Church is effected through the sacraments: Baptism and the Eucharist are the two “social sacraments” of the Church, and in them the true meaning of Christian “togetherness” is continually revealed and sealed. Or even more emphatically, the sacraments constitute the Church. Only in the sacraments does the Christian Community pass beyond the purely human measure and

become the Church. Therefore “the right administration of the sacraments” belongs to the essence of the Church (to her *esse* [“act of being”]). Sacraments must be “worthily” received indeed, and therefore they cannot be separated or divorced from the inner effort and spiritual attitude of believers. Baptism is to be preceded by repentance and faith. A personal relation between an aspirant and his Lord must be first established by the hearing and the receiving of the Word, of the message of salvation. And again an oath of allegiance to God and his Christ is a prerequisite and indispensable condition of the administration of the sacrament (the first meaning of the word *sacramentum* was precisely “the (military) oath”). A catechumen is already “enrolled” among the brethren on the basis of his faith. Again, the baptismal gift is appropriated, received and kept, by faith and faithfulness, by the steadfast standing in the faith and the promises. And yet sacraments are not merely signs of a professed faith, but rather effective signs of the saving Grace – not only symbols of human aspiration and loyalty, but the outward symbols of the divine action. In them our human existence is linked to, or rather raised up to, the Divine Life, by the Spirit, the giver of life.

The Church as a whole is a *sacred* (or consecrated) community, distinguished thereby from the (profane) world. She is the *Holy Church*. St. Paul obviously uses the terms “Church” and “saints” as co-extensive and synonymous. It is remarkable that in the New Testament the name “saint” is almost exclusively used in the plural, saintliness being social in its intrinsic meaning. For the name refers not to any human achievement, but to a gift, to sanctification or consecration. Holiness comes from the Holy One, i.e. only from God. To be holy for a man means to share the Divine Life. Holiness is available to individuals only in the community, or rather in the “fellowship of the Holy Spirit”. The “communion of saints” is a pleonasm. One can be a “saint” only in the communion.

Strictly speaking, the Messianic Community, gathered by Jesus the Christ, was not yet the Church, before his passion and resurrection, before “the promise of the Father” was sent upon it and it was “endued with the power from on high”, “baptized with the Holy Spirit” (cf Luke 14:49 and Acts 1:4-5), in the mystery of Pentecost. Before the victory of the Cross disclosed in the glorious resurrection, it was still *sub umbraculo legis* (“under the shadow of the Law”). It was still the eve of the fulfilment. And Pentecost was there to witness to and to seal the victory of Christ. “The power from on high” has entered into history. The “new aeon” has been truly disclosed and started. And the sacramental life of the Church is the continuation of Pentecost.

The descent of the Spirit was a supreme revelation. Once and for ever, in the “dreadful and inscrutable mystery” of Pentecost, the Spirit-Comforter enters the world in which he was not yet present in such manner as now he begins to dwell and to abide. An abundant spring of living water

is disclosed on that day, here on earth, in the world which had been already redeemed and reconciled with God by the Crucified and Risen Lord. The Kingdom comes, for the Holy Spirit is the Kingdom.⁵ But the “coming” of the Spirit depends upon the “going” of the Son (John 16:7).

“Another Comforter” comes down to testify of the Son, to reveal his glory and to seal his victory (John 15:26; 16:7 and 14). Indeed in the Holy Spirit the Glorified Lord himself comes back or returns to his flock to abide with them always (John 14:18 and 28). Pentecost was the mystical consecration, the baptism of the whole Church (Acts 1:5). This fiery baptism was administered by the Lord: for he baptizes “with the Holy Spirit and with fire” (Matt. 3:3 and Luke 3:16). He has sent the Spirit from the Father, as a pledge in our hearts. The Holy Spirit is the spirit of adoption, in Christ Jesus, “the power of Christ” (2 Cor. 12:9). By the spirit we recognize and we acknowledge that Jesus is the Lord (1 Cor. 12:3). The work of the Spirit in believers is precisely their incorporation into Christ, their baptism into one body (1 Cor. 12:13), even the body of Christ. As St. Athanasius puts it: “Being given drink of the Spirit, we drink Christ.” For the Rock was Christ.⁶

By the Spirit Christians are united with Christ, are united in him, are constituted into his Body. *One body*, that of Christ: this excellent analogy used by St. Paul in various contexts, when depicting the mystery of Christian existence, is at the same time the best witness to the intimate experience of the Apostolic Church. By no means was it an accidental image: it was rather a summary of faith and experience. With St. Paul the main emphasis was always on the intimate union of the faithful with the Lord, on their sharing in his fulness. As St. John Chrysostom has pointed out, commenting on Colossians 3:4, in all his writings St. Paul was endeavouring to prove that the believers “are in communion with him in all things” and “Precisely to show this union does he speak of the Head and the body”.⁷ It is highly probable that the term was suggested by the Eucharistic experience (cf 1 Cor. 10:17), and was deliberately used to suggest its sacramental connotation. The Church of Christ is one in the Eucharist, for the Eucharist is Christ himself, and he *sacramentally* abides in the Church, which is his body. The Church is a body indeed, *an organism*, much more than a society or a corporation.

And perhaps an “organism” is the best modern rendering of the term *soma*, as used by St. Paul. Still more, the Church is the body of Christ and his “fulness”. Body and fulness (*to soma* and *to pleroma*) – these two terms are correlative and closely linked together in St. Paul’s mind, one explaining the other: “*which is his body, the fulness of him who all in all is being fulfilled*” (Eph. 1:23). The Church is the body of Christ because it is his *complement*. St. John Chrysostom commends the Pauline idea just in this sense. “The Church is the complement of Christ in the same manner in which the head completes the body and the body is completed by the head.” Christ is not alone. “He has prepared the whole race in common to follow

Him, to cling to Him, to accompany His train.” Chrysostom insists, “Observe how he (i.e. St. Paul) introduces Him as having need of all the members. This means that only then will the Head be filled up, when the Body is rendered perfect, when we are all together, co-united and knit together.”⁸

In other words, the Church is the extension and the “fulness” of the Holy Incarnation, or rather of the Incarnate life of the Son, “with all that for our sakes was brought to pass, the Cross and tomb, the Resurrection the third day, the Ascension into Heaven, the sitting on the right hand” (Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom, Prayer of Consecration). The Incarnation is being completed in the Church. And, in a certain sense, the Church is Christ himself, in his all-embracing plenitude (cf 1 Cor. 12:12). This identification has been suggested and vindicated by St. Augustine: “*Non solum nor Christianos factos esse, sed Christum*” (“Not only to make us Christians, but Christ”). For if he is the Head, we are the members: the whole man is he and we – *totus homo, ille et nos – Christus et Ecclesia* (“the whole man, he and us – Christ and the Church”). And again: “For Christ is not simply in the head and not in the body (only), but Christ is entire in the head and body” – “*non enim Christus in capite et non in corpore, sed Christus totus in capite et in corpore.*”⁹ This term *totus Christus*¹⁰ occurs in St. Augustine again and again; this is his basic and favourite idea, suggested obviously by St. Paul: “When I speak of Christians in the plural, I understand one in the One Christ. Ye are therefore many, and ye are yet one: we are many and we are one” – “*cum plures Christianos appello, in uno Christo unum intelligo.*”¹¹ “For our Lord Jesus is not only in Himself, but in us also” – “*Dominus enim Jesus non solum in se, sed et in nobis.*”¹² “One Man up to the end of the ages” – “*Unus homo usque ad finem saeculi extenditur.*”¹³

The main contention of all these utterances is obvious. Christians are incorporated into Christ and Christ abides in them – this intimate union constitutes the mystery of the Church. The Church is, as it were, the place and the mode of the redeeming presence of the Risen Lord in the redeemed world. “The Body of Christ is Christ Himself. The Church is Christ, as after His Resurrection He is present with us and encounters us here on earth.”¹⁴ And in this sense one can say: Christ is the Church. “*Ipse enim est Ecclesia, per sacramentum corporis sui in se ... eam continens*” (For he himself is the Church, containing it in himself through the sacrament of his body.¹⁵) Or in the words of Karl Adam: “Christ, the Lord, is the proper Ego of the Church.”¹⁶

The Church is the unity of charismatic life. The source of this unity is hidden in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper and in the mystery of Pentecost. And Pentecost is continued and made permanent in the Church by means of the Apostolic Succession. It is not merely, as it were, the canonic skeleton of the Church. Ministry (or “hierarchy”) itself is primarily a *charismatic* principle, a “ministry of the sacraments”, or “a divine

oeconomia". Ministry is not only a *canonical* commission, it belongs not only to the *institutional* fabric of the Church – it is rather an indispensable constitutional or *structural* feature, just in so far as the Church is a body, an organism. Ministers are not, as it were, "commissioned officers" of the community, not only leaders or delegates of the "multitudes", of the "people" or "congregation" – they are acting not only *in persona ecclesiae*. They are acting primarily *in persona Christi*. They are "representatives" of Christ himself, not of believers, and in them and through them, the Head of the Body, the only High Priest of the New Covenant, is performing, continuing and accomplishing his eternal pastoral and priestly office. He is himself the only true Minister of the Church.

All others are but stewards of his mysteries. They are standing *for* him, *before* the community – and just because the Body is one only in its Head, is brought together and into unity by him and in him, the Ministry in the Church is primarily the Ministry of unity. In the Ministry the organic unity of the Body is not only represented or exhibited, but rather rooted, without any prejudice to the "equality" of the believers, just as the "equality" of the cells of an organism is not destroyed by their structural differentiation: all cells are equal as such, and yet differentiated by their functions, and again this differentiation serves the unity, enables this organic unity to become more comprehensive and more intimate. The unity of every local congregation springs from the unity in the Eucharistic meal. And it is as the celebrant of the Eucharist that the priest is the minister and the builder of Church unity. But there is another and higher office: to secure the universal and catholic unity of the whole Church in space and time. This is the episcopal office and function. On the one hand, the Bishop has an authority to ordain, and again this is not only a jurisdictional privilege, but precisely a power of sacramental action beyond that possessed by the priest. Thus the Bishop as "ordainer" is the builder of Church unity on a wider scale. The Last Supper and Pentecost are inseparably linked to one another. The Spirit Comforter descends when the Son has been glorified in his death and resurrection. But still they are two sacraments (or mysteries) which cannot be merged into one another. In the same way the priesthood and the episcopate differ from one another. In the episcopacy Pentecost becomes universal and continuous, in the undivided episcopate of the Church (*episcopatus unus* of St. Cyprian) the unity in space is secured. On the other hand, through its bishop, or rather in its bishop, every particular or local Church is included in the catholic fulness of the Church, is linked with the past and with all ages. In its bishop every single Church outgrows and transcends its own limits and is organically united with the others. The Apostolic Succession is not so much the canonical as the mystical foundation of Church unity. It is something other than a safeguard of historical continuity or of administrative cohesion. It is an ultimate means to keep the mystical identity of the Body through the ages. But, of course, Ministry is never detached from the Body. It is in the Body, belongs

to its structure. And ministerial gifts are given inside the Church (cf 1 Cor. 12).

The Pauline conception of the body of Christ was taken up and variously commented on by the Fathers, both in the East and in the West, and then was rather forgotten.¹⁷ It is high time now to return to this experience of the early Church which may provide us with a solid ground for a modern theological synthesis. Some other similes and metaphors were used by St. Paul and elsewhere in the New Testament, but much to the same purpose and effect: *to stress the intimate and organic unity between Christ and those who are his*. But, among all these various images, that of the Body is the most inclusive and impressive, is the most emphatic expression of the basic vision.¹⁸ Of course, no analogy is to be pressed too far or over-emphasized. The idea of an organism, when used of the Church, has its own limitations. On the one hand, the Church is composed of human personalities, which never can be regarded merely as elements or cells of the whole, because each is in direct and immediate union with Christ and his Father – the personal is not to be sacrificed or dissolved in the corporate, Christian “togetherness” must not degenerate into impersonalism. The idea of the organism must be supplemented by the idea of a symphony of personalities, in which the mystery of the Holy Trinity is reflected (cf John 17:21,23), and this is the core of the conception of “catholicity” (*sobornost*).¹⁹

This is the chief reason why we should prefer a Christological orientation in the theology of the Church rather than a pneumatological.²⁰ For, on the other hand, the Church, as a whole, has her *personal centre* only in Christ, she is not an incarnation of the Holy Spirit, nor is she merely a Spirit-being community, but precisely the body of Christ, the Incarnate Lord. This saves us from impersonalism without committing us to any humanistic personification. Christ the Lord is the only Head and the only Master of the Church. “*In him the whole structure is closely fitted together and grows into a temple holy in the Lord; in him you too are being built together into a dwelling place for God in the Spirit*” (Eph. 2:21-22, Bp. Challoner’s version).

The Christology of the Church does not lead us into the misty clouds of vain speculations or dreamy mysticism. On the contrary, it secures the only solid and positive ground for proper theological research. The doctrine of the Church finds thereby its proper and organic place in the general scheme of the Divine Oeconomia of salvation. For we have indeed still to search for a comprehensive vision of the mystery of our salvation, of the salvation of the world.

One last distinction is to be made. The Church is still *in statu viae* and yet it is already *in statu patriae*. It has, as it were, a double life, *both in heaven and on earth*.²¹ The Church is a visible historical society, and the same is the body of Christ. It is both the Church of the redeemed, and the Church of the miserable sinners – both at once. On the historical level no

final goal has yet been attained. But the ultimate reality has been disclosed and revealed. This ultimate reality is still at hand, is truly available, in spite of the historical imperfection, though but in provisional forms. For the Church is a sacramental society. *Sacramental* means no less than “*eschatological*”. The *eschaton* does not mean primarily *final*, in the temporal series of events; it means rather *ultimate* (decisive); and the ultimate is being realized within the stress of historical happenings and events. What is “not of this world” is here “in this world”, not abolishing this world, but giving to it a new meaning and a new value, “transvaluating” the world, as it were. Surely this is still only an anticipation, a “token” of the final consummation. Yet the Spirit abides in the Church. This constitutes the mystery of the Church: a visible “society” of frail men *is* an organism of the Divine Grace.²²

The New Creation

The primary task of the historical Church is the proclamation of another word “to come”. The Church bears witness to the New Life, disclosed and revealed in Christ Jesus, the Lord and Saviour. This it does both by word and deed. The true proclamation of the gospel would be precisely the practice of this New Life: to show faith by deeds (cf Matt. 5:16).

The Church is more than a company of preachers, or a teaching society, or a missionary board. It has not only to invite people, but also to introduce them into this New Life, to which it bears witness. It is a missionary body indeed, and its mission field is the whole world. But the aim of its missionary activity is not merely to convey to people certain convictions or ideas, not even to impose on them a definite discipline or a rule of life, but first of all to introduce them into the New Reality, to *convert* them, to bring them through their faith and repentance to Christ himself, that they should be born anew in him and into him by water and the Spirit. Thus the ministry of the Word is completed in the ministry of the Sacraments.

“Conversion” is a fresh start, but it is only a start, to be followed by a long process of growth. The Church has to organize the new life of the converted. The Church has, as it were, to exhibit the new pattern of existence, the new mode of life, that of the “world to come”. The Church is here, in this world, for its salvation. But just for this reason it has to oppose and to renounce “*this*” world. God claims the whole man, and the Church bears witness to this “totalitarian” claim of God revealed in Christ. The Christian has to be a “new creation”. Therefore he cannot find a settled place for himself within the limits of the “old world”. In this sense the Christian attitude is, as it were, always revolutionary with regard to the “old order” of “this world”. Being “not of this world” the Church of Christ “in this world” can only be in permanent opposition, even if it claims only a reformation of the existing order. In any case, the change is to be radical and total.

Historical Antinomies

Historical failures of the Church do not obscure the absolute and ultimate character of its challenge, to which it is committed by its very eschatological nature, and it constantly challenges itself.

Historical life and the task of the Church are an antinomy, and this antinomy can never be solved or overcome on a historical level. It is rather a permanent hint to what is “to come” hereafter. The antinomy is rooted in the practical alternative which the Church had to face from the very beginning of its historical pilgrimage. *Either* the Church was to be constituted as an exclusive and “totalitarian” society, endeavouring to satisfy all requirements of the believers, both “temporal” and “spiritual”, paying no attention to the existing order and leaving nothing to the external world – it would have been an entire separation from the world, an ultimate flight out of it, and a radical denial of any external authority. *Or* the Church could attempt an inclusive Christianization of the world, subduing the whole of life to Christian rule and authority, to reform and to reorganize secular life on Christian principles, to build the Christian City. In the history of the Church we can trace both solutions: a flight to the desert and a construction of the Christian Empire. The first was practised not only in monasticism of various trends, but in many other Christian groups and denominations. The second was the main line taken by Christians, both in the West and in the East, up to the rise of militant secularism, but even in our days this solution has not lost its hold on many people. But on the whole, both proved unsuccessful. One has, however, to acknowledge the reality of their common problem and the truth of their common purpose. Christianity is not an individualistic religion and it is not only concerned for the “salvation of the soul”. Christianity is the Church, i.e. a Community, the New People of God, leading its corporate life according to its peculiar principles. And this life cannot be split into departments, some of which might have been ruled by any other and heterogeneous principles. Spiritual leadership of the Church can hardly be reduced to an occasional guidance given to individuals or to groups living under conditions utterly uncongenial to the Church. The legitimacy of these conditions must be questioned first of all. The task of a complete re-creation or re-shaping of the whole fabric of human life cannot or must not be avoided or declined. One cannot serve two Masters and a double allegiance is a poor solution. Here the above-mentioned alternative inevitably comes in – everything else would merely be an open compromise or a reduction of the ultimate and therefore *total* claims. *Either* Christians ought to go out of the world, in which there is another Master besides Christ (whatever name this other Master may bear: Caesar or Mammon or any other and in which the rule and the goal of life are other than those set out in the gospel – to go out and to start a separate society. *Or* again Christians have to transform the outer world, to make it

the Kingdom of God as well, and introduce the principles of the gospel into secular legislation.

There is an inner consistency in both programmes. And therefore the separation of the two ways is inevitable. Christians seem compelled to take different ways. The unity of the Christian task is broken. An inner schism arises within the Church: an abnormal separation between the monks (or the élite of the initiated) and the lay people (including clergy, which is far more dangerous than the alleged “clericalization” of the Church. In the last resort, however, it is only a symptom of the ultimate antinomy. The problem simply has no historical solution. A true solution would transcend history; it belongs to the “age to come”. In this age, on the historic plane, no constitutional principle can be given, but only a regulative one: a principle of discrimination, not a principle of construction.

For again each of the two programmes is self-contradictory. There is an inherent *sectarian* temptation in the first: the “catholic” and universal character of the Christian message and purpose is here at least obscured and often deliberately denied, the world is simply left out of sight. And all attempts at the direct Christianization of the world, in the guise of a Christian State or Empire, have only led to the more or less acute *secularization* of Christianity itself.²³

In our time nobody would consider it possible for everyone to be converted to a universal monasticism or a realization of a truly Christian, and universal, state. The Church remains “in the world”, as a heterogeneous body, and the tension is stronger than it has ever been; the ambiguity of the situation is painfully left by everyone in the Church. A practical programme for the present age can be deduced only from a restored understanding of the nature and essence of the Church. And the failure of all utopian expectations cannot obscure the Christian hope: the King has come, the Lord Jesus, and his Kingdom is to come.

¹ Robert Grosche, *Pilgernde Kirche* (Freiburg im Breisgau: 1938), 27.

² Sergius Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church*, 1935, 12; Stefan Zankow, *Das Orthodoxe Christentum des Ostens* (Berlin: 1928), 65; English translation by Dr Lowrie, 1929, 6-7.

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³ See MD Koster, *Ecclesiologie im Werden* (Paderborn: 1940).

⁴ See Luke 6:13: “whom also *he named apostles*”

⁵ Cf St. Gregory of Nyssa, *De Oratione Dominica* 3, MG, 44, c. 115-116.

⁶ S. Athan. Alex., *Epist. I ad Serapontem*, MG, 26, 576.

⁷ St. John Chrysostom, *Coloss. Hom. 7*, MG, 62, 375.

⁸ St. John Chrysostom, *Ephes. Hom. 3*, MG, 52, 29.

⁹ St. Augustine, *Evangelium Joannis tract.*, 21, 8, MG, 35, 1568; cf St. John Chrysostom, *I Cor. Hom. 30*, MG, 61, 279-83.

¹⁰ St. Augustine, *Evangelium Joannis tract.*, 21, 8, ML, 35, 1568.

¹¹ St. Augustine, *Ps. 127*, 3, ML, 37, 1679.

¹² St. Augustine, *Ps. 90 enarr.* 1, 9, ML, 37, 1157.

¹³ St. Augustine, *Ps. 85*, 5, ML, 37, 1083.

¹⁴ A Nygren, *Corpus Christi*, in *En Bok om Kyrkan*, av Svenska teologer (Lund: 1943), 20.

¹⁵ St. Hilary in *Ps. 125*, 6, ML, 9, 688.

¹⁶ Karl Adam, *Das Wesen Katholizismus* (4 Ausgabe: 1927), 24.

¹⁷ See E Mersch, SJ, *Les Corps Mystique de Christ, Etudes de Théologie Historique*, 2 vols, 2nd edition (Louvain: 1936).

¹⁸ The image of the Bride and her mystical marriage with Christ, Eph. 5:23-24, express the intimate union. Even the image of the house built of many stones, the cornerstone being Christ, Eph. 2:20-1; cf 1 Pet. 2:6, tends to the same purpose: many are becoming one, and the tower appears as it were built of one stone; cf Hermas, *Shepherd*, Vis. 3, 2, 6, 8. And again, "the People of God" is to be regarded as an organic whole. There is no reason whatever to be troubled by the variety of vocabularies used. The main idea and contention is obviously the same in all cases.

¹⁹ Cf George Florovsky, "The Catholicity of the Church" in Volume I of his *Collected Works*.

²⁰ Such as in Khomiakov's or in Mœhler's *Die Einheit in der Kirche*.

²¹ Cf St. Augustine in *Evang. Joannis tract.*, 24, 40, 35, 19-20, 7.

²² See Khomiakov's essay *On the Church*; English translation by WJ Birkbeck, *Russia and the English Church*, first published 1895, ch. 23, 193-222.

²³ For a more detailed treatment, see George Florovsky, "The Antinomies of Christian History" Chapter 3 of *The Collected Works of George Florovsky* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Press, 1976), 67-100.

THE LITURGY AFTER THE LITURGY

Ion Bria

Liturgy as Witness (“Martyria”)

The idea of the “liturgy after the liturgy” emerged in the mid-1970s in ecumenical discussions of how the theology of mission (missiology) and the theology of the Church (ecclesiology) are related. A key insight came from a consultation of Orthodox member churches of the World Council of Churches in Bucharest in June 1974, convened to prepare a working paper on “Confessing Christ Today” for the WCC’s Fifth Assembly (Nairobi 1975):

If Christ’s mission brings about essentially nothing less than the self-giving of God’s Trinitarian life to the world, it follows that mission is ultimately possible only in and through *an event of communion which reflects in history the Trinitarian existence of God himself*. The church is meant precisely to be that. Mission, therefore, suffers and is seriously distorted or disappears whenever it is not possible to point to a community in history which reflects this Trinitarian existence of communion. This happens whenever the church is so distorted or divided that it is no longer possible to recognize it as such a communion, or whenever mission is exercised without reference to the church, but with reference simply to the individuals or the social realities of history.¹

In other words, ecclesiological heresy may make mission impossible.

This was further developed at a consultation in Etchmiadzine, Armenia, in 1975, on “Confessing Christ through the Liturgical Life of the Church Today”. Its report noted that the Eucharistic liturgy has implications not only for the being and identity of the Church but also for its mission in the world:

The risen Christ is made manifest and present by the Holy Spirit in the liturgical life, through word and sacraments. The whole life and prayer of the church’s members, whether meeting together for common worship or celebrating each one “in the temple of the heart”, centres on the Eucharist. Here all the prayers and liturgical acts of the people of God converge; here the church discovers its true identity. In the whole field of Christian spirituality, Eucharistic spirituality creates a dynamic piety, mystical bonds with Christ, which overcome evil by living fully the mystery of incarnation and divinization in all its dimensions...

In the liturgical celebration, extending into the daily life of the church’s members, the church announces and achieves the advent of the kingdom of the holy Trinity. In all things it commemorates the glorified Christ and gives thanks to God in Jesus Christ. The entire tradition of the church, its worship, its theology and its preaching, is a doxology, a continual thanksgiving, a confession of faith in Christ’s Easter triumph and man’s liberation from all

the forces which oppress and degrade him. Prayer and the Eucharist, whereby Christians overcome their selfish ways, impel them also to become involved in the social and political life of their respective countries.²

Out of this idea of the extension of the liturgical celebration into the daily life of the faithful in the world came the concept of the “liturgy after the liturgy”.³ The dynamics of the liturgy go beyond the boundaries of the Eucharistic assembly to serve the community at large. The Eucharistic liturgy is not an escape into an inner realm of prayer, a pious turning away from social realities; rather, it calls and sends the faithful to celebrate “the sacrament of the brother” outside the temple in the public marketplace, where the cries of the poor and marginalized are heard.

Anastasios Yannoulatos, then a professor at the University of Athens (and now Archbishop of Albania), underscored the necessary link between taking part “in the great event of liberation from sin and of communion with Christ” and making evident “this transfiguration of our little being into a member of Christ” in daily life.³

Each of the faithful is called upon to continue a personal “liturgy” on the secret altar of his own heart, to realize a living proclamation of the good news “for the sake of the whole world”. Without this continuation the liturgy remains incomplete... The sacrifice of the Eucharist must be extended in personal sacrifices for the people in need, the brothers for whom Christ died... The continuation of liturgy in life means a continuous liberation from the powers of the evil that are working inside us, a continual reorientation and openness to insights and efforts aimed at liberating human persons from all demonic structures of injustice, exploitation, agony, loneliness, and at creating real communion of persons in love.⁴

Anastasios describes this everyday personal attitude as “liturgical” because (1) it is energized by participation in the Eucharist; (2) it constitutes the best preparation for a more conscious participation in the Eucharist; and (3) it is a clear and living expression of the real transformation of men and women in Christ.

The typology of “liturgy after the liturgy” is also reflected in the reports of the WCC’s 1980 conference on world mission and evangelism in Melbourne, which spoke of the Eucharist as “pilgrim bread”, emphasized the role of worship in educating and nurturing the “martyrs” of the Church, those who witness to Christ’s resurrection in the world, and recognized the evangelizing force of the very act of coming together for Eucharist in certain circumstances:

We hear of those who come together at great risk, and whose courage reveals to those around them how precious is this sacrament. In other situations the Eucharist may be an open-air witness so planned that many may see it. Such a joyful celebration as this may offer fresh hope in cynical, secular societies. There is, at the Lord’s table, a vision of God which draws the human heart to the Lord.⁵

The urgent need to recover the unity between worship and daily Christian life was summarized by the WCC's Sixth Assembly (Vancouver 1983) as follows:

For the sake of the witnessing vocation of the church we need to find a true rhythm of Christian involvement in the world. The church is gathered for worship and scattered for everyday life. While in some situations in the witnessing dimension of worship there must be a "liturgy after the liturgy"... it must be stressed that there is no Christian service to the world unless it is rooted in the service of worship.⁶

The significance of worship as a means for evangelism was also emphasized by the Seventh Assembly (Canberra 1991):

The fundamental nature of the Christian life is to gather around word and sacrament in fellowship and prayer (Acts 2:42). The experience of worship is both the stimulus for and the result of the inner relationship with the Spirit. It involves life, gives life, and is a means for evangelism and grassroots ecumenism. Every worshipping community should be a model for an inclusive community. Worship space needs to be designed so that all people are able to participate fully. A lively ministry of hospitality, welcoming all in the name of the Lord, is most important. The plea of young people for forms of worship and celebration which fit their culture must be taken seriously.⁷

In ensuing ecumenical discussions other dimensions of "the liturgy after the liturgy" have been discovered.⁸ The Church's liturgical and diaconal functions are connected, for liturgy reshapes the social life of Christians with a new emphasis on the sharing of bread, on the healing of brokenness, on reconciliation and on justice in the human community.⁹ The concept has also come to be associated with a other facets of the life of the Church, including education,¹⁰ evangelization,¹¹ concern for creation,¹² spirituality¹³ and social ethics.¹⁴ The churches in WCC's Vancouver Assembly spoke about the "Eucharistic vision of ecumenism".¹⁵

Perhaps a major reason for the ecumenical importance attached to the liturgy after the liturgy in the 1970s and 1980s is that, under the burden of despotic and totalitarian regimes, the *Kyrie eleison* of the modest and sometimes hidden Sunday liturgy was the only collective cry for truth, love and mercy.¹⁶ The ecumenical community learned a good deal from the resistance of the Orthodox churches under communist regimes and Soviet domination, through the network of popular communities who never ceased to believe in the force of the Eucharistic liturgy:

Sometimes historical circumstances will demand that the Christian witness to the God of Jesus Christ take the form of a *martyria* in the strongest sense of the term. The history of the Church affords many examples to show that God's grace will not fail his elect, even in the extremity of their suffering. Often it has been very explicitly from the Eucharist that Christians under trial have drawn the divine strength which gives them courage and keeps them faithful... Already at the beginning of the second century, St. Ignatius of Antioch foresees that his martyrdom will

“grind” him into one bread with Christ. Fifty years later, the martyr Polycarp will give to his parting prayer the form of a *Eucharistia*.

Especially in difficult circumstances, the very celebration of the Eucharist can constitute an act of witness. In “impossible” situations, it proclaims that God alone creates a saving future. When it cries “Maranatha”, the Eucharistic community is calling for the overthrow of all that is opposed to God; it is praying for the final coming of God’s Kingdom “Let grace come: let this world pass away” (*Didache 10*). This hoped-for future is already prefigured in the fact that the Eucharistic community itself includes pardoned sinners, reconciled adversaries and the desperate restored to life: all are welcomed by the Lord at his table of justice, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (cf Rom. 14:17).¹⁷

Important contributions to the evolution of this concept were also made by the “Eucharistic ecclesiology” elaborated by Orthodox theologians in Britain, France and the USA, as well as from the experience of emerging churches in Africa and Asia.¹⁸

Essential Connections

The liturgy is constituted by pairing certain realities which cannot thereafter be disconnected. Too often, however, one-sided interpretations put the life of the churches in contradiction with the liturgy.

The meaning of the liturgy has been often obscured by one-sided interpretations, in which it was presented almost exclusively as a means of individual sanctification. It is urgent, therefore, that we rediscover the initial *lex orandi* of the Church in its *cosmic*, *redemptive* and *eschatological* dimensions. Behind this static and individualistic understanding of the liturgy we must recover its dynamic nature and power. It edifies and fulfils the Church as the sacrament of the Kingdom; it transforms us, the members of the Church, into the *witnesses* of Christ and his co-workers.¹⁹

One evidence that liturgical practice and ritual have become disconnected from authentic Orthodox ecclesiology is the decreased involvement of the people in the liturgy and Communion.²⁰ Moreover, despite the courageous celebration of the liturgy under communist regimes to which we referred above, ignorance of the Bible and the Tradition have become more and more pronounced in these countries. The Tradition is not only a treasure that needs to be preserved but also something that must live in the process of being transmitted.

This raises the difficult problem of the language of the liturgy. One of the blatant contradictions in the Orthodox churches is the celebration of the liturgy in ancient languages which are no longer spoken or written by the people. While these liturgical languages should not be allowed to disappear, because of their important impact on culture as a whole and the identity of the Church, room should also be made for the introduction of the vernacular into the liturgy. Young people must also be prepared to follow

the services with understanding. If the language and vocabulary make the text impossible to understand, the people are bound to ignore it. This inevitably breaks any connection between the liturgy, and the liturgy after the liturgy.²¹

But there is a further problem. Under the guise of avoiding the temptation of “horizontalizing” the Christian message or subjecting it to “social” and “political” concerns, the Orthodox have often proposed a way of life which cannot be translated into action in society. They place the social order and secular issues into the hands of the state and the political parties. Hence they are unable to translate their theological vision into the terms of the prevailing intellectual and political culture. They have ignored the social and political consequences of *theosis* (deification) and disregarded the historical concretization of Eucharistic spirituality.²² In so doing, they interrupt the flow of the liturgical act, breaking off *diakonia* at the end of worship, at the door of the church.²³

Basileia, the rule of God, is the centre of the liturgy: “Blessed is the kingdom of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Preaching the good news of the *basileia* of God means challenging the unjust and totalitarian structures of society. The liturgy is not just the telling of the story of Jesus Christ, but the interpretation and concretization of his death on the Cross and his resurrection. Because the *basileia* is invoked, Christian witness as struggle and confrontation must never be allowed to disappear from the horizon of the liturgy.²⁴

The basic structure of the liturgy is based on two movements: first, the people gather for worship, to hear the word of God and to eat the bread of life (cf Luke 4:16); then, at the end of the liturgy, they are sent out (cf Matt. 28:19-20). Here the worshipping community becomes an evangelizing community. Receiving the Eucharistic “bread for pilgrims”, food for missionaries, the faithful become actors of mission. The liturgical assembly is transformed into a “cloud of witnesses”, together with all saints, confessors and martyrs. The Church sends its members on the way of the apostles, knowing what Jesus told them: “Whoever does not gather with me scatters” (Matt 12:30). The Church grows by adding new members to the original apostolic community founded on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, where the disciples experienced historically the fulfilment of Jesus’ prayer “that all may be one” (John 17:23).

This one universal Church is not an abstract entity; it is found historically in particular places and times. This points to a second essential connection: the pairing of the liturgy and indigenous culture. The liturgy is a clue to understanding the polyphony of the local churches united in their episcopal conciliarity and cultural diversity. The bishop as celebrant of the Eucharist is at one and the same time the symbol of apostolic fidelity, local unity and universal communion or catholicity.

Eucharistic ecclesiology focuses on the miracle of the unity of the early Christian Church, which really existed only in the local churches without

yet being bound together by councils and general structures of Church government; yet everywhere this early Christian Church was the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Where by the operation of the Holy Spirit the Lord is sacramentally present in his world and his reconciling sacrificial death, and the congregation is gathered around him in praise and worship, there the Church in all its plenitude is present. For St. Ignatius of Antioch, its unity was visible in the one president of the Eucharistic assembly, the bishop and the successor of the apostles; the multiplicity of interrelated ministries expressed the richness of the divine love in the mystery of the Holy Trinity, as the church Fathers testify.

“Local church” refers primarily to the incarnation of the universal among a particular people through its own culture and language. The *Church of nations* is at the heart of the whole history of Orthodox mission. It is important for the local church to manifest its cultural identity, but this must not be confused with nationalism. The local church is not an invention of national states – although it can become a national institution – but is the fruit of proclaiming the gospel through the liturgy to a particular people. In some parts of the Orthodox world the anomaly remains that indigenous people do not yet have full cultural autonomy (Greek is used in Palestinian lands) or canonical autocephaly (there are non-indigenous leaders of Orthodox churches in Jerusalem, Africa, Asia and Latin America). Meanwhile, aspirations for autonomy and autocephaly within Orthodox churches in newly independent countries in Europe have created sharp tensions within the worldwide Orthodox family.

At the *koinonia* around the holy table in the liturgy, there is a vision of God inviting all humanity to participate in his precious celestial gifts. Here is another essential connection: the sharing of one bread and one cup together within the Church must have its counterpart in the life of the community. As we share the same Eucharistic bread, we must also share our food and existence with our neighbours. St. John Chrysostom spoke about the liturgy which takes place outside the temple, where the altar raised by the poor people must be reinstated by the Christians. It is the “sacrament of the brother”, the brothers of Christ, and the poor.

This logic of serving at the brother’s altar has motivated the Church to develop a witness in society, but the Church can easily bypass this requirement of the liturgy by what it says or fails to say during the liturgy. The Church can be diverted by social and political considerations, especially by the lust for power and hegemony, which contradicts the liturgical values of sacrifice, reconciliation, justice and sharing. The liturgy has a mechanism which rejects the distance between ecclesiastical hierarchy and the people, between a clerical church and the body of the faithful. The institutional Church must thus remain transparent and flexible if it is to be an instrument in the hands of the faithful for effective Christian action.

The political culture of the Eastern tradition has been determined by the choice of Christianity as the official religion of the empire following the conversion of Constantine in the fourth century. Later, the theory of a “symphony” between state and Church, patriarch and empire, became part of the political doctrine of the Church. While the Constantinian era as a political reality has been over since 1917, many Orthodox retain their nostalgia for the protection of the empire. Even after the tragic experience of state-Church relationships under the communists, the topic of separating Church and state remains a taboo subject. But the spirit of the liturgy does not allow the suppression of hidden realities and moral heresies. It is important to know how far Christian values and moral convictions have been compromised by “symphony”. The liturgy inevitably raises the issue of ecclesiology and ethics; it is inevitably concerned with the destructive nature of political powers. In such cases it can inspire dissidence and civil disobedience.

The Orthodox churches’ anchoring of tradition in a certain period of history, the period of the “ancient undivided churches” and the great Ecumenical Councils, brings with it a sense of conciliarity which recognizes the polyphony of the local churches and the doctrinal symbol of common tradition. The liturgy also reflects this broad conciliar spirit. Before Holy Communion the believer must personally confess the Creed, repeating the baptismal confession, “I believe in one God...” Does this model of Eucharistic catholicity provide sufficient ground for comprehensive reception of various Christian churches at the Lord’s Table? Is the liturgical “economy” not a way to restore broken communion?²⁵

The rediscovery of this *ecclesiology of communion* is at the centre of the typology of the “liturgy after the liturgy”. Stimulated to clarify their missiology ecumenically, the Orthodox felt the need also to renew their ecclesiology, to recapture lost or forgotten dimensions of the doctrine of the Church, the witnessing people of God in the world created by God. The essential connection must be maintained between ecclesiology and missiology, between the proclamation of *basileia* and the building up of the body of Christ in history as sacrament of the Kingdom.

The ecclesiology of communion or *koinonia* is a critical principle for understanding the nature and mission of the Church, offering several significant clarifications:

- correction of an ecclesiology informed by the Constantinian ideology of Christendom. The Church is not a Christian institution of the empire, but the *ecclesia* of the scattered people in all nations;
- rediscovery of God’s “economy” for the whole *oikoumene*; hence, God’s preferential option for the poor;
- creation of concern about poverty, marginalization and suffering, because *koinonia* is the opposite of exclusion;
- an understanding of tradition not only as fidelity to the experience of the early Church but also as an instrument of renewal and a

movement for mission; a recognition, therefore, that worship needs new symbols to capture something of the mystery of God in contemporary society;

- emphasis on the need to confront the problem of how to communicate, including the issue of the hearer, of the message itself and of identity through the ages.

The Dynamics of Liturgy in Mission

It is a false, but unfortunately common, stereotype among Christians of other traditions that the Orthodox churches are “non-missionary” churches. On this view, they are preoccupied with their doctrinal and ritual integrity, enclosed within their national frontiers and indifferent to the proclamation of the gospel, the conversion of the nations or the growth in the number of Christians in the world. The growth of proselytism in the areas of Orthodox churches, especially in central and eastern Europe since the fall of communism, attests to the fact that their way of evangelization is unknown or disregarded as completely inadequate. While the missionary and social failures of the Orthodox churches over many centuries cannot be overlooked, it is not correct to say that they have abandoned their responsibility for apostolic ministry and diakonia. The Orthodox have chosen their way of understanding and undertaking mission. As they celebrate the liturgy, they are equipping, nourishing and sending missionaries outside. Tradition is also true mission, because it implies a creative encounter between gospel and culture.

It is important to recognize this in ecumenical missiology, which should foster a continuous process of mutual correction among the many diverse missionary traditions, methodologies and strategies. In the words of the WCC’s 1980 world mission conference in Melbourne:

We are aware of different emphases, but believe there is a growing ecumenical consensus... We would seek to value the spoken word as having a sacramental quality, for in preaching we ask the Spirit to take our crude words and thoughts and make them effective and loving to touch the hearts of our hearers. We would seek to receive the Eucharist as God’s word which speaks freshly each day of sacrifice and victory. We believe that as our churches hold together these two aspects of Christian sharing, we may avoid both the excessive intellectualism of some preaching traditions and the excessive ritualism of some who have focused entirely on the Eucharist.²⁶

The evangelizing and witnessing potentialities of the Eucharistic liturgy extend to other kinds of liturgies and forms of diakonia outside the walls of the Church. What is at stake here is the continuous building up of the Church, the body of Christ, the sacrament of the Kingdom of God in history. To strengthen the diaconal role of the worshipping community scattered for daily life, this second movement of the liturgy, the Eucharist

has to become “pilgrim bread”, food for missionaries, nourishment for Christians involved in social and moral struggles.

By contrast, there are many churches today in which few people even receive Holy Communion as an integral part of the liturgy. Many people are not committed to mission and evangelism because they do not understand the liturgical language, the depth and meaning of the rites, especially during the first part of the liturgy of the word, which is the missionary section par excellence. An extreme abstraction and a lack of contact with human reality and the physical universe are entirely contrary to the spirit of the liturgy.

In the Eucharist the church community enjoys a moment of affirmation of the reality of being in Christ. It is the icon of Christ; it is the cosmos becoming *ecclesia*. The people touch the mystery; they have a foretaste of the Kingdom with all their physical senses – listening to the prayers and the music, seeing the icons and the processions of the gospel and the gifts, eating and drinking the Lord’s Supper. Above all, the Eucharistic liturgy is not terminated in the prayerful intimacy of the worship, but it continues with diakonia, apostolic mission, visible and public Christian witness.

But the liturgy is not simply a tool for confessing Christ or an instrument of mission; rather, it must be seen as the starting event of the Christian movement for mission, the point of departure given to the Church for pursuing its vocation in the wider society, which is also a point of arrival.

The significance of the Eucharist for the communion of the faithful, the renewal and sanctification of creation, the missionary witness of Christ is strongly underscored by the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* document:

The Eucharist embraces all aspects of life. It is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world. The Eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in the search for appropriate relationship in social, economic and political life... All kinds of injustice, racism, separation and lack of freedom are radically challenged when we share in the body and blood of Christ. Through the Eucharist the all-renewing grace of God penetrates and restores human personality and dignity. The Eucharist involves the believer in the central event of the world’s history. As participants in the Eucharist, therefore, we prove inconsistent if we are not actively participating in this ongoing restoration of the world’s situation and the human condition.

Solidarity in the Eucharistic communion of the body of Christ and responsible care of Christians for one another and the world find specific expression in the liturgies: in the mutual forgiveness of sins, the sign of peace; intercession for all; the eating and drinking together; the taking of the elements to the sick and those in prison or the celebration of Eucharist with them. All these manifestations of love in the Eucharist are directly related to Christ’s own testimony as a servant, in whose servanthood Christians themselves participate...

Reconciled in the Eucharist, the members of the body of Christ are called to be servants of reconciliation among men and women and witnesses of the joy of resurrection. As Jesus went out to publicans and sinners and had table fellowship with them during his earthly ministry, so Christians are called in the Eucharist to be in solidarity with the outcast and to become signs of the love of Christ who lived and sacrificed himself for all and now gives himself in the Eucharist.²⁷

All this inevitably raises the issues of concelebration and Eucharistic communion with churches which have different ecclesiological views on the liturgy. "Liturgy after the liturgy" stands for the catholicity of the Eucharist. It is the priest's responsibility to encourage all people who take part in the offertory and the *anaphora* to come for Holy Communion. At his discretion he may give Communion to members of Oriental Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Old Catholic churches without formal conversion to the Orthodox Church.

Of course, the way for full Eucharistic communion needs solid preparation. For the Orthodox this will mean re-examining their deeply entrenched, evasive attitude regarding the history and vocation of those Christians who do not belong to their own church. It is important to conceive all churches in the framework of an ecumenical conciliarity and from the perspective of the catholicity of the Eucharist, no longer taking for granted that the particular traditions of other churches have merely secondary authority. To blame other Christians for being Catholics or Protestants or Evangelicals, to describe them as "heterodox" and treat them as strangers, will only deepen the wounds of separation. All Christians ought to feel settled and joyful with their origin and church affiliation and travel together with other Christians as pilgrims on the way to fuller *koinonia*.

At the same time, we must clearly identify the concrete points of separation which continue to constitute a defeat for all the churches. Ecumenism challenges our sinful clinging to sectarianism and integrism. We have to rediscover such ecumenical resources as the litany for unity which is a part of many Christian liturgies, for as long as there is a prayer "for peace in the whole world, for the stability of the holy churches of God and for the unity of all" there is hope for unity in *koinonia*.

Most contemporary missionary methods, which continue those which evolved between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, reflect the attachment of Protestants to biblical texts and sermons or of Roman Catholics to ecclesiastical institutions and sacraments. One lesson that could be drawn from Orthodox history is the dynamic of the Eucharistic assembly for the proclamation of the gospel, the sharing of the bread of life with others and the visible communion of the people. This way of evangelizing remains largely ignored, which, as we said earlier, explains in part at least the growth of proselytism in Orthodox countries.²⁸

From the beginning, the celebration of the Lord's Supper at a particular time (Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection) and in a particular holy

place was at the heart of the Christian community (*ecclesia*). Borrowing some of the rituals used in the synagogues and temple of apostolic times, but based on the words of Jesus Christ, the liturgy was meant to transform the worshippers and send them on an apostolic journey into the *oikoumene*: “Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world” (Rom. 10:18).

The liturgy goes beyond the appropriation of Christ’s message of salvation to transform Christians into witnesses to the risen Christ. The joy of sharing the very life of Christ, in the form of the Eucharistic bread and wine, should be transmitted to others. Through the liturgy of the word – biblical readings, homily, litanies and responses – the faithful are learning a language of communication in order to reach other people who are looking for faith. The Eucharist itself is given as “pilgrim bread”, as nourishment for exhausted pilgrims, sometimes martyrs of the Cross. This is why, at the end of the liturgy, the priests bless their apostolic journey – “Go forth in peace” – in order to give an account of the Christian faith, hope and love.

The liturgy reminds us that the Church is built on the foundations of the apostles, the cornerstone being Jesus Christ himself (in fact, the altar stone stands for Christ). The images of the apostles, which are visible in the Church in various forms, symbolize the multitude of nations who will be converted to Christ, joining the Jerusalem community, for historically the apostles went into all parts of the world to preach the gospel and establish local churches:

The Church is planted in the world for the healing of the nations. The Church should not be seen simply as a Noah’s Ark to salvage a few specimens of the human race about to perish. The Holy Spirit came upon that small Jerusalem community on the day of Pentecost in order that, through them and through others who were to believe in Christ through their word (John 17:20), the world may be healed and redeemed.²⁹

The Church is a holy place because it symbolizes the venue of the coming of the Kingdom of God. It is essential to challenge individualistic approaches to mission with the reminder that Christ formed those who believed in him into his body, the Church, the sign and sacrament of the Kingdom.

In the Orthodox tradition, there is no private or isolated liturgy. Since all are celebrating the same faith, all are at the same time concelebrants and communicants: praying, singing, chanting, confessing their faith. The liturgical community gathered together “to do this in remembrance of me” is by this very fact a witnessing community. As a place of gathering for praying and sharing the body and blood of Christ, every local parish is also a point of departure into the world to share the joy of resurrection. The worshipping assembly is prepared and sent as an evangelizing community. Therefore, for the Orthodox, the missionary life and structure of every parish is the key to practising the proclamation of Christ today. For the responsibility of every believer does not end at the geographical and

cultural borders of the community in which he or she lives, but extends to other communities, including the people who do not know the gospel.

In the liturgy the verbal proclamation of the gospel is inseparable from the doxological way of praying and symbolic ritual of the sacraments. This prevents the Orthodox from separating doctrine and prayer, biblical texts from hymnology, biblical stories from the life of saints. It overcomes the contradiction between doctrinal teachings and personal experiences. *Lex credendi* goes together with *lex orandi*.

Liturgy opens the horizon of the Kingdom of God for all humanity in the midst of history. It opens the communion of God for scattered people. There is a sacred time and a sacred place where people bring forth everything of their own existence and commit their lives into the hands of the Creator and Saviour: “*Thine own, of thine own, we offer unto thee in all and for all.*”

Orthodox theologian KM George draws a contrast between the “saint” in the Orthodox tradition and the “crusading missionary”:

The saint prays and receives the creation of God with hospitality. The missionary preaches and offers, often aggressively, in order to give. The world, however, is healed and transfigured more by the praying saint than by the thundering preacher. It is the saint who, manifesting God’s tender love and receiving all creatures in divine hospitality, is genuinely sensitive to the riches of other religions, to different cultures, to “all sentient beings”. The crusading missionary is afire with the message he proclaims, but can be totally lacking in receptivity and sensitivity. Today we need to combine in our experience of our church the true saint and the genuine missionary whose sole concern is manifesting the kingdom and not annexing new territories.³⁰

The Church grows by increasing the Pentecost community, by bringing new members into Christ’s body: “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16). On the Cross he assumes the sufferings of all. He incorporates into the people of God those who were excluded (Luke 5:27-32, 19:1-10), offering *koinonia* to all scattered. By celebrating Baptism and Eucharist, the Church opens the *koinonia* of God to everyone, becoming a fellowship of all nations.

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1. From the report of the consultation in *IRM*, 64:253 (1975), 79.
2. For the text, see Georges Tsetsis (ed), *Orthodox Thought* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 6-7. See also *IRM*, 64:256 (1975), 417-21; Ion Bria (ed), *Martyria-Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), 231-34.
3. Cf Bria, “The Liturgy after the Liturgy”, *IRM*, 67:265 (1978), 86-90, reprinted in *Go Forth in Peace: A Pastoral and Missionary Guidebook* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 28-41; and in Gennadios Limouris (ed), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), 216-20.
4. Bria, *Martyria-Mission*, 67.
5. From the report of Section 3, “The Church Witnesses to the Kingdom”, para. 31a, *Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives* (Geneva: WCC, 1980), 205.

The social dimensions and missionary repercussions of the sacramental life of Orthodoxy were also discussed in the preparations for the 1989 conference on world mission and evangelism (San Antonio); cf Georges Lemopoulos (ed), *Your Will Be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission* (Geneva: WCC), and Katerini, Tertios, 1989.

6. David Gill (ed), *Gathered for Life: Official Report of the WCC's Sixth Assembly* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 35.

7. Michael Kinnamon (ed), *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report of the WCC Seventh Assembly* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 119.

8. A consultation on "The Ecumenical Nature of Orthodox Witness" (New Valamo, Finland, 1977) was the first to speak of "the dynamics of the concept of 'liturgy after the liturgy'". The text of the report is in Lymouris (ed), *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, 66-69.

9. Cf Myra Blyth, "Liturgy after the Liturgy: An Ecumenical Perspective", *TER*, 44:1 (1992), 73-79.

10. Jan Anchimiuk, "Ministry of the Eucharistic Liturgy and the Ministry of the Liturgy after the Liturgy", in Tsetsis (ed), *Orthodox Thought*, 31-2.

11. Cf Aram Keshishian, *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum-Lynx, 1992), 22-30.

12. Cf Limouris, "The Eucharist as Sacrament of Sharing", in *Orthodox Visions of Ecumenism*, 253.

13. Dan-Ilie Ciobotea, "Spiritual Formation and Liturgical Life", in S Amirtham and Robin Pryor (eds), *Resources for Spiritual Formation in Theological Education* (Geneva: WCC, 1989), 23-30.

14. Cf Emmanuel Clapsis, "Ecclesiology and Ethics: Reflections by an Orthodox Theologian", *TER*, 47:2 (1995), 161-63; "The Eucharist as Missionary Event in a Suffering World", in Lemopoulos, *Your Will Be Done*, 101.

15. *Gathered for Life*, 45; cf Aram Keshishian, *Conciliar Fellowship: A Common Goal* (Geneva: WCC, 1992), 42ff.

16. Cf Boris Bobrinsky, "Prière du coeur et Eucharistie", in *Person and Communion: Homage to Fr Dimitru Staniloae* (Sibiu, 1993), 631.

17. *Sharing in One Hope*, report of the meeting of the WCC commission on Faith and Order in Bangalore (Geneva: WCC, 1978), 197-8.

18. Some of these themes are reviewed in greater detail in several of my articles, among them, "The Church's Role in Evangelism: Icon or Platform?", *IRM*, 64 (1975), 243-50; "Reflections on Mission Theology and Methodology", *IRM*, 73:289 (1984), 66-72; "Mission and Secularization in Europe", *IRM*, 77:305 (1988), 117-30; "Renewal in Mission", *IRM*, 80:317 (1991), 55-59; "Diaspora, mission et ecclésiologie", *Service Orthodoxe de Presse* (Paris), 15 (1977), 8-10. "La signification missionnaire de l'Eucharistie", *Service Orthodoxe*, 62 (1981), 15-20; "Théologie de la mission", *Service Orthodoxe*, 85 (1984), 17-24, "Eucharistie et évangélisation", *Lettre sur l'Évangélisation* (Geneva), 3-4 (1981), 2-6; "Unité des chrétiens et missions de l'Église", *Spiritus*, 88 (1982), 293-300; "Biserica si Liturgia", *Ortodoxia*, 34:4 (1982), 481-91; "Ecclésiologie: Préoccupations et mutations actuelles", *Unité Chrétienne*, 70, 45-88; "Faith and Worship", *One World*, 141 (1988), 15-16.

19. Report of a consultation "Preaching and Teaching the Christian Faith Today" (Zica Monastery, Yugoslavia, 1980), in Tsetsis (ed), *Orthodox Thought*, 62-63. On the link between worship, mission and culture, see also Anastasios Yannoulatos, "Thy Will Be Done: Mission in Christ's Way", in JA Scherer and Stephen B Bevans (eds), *New Directions in Mission and Evangelization* (Maryknoll NY:

- Orbis, 1994), 26-38; John Meyendorff, "Christ as Word: Gospel and Culture", *IRM*, 74:294 (1985), 32-43; Savas Christos Agouridis, "Evangelisation et monde moderne", in Agouridis and René Girault (eds), *Annoncer Jésus-Christ aujourd'hui* (Paris: Mame, 1973), 11-48; Geevarghese Mar Ostathios, "The Gospel of the Kingdom and the Crucified and Risen Lord", *Your Kingdom Come*, 37-51; Paulos Mar Gregorios, *The Meaning and Nature of Diakonia* (Geneva: WCC, 1988).
20. Alexander Schmemmann. *For the Life of the World* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1973), 45.
21. Cf "Orthodox Mission in the 9th Century: The Witness of St. Methodius", *IRM*, 74:294 (1985), 217-18.
22. Cf "Salvation in Orthodox Theology", report of a consultation in Greece, 1972, in *Orthodox Contributions to Nairobi* (Geneva: WCC, 1975), 7-10.
23. Cf Bria, "Ecclesiologie et Sociologie, in *Le défi de l'Europe post-communiste et l'engagement social chrétien* (Fribourg: Editions Universitaires, 1994), 69-75.
24. Cf Metropolitan John of Pergamon, "The Church as Communion", in *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia* (report of the fifth world conference on Faith and Order) (Geneva: WCC, 1994), 106.
25. Fairy von Lilienfeld, "Visions of Europe with Divided Churches?", in JS Pobeë (ed), *Construction of a Common European Home* (Geneva: WCC, 1994), 87-88.
26. Ostathios, *Your Kingdom Come*, 203-04.
27. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 14; the entire section (paras 19-26) from which these excerpts are taken is worth reading in this connection.
28. Cf Raymond Fung, *Evangelistically Yours: Ecumenical Letters on Contemporary Evangelism* (Geneva: WCC, 1992), 92-126; Karel Blei, *On Being the Church Across Frontiers* (Geneva: WCC, 1992), 73-81.
29. *Jesus Christ – The Life of the World* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 6. KM George, "Mission for Unity or Unity for Mission?", in Lemopoulos, *Your Will Be Done*, 158-59.

THE EUCHARIST AS MISSIONARY EVENT IN A SUFFERING WORLD

Emmanuel Clapsis

As Christians, we have freely consented and invited God to reign in history, to change the world, looking forward to the moment when “God will be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:28). This is reflected in the Lord’s prayer: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.” In Jesus Christ the will of God has been done on earth as it is in heaven (John 4:34; Matt. 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; John 6:38-48). Those who constitute his resurrected body in history, to the extent that they identify with him by the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore doing the will of God, manifest and actualize the good news of salvation to all people. Salvation in this context is understood as a communion of loving obedience and life with God, since life apart from him has been experienced as death. The Christian Church proclaims that the only option and hope of life that the world has is derived from the already actualized and coming reality of God’s Kingdom in which all people, through their identification with Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, partake in God’s trinitarian life and thus live in his love, peace, joy and justice (Ps. 85:7-13; Isa. 32:17-18; 65:17-25; Rev. 21:1-2).

The Christian message is *euangelion* – good news – for the whole world that groans for redemption. The good news needs to be consciously known and shared by all who seek liberation from the forces of evil and death. For this reason, Jesus Christ explicitly exhorted his disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...” and simultaneously he assured them “... and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age” (Matt. 28:19). The wisdom and the power of their missionary endeavour was given to them by the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8).

The mission of Jesus’ disciples to the world is not theirs, but his, since God does not delegate his salvific mission, but they participate in it by virtue of their identification and communion with him. From this perspective, conversion to Christ is not just a matter of espousing a new set of beliefs or executing new forms of worship; it rather implies a new way of relating to God that decisively affects, to the extent of an ontological change, the totality of our human existence, with significant consequences for the mode and the nature of our relationships with other people and the world at large.

Mission and Worship

In addition to his missionary exhortation, Jesus Christ asks his disciples to “gather in my name” (Matt. 18:20) “for the breaking of bread” (Acts 20:7; cf 1 Cor. 11:33). In this *synaxis* the early Christians experienced that which is promised for the *parousia*, namely the eschatological unity of all in Christ: “Just as this loaf was scattered all over the mountains and having been brought together was made one, so let your church be gathered from the ends of the earth in your kingdom.”¹ Thus the life of the early Christian community has been shaped by a two-fold orientation: towards the world in a movement of *diastole*, and towards God in that of *systole*. These two orientations constitute the being of the Church as mission and liturgy, and neither of these two aspects of the Church’s being should be confused or separated from the other.² This must be further emphasized since in contemporary Christian theology – with few exceptions – worship and mission are treated as two totally distinct objects of theological investigation; they are placed in isolated compartments without the possibility of cross-fertilization and without the question of their unity being raised at all. Disunity between worship and mission is contrary to the experience of the apostolic church. In the scriptures the life of Jesus is simultaneously described in terms of both mission and worship. He is “Apostle and High Priest” (Heb. 3:1). In addition, cultic language has been used in order to describe the nature of charity in God’s sight: “an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18; cf Jas. 1:27).³

The unity between mission and worship as inseparable aspects of God’s relation to humankind must be affirmed by the Christian Church since, where disunity prevails, distortion inevitably arises. An exclusive emphasis on cultic life leads to introversion and liturgical escapism from the challenges of history. This was a reality when Amos explicitly condemned worship detached from an active concern for justice (5:21-15). In the same manner Isaiah stated:

I am disgusted with the smell of incense you burn
 Your Sabbaths, and your religious gatherings.
 They are all corrupted by your sins.
 Yes, stop doing evil and learn to do right.
 See that justice is done
 Help those who are oppressed
 Give orphans their rights
 and defend widows (Isa. 1:13-14, 16-17; cf Isa. 58:3-7; Jer. 7:2-12, 21-23).

This prophetic tradition was continued in the ministry of Jesus. He referred explicitly to it in one of his discourses with the Pharisees. He appealed to them:

Go and learn what this means.
 I desire mercy, and not sacrifice (Matt. 9:13; cf Hos. 6:6).

On another occasion Jesus instructed his disciples that:

If you are offering your gift at the altar
and there remember that your brother has something against you,
leave your gift, first be reconciled,
and then offer your gift (Matt. 5:23-24).

Biblical tradition confirms as an indisputable fact that there is an indissoluble link between worship and service to others, especially to the poor. Whenever this reality has been weakened in the life of the Church, prophetic voices, like the voice of St. John Chrysostom, will remind us:

Do you want to honour Christ's body? Then do not honour him here in the church with silken garments while neglecting him outside where he is cold and naked... or what use is it to weigh down Christ's table with golden cups when he himself is dying of hunger? First fill him when he is hungry; then use the means you have left to adorn his table.⁴

The same venerable Father of our Church states boldly that love for the poor is a liturgy whose altar is more venerable than the one on which the Eucharist is celebrated, "the latter being precious by reason of the body of Christ which is received (from it), the other because it is the body of Christ."⁵ The point is clear that worship, "the sacrament of the altar", is inconceivable apart from the "sacrament of the poor".⁶ They are two facets of one and the same reality of God's active presence in history. Jesus described his mission in terms of: "Bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, setting free those who are oppressed" (Luke 4:18).

In the Eucharist, the faithful become the living expression of Jesus Christ and therefore participate in his saving mission in the world. They are sent out on mission that includes the liberation of humanity by putting into motion the construction of that new world for which Christ gave his life in love. This means that we can no longer celebrate the Eucharist with eyes closed to the needs of the poor and downtrodden.⁷ Commitment to Christ in the Eucharist carries with it a commitment through Christ to the poor of this world. In this way an indissoluble relationship exists between the celebration of the Eucharist and the creation of a better world. Consequently this implies that action for justice constitutes an integral element of the Church's mission in the world. Therefore, it is a false dilemma to debate whether the Eucharist has priority over social concerns and actions, or vice versa. It should rather be emphasized that they cannot be conceived apart from each other without erroneous consequences for the authenticity of the Christian ethos.

Liturgy without social concern is reduced to ritualism and leads to introversion. It is equally true that *mission* apart from worship reduces Christianity to a religious ideology, either of the left or of the right. It becomes a subject of human pride and self-will and may not serve Christ, but its proprietor. Worship as a communal and God-centred event can help mission to recover its true nature as participation in God's mission. More specifically, the Eucharist is the unique liturgical act that brings together in

a creative but disturbing unity the vertical and horizontal dimensions of Christian mission and living.

Eucharist and Mission

Having defined mission and worship as two distinct but inseparable facets of God's presence and action in the world, we have affirmed their inclusive interdependence and rejected any attempt to subsume either under the other. The Church, through mission, makes people consciously aware of God's salvific presence and action in the world, and invites them to partake in a new life of communion with the Trinity that decisively shapes their identity as this develops through and in relation to God and other people. This kind of new life is sacramentally actualized and communally experienced in the Eucharist, which is the great mystery of our participation in the life of the Holy Trinity, the recapitulation of the entire history of salvation in Christ and the foretaste of the Kingdom of God.⁸ In it, the faithful, by the invocation of the Holy Spirit, become the body of Christ, in which all respect one another for their unique gifts that the Holy Spirit has bestowed upon them for the building up of their unity, which is grounded in their baptism: "In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body" (1 Cor. 12:13). In Christ all discrimination among Christians on grounds of history, culture, social status, or sex have been removed (Gal. 3:27-28; cf 1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 3:11; Eph. 6:8; Jas. 2:2-7). The gift of life in the one body is a call to mutual forgiveness, love and peace (Col. 3:12-15).⁹

Because the Father's purpose for humanity is all-embracing, to the Christian the stranger in need and even the enemy are potential brothers and sisters.¹⁰ From this perspective, the Eucharistic community is a catholic community in the sense that it transcends not only social but also natural divisions, just as will happen in the Kingdom of God, of which this community is a revelation and real sign.¹¹ The light of the Eucharistic liturgy projected upon life unmask as inhuman and false any life reduced to an excessive and egoistic accumulation of material goods, oblivious to the needs of the neighbour, and any mentality of consumption without the joy of sharing. In Eucharistic vision is also a judgment on any oppression of the neighbour, since justice, peace, love and service to the neighbour are the only basis for true relations among people and nations.¹²

An encounter with this high Eucharistic theology immediately raises questions as to whether it is possible to discern this kind of communal life in the life of the historical Church.¹³ We must admit that this Eucharistic experience to a great degree has ceased to affect and guide the ecclesiastical consciousness as well as the "worldview" of the Christian community.¹⁴ This signifies that in the lives of the believers an undesirable separation between the sacred and the secular has been developed that seriously challenges the sincerity and effectiveness of their worship. Regardless of how we explain this phenomenon theologically, we must

insist that in so far as the liturgy fails to produce appropriate fruits in the lives of the participants, the failure is due to a lack or refusal on the human side to encounter God.

The unity of a person with God in the Eucharist is actualized when the person is open and receptive to God's grace. It means something more than just not putting an obstacle to it; it calls for the active engagement of the person in its reception (*synergeia*).¹⁵ In this context it is also important to emphasize that unworthy participation in the Lord's Supper is, in fact, counter-productive to one's salvation (1 Cor. 11:17-34), and it becomes a serious obstacle to the Church's mission as much as this is dependent on the life and the witness of those human beings who profess to be church members.

What the faithful become in and through the Eucharist is primarily an event by which God, through the operation of the Holy Spirit, unites his people with the risen Lord. Thus, the people of God experience sacramentally in history their eschatological existence as it will be in God's Kingdom. However, although this is an immediate experience for them through the celebration of the Eucharist, it does not become history since it is an act of God reserved for the *eschata* (meta-history). For this reason, the Fathers understood the Eucharist not only as a sacramental assembly of what we have already become in the risen Christ but also as a movement, a progress toward this realization.¹⁶ This *kinesis* makes the Eucharist a dynamic event of life that shapes the lives of its participants who have encountered God as a movement from death to life, from injustice to justice, from violence to peace, from hatred to love, from vengeance to forgiveness, from selfishness to sharing, and from division to unity. It has the power to give confidence in the midst of ambiguity, openness in the face of uncertainty, and hopeful courage even in the face of death. It has the power to raise people to a new threshold from which they can view reality with new eyes, new hope, new resistance.¹⁷ "One can even say that the Eucharist is, as it were, a transcendent support for all social activity when the latter is directed towards the qualitative unity of all mankind."¹⁸

This constitutes the Church's mission, revealing what we have already become in the risen Christ, and what we will fully experience in his Kingdom. Thus Christians, as it becomes evident in the Eucharist, draw the being of their identity not from the values of this world but from the being of God and from that which we will be at the end of this age.¹⁹ Baptized Christians, therefore, in the Eucharist become a community of people who together unite prayer with action, praise with justice, adoration with transformation, and contemplation with social involvement. As they disperse in history for the proclamation of the Christian gospel, their missionary task is affected not only by their words but also by what they do and how they relate to each other in the context of our fragmented world. Consequently, an essential aspect of the Church's mission is realized by the nature of the community that Christians become and are in the process of

becoming, through the celebration of the Eucharist, which is the springboard and the goal of mission.²⁰ This, however, presupposes the adoption of an effective process of “consciousness-raising”, by which the faithful will be helped to recognize the social implications of what they become in the liturgy, which is not unrelated to what they do outside the church building.

Caution must be exercised here against any kind of reductionism of the utilitarian nature that reduces the Eucharist simply to a “useful” event that sanctifies our political agenda and actions. This is usually preceded by an unbalanced theology that maximizes God’s immanence while it minimizes or ignores his transcendence. From this perspective, the Christian gospel becomes only an immanent reality or force of social transformation. The Eucharist, being an intrinsically eschatological event of theandric origin and nature, invites its participants to experience, understand and criticize life from their unity with God and the coming reign of his Kingdom. This perception unmasks the inhumanities and the basic deficiencies of all ideologies by insisting that it is primarily God who changes the world and those who confess his name participate in that process of change by doing his will.²¹ Thus, in the Eucharist, the faithful celebrate what they have already become in Christ and what the world will become when God’s will is done on earth as it is in heaven. This experience determines the witness of the Church to the world.

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1. *Didache*, 9:4, cf 10,5.
 2. Nikos A Nissiotis, “The Church as a Sacramental Vision and the Challenge of Christian Witness”, in *Church Kingdom World – The Church as Mystery and Prophetic Sign*, Gennadios Limouris (ed) (Geneva: 1986), 103.
 3. JG Davies, *Worship and Mission* (London: 1966); Johannes Hofinger, *Worship: The Life of the Missions* (Notre Dame: 1958); Hofinger (ed), *Liturgy and the Missions* (New York: 1960); Alexander Schmemmann, *The Eucharist* (New York: 1988); Ion Bria (ed), *Martyria and Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (Geneva: 1980); Bria (ed), *Go Forth in Peace, Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Geneva: 1986); George Patronos, *Biblikes proypotheseis tes hierapostoles* (Athens: 1983).
 4. St. John Chrysostom, Homily 50, Mat. Ev. 3-4, in *PG*, 58, 508ff.
 5. S Lyonnet, “La nature du culte dans le Nouveau Testament”, in JP Jossua and Y Congar (eds), *La Liturgie après Vatican II* (Paris: 1967), 383; NE Mitsopoulou, *Physis kai lalreytikos charakter ton agathon ergon* (Athens: 1969).
 6. Olivier Clement, “The Sacrament of the Brother/the Sister”, in JP Ramalho (ed), *Signs of Hope and Justice* (Geneva: 1980), 24.
 7. Christians must remember that the Christ who is really, truly and substantially present in the Eucharist is the same Christ who is also personally present in the poor and downtrodden of this world. These two presences of Christ must be kept together and understood as complementing each other. We cannot consistently choose the comfortable real presence of Christ in the Eucharist and ignore the disturbing personal presence of Christ in the poor and downtrodden.

8. *Report of the New Valamo Consultation* (Geneva: 1978), 17.
 9. JC Haughey, "Eucharist at Corinth: You are the Christ", in *Above Every Name: The Lordship of Christ and Social Systems*, TE Clarke (ed) (New York: 1980), 107-33.
 10. For the ethical presuppositions and consequences of the liturgy, see Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: A Systematic Theology* (London: 1980), 399-434.
 11. John D Zizioulas, "Eucharist and Catholicity", in his *Being as Communion* (New York: 1985), 143-69.
 12. Dan-Ilie Ciobotea, "The Role of the Liturgy in Orthodox Theological Education", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 31/2 (1985), 114.
 13. This question was immediately raised whenever Orthodox theologians expressed this kind of theology. (See the discussion and the reaction in the Orthodox Ecclesiological statement of the New Valamo Consultation, especially the reactions of Jose Miguez Bonino on the *Report of the New Valamo Consultation* (Geneva: 1978), 33-36).
 14. This problem was articulated by Alexander Schmemmann in his article "Theology and Liturgy", *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 17/1, 1971, 86-100.
 15. Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology*, 403; Limouris, "The Eucharist as the Sacrament of Sharing: An Orthodox Point of View", *TER*, 38 (1986), 401.
 16. "Where a people is being harshly oppressed, the Eucharist speaks of the exodus or deliverance from bondage. Where Christians are rejected or imprisoned for their faith, the bread and the wine become the life of the Lord who was rejected by men but has become 'the chief stone of the corner'. Where the church sees a diminishing membership and its budgets are depressing, the Eucharist declares that there are no limits to God's giving and no end to hope in him. Where discrimination by race, sex or class is a danger for the community, the Eucharist enables people of all sorts to partake of the one food and to be made one people. Where people are affluent and at ease with life, the Eucharist says, 'As Christ shares his life, share what you have with the hungry.' Where a congregation is isolated by politics or war or geography, the Eucharist unites us with all God's people in all places and all ages. Where a sister or brother is near death, the Eucharist becomes a doorway into the kingdom of our loving Father", *Your Kingdom Come: Report on the World Conference on Mission and Evangelism 1980* (Geneva: 1980), 206.
 17. On the eschatological nature of the Eucharist, see the excellent book by Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (London: 1971).
 18. Limouris, *op. cit.* 404.
 19. Zizioulas, "Eucharist and Catholicity", 61.
 20. Bria, "Liturgy after Liturgy", *Martyria and Mission*, 69.
- On the complexities of the political involvement, see Nikos A Nissiotis, *Apologia tes elpidas* (Athens: 1975); Emmanuel Clapsis, *Church and Politics* (unpublished paper).

THE MISSIONARY IMPLICATIONS OF ST. PAUL'S EUCCHARISTIC INCLUSIVENESS

Petros Vassiliadis

In his posthumous article “Widening the Ecclesiological Basis of the Ecumenical Fellowship”,¹ perhaps the most challenging contribution to our missiological and ecclesiological discussions, the late Fr Ion Briia lamented the Orthodox Church’s lack of progress in the imperative task toward the visible unity of the Church, according to our Lord’s last will that we all “be one” (John 17), in other words, toward full communion. In a private conversation we had during our last meeting in Geneva, a few months before his death, he openly confessed to me his disappointment that at least some sort of *intercommunion* had not taken place between the Eastern and the Oriental Orthodox churches; and with all humility, he put the blame on us theologians!

As we all know, the main difference between the traditional churches (Orthodox and Catholic) and the rest of the Christian communities is the issue of the “exclusive” character of the Eucharist. Here, any Eucharistic exchanges are out of the question, and there is no margin for even considering a way of extending amongst themselves some kind of “Eucharistic hospitality”. This, according to my Orthodox sensibilities (see, for example, the notion of hospitality as described in the recent ecumenical document “Religious Pluralism and Christian Self-understanding”²), constitutes a grave “ethical” problem, and for this reason I dedicated some scholarly works to this issue from a specifically biblical perspective, but with concrete theological – i.e. missiological and ecumenical – implications.³

In this short article I will reflect upon this discussion and see whether we can move beyond the old dilemma “full communion versus intercommunion”. I will try to briefly outline the Pauline Eucharistic theology of “inclusiveness”, which has come to the attention of biblical scholarship in our time with the help of the social and anthropological disciplines; and of course I will draw the implications of this for ecclesiology, missiology, and our ecumenical relations. Needless to say, my proposals apply to all Churches and Christian communities, i.e. they are not limited only to us Orthodox.

In the last few decades, the social and anthropological sciences, and in particular “Cultural” or “Social” Anthropology, have given new impetus to biblical, theological, and ecumenical research, and unexpectedly shed new

light on the understanding of Christian origins, and consequently on the *inclusive* (i.e. not *exclusive*) character of the Eucharist, the Church's sacrament par excellence. In my view, the affirmation of the importance of "common meals" (i.e. the Eucharist) in relation to Christian identity was the result, to a certain extent, of recent developments in the field of "Cultural Anthropology". The combination of biblical and cultural anthropological studies has contributed enormously to the predominance within Christian circles – and to a certain degree in theological scholarship, but also in missiological and ecumenical reflections – of the assumption that the Eucharist determines the *esse* and the *identity* of the Church right from the beginning.⁴

As Fr Ion Bria wrote in the aforementioned article, "There is an almost unanimous conviction among Orthodox theologians that the Church must be defined in the framework of a Eucharistic ecclesiology."⁵ It was, nevertheless, on this very theological articulation – rather, on a narrow interpretation of the Eucharist – that so many problems have emerged. In my opinion, one of the major issues in contemporary theological reflection is whether one should attach a *soteriological* or an *ecclesial* dimension to the Church. In other words, whether a privileged priority should be given to its personal and salvation-by-faith dimension (influenced more or less by individualism, the pillar of modernism), or to its communal one (influenced by the traditional Eucharistic self-understanding). In biblical terms, the question is whether the emphasis is to be placed on the *Pauline* version of the Christian *kerygma*, as well as on St. Paul's interpretation of Jesus of Nazareth (culminating in his famous *theologia crucis*), or on the *Johannine* Eucharistic expression of the Church's identity.

Gillian Feeley-Harnik, both a theologian and an anthropologist, has convincingly shown that food was an important language in which Jews of Jesus' time expressed relationships among human beings, and especially between human beings and God. Violation of dietary rules and inclusion in religious tables of non-Jews or unclean people became equivalent to apostasy.⁶ The problem of "who" eats "what" "with whom" and "why" was of extreme importance, anthropologists insist,⁷ since "anyone familiar with Jewish religious observance will notice that food plays a considerable part throughout", as Jacob Neusner, a specialist in the field has stated.⁸ Mary Douglas has convincingly demonstrated the strong association between table and altar, as well as the boundaries the Israelites erected at meals.⁹ In addition to these observations, Bruce Chilton has rightly argued, that "what distinguished Jesus among many of his rabbinic contemporaries was his practice of fellowship at meals".¹⁰

This "open table fellowship" is clearly evidenced in the Epistle to the Galatians, where St. Paul defended St. Peter's dining (before the arrival of St. James's people) with the Gentiles (cf Gal. 2:12).¹¹ Finally, a renowned biblical scholar of our day, JGD Dunn, argues that "open table fellowship"

and the absence of boundaries at meals were “characteristic and distinctive of the social self-understanding that Jesus encouraged in his disciples”.¹²

With all this in mind, modern biblical scholarship has reached some significant conclusions with regard to the original meaning of the *Divine Eucharist*, analyzing it from various angles and using different approaches, which can be conventionally divided into three periods. These periods in fact characterize three distinct “paradigms” in contemporary Eucharistology: the *Mystery* paradigm, the *Jewish* paradigm, and finally the *Eschatological* paradigm.¹³ This last paradigm is in full agreement with Orthodox theology, although its implications have not yet been applied to today's Eucharistic praxis. This is due to the fact that the *soteriological* interpretation of the Divine Eucharist, based on an erroneous understanding of St. Paul's *theologia crucis*, has surpassed and nearly overshadowed the original, primary, and theologically more important *eschatological* one.¹⁴ To this end, the rediscovery in recent years of the theology of St. Maximus the Confessor who, by the way, eschatologically reinterpreted the Ps-Dionysian interpretation of the Holy Eucharist, has also played a decisive role.

On the basis, therefore, of a fresh interpretation of the biblical and post-biblical data (mainly that of the *Didache*), which were brought to the fore by the *eschatological paradigm* in the Eucharistic understanding, the older *linear historical* development of the Divine Economy, which had as its starting point the “words of institution” – or the institutional act itself – has today been replaced by an *eschatological* one. No one can deny today that the only reliable starting point is the “open table fellowship” and “inclusiveness” underlined in Jesus' teaching about the coming Kingdom of God, and the common meals, which he blessed, and participated in, during his earthly ministry.

More and more serious Eucharistic theologians are now convinced that the original, and by all means authentic, understanding of the Eucharist stems from the awareness of the early Christian community that *they were God's eschatological people, who represented in their Eucharistic gatherings the expected Kingdom of God*. As with the understanding of their mission, according to which the apostles were commissioned to proclaim not a set of given religious convictions, doctrines, moral commands, etc., but rather the coming Kingdom with their resurrected Lord sovereign of it, so also with the Eucharist they actually expressed in deed, i.e. around a common table, the good news of a new eschatological reality.¹⁵ That is why they were all called “holy” and a “royal priesthood”, because in the eschatological era all of them (not just some special caste, such as the priests or Levites) were believed to have priestly and spiritual authority to practise in the Diaspora the work of the priestly class, and reminded at the same time to be worthy of their election though their exemplary life and works.¹⁶

Using the social sciences, biblical scholarship is nowadays seriously considering the social and religious significance of the Jewish regulations about “cleanness” in order to better understand the NT data. It has thus become quite clear that in numerous cases the historical Jesus was actually challenging the social and religious validity of some Torah regulations about what was clean and unclean. Most of his healings involved people who were considered unclean: lepers (Mark 1:40-45; Matt. 8:1-4; cf Luke 17:11-19), the woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34; Matt. 9:20-22; Luke 8:43-48), people possessed by demons, the blind, crippled, etc.¹⁷ While for the Jews the most important issue was “how and on what conditions can people approach God in order to be saved”, the early Christians put more emphasis on “how God approaches people and offers salvation”. To the former, approaching God was accomplished only through the Law, whereas to the latter through Christ.¹⁸

The issue of inclusion within the community of faith of all people (clean and unclean – one could expand today, *mutatis mutandis*, also to the faithful and heretics?) and therefore accepting them at the common (Eucharistic, eschatological, messianic or otherwise) meals, had dangerous implications for the emerging new Christian religion once it expanded beyond the boundaries of Judaism. Receiving new converts, of course, was never a problem in the early Church. Even Judeo-Christians could accept and endorse it. The problem centered on the practical consequences of such a move: at the common meals between circumcised Jews and former Gentiles.

Till quite recently, Paul’s letter to the Galatians, especially its first autobiographical chapters, were almost exclusively read as an anti-authoritarian (and to a certain extent anti-Jewish) appeal. Viewed, however, through the above perspective, the so-called “incident at Antioch” seems to be better explained as an appeal to the “inclusive” character of the new religion, embracing all people of faith regardless of their past. At the heart of the incident lay the problem of receiving former Gentiles and accepting them at the Eucharistic table with or without the Jewish legal conditions. The expression that before the arrival of representatives of the Jerusalem group Peter “ate with the Gentiles” (Gal. 2:12) is quite characteristic. Obviously in the early Church there were leaders insisting on separate Eucharistic celebrations, so that the basic rules of cleanness could be kept. This tendency followed the line of a “Eucharistic *exclusiveness*”. Paul’s line, on the contrary, understood the fundamental issue of salvation “*in Christ*” in a quite *inclusive* way. He considered “separate” Eucharistic tables as an inconceivable practice, and he insisted on a “common” Eucharistic table for both Jews and Gentiles. In other words, his view was that of a “Eucharistic *inclusiveness*”. For Paul there was no other way; any compromise would destroy the basis of his faith and the legacy of Jesus of Nazareth.

Despite the compromise adopted at the Apostolic Council, the early Church, up through the Constantinian era, was an “open society for all who believed in Christ”, with “open table fellowship”, and with unconditional participation in all Eucharistic meals. As JGD Dunn has rightly stated, the “Antioch incident” – where Paul vigorously insisted on the Gentiles’ unconditional participation at the Eucharistic table – “convinced Paul of the need to assert his apostolic status” and “reinforced the importance of justification by faith as central to the gospel and the ongoing relations between Jewish and Gentile believers”.¹⁹

In the third millennium, therefore, one can fairly argue that biblical research has proved beyond any doubt (with the help of other disciplines) that Jesus’ (and the early Church’s thereafter, especial St. Paul’s) “open fellowship”, as well as their “inclusive” theology, constitute an essential part of Christian identity, with obvious missiological and ecumenical implications for today.

Many scholars in modernity have accused St. Paul either of unconditional obedience to civil authorities (Rom. 13), or surrendering the divine gift of freedom and human dignity and accepting the status of slavery (1 Cor. 7:21; Phlm), or implying the subordination of women (1 Cor. 14:34-36; Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18; etc.). I am referring of course to the well-known household codes (*Haustafeln*, Col. 3:18-22 and parallels) of the Deutero-Pauline corpus. It was mainly these instances that gave rise to the criticism that Paul (or the Pauline school) did not resist as he should have the socio-political *status quo* of his time, and that he and his school, and Christianity thereafter, tolerated unjust social institutions and structures.

Without question, the solution Paul offered to ancient society was not as radical and idealistic as the solution the Palestinian community experienced in their “common” or “no property” communal life (evidenced in the Synoptic tradition and Acts). Nevertheless, the “open fellowship” and “common Eucharistic meals” that St. Paul so vigorously defended, were in fact a *realistic solution*²⁰ that can be characterized as a “social integration” of the Church (as an eschatological charismatic community and proleptic manifestation of the Kingdom of God) into a declining world.²¹ It may be true that this realistic solution did not struggle to implement the social values of unconditional freedom, justice, and equality at any cost. Rather it gave priority to the reality of the Kingdom of God within the present social order. In other words, St. Paul’s emphasis was not upon social *transformation* as such, but upon the *formation* of an ecclesial (Eucharistic) reality that inevitably would become the decisive element in creating a new social reality of freedom, justice, and equality. If this was so, then one (and first and foremost we Orthodox) cannot ignore the implications of his Eucharistic theology!

Having presented, however briefly, St. Paul’s “inclusive Eucharistic theology”, I do not by any means wish to question the theological

foundation of modern Orthodox theology's difficulty in accepting the idea of *intercommunion*, at least in the form it is generally presented by some of our Protestant brothers and sisters. The Eucharist is, and will remain, an *expression of*, not a *means toward*, Church unity. However, Jesus of Nazareth's inclusive *kerygma*, and St. Paul's foundational teaching and praxis of a "Eucharistic inclusiveness", remind us that the original "open", "inclusive", and above all "unifying", character of the Eucharist stands as somewhat of a challenge to our contemporary views and demands a radical reconsideration of our Eucharistic ecclesiology.

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1. *TER*, 56 (2004), 199ff. Fr Ion Bria was working on this article at the time of his death in 2002. Most probably the unfinished last (n. 19) quotation with my name was the last phrase he wrote down before he was called by our heavenly Father to his kingdom, as is evidenced by the missing works of the other Orthodox scholars he mentions in the main text.
 2. Cf the Greek translation in Appendix 7 of my recent book *Unity and Witness* (Thessaloniki: 2007) (in Greek), dedicated to Ion Bria, whom I consider as my mentor in missiology.
 3. Cf e.g. my "Eucharist as a Unifying and Inclusive Element in NT Ecclesiology", in AA Alexeev, Ch. Karakolis and U Luz (eds), *Einheit der Kirche im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 121-45; and "Beyond Intercommunion: The Inclusive Character of the Eucharist in the New Testament", to be published in the publication in memory of Ion Bria.
 4. More on this in the contributions mentioned in the preceding note.
 5. Bria, "Widening the Ecclesiological Basis of the Ecumenical Fellowship", 119.
 6. Gillian Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table: Eucharist and Passover in Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: UPP, 1981), especially ch. 4.
 7. Feeley-Harnik, *The Lord's Table*, 6.
 8. Jacob Neusner, *Invitation to Talmud: A Teaching Book* (New York: Harper and Row, 1973), 18.
 9. More on this in Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal", in C Geertz (ed), *Myth, Symbol and Culture* (New York: Norton, 1971), 61-81.
 10. Bruce Chilton, "Inclusion and Non-Inclusion: The Practice of the Kingdom in Formative Christianity", in Neusner (ed), *Religion and the Political Order* (Atlanta: Scholars Press), 133-172, 137; also in his *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
 11. More in D Passakos, "Μετά των εθνων σνήσθην...", *Theology and Society in Dialogue* (Thessaloniki: 2001), 96ff (in Greek).
 12. JDG Dunn, *Jesus Remembered* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 599.
 13. More in my "Eucharist as a Unifying and Inclusive Element in NT Ecclesiology".
 14. See my "Paul's *theologia crucis* as an Intermediate Stage of the Trajectory from Q to Mark", in L Padovese (ed), *Atti del VI Simposio Di Tarso Su S. Paolo Apostolo* (Rome: 2002), 43-52.
 15. Ion Bria extended this belief to the Trinity, defining mission, on the basis of John ch. 21, in terms of a *missio dei*, namely that "God in God's own self is a life of communion and that God's involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and

creation in general into this communion with God's very life", which implies that this must also be the goal of mission (Bria, *Go Forth in Peace* (Geneva 1987), 3).

16. JH Elliott, *The Elect and the Holy*, 1966, has redefined for Protestant biblical theology the real meaning of the term "royal priesthood", which has been the subject of vigorous debate since the time of Luther. Cf R Brown, *Priest and Bishop: Biblical Reflections* (New York 1971). In my article, "Holiness from the Perspective of a Eucharistic Theology", I explained, on this basis, why the early Christians "were called to walk towards unity ("so that they may become perfectly one", John 17:23), to abandon all deeds of darkness and to perfect themselves. They are to become holy just like the one who called them out of darkness into light, "from non-existence into being", who took them as non-members of the people of God and made them into genuine members of the new eschatological community ("Once you were no people, now you are God's people," 1 Pet. 2:10), is holy ("you shall be holy, for I am holy," 1 Pet. 1:16; cf Lev. 11:44-5, 19:2, 20:7) and perfect: ("I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified in truth," John 17:19; see also Matt. 5:48 and par., "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect").

17. BJ Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1981). Also his *Christian Origins and Cultural Anthropology: Practical Models for Biblical Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1986), 143-46.

18. Cf LW Countryman, *Dirt, Greed and Sex: Sexual Ethics in the New Testament and their Implications for Today*: (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989), 103-04; BJ Malina, *The New Testament World*, 150.

19. JGD Dunn, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Black's T & T Clark, 1993), 19.

20. For another view on the problem, see NA Dahl, "Paul and Possessions" in *Studies in Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 22-39.

21. Cf my *Paul: Trajectories into his Theology* (Thessaloniki: 2005), 243 (in Greek).

THE WITNESS AND THE SERVICE OF EASTERN ORTHODOXY TO THE ONE UNDIVIDED CHURCH

Nikos Nissiotis

Today, in many quarters, it is fashionable to be “ecumenical”, but a superficial “ecumenism” too often hides from us the tragic nature of our situation. Dissension and disunity continue to poison and pervert all our church actions, our theological thinking and our missionary activities. We no longer have any right to go on using the slogans of the first stage of our ecumenical sentimentality – to say, for example, that we must sit back and wait until Christ unites his Church, *or* that spiritual unity cannot really be affected by our dissensions, *or* that it is sufficient that we co-operate with one another so much more than we used to. Do we not all constantly fall back into thinking and acting as though the *Una Sancta* were confined within the limits of our own Church or confession? But the experience of meeting one another in church assemblies and conferences is shaking us out of our complacency. The wind of the Holy Spirit is driving us forward with pressing urgency. An Assembly is a time for action directed towards the restoration of unity. Let us pray that none of us may be content to continue as passive and self-satisfied members of our separated churches.

1. The Witness of Orthodoxy to Unity

In Orthodox thinking Church Union is an absolute reality pre-established by God. It is not a “spiritualized” sentimental, humanistic expression of goodwill. It is not the result of a human agreement or of the acceptance of a particular confessional position. Unity among Christians is to be identified with the union of the Father and the Son – “*that they may be one, even as we are one*” (John 17:22-23). Unity among men in the Church is the result, the reflection, of the event of the Father’s union with Christ by his Spirit realized in the historical Church on the day of Pentecost. The One undivided historical Church is the outcome of God’s revelation and his real Presence, which is realistically affected in his Communion with men. Unity is not an *attribute* of the Church, but it is its very *life*. It is the divine-human interpenetration realized once and for all in the Communion between Word and Flesh in Christ. It includes the act of Creation of man by the Logos; the reality of the Incarnation of this same Logos in man; man’s redemption and regeneration through him, and the participation and consummation of all history in the event of Pentecost – when the Holy Spirit accomplished the communion of mankind in Christ.

Therefore, the Church does not move towards unity through the comparison of conceptions of unity, but lives out of the union between God and man realized in the communion of the Church as union of men in the Son of Man. We are not here to create unity, but to recapture it in its vast universal dimensions. Unity as union is the source of our life. It is the origin and the final goal of the whole Creation in Christ represented in his Church. We are not only moving towards unity, but our very existence derives from the inseparable union between the three persons of the Holy Trinity given to us as a historical event on the day of Pentecost. Therefore, unity, which is the essence of God's act in Creation, Incarnation and Redemption, and which is reflected in the historical life of the Church, constitutes the first chapter of an authentic ecclesiology. This solid theological conception of unity is the only firm foundation for ecumenical thinking about the Church.

The unity of which we speak is not something subsequently given to the Church from a source outside the Church after that Church has come into existence from other causes. It is the *sine qua non* of the very existence of the Church implanted by the Holy Spirit among men. This unity is expressed in distinctive and unshakable historical forms and inspires that regenerating life-process which will incorporate the whole world into one (Col. 1:15-20). The cosmic Christological vision of the economy of salvation in this biblical passage reaches its climax with v. 18: "*and he is the Head of the Body, the Church*", reminding us of Ephesians 1:22: "*and (he) gave him to be the head over all things to the Church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all*". Thus this cosmic vision of salvation does not remain a theoretical, contemplative or eschatological vision. Through the concrete act of God at a certain moment in this (our) time ("*he gave him to be the Head of the Body*"), everything is decided and realized in this historical Church in which and out of which we live in this world, on this earth. It is therefore at this moment of "*he gave*" and at every Church moment that this whole cosmic, universal vision is concretized in and for every Christian community and congregation, which has to grasp its existence as part of an undivided whole, as being unavoidably rooted therein. Therefore, we can say that the unity of the Church on the day of Pentecost reveals the mystery of the act of the Creation of the whole world out of union, through union, and for Communion.

Thus "unity" does not mean waiting for agreement to be reached between the different conceptions which are held in our churches, but imposes on us the obligation to remain in that condition in which we are re-created by the Spirit as One in the One undivided Church. It is not only through consideration of "*what*" we believe this Church Unity to be that we hope to advance to the continuous re-establishment of reunion, but also through "*how*" we exist as Christians. It is the content seen and lived in the historical churches through the act of our faith in God the Holy Trinity.

When we live by faith in the Trinity, our very existence as Christians discloses what unity is. We do not find the nature of that unity by devising subtle pseudo-theological formulas which would capture its essence in polemical concepts. No, we find it in the life of historic churches, a life which springs from the same source as the life received at Pentecost. By “historic churches” we mean churches which confess in terms of the Nicene Creed the whole of the Divine Economy of the Revelation in the Church of God the Holy Trinity, and which believe in the continuation of this event by the Holy Spirit in and through the Church by acts culminating in the Sacraments and the Word, administered by those set apart to do so. This is what for me is implied by the definition of unity agreed by the representatives of the churches at the Central Committee at St. Andrews in 1960. What the churches *actually do as churches* constitutes the authentic expression of their undivided unity, and this is far more important than the theories and declarations of individual members as to what the churches do.

The life of God the Holy Trinity in the Church and the acts of the churches in this world are the categories and the criteria of a true ecclesiology which is able to contribute to the struggle for reunion. This unbroken continuity of Church life points to the same acts performed by the power and in the freedom of the Holy Spirit, who has yet bound himself up with undeniable concrete historical events. This is the most incomprehensible mystery of the grace of God which escapes all attempts at absolute clarification by mere human logic. The truth about the Church can never be totally identified with the definitions with which we describe it.

The unique contribution of Orthodoxy to the discussion on Church unity lies in its simple reminder that the unbroken continuity of the life of the historical Church has a far greater authority than any confessional statement of a local church which attempts to explain and justify its separateness. The life of the Church in itself and by itself is the most solid authority because it perpetuates the event of Pentecost. Eastern Orthodoxy must respond to the calling of the Holy Spirit to be the pivot-Church for the Ecumenical Movement precisely through maintaining its catholic and apostolic witness to this foundation fact and through its own unity.

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(a) Orthodoxy's service to unity

This unity as union is not only revealed by God in Christ, but is also realized amongst men through his Spirit. The essence of this union is a new life for men in full communion with each other through and because of the real presence of God in history. We must, therefore, continuously remind ourselves that this given fact of unity has led us to a difficult process of growth towards perfect unity in Christ. It is in this context alone that we are able to understand St. Paul's references to the unity of the Church: on the one hand, he refers to the given historical fact, which makes us partakers of

an already established Oneness, being “*built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets*” (Eph. 2:20). And on the other hand, he is calling us to concern for “*building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ*” (Eph. 4:12-13).

The Eastern tradition bases its own conceptions and continuous prayer for unity on this apparent dualism: on the one hand, to be supported by the unity, on the other hand, to have a vocation for this unity. There is a double relationship between the overwhelming grace of God, and the weak and sinful acts of men. This vocation implies not only the proclamation of a verbal confession but the acceptance of the process of regeneration by the Spirit. It presupposes a real death in us of the spirit of separation, through continuous repentance. Eastern Orthodoxy can maintain the most substantial unity in Christ through the fact of his real presence. It does not need to formulate complicated confessional statements or to have a centralized, juridical authority.

But the New Delhi Assembly demands from Eastern Orthodoxy something more than this simple witness. This witness is not simply that of a signpost, showing other churches the path towards unity, but there is to be found in this witness the power, the reality, the compulsion of the Holy Spirit to express this witness in practical service to all the churches, to aid them in their mutual engagement as they go forward or stumble together on the difficult road towards the re-establishment of church unity. This is where Orthodoxy’s *witness* to unity passes over into the faithful *service* of unity. This does not imply a change of external behaviour, but is rather an obligation arising from the very essence of Orthodoxy itself.

Witness in the biblical understanding of the word *martyria*, is the result of Christ’s *diakonia* rendered to his Father on behalf of the whole human race which has been called to be one in him (John 5:36). On this primary and Christological *martyria* through the offering of Jesus, the apostolic *martyria* is based as the ground event of the continuity of the saving act of God in Christ through all ages in his apostolic Church. The apostles possess a unique place by making the *martyria* of Christ through their *martyria* an historical process in inseparable and undivided continuity. The faithfulness of the saving act of Jesus is manifested through the true *martyria* that they offer through their writings (John 21:24) and their preaching (2 Cor. 4:1-3) in the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 25:8). The Apostolic *martyria* is a witnessing *martyria* through immediate contact with the *diakonia* of Christ to his Father (Acts 10:39). This *martyria* is related with the event of the resurrection with which the apostles as martyrs are inseparably united, uniting all of those who are going to believe through their witness to this resurrection (Acts 3:15). But it is through this witness-*martyria* that the apostles share the martyrdom-offering of Jesus to his Father by their own martyrdom in the world for him; this is the further event of witness on

which the Church as One Body is built together. The preaching of the resurrection, of the victory of the Lord Jesus, this climax of the apostolic *martyria*, is precisely that which culminates in the martyrdom of those who are witnessing it (Acts 24:2 and 17:32). Without this *martyria* the apostolic witness is vacant and in vain (1 Cor. 1:14).

Therefore we can say that this *martyria* is the martyrdom of the One undivided historical Church in its struggle to maintain unity through the apostolic witness to the *diakonia* of Jesus culminating in the resurrection with the saints and martyrs. It is furthermore the martyrdom of the suffering involved in the struggle to preserve this unity through the victory of Christ, but in the midst of division and sin. It is not its glory, therefore, but its suffering in the world that Eastern Orthodoxy brings as its contribution to the debate on reunion. Witness as *martyria* is not given through acts of service of a social character; but primarily in the fact of its bearing the signs of the truth of resurrection but in the power of the Cross of Jesus in blood and tears. It is an experience of death which in humiliation, self-sacrifice and self-denial for the sake of unity, can endure this martyrdom in the hope of the final victory of Christ and of the continuous restoration of unity in the light of the resurrection. In its participation in the Ecumenical Movement, Eastern Orthodoxy as the *martyria* Church of unity should “bear about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in its body” (2 Cor. 4:10).

This witness to unity is expressed with greater force through the silence of martyrdom; through sacrifice of our self-sufficiency; through tolerance in difficult situations; through a self-emptying of its privileges; through sharing those privileges with other churches outside one’s own church. This would lead Orthodoxy to that *martyria* which we call *diakonia* on the long way towards the reunion of the Churches.

The uniqueness of Orthodoxy as described above is not expressed by, and does not need to make easy judgments upon, the other churches by enlisting the aid of new confessions to serve this purpose. This would mean a betrayal of the Orthodox contribution to unity. It would result in the Eastern churches becoming involved in the controversy between the churches of the West by copying their own methods, and Orthodoxy would thus become entangled in a fanatical attempt to define absolutely the mystery of God.

We do not condemn the making of all local confessional definitions, but we do say that these confessions are put to a wrong use when they are employed in a polemical spirit and when the claim is made that such a local confession is the only true answer to what the essence of the mystery of the Church really is. From our point of view that is not the use to which a local confession should be put in a divided church. It too often happens that a church seeks to impose its own conception of reunion, instead of allowing the life of the Church itself to communicate the gifts of the Holy Spirit to

the other local churches which are separated from it. Eastern Orthodoxy has not committed itself to this grave, ecclesiological mistake. But it is tempted again and again towards such a narrow-minded confessional polemic attitude. If this ever happens, we must realize that it would lose its uniqueness in witnessing to the biblical *martyria* by *diakonia*, its witness to the unity offered to the other churches directly through its undivided “mysterious” life.

The passage from witness to service or to the right expression of Orthodox witness is possible only if we understand the full significance of the word “Orthodoxy”. “Orthodox” is not the adjective or the qualification of one local church or even of all of our Eastern Orthodox churches: it is the synonym of the words “catholic” and “apostolic”. It is not an exclusive but an inclusive term which goes beyond the limits of the churches which call themselves Orthodox. It includes all those churches and believers who seek to offer an honest confession and achieve a life which is untouched by heresies and schisms and to arrive at the wholeness of the divine revelation in Christ. We could echo the words of Father George Florovsky in his analysis of the word “Orthodoxy” as meaning precisely “right-doxa”, that is with a view to sharing in common in rendering glory to the Lord in thanksgiving, in and through the One undivided Church. *Orthodoxia* is the right *martyria* of truth and is based on the union of God with man in Jesus, lived and understood as the full communion of all those believers who are ready to share fully with each other the glory of the God revealed in the Orthodoxy of the One Catholic and Apostolic Church. If, therefore, Orthodoxy silently accepts that there is salvation in other churches outside its limits, limits which, in this context, seem to be narrow as a result of the very fact of the abnormal situation of division; this means that an Orthodox, through his faith, is invited to become really “Ortho-doxos” by offering himself in humility in order to effect a full realization of Orthodoxy in the life of the Universal Church. It is only then that this ecumenical *Orthopraxia* would prove and confirm the locally existing *Orthodoxia*.

This dynamic understanding of Orthodoxy enables us to see Church history in a new perspective. It excludes labelling movements within the Church as “apostasies” – thus placing them “outside” the Church. It is impossible to locate an ecclesiological event *extra ecclesiam*. Neither the Roman schism nor the Reformation which resulted from it should be described in this way. The Orthodox witness as service to unity can, by self-sacrifice, put all separations in their right place within the One undivided Church, and share the glory of God with them. This means in practice that Orthodoxy must give up its defensive, confessional-apologetic attitude, and in the glory of the Holy Spirit, become a mighty river of life, filling the gaps, complementing opposites, overcoming enmities, and driving forward towards reunion. This was how the Church lived in the time of the Fathers, creating new ways for achieving dynamic unity, richer

forms of worship, a really ecumenical theology which regenerated the world through its authentic interpretation of the mission of the Church. The pseudo-conservative attitude which simply condemns the past of other confessions is not a genuine Orthodox attitude. Perhaps our negative judgments on the past of other churches are one of the reasons for our weakness today.

To use such slogans as “come back to us” or “let us go back to the first eight centuries” as though we were inviting others to deny their own traditions is un-Orthodox. Such an attitude denies the action of the Holy Spirit in baptized Christians in long periods of Church history. Orthodoxy would fall into a false western type of conservatism, which longs for an idealized first century, if she merely calls others to go back, in this sense, to the past. The right expression of Orthodoxy should be to say: “The presence and witness of the Eastern Orthodox churches and their witness to the unbroken Orthodox tradition can help all the other historical churches to recover their own true life.” It is through the dynamic openness and inclusiveness of Orthodoxy that the Eastern Church can fulfil its function as the pivot of the reunion movement today.

Let me briefly illustrate this principle in relation to the Church of Rome and to the Churches of the Reformation. Eastern churches never denied the *primus inter pares*, the *honoris causa* primacy of the Bishop of Rome. But in the service of unity we must now rethink our conceptions of this primacy. We must regard it as a response to the desires of the local churches for an initiative in convening pan-Christian councils and for a link between the churches such as the Patriarchate of Constantinople provides for the Eastern Church today. The Orthodox *martyria* for unity must include psychological and theological preparation for the restoration of this function of the undivided Church as one of the most fundamental means of preserving unity. And we must hope and pray that the Second Vatican Council will re-evaluate the diocesan system by a reinterpretation of the primacy of the Holy See, in the full Catholic and Orthodox sense *ex consensu Ecclesiae et non ex sede*. Again, ceasing to live in the past, we should cease calling each other “schismatics”. There are no “schismatics”, but the historic churches in their division represent a schismatic situation in the One undivided Church. This means that the churches which came out of the Reformation as new churches will have to study and consciously accept all the consequences of their belonging to the Catholic stream of church life through the centuries. They are invited by the witness of the Eastern churches to see themselves as particles of the One Church which cannot be circumscribed within the limited forms of congregational existence *only*. Through ecumenical intercourse they can experience the main ecclesiological dimension hidden in Christ beneath the simple forms and without which there is no historical Church, no congregation. It is not a question of “confessions”, but of accepting the fact that they live as churches within the universal Church in which the Holy Spirit creates,

sanctifies and shapes the historical-charismatic order of an *ecclesial* institution, not invented by man but created by the grace of Pentecost, in which real freedom is experienced in unbroken communion. Only through such witnessing together can the Orthodox witness to unity expressed in service be accepted by other churches as a reuniting power.

(b) The nature and goal of Church unity

The representatives of the churches have frequently declared that *unity* does not mean *uniformity*. But in practice there is great reluctance to accept different forms of church life, worship and doctrinal expression. We tend to use our differences as defence against other churches, instead of accepting them as external signs of the inner riches of the infinite and unbounded grace of the Holy Spirit. But we cannot and should not impose on others our own forms of church life. Perhaps in this respect we have to experience the fact that the road to reunion may involve a kind of death in order that we may receive the new life of the Holy Spirit which flows deep within the differing forms of church life. The unity we seek to restore must necessarily have room for a multiplicity of different forms. It is not to be established through the acceptance of one central human authority or of one programme of action on social and political issues. Nor can it be based on using the Bible as a kind of Qu'ran, that is as a source of inflexible rules applicable under all conditions.

The unity we seek is neither that of church disciplines under a centralized authoritarian institution, nor is it based only on the kerygmatic message of the gospel to the world; but it is primarily based on and maintained by the charisms received from the Holy Spirit by the People of God in the historic Church. It is therefore a charismatic and Eucharistic unity, expressed through and for communion with the grace of God the Holy Trinity. These words are not to be interpreted as introducing a relativization of the importance of the confessions for re-establishing unity. On the contrary, they intend to situate the confessional statements in their right place and function as pointing to the same fundamental event of the unbroken unity realized in the event of the revelation of the life of the Holy Trinity in the Church, whose only verbal witness a church confession has always to be. A confession should never be used as a separating force but as a uniting one pointing towards the one central event of the Church: its Oneness, realized by the trinitarian God in his historical Church.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, church assemblies of divided confessions reveal this event more and more convincingly. Our prayer and worship in common, as separated confessions, reveal our origin as One Church and our goal as far as the nature of the unity we seek is concerned. The more we dispute on the basis of local confessions as separated churches, the more we feel ourselves engaged in walking together towards the origin, the nature and the expression of this unity that we have and we

seek, namely the communion in the divine life in common in the One undivided Church. All our different theologies and confessions are already pointing to this Eucharistic unity in which all the scholastic confessional differences have to be consumed and reconciled within the communion of the Body and Blood of our Saviour. It is only in this way that we can understand how this unity is the fulfilment of his purpose to bring the whole world, which is already potentially saved in Christ, to share in salvation through the charismatic Church, and so to be called into his unbroken Unity.

Church unity, therefore, has both its origin and its goal outside itself. It is given by God the Holy Trinity and for the sake of the world which he has already saved. There is no analogy here with political power. The world is not going to be convinced by our agreements about social and political problems; but Church unity is the expression of the purpose of Christ to save the whole world. Unity and Mission coincide in the nature of the Church; for mission means: sharing directly in the grace of God the Holy Trinity in his Church. It does not imply witness and service apart from unity, but out of, in and for this unity. Mission is the calling of all the peoples of the world to become partakers, in repentance, through the mysteries of the Church, in that Oneness which is the origin, essence and being of the Church, through the regenerating, all-embracing and uniting mysteries of the Holy Spirit.

In the crises of the deeply divided modern world, the One missionary Church has to witness to the divine purpose to unite and restore all things in Christ. Unconsciously, the world that is still outside communion with God through the One Church, cries out to the churches to affirm their union and to act as one. Suspended between “dispersion” and “gathering”, divided Christianity has to seek again for its origin in the One undivided Church. Witness and service thus become for all men the *martyria* of the real and uniting presence of God. In full consciousness of their God-given responsibility in today’s world, the historic churches are called to sacrifice the self-sufficiency of their forms and their confessional security, not for the sake of some theological unity, but for the sake of the witness and service for God and for the world of the One undivided Church.

THE SELF-UNDERSTANDING OF THE ORTHODOX AND THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

John Zizioulas

Introduction

The subject on which I have been asked to speak is a complex and vast one. I have no ambition to deal with it exhaustively, or even properly. I shall limit myself to certain reflections of a theological nature, hoping that these might help the present meeting to reach a clearer view of the role of the Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement, and the WCC in particular, as well as of what this role entails both for the WCC and the Orthodox themselves.

The question of the Orthodox self-understanding in relation to the Ecumenical Movement was raised almost from the start, as soon as the WCC was formed in the late 1940s. At a time when the eastern European-speaking Orthodox were still taking a negative view of the WCC, and the Roman Catholic Church was looking at this institution with deep suspicion, the problem could not but be debated almost exclusively among the Greek-speaking part of Orthodoxy which, led by the Ecumenical Patriarchate's Encyclical of 1920 and the enthusiastic initiatives of Greek ecumenists, such as the late Prof. Alivizatos, undertook to defend the participation of the Orthodox Church in the Ecumenical Movement. It was at that time that the first articles were published in Greece dealing with the matter. Almost with no exception the position taken by the authors of these articles was that the Orthodox Church participates in the Ecumenical Movement with the clear consciousness that she is the *Una Sancta*, a conviction that could not be affected or diminished in any way whatsoever by this participation. On the basis of this conviction, common to all Orthodox participants in the Ecumenical Movement of that time, the first divisions made their appearance, mainly in Greece, between those who would support the Orthodox involvement in the WCC and those who would fiercely oppose it, such as the late Metropolitan of Samos Irenaeus (incidentally, one of those who had signed the Encyclical of 1920) with the argument that, since we are the *Una Sancta*, we cannot accept to be treated like the Protestant members of the Council – an experience found by the above-mentioned Metropolitan to be deeply humiliating when he attended the Amsterdam Assembly. This division continued to dominate the Orthodox Church in Greece long after Amsterdam (surviving to some extent even in our own

days), sometimes leading this Church to the point of wondering whether, for example, she should not be represented in the ecumenical meetings solely by lay theologians or priests so as to protect the episcopal dignity of her bishops. In the end, albeit with difficulty at times, the Orthodox delegations to the WCC meetings have always included bishops, something due to a considerable extent to the fact that from 1961 onwards the Russian and other East European Orthodox churches not only radically reviewed their attitude to the Ecumenical Movement but came to the WCC meetings in huge episcopal delegations.

On the level of theology, a decisive factor contributing to the continuing full participation of the Orthodox in the WCC was, in my view, the support given to the Ecumenical Movement by the eminent Russian theologian, the late Fr G Florovsky, deeply respected in conservative Orthodox circles. His role was decisive, particularly at the Evanston Assembly. Florovsky was the first, as far as I am aware, to raise the question of the Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement at a theological level. Up to that time the Orthodox limited themselves to the assertion that only the Orthodox Church is the *Una Sancta*, avoiding the question of what the other participants in the Ecumenical Movement were, ecclesiological speaking. When pressed to give an answer, they would usually repeat Khomiakov's view, shared by many émigré Russian theologians of this century, namely that we Orthodox can only say what we are ecclesiological, and it is only God who can decide about the fate of the others. The Toronto Statement of 1950 did not simply have a negative function, namely to protect the Orthodox – and Roman Catholics – from a loss of their ecclesiological identity, but must be seen against the background of what we may call an “ecclesiological agnosticism” expressed by Khomiakov and many Orthodox with regard to the non-Orthodox members of the WCC.

Florovsky took the matter further, and the step he made must be taken into account even today. First, he insisted that the true catholicity of the Church requires the co-existence of both eastern and western Christianity. Speaking of the “catholic ethos” of the ancient undivided Church, he made the point that this was due to the creative exchange between Greek and Latin Christianity, an exchange which ceased to exist after the great schism of the eleventh century. His slogan “ecumenism in time” did not aim at an assertion of traditionalism, but expressed the conviction that the division between West and East has affected seriously the catholicity of the Church.

Furthermore, in an article in the *Ecumenical Review*, Florovsky took the bold step of raising the question of the limits of the Church, thus addressing the issue of the ecclesial character of the non-Orthodox bodies. Comparing and analysing with his remarkable patristic scholarship the ecclesiologies of Cyprian and Augustine, he distinguished between the “canonical” borders (St. Cyprian's position) and the “charismatic” borders (St. Augustine's view) of the Church, not hesitating to accept as his personal view that of

St. Augustine: the Church is not exhausted by her canonical borders; there is charismatic life beyond these borders (who can deny the holiness of persons like Francis of Assisi? he wrote); there is, in other words, some kind of ecclesiality beyond the canonical borders of the Orthodox Church.

These views of Florovsky were so advanced that I myself found them difficult to accept when I was writing my doctoral thesis, not because they appear to be unacceptable, but because they call for a great deal of explanation and investigation of the fundamental and still unresolved problem of the relation between the “canonical” and the “charismatic” in the Church. In any case, this position of Florovsky does not seem to have enjoyed a following, and the question still remains open whether the Orthodox participate in the Ecumenical Movement without recognising any ecclesiality in their non-Orthodox partners, or whether they do so by implicitly admitting that there is some kind of ecclesiality in the latter. Some extremely conservative Orthodox would deny the use of the term “church” with reference to any other group outside the Orthodox Church, while others would allow this use with the understanding that the word “church” is used by these non-Orthodox groups to define themselves, and not by the Orthodox to define these groups – in other words, the word “church” does not carry the same ecclesiological meaning when applied by the Orthodox to their own church as it does when applied by them to the non-Orthodox bodies. In the latter case “church” can mean anything from an “incomplete” or “deficient” ecclesial entity to an entirely non-ecclesial one.

All this is possible because of the famous Toronto Statement. This statement allowed such an ecclesiological ambiguity that made it possible for the WCC to develop and work without being hindered by it. Indeed, as history has shown, the WCC can exist without clarifying the position of its members with regard to the ecclesial status of their fellow-members. There seems to be no compelling reason why we should force the member churches to state clearly what they believe about the ecclesial status of the others. But this is only half of the story of the Toronto Statement. The other half has to do with the question of the ecclesial character of the WCC itself. And this point, although different from the previous one which concerns the ecclesiality of the non-Orthodox members, is still dependent upon ecclesiology. Without clarifying our ecclesiology, the Orthodox cannot answer the question of the ecclesial character of the WCC. Let me offer some remarks on this:

1. Some Fundamental Orthodox Ecclesiological Principles

(a) The Church is one and only one, and she is an historical entity. We cannot be satisfied with an “invisible” Church or an “invisible” and “spiritual” unity. Bulgakov’s plea to approach the Church as a “spiritual” reality, as “experience of life” can be misleading. The Orthodox expect that

the other Christians will take the visible unity of the Church seriously, and it is indeed gratifying to see that since Nairobi at least the call to visible unity has become central in the ecumenical agenda and language.

(b) The Church is also an eschatological entity. This is not a statement to replace the previous one concerning the historical character of the Church. It is meant to remind us that the historical entity called “church” is constantly called to reflect the eschatological community, to be a sign and image of the Kingdom. Without an eschatological vision the Ecumenical Movement will deteriorate into an ephemeral secular affair. The Orthodox wish to be there as a constant reminder of the eschatological vision of the Church. Whatever we are as historical entities, each of the member churches of the WCC must be constantly judged by what the Kingdom calls us to be, by what we shall be. It is encouraging to see such study programmes in the WCC agenda as that called “the Church as a prophetic sign of the Kingdom”, but is doubtful that such an eschatological vision marks the Ecumenical Movement in its entirety and in a decisive way.

(c) The Church is a relational entity, and this means several important things. The first is that the Church is not a petrified entity transmitted from one generation to another as an archaeological treasure. Some Orthodox would tend to give to this “conservation” of the past the utmost priority. And yet, if we take such an attitude – which is not what the Fathers did – we shall soon end up with a Church unable to relate to the problems of each time and incapable of carrying on the saving work of Christ in history. The Church is only where the Spirit is, and where the Spirit is, the past relates to the present and the present is opened up to the future. All this is implied in what we call Reception of Tradition. What we have inherited from the Fathers, be it dogmas, ethos or liturgy, must be received and re-received all the time, and in this process the past becomes existentially, and not simply mentally or ritually, present. The agenda of the WCC seems to have paid attention to the problem of Reception, and yet it is questionable whether this is being done satisfactorily. This is so because the Orthodox, on the one hand, do not seem to be willing to let their tradition (dogmatic and otherwise) be challenged enough by the problems of the day (compare their reaction to what is named “horizontalism”), while the non-Orthodox, on the other hand, seem to be totally unwilling to take into consideration what has traditionally been conveyed to us (compare the way in which the issue of the ordination of women has been decided by them). The Orthodox are there in the Ecumenical Movement to remind us of the importance of Tradition, but also of its creative re-reception. The Ecumenical Movement has to see the mystery of the Church against the background of reception all the time. The relational character of the Church concerns also her structure and ministry. It would be a mistake to think of the Church as an unstructured entity, but it would also be wrong to think of her structures as valid in themselves, apart from the *koinonia*, which they are meant to convey. The same is also true of the Church’s ministries. This is what we

are taught by trinitarian theology, and Pneumatology in particular, as the basis of ecclesiology. The concept of *koinonia* is gaining ground in the agenda of the WCC, and this is a good thing. It is too early to say where this new approach will lead us. One of the dangers that the Orthodox would wish to see avoided is a kind of sanctification of diversity at the expense of unity (on the Roman Catholic side, the danger would be the opposite – compare the latest Papal encyclical). It is in any case important to underline the critical significance of this concept for the Ecumenical Movement. Orthodox ecclesiology will have to make a crucial contribution to this matter, on which, I personally believe, the future of the Ecumenical Movement will depend a great deal.

(d) The Church is a sacramental entity. This is another point on which Orthodox participation in the Ecumenical Movement would focus its contribution. This point is probably the most difficult one owing to the fact that it involves Eucharistic fellowship which the Orthodox deny to the non-Orthodox. The discussion of the problem does not have to be repeated here. What seems to be crucial is that Eucharistic fellowship should not cease to be the goal (the Orthodox would say the ultimate goal) of the Ecumenical Movement. The importance in keeping this issue alive and central lies in the fact that through it the WCC will maintain its non-secular character, which otherwise it may lose. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry are a good beginning, and it has revealed a great potential for further progress. Protestant churches have made through this document a big step towards sacramental, particularly Eucharistic, thinking, and this in itself is quite significant. The question that the Orthodox will soon have to answer, if this sacramental thinking continues to mark the problematic the Ecumenical Movement, is to what extent recognition of baptism implies recognition of ecclesiality.

(e) These are but a few, yet fundamental, ecclesiological principles that the Orthodox carry – or should I say ought to carry? – with them into the Ecumenical Movement. This is how they understand the Church, and this is how they would like their ecumenical partners to think of the Church. They do not wish to see the WCC turn into a church of this kind. They do wish, however, it to be a “fellowship of churches” aiming and working towards conformity to this kind of church. Unity will be restored in a healthy way when this fellowship – encouraged, supported and built by the WCC – is constantly inspired by and aspires to the right “model” of the church indicated by the above principles. This may mean, in the final analysis, that the ecclesiological pluralism proposed by the Toronto Statement will have to be rejected. The WCC must not become a church, but it must eventually acquire a basically common idea of the Church. We cannot go on for ever and ever holding different or contradictory views of the Church. It was wise to begin with the ecclesiological “laissez-faire” of Toronto but it would be catastrophic to end with it.

2. The “Ecclesial” Character of the WCC

The WCC cannot be turned into a church but it must acquire an ecclesial vision shared by all its member churches. This seems to be the conclusion of the previous section. But how would the WCC perform this mission? Is it simply by organising meetings, publishing books, etc? Or is it rather through the fact of being a “fellowship”, i.e. of being an event of communion? If the latter is the case, as it in fact seems to be, the question of its ecclesiological significance appears to be inevitable. For you cannot build up a fellowship through which the consciousness of the *Una Sancta* would emerge before the eyes of those not having seen it before without acquiring some experience of the reality of the *Una Sancta*. If the means by which you come to experience the true Church is through the fellowship, sometimes painful as the lack of intercommunion can show, then this fellowship must inevitably carry an ecclesiological significance.

Here the options before the Orthodox are limited: either they regard the WCC as a mere organizer of meetings, in which case Church unity will emerge through theological persuasion and conversion; or they accept it as a fellowship through which, i.e. through being and working and reflecting theologically and suffering, and witnessing, etc. together, and above all by sharing a common vision of what the Church is, they will come to the point of confessing not only one Lord but also one Church, the *Una Sancta*. There is logically no other alternative laid before the Orthodox with regard to their participation in the Ecumenical Movement. It seems to me that there are indications that the Orthodox have in fact opted for the second of these two alternatives. These indications include the following:

(a) The Basis of the World Council of Churches. The Orthodox more than anyone else have insisted from the beginning that the basis of WCC be narrowed down as much as possible, and they have in fact succeeded in bringing it down to the confession of faith in the Holy Trinity. They now express the desire to limit membership of the WCC to those accepting and practising baptism. This is all very good, but what about its implications for the nature of the WCC? If the WCC acquires its identity – this is what the basis means – through confession of faith in the Trinity and baptism, these things constitute lines of demarcation from other communities or organizations. The WCC, therefore, cannot be considered “as a pagan or a tax collector” (Matt. 18:17); there is something to it stemming from faith in the Triune God and from baptism, otherwise what is the point of insisting that the WCC should be made up only of such people? Are such things as trinitarian faith and baptism sufficient to make up an ecclesial reality? Certainly not. Yet that they are totally insignificant ecclesologically would be hard to accept.

(b) The Confession of the Creed. The Orthodox attach great significance to the Creeds, and rightly so. Particularly the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed is the object of reverence and the basis of ecclesial unity for the Orthodox. We have not come to the point of making this Creed the sole

basis of credal confession in the WCC, but there has been some progress in this matter. Is this totally irrelevant ecclesiologicaly? The Orthodox would say that until all Protestants accept the seven Ecumenical Councils there can be no ecclesial reality in them. This is so. But is the movement in that direction totally void of ecclesiological significance? This is a question that cannot be avoided.

(c) Common action in facing contemporary issues. Ethics cannot be separated from faith any more than Orthodoxy can be divorced from Orthopraxis. We act as Christians not because of some impersonal moral imperative but because we believe in a God who not only orders us to behave in a certain way, but offers himself as love for his creation and wants us to share this love. It is because we believe in a God who is communion as Trinity that we are called to be persons of communion. All moral issues have for us a theological basis. This means that in acting together in the WCC on ethical issues we share and express the same faith. This is not necessarily the case in all ethical action, for many Christians do not make necessarily the connection between faith and ethics. Here the WCC is often seen to act as a humanistic or sociological entity. This is what made the Orthodox at Uppsala accuse the WCC of "horizontalism". The more, however, it relates its social, ecological, etc. activities with faith, the more the question is raised whether our common action is ecclesiologicaly irrelevant. Father Borovoy has rightly underlined the statement of early ecumenists: "To act as if we were one Church." He rightly recognizes ecclesiological significance in such a statement, for although acting as if it is a conditional expression, it nonetheless indicates a common motivation and perhaps a common vision. And what we are looking for together affects to some extent what we already are.

Some Conclusions

The question of Orthodox self-understanding was raised at the beginning as a matter of self-consciousness vis-à-vis the WCC. This is still the case with many Orthodox and with the Orthodox Church officially as a whole: it is a question of "us" versus "them" (the WCC). This is not inexplicable. A great deal of responsibility for this attitude of the Orthodox belongs to the WCC itself which has often tended to push the Orthodox to the margin and treat them as a troublesome minority. The WCC documents were often written by Protestants, and the Orthodox were simply called to comment on them. Majority votes have often frustrated the Orthodox and made them want to produce their own separate statements. It would be totally unrealistic to ignore the fact that the Orthodox feel at times that they belong to the WCC only nominally and constitutionally, while they remain strangers spiritually. There is, of course, a great deal of responsibility for this situation that belongs to the Orthodox themselves. When staff positions are offered to them, they are unprepared to fill them with appropriate

candidates. Very often they display a negative spirit at meetings, as if they were seeking confrontation rather than co-operation. There is also in certain quarters a spiritual terrorism against ecumenism which paralyses church leaders who fear that they may lose their “good reputation”, since genuine Orthodoxy has become identical with negativity and polemic. All this contributes to the formation of Orthodox self-consciousness in opposition to or vis-à-vis the WCC.

But what about Orthodox self-consciousness as it emerges from within the membership of the WCC? For it is undeniable that for decades now the Orthodox Church is an integral and organic part of the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC, and as such it has been forming its self-consciousness not vis-à-vis but as part of the WCC. What, in other words, is Orthodox self-consciousness in relation to the WCC when it is considered not as “them” and “us” but as simply “us”?

The answer to this question is, that, in my view at least, the relation between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox within the WCC is and will always be a dialectical one. This is due to the fact that the Orthodox will always feel as *sui generis* Christians in relation to the West. This is the sad consequence of the gap between West and East produced by the great schism and deepened by centuries of estrangement and autonomous existence. Both sides cultivate this gap even in our time. On the Orthodox side there is a growing self-consciousness of difference or even superiority over the barbarian West, while in the West books are written to show how the Orthodox world (grouped together with Islam!) is totally incompatible with the civilized West. All this affects the formation of Orthodox self-consciousness, and although the WCC has no responsibility whatsoever for this matter, it should do its best to convince the world that the gulf between Orthodoxy and the West can and must be bridged. Here is an item of priority for the agenda of the WCC. We must turn the dialectic between West and East into a healthy and creative one. If the dialectic between Orthodoxy and the West becomes within the WCC a healthy and creative one, Orthodox self-consciousness will emerge as bearing the following characteristics:

- The Orthodox will never depart from their conviction that the Orthodox Church is the *Una Sancta*. This is due to their faith that the Church is an historical entity and that we cannot seek her outside the tradition historically bequeathed and appropriated. Unless they have reasons to move to another Christian confession or Church, i.e. as long as they remain Orthodox, they will identify the *Una Sancta* with their Church. But ecumenical experience is taking away all triumphalism from such a conviction. The *Una Sancta* transmitted in and through tradition is not a possession of the Orthodox. It is a reality judging us all (eschatological) and is something to be constantly received. The Ecumenical Movement offers the context of such a re-reception which takes place in

common with the other Christians. This amounts to an overcoming of confessionalism: the *Una Sancta* is not statically “enclosed” in a certain credal “confession” calling for “conversions” to it.

- The Orthodox will have to keep pressing for a common stance on or vision of the *Una Sancta* in the Ecumenical Movement. In the process of ecumenical reception, the “fellowship” of the member Churches will have to grow into a common vision and recognition of what the true Church is. This will be done through the intensification of ecclesiological studies as well as constant reminders of the significance of being and acting together as a matter of common faith and ecclesial vision. In this respect, the Toronto Statement will have to be stripped of its ecclesiological pluralism. I do not agree with the view that the WCC should not develop an ecclesiology. On the contrary, I believe this to be a priority for it.
- With regard to the ecclesiological significance of the WCC itself, the Orthodox will not be in a position to accept the WCC as a Church, i.e. as a body that can be identified through the marks of the *Una Sancta*, for it lacks the presuppositions of such marks, at least from the perspective of Orthodox ecclesiology. But we must distinguish between *being* a Church and *bearing ecclesiological significance*. Anything that contributes to the building up of the Church or to the reception and fulfilment of the Church’s life and unity bears ecclesiological significance. In this respect, the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC in particular are strongly qualified candidates, for they have as their primary object and *raison d’être* the restoration of the unity of the Church. This makes it imperative for the WCC to keep the unity of the Church at the centre of its life and concerns. It is this that makes it ecclesologically significant.

Finally, the question must be asked: does bearing an ecclesiological significance amount to having an *ecclesial character*? At this point terminology becomes extremely delicate. If by “ecclesial character” we wish to mean a “Church”, then in accordance with what was stated above such an ecclesial character should be denied. If, on the other hand, having an “ecclesial character” means participating in the event of a “fellowship” through which the Church’s unity is being restored, such a character clearly belongs to the nature of the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC. Denying, therefore, *a priori* and without explanation, an ecclesial character to the Ecumenical Movement and the WCC would turn these into totally secular entities.

The Orthodox participate in the Ecumenical Movement out of their conviction that the unity of the Church is an inescapable imperative for all Christians. This unity cannot be restored or fulfilled except through the coming together of those who share the same faith in the Triune God and

are baptized in his name. The fellowship that results from this coming together on such a basis and for such a purpose cannot but bear an ecclesiological significance, the precise nature of which will have to be defined. In the present paper I have tried to indicate the possibilities as well as the limits of such a definition. Certainly, the matter requires further reflection. I hope the discussion that will follow will contribute to this.



UNITY OF THE CHURCH – UNITY OF MANKIND

John Meyendorff

The “main theme” which will be before us in the coming days is an outcome of developments which took place in the Ecumenical Movement at large, in the World Council in particular and, more specifically, in Faith and Order during the past decade.

The definition of the “unity we seek” as a “churchly” unity, the ecclesiology of the New Delhi “unity statement”, the trinitarian “basis” adopted in New Delhi for World Council membership, were greeted by some as great victories of the “catholic” tradition in the Ecumenical Movement. They undoubtedly contributed to greater involvement of Orthodox churches in WCC work, since they gave them the impression – or, perhaps, the naïve illusion – of a return to the “sources” of biblical and patristic Christianity. Others felt, however, that the adoption of formal theological statements, or the description of unity in biblical or theological terms unrelated to the present historical moment, were nothing more than a futile academic exercise leading the Ecumenical Movement to a tragic impasse. Their feeling was strengthened when the Fourth Faith and Order Conference in Montreal (1963) failed in an attempt to define the ecclesiological nature of the World Council of Churches, proving implicitly that biblical and traditional definitions of church unity were still inapplicable to Christians in their present state of division and that the World Council, when it comes to precise statements and definitions, is still very much bound by the Toronto Statement of 1950: no understanding of unity can presently be assumed by all, and if some formulae can be widely accepted, one can be sure that they are understood differently in the WCC constituency. It is this impasse which leads many away from Faith and Order altogether. Faith and Order, whose work was largely responsible for producing the above descriptive formulae, added to its reputation as a highly segregated club of hair-splitting professors, detached from the real needs of man.

Thus, already in Montreal, a clear shift of emphasis began to take place, a shift which has been described as a move “from God to man”, or from “theology” to “anthropology”. The intention of this shift was not, expressedly, to modify the basic goal of ecumenism but to discover the meaning of “churchly” unity in the light of God’s plan for all of creation, the whole of mankind, and for man as such. No Christian theology can deny the legitimacy of this new approach provided, however, that it is

based upon a valid methodology in studying the *humanum*. For it is indeed in order to save *man* that the Christ-event took place – man in the fulness of his developing and creating potentialities – and not simply in order to create an institution following a proper “faith and order”. And it is certainly not the Orthodox who can object to this anthropological approach to problems of unity: didn’t they inherit from the Greek Fathers a doctrine of the “image of God” in man – an image which no sin is able to erase totally? Didn’t St. Maximus the Confessor already teach that creation is a dynamic and “energized” being, which Christ assumed in its fulness, so that it may again *act* in accordance with its proper design, restoring the entire *cosmos* in a united harmony? The Christian gospel is about the fate of all creation and of the whole of mankind, not just about Christians and their institutions.

What “man”, what anthropology, was taken as the basis for the shift we have just mentioned? A simple answer to this question is probably impossible, but one cannot deny that the so-called “secular” categories were decisive in shaping much of recent ecumenical thinking – categories which are, or are presented to be, *common* to both the Christian and the “secular” man. And here lies precisely the whole problem which we face: which anthropology do we choose as criterion in our shifted “Faith and Order” thinking? Is it the “secular” one – which “assumes”, according to the much misquoted phrase of Bonhoeffer, that “there is no God” – or is it the anthropology called “theological” by Karl Rahner which defines man not only as a psychologically “religious” being, but also as a phenomenon impossible to explain without referring to God?

Since the present paper does not pretend to be a balanced “presidential” statement or a study document and since, in the forthcoming days, we will have in front of us enough balanced papers and preparatory materials representing a fair amount of committee work, I will allow myself at this initial point to rely mainly on personal judgment. First of all, it seems to me that so far the results of the “shift” to anthropology have not yet objectively contributed much to the Ecumenical Movement and to the cause of Christian unity. They have created a conservative backlash among churchmen without, however, convincing many people in the secular world that the Ecumenical Movement really has much to contribute to solving “secular” problems. In the Orthodox world they have strengthened the position of those who believe that the Orthodox should withdraw from the Ecumenical Movement altogether, since membership in the WCC becomes synonymous, in their eyes, to national and international politicking, which may help some Orthodox ecclesiastical institutions in their struggle for survival by providing them with an international forum, but which has nothing to do with the quest of *ecclesial* unity as the Orthodox understand it. Sectarian fringes, both in Protestantism and in Orthodoxy, receive a great boost from this situation. This judgment, of course, refers to the public image of the World Council as a whole more than to that of Faith

and Order. But what place does Faith and Order occupy in the overall image of the Council? Even if one forgets about the recent (and fortunately discarded) possibility that it be dissolved in the broader framework of a new divisional structure, and even if, on the contrary, one acknowledges the constructive theological work which has never stopped being produced in Faith and Order, it remains obvious that what Faith and Order represents was largely overshadowed by noisy talk about various social causes, most of them justified and valuable, but still peripheral to the main issue of the Christian faith – the ultimate and eternal destiny of man.

I do not think that anyone will doubt that the various forms of social utopianism which have monopolized the enthusiasm of the young and of the not-so-young in recent years have lost their impetus. Not that the fundamental aspiration for justice, brotherhood, and peace has disappeared, but the greater and deeper dimensions of the quest for justice and peace have been much more widely recognized, especially by the young. This recognition leads everywhere to a new sense of religious experience, to the realization that man's happiness can be found not only in an equal distribution of material goods, and not even necessarily in social and political equality and dignity, but must also be attained in mystical, religious experience, often expressed through music, through visual arts, through poetry, and through other forms of *aesthetic* contact with reality. This is, in other words, through an *escape* from the monotonous and inhuman determinism of economics and all other "systems" which pretend to regulate human life.

Nicholas Berdyaev, in one of his most brilliant short essays, defines every capitulation before this determinism as "spiritual *bourgeoisie*".

Whether a capitalist or a socialist, the spiritual *bourgeois* is unable to say, with Ecclesiastes: "I have seen everything that is done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind" (Eccl. 1:14). And Berdyaev concludes: "The *bourgeois* spirit wins every time when, among Christians, the city of the earth is mistaken for the city of heaven, and when Christians stop feeling as pilgrims in this world."¹ I am afraid that if Berdyaev had lived until 1968, he would have found the Uppsala Assembly very *bourgeois* indeed. However, I have referred to him not to condemn the new emphasis on man in the Ecumenical Movement as a whole, and in Faith and Order in particular. The fact that we are called to deal with an "anthropocentric" theme gives us, in Faith and Order, a new opportunity, which comes just at the right time, to salvage the Ecumenical Movement in a period of acute crisis. It is certainly not by simply returning to a study of ecclesiastical formulae and institutions in themselves, of their historic authenticity and possible adaptability through compromise, that Faith and Order will fulfil its mission fully, but by showing that what is at stake is *man himself*, his life and salvation. This is precisely the task we have before us today – to answer two questions, as spelt out by Lesslie Newbigin: "What is the form of church order which will effectively offer to all the

human beings in this place the invitation of Jesus Christ to be reconciled to God through him?” and: “What is the form of church order which will effectively offer to *mankind as a whole* this same invitation?”²

These questions are indeed “Faith and Order” questions, because the “invitation” comes not from man, not from “history”, not from “secular society”, but *from Christ*. To restate this is “Faith and Order’s” duty in the WCC. But these questions also call us to agree on the meaning of such terms as “human being”, “mankind” and “church”. To understand what “man” and “mankind” mean, we must indeed be attentive (critically, of course) to what the secular world has to say. To agree on the meaning of “church” is admittedly quite difficult, but our ecumenical commitment requires that we continue to listen to each other, and also to our respective pasts, with continuous and brotherly attention.

To initiate our discussion, I will limit myself today to a few observations on “the unity of the Church”, “the unity of mankind”, and on “eschatology” in the anthropological context of our main theme.

1. Man and the Unity of the Church

The innumerable ecumenical documents on “unity” produced since the beginning of the Ecumenical Movement have rarely paid attention to the fact that the recognized polarity between various ecclesiologies implies differences in the understanding of man’s nature. Meanwhile, an understanding of who man is, is essential in order to answer the first of Newbigin’s questions on the relationship of church order to concrete *human beings*. Let us take, for example, the perennial debate on unity as a *given* reality, as opposed to the unity which is yet to be realized among divided Christians.

It is well known that, in Eastern patristic thought, man is conceived not as an autonomous being, but as a being fully himself only when he is in communion with God. His *nature* is determined by his being an image of God. Interestingly enough, there was never a debate in the East concerning the Pauline use of *pneuma* and its application to both the human “spirit” and the divine “Spirit”, coming from God. This usage, which embarrasses so many modern theologians because it goes against their presuppositions on “nature” and “grace” as distinct realities, was not a problem at all for Irenaeus, who simply affirms that man is by nature made up of “Spirit, soul, and body”, meaning by that that a *divine* presence is indeed what makes man truly himself (*Adversus haereses* 5, 6, 1). Whether later theologians will adopt a more neo-Platonic language to define the same reality (Gregory of Nyssa, for example, will speak of the “divine spark” in man), or whether they will start to distinguish between the human *pneuma* and the Holy Spirit in order to maintain the original “parenthood” between God and man, they will develop the theology of the *imago Dei* as living

communion and will always take for granted that man's *nature* and *ultimate destiny* is life "in God", or deification (*theosis*).

Needless to say, this understanding of man also implies that God is "participable", that by creating man he has established between himself and creation a living and personal link, to which he himself is personally committed, that it is always possible, by looking at man as his image, to see God himself, that *through man* God is always somehow visible. The image, of course, has been distorted through a mysterious tragedy which happened in creation and which is described through the story of Genesis 3, but it has also been restored through the death and resurrection of Jesus. In Christ, the fulness of divinity abides "bodily" and can be seen, accepted and participated in again. *Therefore*, it is also in Jesus that one discovers what man authentically is – for Jesus is fully God and fully man, and the one is ("hypostatically") inherent in the other.

In the light of this anthropology, what is the *koinonia* and the "unity" of the Church? Obviously, and primarily, a unity of man *with God* and, only secondarily, a unity of men with each other. If man is a "theocentric" being, any unity outside the "centre" will be defective and, perhaps, demonic. "A human being", writes Karl Rahner, "is a reality absolutely open upwards; a reality which reaches its highest (though indeed 'unexacted') perfection, the realization of the highest possibility of man's being, when in it the Logos himself becomes existent in the world."³ The true *koinonia* occurs when such an "opening" is really possible. In an essay on ecclesiology published posthumously, Vladimir Lossky also insists on this same anthropological dimension: no Christian ecclesiology, he maintains, is possible on the basis of a secularized anthropology, which necessarily reduces the Church to the level of a human organization.⁴

Understood in this sense, *koinonia* is also necessarily a *personal* event. To quote Lossky again: "Christ becomes the sole image appropriate to the common nature of humanity. But the Holy Spirit grants to each person, created in the image of God, the possibility of fulfilling the likeness in the common nature. The one lends his hypostasis to (human) nature, the other gives his divinity to the persons."⁵ The *koinonia*, as communion of "persons" with God and with each other, implies a theology of the Spirit, which concerns the nature of the Christian faith itself.

Pentecost saw the birth of the Church – the *koinonia*, which will gradually acquire structures and will presuppose continuity and authority – and it was also an outpouring of spiritual gifts, *liberating* man from servitude, giving him personal freedom and personal experiences of God. The *koinonia* must uphold this polarity of the faith as continuity and as personal experience. The Spirit authenticates the ministries which are in charge of continuity and authority: but the same Spirit also maintains prophetic functions and reveals the whole truth to each member able to "receive" it. Thus the life of the *koinonia* cannot be reduced to either the "institution" or the "event", to either authority or freedom. It is a "new"

community created by the Spirit in Christ, where true freedom is recovered in the spiritual *koinonia* of the body of Christ.

This conception of the *koinonia*, based upon a “theocentric” anthropology implies:

(a) That communion with God cannot, as such, be “divided”. It can only be incomplete and deficient on the personal human level because of man’s lack of receptivity to the divine gift. The existence of the *koinonia* in history is the effect of God’s action in Christ, it is an openness of God, which also responds to the openness of man. A very great Byzantine mystic of the eleventh century, St. Symeon the New Theologian, wrote that those who deny this fulness of revelation “close the heaven which Christ opened for us and block the way which he himself has traced out for our return”.⁶ The Orthodox continue to react violently today when they are told that the Church (i.e. for them the *koinonia* with God) is “divided”, i.e. does not exist in its fulness and accessibility any more.

(b) That the fulness of *koinonia* exists only in Christ and is *given* in the Eucharist. Its “acceptance” by man, until the *eschaton*, is proportionate to his free “openness” to the gift and is therefore always limited. No individual member of the Church can take his membership in the *koinonia* for granted. Actually, he is constantly in and out, either excluded through his sins, or reintegrated through repentance. But the ministries, the structures – the entire “Church order” – are a given reality inasmuch as they are functional to the Eucharist. The *charismata* required by the Eucharist cannot as such be limited. However, as soon as “order” becomes an end in itself, it blasphemously creates a new obstacle to the *koinonia*. Such a blasphemy can be institutionalized – permanently or only temporarily – whenever the structures (episcopate, primacies, etc.) are used for any other purpose than that which is theirs, i.e. to administer, to secure, and to promote the *koinonia* of man with God and, in God, with his fellow man. Some of us will see such a misuse of the Church “structures” whenever they are conceived as vicarious powers, exercised individually *over* the Eucharistic *koinonia*. All of us, I hope, will condemn the divisive use of “structures” in the defence of nationalistic, political, racial, or economic interests. And all of us have sins on our conscience in this respect: no one, I think (and certainly not the Orthodox!), could affirm that his belonging to the *Una Sancta* is based upon the actual performance of the ecclesial “structures” of the church to which he belongs.

Obviously, the Eucharistic understanding of *koinonia* will imply that it is the local sacramental community which is its full realization. Union with God in Christ does not require the geographic universality of the *koinonia*. Theocentric anthropology and union *in Christ* make the traditional term of catholicity, with all its implications and dimensions, more able than others to express the “wholeness” and the cosmic dimensions of salvation in Christ. Indeed, each local community must be the *catholic Church*, i.e. understand not only its own internal unity but also its unity and

solidarity with the work of Christ in all ages and in all places. If our anthropology is really “theocentric”, if our understanding of *koinonia* is truly Eucharistic, the local community is indeed the place where the initial and fundamental Christian experience takes place. However, the *catholicity* of that experience makes it the foundation and the beginning of a responsible and, indeed, universal mission which in turn requires proper organization and proper structures.

This theology of unity, based on a particular understanding of man and on a definite meaning of the Eucharist, presupposes that the local community, as it empirically exists, provides the proper experience of that which it is supposed to be. And, in this respect, the situation is indeed tragic – for different reasons in different places. Among some of us, the Eucharistic worship is often reduced to frozen ceremonial. Among others, the sweeping reforms of the past years were based either on no theology at all or else on a theology of the “secular”, which practically excludes the *paschal*, liberating character of the Eucharist, i.e. the idea that the *koinonia* which it creates leads us *out of* the world in order that we may return *into* it as “new creation”. It is indeed the duty of Faith and Order to continue the worship study begun at Uppsala. For if the Eucharist is a sacrament of unity, one should unavoidably ask the question: unity in what? The answer can only be: unity in faith and in hope, i.e. as fellow-citizens, by anticipation, of the coming Kingdom of God, for *only* as such can they overcome division and conflict, which are the inevitable conditions of life “in this world”.

2. The Unity of Mankind

The second of Lesslie Newbigin’s questions was: “What is the form of church order which will effectively offer to *mankind as a whole* the invitation of Jesus Christ to be reconciled to God through Him?” On the other hand, the Uppsala Assembly stated that “the Church is bold in speaking of itself as the sign of the coming unity of mankind”.⁷ Obviously the answer to the question and the meaning of the statement again depend upon how we understand “man” and what we mean by “unity”.

If we accept as normative the *theocentric* anthropology of Irenaeus and Rahner and understand Church unity as basically a Eucharistic, and therefore eschatological reality, our attitude will be different from that which considers the Church as immanent to the world, so that its destiny is determined by the secular goals of mankind.

In past years, great emphasis was placed on an understanding of Christology and of salvation in universal and cosmic terms. Christ and the Spirit were understood as acting in the whole world, in history, in social change, in revolutionary movements, in world religions, so that it is by “listening to the world” that man can hear God’s voice. In opposition to the

traditional pietistic and emotional meaning of “renewal”, Uppsala discovered “new creation” in the “new things” happening in the world.

Naturally, no Christian theologian has ever denied that the Christ-event has a universal and cosmic significance. Least of all will an Orthodox theologian object to this universalist Christology. For his own tradition, with Maximus the Confessor, has taught him that man is a microcosm and that Christ, the New Adam, has manifested a new and authentic humanity in which the divisions and contradictions of the fallen world are transfigured and overcome.⁸ The Orthodox Eucharistic liturgy expresses clearly the same universalism. It is, each time, offered “on behalf of all and for all” – *kata panta kai dia panta* – an expression to be understood in line with the Pauline concept of *ta panta*, the whole of creation, as it is dependent upon God, the *pantokrator*. The Eucharist is certainly not offered for Christians alone (although it is indeed *presented* by the committed members of the Church: “*We offer unto Thee Thine own of thine own*” – *ta sa ek ton son*).

However, modern universalist Christologies, as well as the understanding of the Church which is based on them, overlook the crucial aspects which are just as fundamental as universalism – the reality of freedom and the reality of evil.

Dependence upon the “elements of this world” is the fate of man, unless he *chooses* to recover the dignity God wanted him to possess. This is indeed the message of Paul in Galatians: “Formerly, when you did not know God, you were in bondage to beings that by nature are no gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and beggarly elemental spirits, whose slaves you want to be once more? You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have laboured over you in vain” (4:8-11). I do not think that anyone can doubt that the concept of the “world – and therefore for us the concept of “secular mankind” – is associated in the New Testament with slavery and dependence. Therefore, if the Church must “serve” the world and “unite” mankind – and it certainly exists for that purpose – it can do so only if it is *free from them*, i.e. if it is fully independent from its categories and laws, whatever partial and temporary value they may have. The command to “withdraw from the world”, as it is expressed in the New Testament, is primarily a withdrawal from “lust”, from dependence upon creaturely beings; it is not a condemnation of the world as evil or an escape from reality. But no action *upon* the world and in the world is possible without first, liberation.

But Christian freedom is not merely a “freedom from” the world; it is also a positive experience and a positive dignity. It is not only a power to choose, but the very likeness of God in man, unattainable except by communion with God. Once this communion is given, the world cannot take it back. In this sense, Christian freedom is the joy and the dignity of the slaves, of the persecuted, of the deprived, and of the humiliated – in

other words, of all those who are the victims of this world, of its power and of the determinism which it claims to possess over man's dignity. It is *this* freedom which Christ restored for man when he died on the Cross, and its meaning is best understood by those who are themselves suffering from the powerful.

And finally, Christians must recognize the freedom of the "secular" man. For even if "secular" man is, according to Galatians, still enslaved to the powers of the world, he certainly continues to possess the freedom to reject Christ and to refuse his gospel. The cosmic Christologies and secular ecclesiologies of our time all risk annoying the secular man with their *de facto* triumphalism, a triumphalism which assumes a Christian content in the words and actions of those who do not want anything to do with Christianity. It is out of respect for the secular man that a Christian should not impose upon him his own understanding of human destiny.

The reality of evil is another aspect of the situation which is being overlooked. Not that the evil *phenomena* of human life are not recognized, whether they be war, racism, social injustice or totalitarian oppression, but a *theology of evil* is tragically lacking. I submit that it is impossible to understand the meaning of the Christian faith about man and the world; that it is impossible to be faithful to the significance of the Cross of Jesus, without admitting that Evil has a personalized existence, and therefore a strategy, a sense of reacting and planning (or rather plotting) against God's work. Divisiveness and simulation are its major tools. This personalized Evil should not be avoided as a problem when one is concerned with the unity of mankind. For it indeed possesses the devious talent of entering through the back door precisely when one thinks one has taken a step towards unity.

Personally, I think that the rationalistic disbelief in Satan is one of the saddest and unnecessary results of the modern demythologizing of the New Testament narratives, and also one of the most *bourgeois* products of our modern, secularized mode of thinking, inherited from nineteenth-century positivism. Writers and artists, especially since Dostoevsky, have had a much better grasp than theologians of the tragic, cosmic struggle in which man is engaged. What this struggle means practically for us is that unity, in order to be true and authentic, must be *exorcised*, and that exorcism is the preliminary condition – as in traditional rites of baptism – to authentic life in Christ. Until the *parousia*, history is a battlefield on which Good and Evil meet: their respective forces are confused and the external results of the battle are always uncertain. In this context it is extremely important to recognize that, on the secular level – and we are always part of the secular order (except in the Eucharist) – our practical choices are not between absolute Good and absolute Evil: we always have to choose a "better" solution or, quite often, only the "lesser evil". The ethical absolute is impossible on the secular level, and those who are seeking it are in fact seeking the Kingdom of God. They are, indeed, blessed, but it is our duty to

warn them against utopianism and to help them discover the Kingdom where it really is. Absolute achievements, absolute victories, as well as absolute defeats, happen only on the spiritual level, and neither these victories nor these defeats are necessarily recognized “in the world”. The gospel is indeed not a success story, and Christ does not promise success to his disciples, because his own achievement consisted of “disarming the principalities and powers” (Gal. 2:15), not in revolutionizing the world and making it sensibly better than it was before. It is certainly our duty to be fully involved, in the world and with the world, in seeking both the “better” solutions and the “lesser evils”, but in doing so it is also our duty to be inspired not only by well-known biblical texts, which speak of the universality of salvation, but also by the wise Ecclesiastes: “What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?” (Eccl. 1:3) By adding some detachment and some humour to our deadly serious ecumenical documents, we will make them, in any case, more palatable to the average reader and certainly more balanced theologically and less triumphalistic. Political ideologists and doctrinaires may certainly be disappointed by this approach, but we can safely say, after listening to the millions of young people around us, that the time for dogmatic political ideologies is *passé* for most of them. What they are seeking is not one more radical ideology but a Truth which is *human*. And what is more human than the gospel of Jesus Christ?

As Christians, we are not the first ones to think of the “unity of mankind” in its relation to the “unity of the Church”. Starting with Constantine and throughout the Middle Ages, the Christian Church, both in the East and in the West, abandoned the eschatology of the early period and considered that the Kingdom of God was not only to be “expected”, but also to be *built*; that there was no possible division between the “secular” and the “sacred”; that redemption was indeed brought to the *whole* of mankind; that, consequently, mankind was to be united not only in a sacramental communion, but also as a single society where the whole of life was to be guided by the gospel. These discoveries of medieval Christianity were correct in their own way and some are still valid today. But now that the Constantinian period is over, we generally recognize where they were also *theologically wrong*, i.e. (1) in thinking that the authority of Christ could be identified with the political *power* of the state; and (2) in considering that the *universality* of the gospel is definable in political terms. Today, we are ready to celebrate the burial of Christian empires and states, but have we really abandoned the mistaken aspects of their theology? To ask this question is to imply that the theology of many of our “secularists” is actually the theology of Constantine, Justinian, and Hildebrand, although the means at their disposal are different and, consequently, the methods they propose to use are different as well. But the *main* concern is the same – to define Christianity in such a way as to solve the problems of this world, as to be “relevant” in terms understandable to

“secular man” and, practically, so as to use secular means to attain a goal which has been set by others. But then what about Jesus’ answer to Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight” (John 18:36)? What about the demonic which constantly tempts us (whether we are rich or poor, oppressors or oppressed) with power, with bread, and with easy, “miraculous”, i.e. utopian, solutions?

Christianity has suffered enough because it identified itself with power, with the state, with money, with the establishment. Many of us rightly want to disengage it from these embarrassing allies. But in order to win its true freedom *the Church must become itself again, and not simply change camps.*

To help our churches in this task is the *raison d’être* of Faith and Order. Without fear of dialectical conflict among us, or between us and others, honestly disagreeing if necessary, let us be bold enough to speak our own mind. We are indeed at a historical moment when Faith and Order is asked not simply to give an expertise on refined, theological issues, but to say its word on the concern of all. This word should give a true Christian meaning to our necessary and actually unavoidable involvement in promoting and helping this world, this society, this humanity, in becoming more just and more human. Where else can this meaning be found except in the light of a sound eschatology?

3. Eschatology

The unity of the Church and the unity of mankind will ultimately and fully coincide only in the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, *and not before*. Only in this perspective can one legitimately say that the unity of the Church is an anticipation of the unity of mankind. In the Eucharist, however, it is possible to taste the very reality of future unity, which is not simply a human reconciliation and fellowship, but a unity in God, in the fulness of truth, in the joy of the Kingdom. As such, the Eucharist as well as the entire liturgical worship which constitutes its framework can legitimately be considered as an *escape* from the determinism of the world, from our animal existence which ends in death, from the limitations and the frustrations which we meet as Christians in the world. Liturgical worship is indeed the leisure, the “going home” of Christians inasmuch as they are, through their baptism, the citizens of the Kingdom of God, not of the world. The anticipated eschatology of the Eucharist is a relief, the very experience of a victory already won, which gives credit to Christ’s words: “In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33). This saying is actually being tested when Christians are making their “trip” to the Kingdom of God: this, we believe, happens not only emotionally and subjectively, but quite really, however “hard” this “saying” may be in the eye of the world (cf John 6:30-32).

For the Eucharist is indeed not an escape from reality but from slavery, from the so-called “necessities” of the world, from the “determinism” of rationality: this is why it is a victory over the “powers and principalities”. No wonder that the meaning of worship as *liberation* is best understood by those Christians who are openly rejected by the world, persecuted, oppressed, or segregated – in communist Russia or in the black ghettos of America. And I also think that it is *this* kind of worship which will eventually be understood by all who today are in the midst of an authentic quest for the “disestablishment” of Christianity.

The Eucharist, therefore, as an eschatological event is the “place” of unity. However, Christ is not only the *Omega*, the goal of history, but he is also the *Alpha*: the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the beginning and the end, are both in him. This implies that, for Christians, the “last things” will not be entirely “new” – in any case not as new as they will be for the world. The Judge of the “last day” is already our recognized Master. Thus the Church holds to the “apostolic” faith, both because it is through the apostles that she knows about the acts performed by Jesus and because the apostles will sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The maintenance of an “apostolic” structure of the Church is not only a conservative reaction (however legitimate conservatism may be) but also an eschatological necessity. Only those “structures” of the Church are truly necessary which have an eschatological dimension. Those of us who, for example, insist on the necessity of an “apostolic” episcopate must also show the episcopate to have an eschatological significance – not simply to be a practical requirement in reference to the “world”. The *Alpha* and the *Omega* are one, and it is to this oneness, to this unity, that Christ promised indestructibility by the gates of Hell.

Now if the Eucharist is the eschatological event par excellence, it is for and through the Eucharist that one discovers what, in Church structure, is truly eschatological and therefore necessary for the Church to be the Church. It is on this point that the perennial debate between East and West has taken place: is a *universal structure* of the Church really necessary, although it is obviously not determined directly by the Eucharist (as is the structure of the local church with a bishop at its head)? Is there an eschatological necessity for the universal Church to be structured around a universal “vicar of Christ”? Is the “successor of Peter” only in *one* particular church, or is there one in every local community which is, through the Eucharist, the *catholic* Church, i.e. the fulness of the Church in that place?

Obviously the debate on this point is theologically the same as the one we are having today on the history of the Church and the unity of *mankind*. The Eucharist can only be celebrated locally, but it is celebrated for the whole world. And also, having made their *trip* to the Kingdom of God, Christians are indeed being sent into the world in order to prepare it to become the Kingdom of God. For that purpose they must act together, use

the means which the world offers, be understood by the secular man and, on a deeper ontological level, *assume* the world as God's creation ; and we know also that this assumption includes even "the sins of the world" for the sake of the world's redemption. The medieval western Church thought that the proper way of realizing these goals – including that of uniting mankind – was to assume state powers over the world. It also presumed that Christ himself had provided the universal Church with a structure adapted to the needs of the secular world. The East, meanwhile, was largely relying on the (supposedly) Christian state to take care of the secular tasks, limiting its ecclesiology to the eschatological Eucharistic dimensions. Modern "secularists", rejecting the idea that the Church has a God-given structure, think that it must learn from the world how to make that world better.

The theological and practical mistakes of these three attitudes are rather clear. But to find alternatives in this rapidly changing world of ours is harder than to criticize the mistakes of others. Our difficulties lie in the polarization and chaos which characterized the theological developments in the western world during the past decade. There are certainly hopes but still no clear evidence that these iconoclastic years will have cleared the way for a renewal of Christian experience and witness. Our difficulties lie also in the fact that, called to speak of the "unity of mankind", we are ourselves not at all free from the forces which actively divide it, and therefore cannot pass a clear judgment upon these forces. Some of us are able to judge the fault of other societies, but the conditions in which we live would not allow us to direct the same judgment closer to home. Others, on the contrary, are fascinated by the problems which assail the social groups to which they belong, so that they are unable to see these problems in the wider perspective of a world society. The result of these limitations is that our statements often lack the ultimate Christian integrity which would deserve lasting significance and respect.

These are the reasons why my goal in these preliminary remarks has been an attempt to discuss the basic theological presuppositions which would allow us to move into the concrete issues which face us in our five Sections. Clearly, our debates will bring out different results whether we admit or not that the eschatological Kingdom is anticipated, in a unique and fundamental way, through the Eucharist in the local community, and that a Eucharist-centred Church is our primary responsibility as a starting point of an active involvement in the service of the world (which is certainly desirable, but not always possible and, at times, ineffective and even harmful). If our answer is positive, we will basically agree with Jacques Ellul when he castigates the illusion "that justice can be attained by a political organization of any kind"⁹ and believes "that it is only through complete refusal to compromise with the forms and forces of our society that we can find the right orientation and recover the hope of human freedom".¹⁰

If we disagree with the letter of Ellul's judgment and know, through our own experiences in our own local situations, that active work for reconciliation, unity, and justice is actually possible *through involvement*, are we ready to admit that the results, achievable through such an involvement, will possibly be a "lesser evil" only and, as such, of no great eschatological significance?

And finally, if we totally disagree with a Eucharist-centred eschatology, what safeguards do we offer against utopianism? Do we mean that the better world which the young people of all continents seek will come about through any of the world religions other than Christianity, or through a combination of several of them, or through any of the ideologies which presently compete for men's souls?

A clear answer to these questions, or at least to some of them, would be a useful signpost for a truly meaningful debate on the issues facing us in the Ecumenical Movement.

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 7. *The Uppsala Report*, Report of Section I (WCC: Geneva, 1968), 17.
 8. See the recent book on Maximus by Lars Thunberg, *Microcosm and Mediator: The Theological Anthropology of Maximus the Confessor* (Lund, 1965).
 9. *The Political Illusion* (New York: Knopf, 1967), 191.
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MISSION FOR UNITY OR UNITY FOR MISSION? AN ECCLESIOLOGICAL / ECUMENICAL PERSPECTIVE

KM George

The New Awakening

Very recently, in a prestigious Indian newspaper, there appeared an extended book review by Ram Swarup, a Hindu columnist. The title given to the review article was “Christianity Mainly for Export”.¹ The book under review was *Mission Handbook: North American Ministries Overseas*, published by World Vision International, an American evangelical agency with an annual budget of \$4 million dollars.² The article begins by quoting Mark 16:15-16: “Go into the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” The writer, who qualifies western missionary work as “soul-saving business”, “corporate enterprise”, “proselytizing”, etc., quotes extensively from the *Handbook* and picks up revealing statistics.

Kam Swarup quotes from the writings of the Texas-based “Gospel for Asia” group: “The Indian sub-continent, with one billion people, is a living example of what happens when Satan lies the entire culture... India is one vast purgatory in which millions of people are literally living a cosmic lie. Could Satan have devised a more perfect system for causing misery?”³ He has other citations in the same vein. The reader is given a hellish picture of western multi-billion-dollar missionary activity. The inevitable conclusion of the reviewer is that Christianity is losing its hold in western countries, but they are keeping it for export to the third world. Referring to “the powerful missionary lobby” behind the UN Declaration on Human Rights, which states that every individual has the right to embrace the religion or belief of his/her choice, the Hindu writer asks: “But is there to be no similar charter that declares that countries, cultures and peoples of tolerant philosophies and religions who believe in the famous quote ‘live and let live’ also have a right to protection against aggressive, systematic proselytizing? Are its well-drilled legionaries to have a free field?”⁴

Some of our more enlightened mainline churches, which are engaged in more sophisticated missionary activity, may dispose of it as sectarian fundamentalist rubbish. But to the vast non-Christian populations in many parts of the world it makes no difference. Missionary work is missionary work, i.e. the aggressively patronizing, culturally oppressive domination of

two thirds of the world by the powerful western minority wielding the world's wealth and military might, and using the gospel of Christ as a pretext for furthering their political and economic vested interests.

I use this article not simply to show how the multi-million evangelical empires, equipped with the latest electronic media and communication channels, work in our world, but also to point out the new awareness that is being built up among the ancient religions of the world, such as Hinduism and Buddhism. The primary components of this revivalist awareness are suspicion of every Christian activity and complete resistance to it. Even Mother Teresa's dedicated work for the poor is being discredited by some of these anti-missionary circles, primarily because some of western evangelical agencies quote Mother Teresa out of context, highlighting her missionary zeal, and use her work as propaganda material for their proselytizing evangelical business. When resistance to the western missionary initiative began, most of the missionary bodies switched to recruiting and fostering indigenous agencies in the hope that the pill would be swallowed with the indigenous coating. These agencies, however, are heavily or even totally funded by their mother bodies, and the "pagans" are intelligent enough to detect all covering and coating. What is at stake is the authenticity of the proclamation of the life-giving gospel. The fraud, vested interests and big money that accompany the word render it vain and counter-productive.

The awakening of awareness among ancient religions and older civilizations indicated here is different from the awakening of the nations of the East described by Lord Balfour, the first speaker at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910. Balfour said, in the prevailing mood of optimism created by imperial expansion, "Nations in the East are awakening. They are looking for two things – they are looking for enlightenment and for liberty. Christianity alone of all religions meets these demands in the highest degree. There cannot be Christianity without liberty..."⁵ Balfour spoke of liberty while his church connived with the British Empire to hold millions of people in bondage. The new awakening among the nations of the East rejects the "enlightenment and liberty" offered by the religion of the colonial masters. The way in which Christianity was preached to these nations was a great disservice to the gospel of Christ.

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Two Assumptions

It is a known fact that the major impetus for the church unity movement came from missionary motivations in the early part of this century. The great missionary motto, "The evangelization of the world in this generation," was launched by John R Mott in 1910. The urgency of bringing the gospel to the unsaved millions impelled the various Protestant denominations to come together and seek common ground and a common

strategy for missionary action. It was a very practical and empirical search. It was expected that unity would begin in the mission field, and that devising a common overseas missionary strategy would perhaps bring in “a greater measure of unity in ecclesiastical matters at home”, and “increased hope of international peace among the nations of the world” (Lord Balfour). There were two assumptions behind this search for unity:

(a) Although speakers at the Edinburgh Conference, such as Archbishop Davidson of Canterbury, expressed the idea that “the place of missions in the life of the Church must be the central place and none other”, it was generally assumed that unity of the churches would be instrumental in the effective carrying out of the all-important missionary task. The same idea of the instrumental character of church unity for world evangelization, and through that for world peace, was prominently held during many subsequent years. The Tambaram (Madras) Conference in 1938, the 50th anniversary of which was recently celebrated, affirmed that “world peace will never be achieved without world evangelization”, and thus urged the churches “to *unite* in the supreme work of world evangelization until the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of our Lord”. Thus, the predominant thrust of the period before the formation of the World Council of Churches was *unity for mission*. The emphasis was not on the Church, nor on the unity of the Church, but on evangelistic mission, civil gatherings for conversions, and number-increasing mission. There was no real search in missionary circles for ecclesiological grounds for unity as would appear later, for instance, in the Faith and Order Movement, which expressed the need “to penetrate behind our divisions to a deeper and richer understanding of the mystery of the God-given union of Christ with His church” (Lund: 1952). Theologically speaking, the “unity for mission” call assumed that mission was different from unity. It could not go beyond the notion of the practical coming together of various Protestant denominations for strengthening work in the mission field. Division was detrimental to mission and therefore had to be rectified. Unity was the means by which mission could be accomplished.

(b) Churches and missionary bodies in the pre-WCC period, which coincided with the colonial-imperial period, apparently assumed that concern for unity and mission was an exclusively Christian concern. Perhaps they did not openly acknowledge that the mission they conceived was modelled on another complex and universal political mission of the imperial rulers. The gigantic movement of colonial expansion, which spanned several centuries, attempted to accomplish a certain unity by bringing various peoples, cultures and continents under the authority of western imperial powers. It was an invading, conquering and colonizing mission. In spite of its openly lustful search for wealth and power, the prophets of that mission identified it with a divine calling. It was “the white man’s burden”, as the poet Rudyard Kipling, one of the staunchest advocates of imperialism, conceived of it. He was convinced that “the

responsibility for governing India had been placed by the *inscrutable decree of providence* upon the shoulders of the British race”.

Mission in Humankind’s Way

Vasco de Gama, the Portuguese explorer, landed in Kerala, India, in 1498 where a Christian church had already taken root from the apostolic era. It is reported that in answer to a question posed by an Indian, “What were the Portuguese looking for in Asia?” he said, “Christians and spices.” And his landing on the Malabar coast marked the beginning of a conquering and proselytizing mission by Portuguese Roman Catholics, and later, by British missionaries, inflicting deep wounds on the already existing Christian community in India. The Portuguese *conquistadores* defined their motive for embarking on this mission as “to serve God and His Majesty, to give light to those who are in the darkness and to grow rich as all men desire to do”.⁶

Therefore, what the west European churches conceived of as their unique mission of saving the pagans and gathering them for the patriarchal embrace of western Christendom was mainly an extension of the great commercial and political mission already universally launched by the colonial-imperial powers. “Mission”, whether in the political, commercial or religious sense, was essentially a state enterprise. “Religion supplied the pretext and gold the motive. The technological progress accomplished by Atlantic Europe during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries provided the means.”⁷ Rarely did any European engaged in this mission distinguish the mission of Christ from that in His Majesty’s service. The tragedy of mission in the post-colonial imperial period is that the basic attitudes and methods of the imperial mission still lingered. The division of the world into those who are saved and those unsaved, or yet to be saved, remains in Christian missionary attitudes and in politico-economic categories like the new three-tier universe of first, second and third worlds.

These two assumptions of the past western missionary enterprise are mentioned in order to suggest that we have to go far beyond them in order to enter into a new understanding of the nature of unity and the mission of the Church. On the one hand, we need to transcend the alternatives – unity for mission or mission for unity. The understanding of the Church as the body of Christ, manifesting the Kingdom in unity, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity, is central to us. Unity and mission are integral to this. On the other hand, our mission is not on behalf of the powers of this world, but on behalf of the one whose “kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36). God’s mission has to be weaned from its past political, imperialistic matrix. This is the dialect of Christ’s mission today – the historical visible, tangible dimension of the life of the Church expressing itself in concrete situations and moments on the one hand, and on the other, the transcendent, ineffable,

eschatological experience of the body of Christ, the Lord whose Kingdom permeates the whole creation, both visible and invisible.

Manifesting the Kingdom

Manifesting God's rule or Kingdom is the mission par excellence of the Church. We know that the fulness of the Kingdom cannot be identified with anything within the created realm. It is a kingdom ever-present and ever-coming. God's rule is inexhaustible and is identified only with the incomprehensible nature of the Triune God. However, created reality is thoroughly permeated with the power of the Kingdom.

Everything that is, visible or invisible, is under God's rule. The Church, as the community of the Holy Spirit, is called to make his power manifest in our world, to witness where it is discernibly present, whether in cultures, religions or secular ideologies; to discern it where it is confused with the powers of this world; to proclaim it, especially to the poor and the victims of injustice, as "the Lord's year of grace" for liberation.

The presence of the Church as the icon of the Kingdom is mission in the deepest sense. Just as Christ was fulfilling his mission by his incarnate presence in the world, the Church's iconic presence in itself constitutes the mission. In the physical presence of the Lord, the reality of God and the destiny of creation were together manifested. We understand the presence of the Church as a continuous *parousia*, enabling us to participate in the mission of Christ. This understanding of the Church, of course, does not conform to the notion of the Church as an instrument – an instrument for mission, for social transformation, for uniting the nations of the world. The instrumentalist language tends to treat Christ, Church, unity, mission and world as unrelated realities that somehow must be linked with each other. But in the biblical and patristic understanding of the Church as the body of Christ and the icon of the Kingdom, manifesting the glory of God and illuminating the future of creation, the integral unity of Christ, Church and the creation is presupposed as fundamental. Mission in our times must rediscover this unity from within and not impose unity from a detached alien and superior perspective, as was done in colonial, imperial times and as it is being done in our neo-colonial times.

Prof. Nikos Nissiotis classifies all ecclesiological trends in contemporary systematic theology mainly in two categories – the pro-Catholicizing and the pro-Congregationalists.⁸ The first is conceived on the basis of incorporation of all in Christ and sharing the same experience in the sacramental body, and implies an inseparable single communion. The second ecclesiological category starts with the gathering of the people of God by God's word. The community "hears" and acknowledges the supremacy of the word of God and shares in the prophetic actualization of the Gospel messages in the world. Although these two trends are integral dimensions of an authentic ecclesiology, our loyalties are often in conflict,

and we attach ourselves to either one or the other in a mutually inclusive way.

Perhaps the different historical experiences of the Western and Eastern Churches encouraged the deepening of the separation between these two ecclesiological trends. The churches that live under hostile regimes would perhaps show an inclination to the first, and the churches that live in political and economic systems that emphasize geographical outreach as the essence of growth would be inclined towards the latter. In our understanding of the Church as the iconic manifestation of the Kingdom, these two ecclesiological dimensions are taken together as two sides of the same coin. I would like to indicate some of the major aspects, as they appear to me, of the Church's life as manifesting the Kingdom in relation to unity and mission.

In the sayings of the Desert Fathers, we often see young monks, who are tormented by disturbing thoughts and flights of fantasy, approach the elders for advice. The usual advice is "stay in your cell". The risen Lord told the disciples: "Stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49) before they went out to announce the good news. The Church's staying in the city of Jerusalem in prayer and waiting for the Holy Spirit was an exercise in unity. The Eucharistic community that worships and gives thanks to the Lord in the "cell" of prayer on behalf of all creation, continues that act of gathering the whole order of creation to be offered to God. The Church joins the high-priestly prayer of our Lord "that they all may be one".

In the Orthodox tradition, the predominant image is that of the saint and not of the outgoing preacher-missionary. The saint prays and receives the creation of God with hospitality. The missionary preaches and offers, often aggressively, in order to live. I'm not drawing a mutually exclusive contrast between the saint and the missionary. There are missionaries who are saints and saints in the Orthodox tradition who were missionaries. The world, however, is healed and transfigured more by the praying saint than by the thundering preachers. It is the saint who, manifesting God's tender love and receiving his creatures in divine hospitality, is genuinely sensitive to the riches of other religions, to different cultures, to "all sentient beings". The crusading missionary is afire with the message he proclaims, but can be totally lacking in receptivity and sensitivity. Perhaps this is a stereotyped image of the past. Today we need to combine in our experience of our Church the true saint and the genuine missionary whose sole concern is manifesting the Kingdom and not annexing new territories.

Division and conflict in our world are mainly the work of the political powers allied with economic interests. The military-industrial complex of demonic dimensions will continue to strike at the root of harmony and unity among peoples of the world. Disunity is essential for the survival of those forces of evil. The churches in many parts of the world are unknowingly drawn to be instruments of these powers. At the same time,

there are strong movements in various churches that stand up prophetically against the powers that break God's word and sow enmity among the people. This should challenge the Orthodox churches to witness to the Kingdom in the true sense of *martyria*. How can we keep ourselves from identifying God's will for the world with the political will and economic designs of dominant powers? This is a major question which we must answer when concerning ourselves with the mission of the Church.

The mission of the Church is an act of *epiclesis*, calling the Holy Spirit to descend upon the whole creation. It constitutes an act of creative unification. The priestly gesture at the moment of *epiclesis* in the Syrian Orthodox liturgy is especially significant. In the fluttering and cyclic movements symbolizing the Spirit, the priest invokes the Spirit to hover over the elements and to dwell within the Holy Eucharist, thus infusing the whole created reality. If the Church's historical existence can become an act of *epiclesis*, calling upon the Spirit to descend and dwell within our world, to transfigure it, then the Church's mission is accomplished. The Spirit also liberates us from our barrenness of thought and attitude and makes us aware of the truth that mission in Christ's way has many faces and many ways, not only one. St. Paul, writing to the Thessalonians, said, "For our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction (1 Thess. 1:5). This is the way in which the gospel must be proclaimed in our world too.

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CHRISTIANITY IN A PLURALIST WORLD: THE ECONOMY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Georges Khodr

The end of the First World War brought with it a keener sense of the unity of the world. Since the end of the Second World War we have experienced a process of globalization to which the heterogeneous nature of religious creeds is a major obstacle. The increasing need for unity makes dialogue imperative if we wish to avoid a *de facto* syncretism of resurgent religions all claiming universality. In face of this resurgence of religions and a plurality which shows no signs of yielding to the gospel, the question arises as to whether Christianity is truly so inherently exclusive of other religions as has generally been proclaimed up to now.

The question is of importance not only for the Christian mission but also for world peace. But this is not primarily a practical problem. It is the nature of the truth itself which is at stake here. The spiritual life we live is one thing if Christ's truth is confined within the bounds of the historical Church; it is quite a different thing if it is unrestricted and scattered throughout the world. In practice, and in content, love is one thing if Christianity is exclusive, and a very different thing if it is inclusive. As we see it, the problem is not simply a theological problem. It embraces the phenomenology of religions, their comparative study, their psychology and their sociology. These other disciplines undermine a certain legalistic dogmatism which has long prevailed in Christian countries and which was based on ignorance of other religions on the part of professional theologians. Above all, it is the authenticity of the spiritual life of non-Christians which raises the whole problem of Christ's presence in them. It is therefore quite nonsensical for theologians to pronounce judgement on the relationship of Christianity to other religions if they are unable to integrate extra-Christian data creatively and critically into their theological reflections. Theology has to be a continual two-way exchange between biblical revelation and life if it is to avoid sterility. Moreover, if obedience to the Master means following him wherever we find traces of his presence, we have an obligation to investigate the authentic spiritual life of non-Christians. This raises the question of Christ's presence outside Christian history. The strikingly evangelical quality of many non-Christians obliges us, moreover, to develop an ecclesiology and a missiology in which the Holy Spirit necessarily occupies a supreme place.

Dangers of the Traditional Attitude

We shall need to go back to the *Acts of the Apostles*, the first book of ecclesiology, to see what place is given there to the Gentiles. In the Cornelius narrative we learn that “in every nation the man who is god-fearing and does what is right is acceptable” to God (10:35). “In past ages God allowed all nations to go their own way” (14:16) “yet he has not left you without some clue to his nature” (14:17). There is among the Gentiles a yearning for the “unknown God” (17:23), a search for the God who “is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move, in him we exist” (17:28). But this openness to the pagan world confers no theological status on it, for the “gods made by human hands are not gods at all” (19:26). Paul is quite categorical: “a false god has no existence in the real world” (1 Cor. 8:4). In Revelation, a supremely ecclesiological book, paganism is identified as a lie (21:8) and as deceit (22:15). In this respect, the New Testament is not innovating on the Old Testament, where paganism is regarded by the prophets as an abomination. Nevertheless, the view of the apostle as expressed in his Areopagus speech is that the Athenians worshipped the true God without recognizing him as the Creator. His face had not been unveiled to them. In other words, they were Christians without knowing it. Paul gave their God a name. The Name, together with its attributes, is the revelation of God. We find here the germ of a positive attitude to paganism which goes hand-in-hand with its complete negation, inherited from Judaism. This explains why, from the beginning, Christian apologetics would have two different attitudes. On the one hand, the gods are identified with images of wood or stone fashioned by human hands and are regarded as demons fighting against the Lord; on the other hand, a more positive and inclusive attitude is found. The defensive, hostile approach of Christian apologetics increasingly became a fixed position as dogmatics crystallized into an official body of doctrine and as the Church and Christianity assumed an identity of their own in both East and West, and as the battle against heresy aroused in the minds of apologists of all periods a hostility to error which amounted almost to hatred. Furthermore, the intolerance of Christians towards each other would be reflected in their attitude to non-Christian religions. It was a case of either saving the other man or killing him! A strange notion of a truth divorced from love!

On the other hand, a different style of apologetics sought to continue the approach of Paul’s Areopagus speech to the Athenians. We can trace this movement, starting from Justin with his famous notion of the *logos spermatikos* present even before Christ’s coming. All who have lived according to the *Logos* are Christians. For this tradition of apologetics, there is no truth independent of the direct action of God. Clement of Alexandria, the leading representative of this line of thought, sees the whole of mankind as a unity and as beloved of God. On the basis of Hebrews 1:1, he asserts that it was to the whole of mankind and not only to Israel that “God spoke in former times in fragmentary and varied fashion”.

Mankind as a whole is subject to a process of education (a pedagogy: we should remember that, for Paul, the pedagogue was the Law and the pupil in his care was Israel). It is not a case here of a natural or a rational law, for “the *Logos* of God ... ordered our world, and above all this microcosm man, through the Holy Spirit” (*Protreptikos*, 1. 5). Within this divine visitation, philosophy enjoys a special privilege. Not only does the Alexandrine doctor not hesitate to see it as a stepping-stone to Christian philosophy, he even teaches that it “was given to the Greeks as their Testament” (*Stromata* V: 8.3). Pagan and Greek philosophies are scattered fragments of a single whole which is the *Logos*.

Origen, too, stresses the importance of philosophy as knowledge of the true God. In his opinion, certain doctrines of Christianity are no different from the teaching of the Greeks, although the latter does not have the same impact or the same attraction. Origen’s original contribution, however, was to see elements of the divine in the pagan religions and in Greek mythology.

The Fathers of the Church continued to respect the wisdom of antiquity, although with a clearly apparent reserve. Gregory Nazianzus declared that a number of philosophers, like Plato and Aristotle “caught a glimpse of the Holy Spirit” (*Orat.* 31. 5; *PG* 36, 137 3 c). Despite his sharp criticism of idolatry, he does not shrink from declaring that he sees in the religious life of mankind “the hand of God guiding men to the true God”. In order not to unduly prolong this list of citations from the Fathers, let me simply mention the view of St. Augustine in the West that since the dawn of human history, men were to be found, within Israel and outside Israel, who had partaken of the mystery of salvation, and that what was known to them was in fact the Christian religion, without it having been revealed to them as such. This entire trend in patristic thought could perhaps be summed up in the following sentences of Irenaeus: “there is only one God who from beginning to end, through various economies, comes to the help of mankind” (*Adv. Haer.* III, 12.13).

It is beyond the scope of this paper to outline, even briefly, the history of Christian thought concerning other religions. Suffice it to say that in the Greek-speaking Christian Byzantine East following John Damascene, the attitude towards Islam was somewhat negative. The West, too, was negative, with a few exceptions such as Abelard and Nicholas of Cusa.

The negative evaluation of other religions obviously rests on an ecclesiology which is bound up with a history which has been lived through and with a definite outlook on history. It is certain that a theology of the kind maintained by St. Thomas Aquinas, which advocated the death of infidels, and which had earlier been preached by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, went hand-in-hand with the Crusades which consolidated the brutal separation between Christianity and Islam, as well as that between the Christian West and the Christian East. We should also take into account the extent to which the Arabo-Byzantine wars contributed to the identification

of the *oikumene* with the Church in the East. In other words, because of the armed struggle in which medieval Christendom, Latin and Byzantine, became involved, ecclesiology was historicized, i.e. the Church took on the sociological shape of Christian nations. The Christian world, western and eastern, was the dwelling place of peace, light and knowledge. The non-Christian world was the dwelling place of war and darkness. This was a literal adoption of the Moslem distinction between *Dar el Islam* (the realm of Islam) and *Dar el Kufr* (the realm of the infidels). It was also a view of the Church as an *Umma*, a numerically and sociologically defined community. This area outside the Church had to be saved. Infidels, heretics, and schismatics had to be brought into the Church by missionary activity, by proselytism, or by cultural colonialism if persecution and war became unacceptable, so that there might be "one flock and one shepherd". The established, institutional Church becomes the centre of the world. The history of the Christian Church becomes history itself. What occurs in the experience of the West fashions history. The rest of the world remains unhistorical until it adopts western experience which, moreover, by implacable logic and technological determinism, is destined to dominate the world. This philosophy of history will in its turn leave its stamp on theological thought, its basic outlook and methods. Thus the religions of the underdeveloped countries, which have not apparently been influenced by the dynamics of creative civilization, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and even Orthodox Christianity, being still in a historically inferior era, will have to pass into a superior stage, to be historicized by adopting the superior hierarchical type of Christianity. The rest of the world must come into the time-continuum of the Church through a salvation achieved by the universal extension of the Christian way of life founded on the authority of the West. This attitude rests on a view of the history of salvation imported into Protestantism in the twentieth century and which has been adopted by the whole of western Christianity since the last war. Too much emphasis has been placed on the succession of salvation events, with the result that Christ appears as the end of the history of the Old Covenant and the end of human history. The eschatological dimension of the Church's faith and life thus tends to be blurred. God is indeed within history but we forget that the divine event is the unfolding of the mystery. I shall return to this later. What I should like to emphasize here is that this linear view of history is bound up with a monolithic ecclesiological approach which, while rightly rejecting the Graeco-Asian idea of eternally recurring cycles, turns its back on the idea of an eternity transcending history, based on a conception of the Church in which Christ is seen "not merely chronologically but also and above all ontologically".

Obviously this ecclesiology and linear concept of salvation imposes a specific missionary approach. The Church is then geared either to good works of a charitable and humanitarian character, or else to remedial confessional and sociological work among those who are not yet

incorporated into the Church. Truth lies within the boundaries of the Church; outside them, error. The remedy for all this is certainly not the application of new methods: for example, the consecration of coloured bishops or adaptation to the customs and traditions of a particular people. All this will still be felt to be just a more subtle form of spiritual imperialism. What is on trial here is the theology of mission itself. One example of a tradition entirely independent of this approach is the Nestorian Church's missionary tradition, which is almost unique in its effort to nurture the spiritual development of the religions it encountered by "improving" them from within (Buddhism in Tibet and China), while not "alienating" them. Mission in this way spiritually adopts the whole of creation. We find within the Persian Church in Mesopotamia the boldest attempt at an approach to Islam. The prophetic character of Muhammad is defined in Nestorian texts on the basis of a specific analysis of the Islamic message. But there is no blurring of the centrality and ontological uniqueness of Christ Jesus.

It comes down to this: contemporary theology must go beyond the notion of "salvation history" in order to rediscover the meaning of the *oikonomia*. The economy of Christ cannot be reduced to its historical manifestation but indicates the fact that we are made participants in the very life of God himself, hence the reference to eternity and to the work of the Holy Spirit. The very notion of economy is a notion of mystery. To say "mystery" is to point to the power that is pulsing in the event. It also points to the freedom of God who in his work of providence and redemption is not tied down to any event. The Church is the instrument of the mystery of the salvation of the nations. It is the sign of God's love for all men. It is not over against the world, separate from it; it is part of the world. The Church is the very breath of life for humanity, the image of the humanity to come, by virtue of the light it has received. It is the life of mankind itself, even if mankind does not realize this. It is, in Origen's words, the "cosmos of the cosmos". If, as Origen also says, the Son remains "the cosmos of the Church", then clearly the Church's function is, by means of the mystery of which it is the sign, to read all the other signs which God has placed in the various times in human history. Within the religions, its task is to reveal to the world of the religions the God who is hidden within it, in anticipation of the final concrete unfolding and manifestation of the mystery.

This *oikonomia* is not new. It starts with creation as the manifestation of God's *kenosis*. The cosmos carries the mark of God just as Jacob did after wrestling with the angel. In that world prior to the Law, God makes a covenant with Noah. This is the starting point of dialogue with all mankind, which continues the first dialogue of creation itself.

We are confronted there with a cosmic covenant which continues independently of the Abrahamic covenant. Within this covenant live the peoples who have not known the Word addressed to the father of the faithful. Scripture tells us that angels watch over them. Speaking of these

angels of the nations, Origen tells us that it was they who brought the shepherds the news of Christ's birth and in doing so completed their mission. Yes, indeed, but in the sense that Christ himself fulfils this Noachic covenant by giving it salvation content and significance, having himself become the true covenant between God and the cosmos. The messianic prototype is already foretold in the Old Testament figure who is his "shadow cast before".

With Abraham's call, the election of the nations of the earth becomes clearer. In him they are already the object of this election. Abraham accomplishes the first exodus by departing from his own country. The second exodus will be accomplished by the people of Israel wandering through the wilderness to Canaan down to the day when Jesus is nailed to the Cross like an outsider, a foreigner. In this second exodus, Israel lives figuratively the mystery of the *oikonomia*. Israel, saved from the waters on its way to the Promised Land, represents saved humanity. It is as such the image of the Church saved through Christ. The election is particular but from it the economy of the mystery is deployed for the whole of humanity. Israel is saved as the type and representative of the whole of mankind. It is furthermore manifest in the Old Testament that the saving events are the antitypes of the saving event of the Exodus. The Hebrews saw here, not so much a linear sequence of saving events, as rather a prototypical fact imitated in other facts, the sole continuity being God's fidelity to himself. Israel – as the locus of the revelation of the Word and as a people constituted by obedience to the Word – is indissolubly linked with all other peoples who have received God's visitation "at sundry times and in diverse manners", and to whose fathers and prophets, considered by the church Fathers as saints and just men of the Gentile peoples, God spoke. What matters here is that the histories of Abraham, of Moses and of David were rich with the divine presence. The sequence of the facts is of little importance. The Old Testament authors, like Matthew in his genealogy, were concerned only with spiritually significant facts which were relevant to the messianic hope or the messianic reality.

This significant relationship to Christ is also applicable outside Israel inasmuch as the other nations have had their own types of the reality of Christ, whether in the form of persons or teachings. It is of little importance whether the religion in question was historical in character or not. It is of little importance whether it considers itself incompatible with the gospel. Christ is hidden everywhere in the mystery of his lowliness. Any reading of religions is a reading of Christ. It is Christ alone who is received as light when grace visits a Brahmin, a Buddhist or a Muhammadan reading his own scriptures. Every martyr for the truth, every man persecuted for what he believes to be right, dies in communion with Christ. The mystics of Islamic countries with their witness to suffering love lived the authentic Johannine *agape*. For if the tree is known by its fruits, there is no doubt that the poor and humble folk who live for and yearn for God in all nations

already receive the peace which the Lord gives to all whom he loves (Luke 2:14).

This work of salvation outside Israel “according to the flesh” and outside the historical Church is the result of the resurrection which fills everything with the fulness of Christ. The coming of Christ, in whom “all things are held together” (Col. 1:17) has led the whole of mankind to its true existence and brings about spiritual renewals, economies which can take charge of human souls until he comes. The Church’s mediatorial role remains unimpaired. But the freedom of God is such that he can raise up prophets outside the sociological confines of the New Israel just as he raised them up outside the confines of Old Israel. But these callings to prophecy and wisdom outside the sanctuary possess a secret bond with the power of the Risen One and in no way conflict with the uniqueness of Christ’s economy. The plenitude of Christ may be veiled in history by human sin. Men may fail to see the Church as the bearer of the power and glory of its Lord. What is visible is very often far from a pointer to the Kingdom of God. But God can, if he pleases, send witnesses to those who have not been able to see the uplifting manifestation of Christ in the face which we have made bloody with our sins or in the seamless robe which we have torn by our divisions. Through these witnesses God can release a power far greater than the extra-biblical messages would themselves lead us to expect. True plenitude, however, is lived in the Second Coming. The economy of salvation achieves its full reality as the End, as the ultimate meaning of all things. The economy of Christ is unintelligible without the economy of the Spirit.

“God says, ‘This will happen in the last days; I will pour out upon everyone a portion of my spirit’” (Acts 2:17). This must be taken to mean a Pentecost which is universal from the very first. In fact, we also read in the Acts of the Apostles that “the gift of the Holy Spirit” had been “poured out even on Gentiles” (10:45). The Spirit is present everywhere and fills everything by virtue of an economy distinct from that of the Son. Irenaeus calls the Word and the Spirit the “two hands of the Father”. This means that we must affirm not only their hypostatic independence but also that the advent of the Holy Spirit in the world is not subordinated to the Son, is not simply a function of the Word. “Pentecost”, says Lossky, “is not a ‘continuation’ of the Incarnation, it is its sequel, its consequence ... creation has become capable of receiving the Holy Spirit” (Vladimir Lossky, *Théologie Mystique de l’Eglise d’Orient* (Paris: Aubier, 1944), 156). Between the two economies there is reciprocity and mutual service. The Spirit is another Paraclete. It is he who fashions Christ within us. And, since Pentecost, it is he who makes Christ present. It is he who makes Christ an inner reality here and now: as Irenaeus finely says: “Where the Spirit is, there also is the Church” (*Adv. Haer.* III, 24, PG v. 7, col. 966c). The Spirit operates and applies his energies in accordance with his own economy and we could, from this perspective, regard the non-Christian religions as points where his inspiration is at work.

All who are visited by the Spirit are the people of God. The Church represents the first fruits of the whole of mankind called to salvation. "In Christ all will be brought to life" (1 Cor. 15:22) because of this communion which is the Church. At the present moment the Church is the sacrament of this future unity, the unity of both "those whom the Church will have baptized and those whom the Church's bridegroom will have baptized", to use Nicholas Cabasilas's wonderful expression. And when now we communicate in the body of Christ, we are united with all those whom the Lord embraces with his life-giving love. They are all within the Eucharistic cup, awaiting the time of the *parousia* when they will constitute the unique and glorious body of the Saviour, and when all the signs will disappear before "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:3).

If we accept the bases of this theology, how are we to define the Christian mission and the concrete approach of a Christian community to a non-Christian community?

- The Christian who knows that, within God's plan, the great religions constitute training schools of the Divine mercy will have an attitude of profound peace and gentle patience. There will be an obedience to this plan being carried out by the Holy Spirit, an expectant hope of the Lord's coming, a longing to eat the eternal Paschal meal, and a secret form of communion with all men in the economy of the mystery whereby we are being gradually led towards the final consummation, the recapitulation of all things in Christ.
- There is a universal religious community which, if we are able to lay hold of what it offers, will enrich our Christian experience. What matters here is not so much that we should grasp the historical, literal, objective meaning of non-Christian scriptures, but that we should read these scriptures in the light of Christ. For just as the letter without the Holy Spirit can hide revelation from us in the case of the Old Testament Scriptures, Christ being the only key to them, so is it possible for us to approach other religions and their scriptures either in a purely critical frame of mind and as objective students of history and sociology, or else in order to discern the truth in them according to the breath of the Holy Spirit.
- Within the context of these religions, certain gifted individuals penetrate beyond the signs of their own faiths just as the spiritual life goes beyond the Law, even though legalism does prevail in some cases. What we have to do is to penetrate beyond the symbols and historical forms and discover the profound intention of religious men and to relate their apprehension of divinity to the object of our Christian hope. This means that we must use the apophatic method in speaking of God not only, among Christians, in the knowledge that all concepts of God are idols, but apply this method also to our ways of talking about God as he appears through the scriptures of the non-Christian religions. When we seek to understand the

adherent of another religion, we should not be concerned to arrive at a descriptive account of him as an example of his particular faith, but we must rather treat him as someone who has something to teach us and something to manifest to us of God.

- Communion is the *conditio sine qua non* of communication. This is why no dealings are possible from the Christian side without a conversion which banishes all confessional pride and all feelings of cultural or historical superiority. Such humility requires the Christlike way of self-fulfilment through the other. A Christian community purified by the fire of the Spirit, holy unto God, poor for the sake of God, can in the weakness of the gospel, take the risk of both giving and receiving with equal simplicity. It must accept the challenge as a brotherly admonition and be able to recognize, even in the guise of unbelief, a courageous rejection of falsehoods which Christians have been long unwilling or unable to denounce.
- With this attitude, communication will be possible. The presentation of Christ will be based on his self-humiliation, on his historical reality and his words. It is not so much a question of adding men to the Church. They will come in of their own accord once they begin to feel at home in it as in the Father's house. The supreme task is to identify all the Christian values in other religions, to show them Christ as the bond which unites them and his love as their fulfilment. True mission laughs at missionary activity. Our task is simply to follow the tracks of Christ perceptible in the shadows of other religions.

"Night after night on my bed I have sought my true love;

I have sought him but not found him,

I have called him but he has not answered.

I said, 'I will rise and go the rounds of the city, through the streets and the squares, seeking my true love.' ...

The watchmen, going the rounds of the city, met me, and I asked, 'Have you seen my true love?'" (*Songs*, 3:1-3).

The task of the witness in a non-Christian context will be to name *him* whom others have already recognized as the Beloved. Once they have become the friends of the Bridegroom it will be easy to name him. The entire missionary activity of the Church will be directed towards awakening the Christ who sleeps in the night of the religions. It is the Lord himself who alone knows whether men will be able to celebrate an authentically glorious Paschal meal together before the coming of the heavenly Jerusalem. But we already know that the beauty of Christ shining in our faces is the promise of our final reconciliation.

THE WONDER OF CREATION AND ECOLOGY

Patriarch Bartholomew

My book is the nature of creation; therein, I read the works of God.

St. Anthony of Egypt (Third-fourth centuries)

The Beauty of the World

My appreciation for the natural environment is directly related to the sacramental dimension of life and the world. I have always regarded the natural environment from the perspective of Orthodox spirituality. I have respected it as a place of encounter and communion with the Creator. As a young boy, accompanying the priest of my local village to services in remote chapels on my native island of Imvros, I connected the beauty of the mountainside to the splendor of the liturgy. The natural environment seems to provide me with a broad panoramic vision of the world. I believe that, in general, natural beauty leads us to a more open view of life and the created somewhat resembling a wide-angle focus from a camera, which ultimately prevents us human beings from selfishly using or abusing its natural resources. It is through the spiritual lens of Orthodox theology that I can better appreciate the broader aspects of such problems as the threat to ocean fisheries, the disappearance of wetlands, the damage to coral reefs, or the destruction of animal plant life.

The spiritual life demands an appropriate veneration – though not an absolute worship – of God’s creation. The way we relate to material things directly reflects the way we relate to God. The sensitivity with which we handle worldly things clearly mirrors the sacredness that we reserve for heavenly things. And this is not simply a matter that concerns us as individuals. As we shall see in later chapters, it also concerns us as communities and as a society. We need to treat nature with the same awe and wonder that we show when we treasure a classical work of beauty and art.

In order, however, to reach this point of maturity and dignity toward the natural environment, we must take the time to listen to the voice of creation. And to do this, we must first be silent. As we have already seen, silence is a fundamental element of the ascetic way, which has already been outlined in previous chapters. Silence and asceticism, however, are critical also in developing a balanced environmental ethos as an alternative to the ways

that we currently relate to the earth and deplete its natural resources. Sometimes, it takes effort to change our patterns and habits. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* relate of Abba Chaeremon that in the fourth century he deliberately constructed his cell “forty miles from the church and ten miles from the water” so that he might struggle a little to do his daily chores.¹ In Greece today, the island of Hydra still forbids the construction of roads and the traffic of cars. The same is true of the Princes Islands in Turkey.

So the ascetic way informs us of the critical importance of silence. For “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims the creation of his hands” (Ps. 19:1). The ancient Liturgy of St. James is celebrated only twice a year in Orthodox Churches. However, in that service, there is a prayer that affirms the same conviction:

The heavens declare the glory of the Creator; the earth proclaims the sovereignty of God; the sea heralds the authority of the Lord; and every material and spiritual creature preaches the magnificence of God at all times.

When God spoke to Moses in the burning bush, communication occurred through a silent voice, as St. Gregory of Nyssa informs us in his mystical classic, *The Life of Moses*. Nature is a book, opened wide for all to read and to learn. Each plant, each animal, and each micro-organism tells a story, unfolds a mystery, relates an extraordinary harmony and balance, which are interdependent and complementary. Everything points to the same encounter and mystery.

The same dialogue of communication and mystery of communion is detected in the galaxies, where the countless stars betray the same mystical beauty and mathematical interconnectedness. We do not need this perspective in order to believe in God or to prove his existence. We need it to breathe; we need it for us simply to be. The co-existence and correlation between the boundlessly infinite and the most insignificantly finite things articulate a concelebration of joy and love. This is precisely what, in the seventh century, St. Maximus the Confessor (580-662) called a “cosmic liturgy”. There are “words” (or *logoi*) in creation that can be discerned with proper attentiveness. They are what the church Fathers called “the word (or *logos*) of things”, “the word (or *logos*) of beings”, and “the word (or *logos*) of existence itself”.

It is unfortunate when we lead our lives without even noticing the environmental concert that is playing out before our eyes and ears. In this orchestra, each minute detail plays a critical role, and every trivial aspect participates in an essential way. No single member – human or otherwise – can be removed without the entire picture being deeply affected. No single tree or animal can be removed without the entire picture being profoundly distorted, if not destroyed. When will we stop to hear the music of this harmony? It is an ongoing rhythm, even if we are not aware of it. When will we learn the alphabet of this divine language, so mysteriously concealed in nature? It is so clearly revealed in the created world around us.

When will we learn to embrace the awesome beauty of the divine presence on... of the world? Its contours are so markedly visible.

Orthodox Theology and the Natural Environment

In its foremost and traditional symbol and declaration of faith, the Orthodox Church confesses “*one God, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible*”. An Orthodox Christian perspective on the natural environment derives from the fundamental belief that the world was created by a loving God. The Judeo-Christian Scriptures state, in the Book of Genesis, that “*God saw everything that was created and, indeed, it was very good*” (Gen. 1:31). So the entire world contains seeds and traces of the living God. Moreover, the material and natural creation was granted by God to humanity as a gift, with the command to “*serve and preserve the earth*” (Gen. 2:15).

If the earth is sacred, then our relationship with the natural environment is mystical or sacramental; that is to say, it contains the seed and trace of God. In many ways, the “sin of Adam” is precisely his refusal to receive the world as a gift of encounter and communion with God and with the rest of creation. St. Paul’s letter to the Romans emphasizes the consequences of sin: the fact that “*from the beginning till now, the entire creation, which as we know has been groaning in pain*” (Rom. 8:22), “*awaits with eager longing this revelation by the children of God*” (Rom. 8:19).

From this fundamental belief in the sacredness and beauty of all creation, the Orthodox Church articulates its crucial concept of cosmic transfiguration. This emphasis of Orthodox theology on personal and cosmic transfiguration is especially apparent in its liturgical feasts. The Feast of Christ’s Transfiguration, celebrated on August 6, highlights the sacredness of all creation, which receives and offers a foretaste of the final resurrection and restoration of all things in the age to come. The *Macarian Homilies* underline the connection between the Transfiguration of Christ and the sanctification of human nature:

Just as the Lord’s body was glorified, when he went up the (Tabor) mountain and was transfigured into glory and into infinite light... so, too, our human nature is transformed into the power of God, being kindled into fire and light.²

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Yet the hymns of the day extend this divine light and transformative power to the whole world:

Today, on Mt Tabor, in the manifestation of your light, O Lord, You were unaltered from the light of the unbegotten Father. We have seen the Father as light, and the Spirit as light, guiding with light the entire creation.

Moreover, the Feast of the Baptism of Jesus Christ on January 6 is known as the *Theophany* (meaning “the revelation of God”) because it manifests the perfect obedience of Christ to the original command of

Genesis and restores the purpose of the world as it was created and intended by God. The hymns of that day proclaim:

The nature of waters is sanctified, the earth is blessed, and the heavens are enlightened ... so that by the elements of creation, and by the angels, and by human beings, by things both visible and invisible, God's most holy name may be glorified.

The breadth and depth, therefore, of the Orthodox cosmic visions imply that humanity is a part of this theophany, which is always greater than any one individual. Of course, the human race plays a unique role and has a unique responsibility; but it nevertheless constitutes *a part of* the universe that cannot be considered or conceived *apart from* the universe. In this way, the natural environment ceases to be something that we observe objectively and exploit selfishly and becomes a part of the "cosmic liturgy" or celebration of the essential interconnection and interdependence of all things.

In light of this, another seventh-century mystic, St. Isaac the Syrian, claims that the aim of the spiritual life is therefore to acquire "*a merciful heart, one which burns with love for the whole of creation ... for all of God's creatures*". This is echoed in the nineteenth century by the exhortation of Fyodor Dostoyevsky (1821-81) in *The Brothers Karamazov*:

Love all God's creation, the whole of it and every grain of sand. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things.

Orthodox theology takes a further step and recognizes the natural creation as inseparable from the identity and destiny of humanity, because every human action leaves a lasting imprint on the body of the earth. Human attitudes and behaviour toward creation directly impact on and reflect human attitudes and behaviour toward other people. Ecology is inevitably related in both its etymology and its meaning to economy; our global economy is simply outgrowing the capacity of our planet to support it. At stake is not just our ability to live in a sustainable way but our very survival. Scientists estimate that those most hurt by global warming in years to come will be those who can least afford it. Therefore, the ecological problem of pollution is invariably connected to the social problem of poverty; and so all ecological activity is ultimately measured and properly judged by its impact and effect upon the poor (Matthew 25).

It is clear that only a co-operative and collective response – by religious leaders, scientists, political authorities, and financial corporations – will appropriately and effectively address these critical issues of our time. For this reason, on September 1, 1989, Ecumenical Patriarch Demetrios (1914-1991) issued an encyclical letter – the first of a series of annual messages since that time – to all Orthodox churches throughout the world, establishing that day, which is also the first day of the ecclesiastical year, as a day of prayer for the protection and preservation of the natural

environment. This dedication was later embraced by the Conference of European Churches and, in turn, the World Council of Churches. As his successor to the Ecumenical Throne of Constantinople, I have encouraged the same sense of urgent concern over the environment in order to raise popular awareness and render international consciousness more sensitive to the irreversible destruction that threatens the planet today. The diverse initiatives of our Church include the creation of the Religious and Scientific Committee in 1995 and the organization of several interdisciplinary “Religion, Science, and the Environment” symposia to this day.³ In this way, the Ecumenical Patriarchate is able to contribute to the preservation of the world around us.

Orthodox Spirituality and the Natural Environment

“Around us” is of course precisely what the word “environment” means. We are always surrounded as human beings, from the moment of our birth to the time of our death. We grow and are nurtured, we learn and mature, within an environment. While this environment may be material or spiritual, it remains a constant and defining factor in our lives. We are shaped by family and friends, influenced by teachings and trends, just as we are surrounded by land and air, by sun and sea, by flora and fauna. In the fourth century, St. Gregory the Theologian (329-89) observed that this is precisely how the Creator God intended human beings to be in relation to their natural environment.

The Word of God wanted to reveal that humanity participates in both worlds, namely in invisible as well as in visible nature. This is why Adam (that is to say, humanity) was created. From earthly matter, which was already created, God formed the human body; from the spiritual world, God breathed life into the soul of Adam, which we call the image of God. Therefore, Adam was placed on this earth as a second world, a large world within a small world, like an angel that worships God while participating in the spiritual and material worlds alike. Adam was created to protect and preserve the visible world, while at the same time being initiated into the spiritual world. Adam was destined to serve as a royal (from *basileus*) steward (from *oikonomos*) over creation – royalty, yet at the same time subject to a heavenly king; earthly, yet at the same time heavenly; temporary, yet at the same time immortal; visible by virtue of the body, yet at the same time invisible by virtue of the soul. Adam was between dignity and humility. Adam was called to glorify the divine benefactor on high, while at the same time suffering lowly humiliation. The purpose and end of the human mystery of creation is deification. So Adam is called to become God by divine grace, and to look solely toward God.

This is where the depth of Orthodox spirituality may differ somewhat from contemporary deep ecology. The difference lies not so much in the level of desire to preserve and to protect the natural resources of the world,

which should be the priority of all human beings – from political leaders to individual citizens. It lies primarily in the worldview that is espoused. The difference may be detected less in the way we perceive the end result, which must certainly be sought and achieved by everyone and for the sake of everyone. Rather, it is discerned as the starting point of our attitudes and actions. Orthodox theology regards humanity as possessing a royal, but not a tyrannical, dimension. Belief in the stewardship and ministry of humanity within creation is marked by a profound sense of justice and also moderation.

We can be neither prideful in our authority nor falsely humble in our self-limitations. We are called to preserve creation by serving its Creator. Preservation and celebration are intimately connected. This is the interpretation that Orthodox theology and liturgy provide for the scriptural command “*to till and to keep the earth*” (Gen. 2:15), which might quite as easily be translated as the mandate “*to serve and preserve the earth*”. We are to act as “*faithful and prudent stewards*” of this world (Luke 12:42), “*like good stewards of the manifold grace of God*” (1 Pet. 4:10). We can never act in isolation from God; we must always act in humble acknowledgment of God as Creator. All authority to regulate and minister comes from God and through God; and it is always directed to God for the glory of God (cf Prov. 8:15).

The entire world was created by God for the privilege of all and for preservation by all.⁴ The entire world is, therefore, the concern of the Church, which prays earnestly “*for things in the world and for things above the world*”.⁵ By the same token, the entire world should constitute the object of our prayer to God:

Remember, Lord, favourable winds, peaceful rains, beneficial freshness, the abundance of fruits, perfect ends, glorious years. For the eyes of all look in hope toward Thee, and Thou grantest them their timely nourishment. Thou openest Thy hand and fill all living things with good will.⁶

Send down rains to those places and people that so need them. Raise the rivers in their proper measure and according to Thy grace. Increase the fruits of the earth for their timely sowing and crop. We pray for good winds and for the earth's fruits; we pray for the balanced rise of river waters; and we pray for beneficial rains and fruitful crops.⁷

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Orthodox Liturgy and Natural Environment

This means that the whole of material creation is properly perceived and preserved through the eyes of the liturgy.

In the Orthodox liturgical perspective, creation is received and conceived as a gift from God. The notion of creation-as-gift defines our Orthodox theological understanding of the environmental question in a concise and clear manner while at the same time determining the human response to that gift through the responsible and proper use of the created

world. Each believer is called to celebrate life in a way that reflects the words of the Divine Liturgy: *“Thine own from Thine own we offer to Thee, in all and for all.”*

Thus the Eastern Orthodox proposes a liturgical worldview. It proclaims a world richly imbued by God and a God profoundly involved in this world. Our “original sin”, so it might be said, does not lie in any legalistic transgression of religious commands that might incur divine wrath or human guilt. Instead, it lies in our stubborn refusal as human beings to receive the world as a gift of encounter and reconciliation with our planet and to regard the world as the mystery of communion with the rest of humanity.

This is why the Ecumenical Patriarchate has initiated and organized a number of international and interdisciplinary symposia over the last decade: in the Aegean Sea (1995) and the Black Sea (1997), along the Danube River (1999) and in the Adriatic Sea (2002), in the Baltic Sea (2003), on the Amazon River (2006), and, most recently, in the Arctic Ocean (2007) and the Mississippi River (2009). For, like the air we breathe, water is the very source of life; if it is defiled or despoiled, the element and essence of our existence are threatened. Put simply: environmental degradation and destruction are tantamount to suicide. We appear to be inexorably trapped within lifestyles and systems that repeatedly ignore the constraints of nature, which are neither deniable nor negotiable. It looks all too likely that we will learn some things about our planet’s capacity for survival only when things are beyond the point of no return.

One of the hymns of the Orthodox Church, chanted on the day of Christ’s baptism in the Jordan River, a feast of renewal and regeneration for the entire world, articulates this tragedy: *“I have become ... the defilement of the air and the land and the water.”* At a time when we have polluted the air we breathe and the water we drink, we are called to restore within ourselves a sense of awe and delight, to respond to matter as to a mystery of ever-increasing connectedness and sacramental dimensions.

As a gift from God to humanity, creation becomes our companion, given to us for the sake of living in harmony with it and in communion with others. We are to use its resources in moderation and frugality, to cultivate it in love and humility, and to preserve it in accordance with the scriptural command to serve and preserve (cf. Gen. 2:15). Within the unimpaired natural environment, humanity discovers deep spiritual peace and rest; and in humanity that is spiritually cultivated by the peaceful grace of God, nature recognizes its harmonious and rightful place.

Nevertheless, the first-created human being misused the gift of freedom, instead preferring alienation from God-the-Giver and attachment to God’s gift. Consequently, the double relationship of humanity to God and creation was distorted, and humanity became preoccupied with using and consuming the earth’s resources. In this way, the human blessedness that flows from the love between God and humanity ceased to exist, and

humanity sought to fill this void by drawing from creation itself – instead of from its Creator – the blessedness that was lacking. From grateful user, then, the human person became greedy abuser. In order to remedy this situation, human beings are called to return to a “Eucharistic” and “ascetic” way of life, namely to be thankful by offering glory to God for the gift of creation while at the same time being respectful by practising responsibility within the web of creation.

Eucharistic and Ascetic Beings

Let me reflect further on these two critical words: “*Eucharistic*” and “*ascetic*”. The implications of the first word are quite easily appreciated. The term derives from the Greek word *Eucharistia*, meaning “thanks”, and is, in the Orthodox Church, understood also as the deeper significance of liturgy. In calling for a “Eucharistic spirit”, the Orthodox Church is reminding us that the created world is not simply our possession but a gift – a gift from God the Creator, a healing gift, a gift of wonder and beauty. Therefore, the proper response, upon receiving such a gift, is to accept and embrace it with gratitude and thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving underlines the sacramental worldview of the Orthodox Church. From the very moment of creation, this world was offered by God as a gift to be transformed and returned in gratitude. This is precisely how the Orthodox spiritual way avoids the problem of the world’s domination by humanity. For if this world is a sacred mystery, then this in itself precludes any attempt at mastery by human beings; indeed, the mastery or exploitative control of the world’s resources is identified more with Adam’s “original sin” than with God’s wonderful gift. It is the result of selfishness and greed, which arise from alienation from God and the abandonment of a sacramental worldview. Sin separated the sacred from the secular, dismissing the latter to the domain of evil and surrendering it as prey to exploitation.

Thanksgiving, then, is a distinctive and definitive characteristic of human beings. A human is not merely a logical or political being. Above all, human beings are Eucharistic creatures, capable of gratitude and endowed with the power to bless God for the gift of creation. Again, the Greek word for “blessing” (*eulogia*)^{Material} implies having a good word to say about something or someone; it is the opposite of cursing the world. Other animals express their gratefulness simply by being themselves, by living in the world through their own instinctive manner. Yet we human beings possess a sense of self-awareness in an intuitive manner, and so consciously and by deliberate choice we can thank God for the world with Eucharistic joy. Without such thanksgiving, we are not truly human.

A Eucharistic spirit also implies using the earth’s natural resources with a spirit of thankfulness, offering them back to God; indeed, we are to offer not only the earth’s resources but ourselves. In the sacrament of the

Eucharist, we return to God what is his own: namely, the bread and the wine, together with and through the entire community, which itself is offered in humble thanks to the Creator. As a result, God transforms the bread and wine, namely the world, into a mystery of encounter. All of us and all things represent the fruits of creation, which are no longer imprisoned by a fallen world but returned as liberated, purified from their fallen state, and capable of receiving the divine presence within themselves.

Whoever, then, gives thanks also experiences the joy that comes from appreciating that for which he or she is thankful. Conversely, whoever does not feel the need to be thankful for the wonder and beauty of the world, but instead demonstrates only selfishness or indifference, can never experience a deeper, divine joy, but only sullen sorrow and unquenched satisfaction. Such a person not only curses the world but experiences the world as curse. This is why people with so much can be so bitter, while others with so little can be so grateful.

The second term is “ascetic”, which derives from the Greek verb *askeo* and implies a working of raw material with training or skill. Thus, we have the “ascetic ethos” of Orthodoxy that involves fasting and other similar spiritual disciplines. These make us recognize that everything we take for granted in fact comprises God’s gifts, which are provided in order to satisfy our needs as they are shared fairly among all people. However, they are not ours to abuse and waste simply because we have the desire to consume them or the ability to pay for them.

The ascetic ethos is the intention and disciplined effort to protect the gift of creation and to preserve nature intact. It is the struggle for self-restraint and self-control, whereby we no longer willfully consume every fruit but instead manifest a sense of frugality and abstinence from certain fruits. Both the protection and the self-restraint are expressions of love for all of humanity and for the entire natural creation. Such love alone can protect the world from unnecessary waste and inevitable destruction. After all, just as the true nature of “*God is love*” (1 John 4:8), so too, humanity is originally and innately endowed with the purpose of loving.

Our purpose is thus conjoined to the priest’s prayer in the Divine Liturgy: “*In offering to Thee, Thine own from Thine own, in all and for all – we praise Thee, we bless Thee, and we give thanks to Thee, O Lord.*” Then we are able to embrace all people and all things – not with fear or necessity, but with love and joy. Then we learn to care for the plants and for the animals, for the trees and for the rivers, for the mountains and for the seas, for all human beings and for the whole natural environment. Then we discover rather than inflicting sorrow – in our life and in our world. As suit, we create and promote instruments of peace and life, not of violence and death. Then creation on the one hand purity and on the other hand – the one that encompasses and the one is encompassed – correspond fully and co-operate with each, for they are no longer in contradiction or in conflict or composition. Then, just as humanity offers creation in an act of priestly

service and sacrifice, returning it to God, so also does creation offer itself in return as a gift to humanity for all generations that are to follow. Then everything becomes a form of exchange, the fruit of abundance, and a fulfilment of love. Then everything assumes its original vision and purpose, as God intended it from the moment of creation.

The Third Day of Creation

The brief yet powerful statement found in Genesis 1:11,13 corresponds to the majesty of this aspect of creation:

Then God said: “Let the earth bring forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it.” And it was so... And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning the third day.

As all know the healing and nourishing essence of plants; we all appreciate their manifold creative and cosmetic usefulness:

Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these (Luke 12:27).

Even the humblest and lowliest manifestations of God’s created world comprise the most fundamental elements of life and the most precious aspects of natural beauty.

Nevertheless, by overgrazing or deforestation, we tend to disturb the balance of the plant world. Whether by excessive irrigation or urban construction, we interrupt the magnificent epic of the natural world. Our selfish ways have led us to ignore plants, or else to undervalue their importance. Our understanding of plants is sparse and selective. Our outlook is greed-oriented and profit-centred.

Yet plants are the centre and source of life. Plants permit us to earth and to dream. Plants provide the basis of spiritual and cultural life. A world without plants is a world without a sense of beauty. Indeed, a world without plants and vegetation is inconceivable and unimaginable. It would be a contradiction of life itself, tantamount to death. There is no such thing as a world where unsustainable development continues without critical reflection and self-control; there is no such thing as a planet that thoughtlessly and blindly proceeds along the present route of global warming. There is only wasteland and destruction. To adopt any other excuse or pretext is to deny the reality of land, water, and air pollution.

Plants are also the wisest of teachers and the best of models. For they turn toward light. They yearn for water. They cherish clean air. Their roots dig deep, while their reach is high. They are satisfied and sustained with so little. They transform and multiply everything that they draw from nature, including some things that appear wasteful or useless. They adapt spontaneously and produce abundantly – whether for the nourishment or

admiration of others. They enjoy a microcosm of their own while contributing to the macrocosm around them.

The Fifth and Sixth Days of Creation

On the fifth and sixth days of creation God is said to have made the variety of animals, as well as created man and woman in the divine image and likeness (Gen. 1:26). What most people seem to overlook is that the sixth day of creation is not entirely dedicated to the forming of Adam out of the earth. That sixth day was in fact shared with the creation of numerous *“living creatures of every kind; cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind”* (Gen. 1:24). This close connection between humanity and the rest of creation, from the very moment of genesis, is surely an important and powerful reminder of the intimate relationship that we share as human beings with the animal kingdom. While there is undoubtedly something unique about human creation in more that unites us than separates us, not only as human beings at also with the created universe. It is a lesson we have learned in recent decades; but it is a lesson that we learned the hard way.

The saints of the early Eastern Church taught this same lesson long ago. The Desert Fathers knew that a person with a pure heart is able to sense the connection with the rest of creation, and especially with the animal world.⁸ This is surely a reality that finds parallels in both eastern and western Christianity: one may recall Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833) feeding the bear in the forest of the north, or Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) addressing the elements of the universe. This connection is not merely emotional; it is profoundly spiritual in its motive and content. It gives a sense of continuity and community with all of creation while providing an expression of identity and compassion with it – a recognition that, St. Paul put it, all things were created in Christ and in Christ all things hold together (Col. 1:15-17). This is why Abba Isaac of Nineveh can write from the desert of Syria in the seventh century:

What is a merciful heart? It is a heart, which is burning with love for the whole of creation: for human beings, for birds, for beasts, for demons – for all of God’s creatures. When such persons recall or regard these creatures, their eyes are filled with tears. An overwhelming compassion makes their heart grow small and weak, and they cannot endure to hear or see any kind of suffering, even the smallest pain, inflicted upon any creature. Therefore, these persons never cease to pray with tears even for the irrational animals, for the enemies of truth, as well as for those who do them evil, asking that these may be protected and receive God’s mercy. They even pray for the reptiles with such great compassion, which rises endlessly in their heart until they shine again and are glorious like God.⁹

Thus, love for God, love for human beings, and love for animals cannot be separated sharply. There may be a hierarchy of priority, but it is not a sharp distinction of comparison. The truth is that we are all one family –

human beings and the living world alike – and all of us look to God the Creator: “*These all look to you to give them... When you open your hand, they are filled with good things. When you hide your face, they are dismayed. When you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust*” (Ps. 104:27-29).

Precisely because of our faith as Orthodox Christians in the creation of the world by a loving God, and in the loving re-creation of the world by the divine Word at the Incarnation of God’s Son, we cannot but be convinced – environmentalists and firm believers – in the sanctity of the material world. We await not simply a new heaven but also a new earth. We work toward that reality of a renewed and restored heaven and earth, where “*the wolf shall feed with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the goat*” (Isa. 11:6). This is not a utopian dream; for us as Orthodox Christians, this reality begins now. It is a pledge that we make to God that we shall embrace all of creation. It is what Orthodox theologians call an “inaugurated eschatology”, or the final state already established and being realized in the present. “*Behold, the kingdom of God is among (us)*” (Luke 17:21). The transformation of the created world is a living reality for those who desire it and work toward the fulness of communion and the fairness of community throughout the world.

Poverty and Inequality

The issue of environmental pollution and degradation cannot be isolated for the purpose of understanding or resolution. The environment is the home that surrounds the human species and constitutes the human habitat. Therefore, the environment cannot be appreciated or assessed alone, without a direct connection to the unique creatures that it surrounds, namely humans. Concern for the environment implies also concern for human problems of poverty, thirst, and hunger. This connection is detailed in a stark manner in the parable of the Last Judgment, where the Lord says: “*I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink*” (Matt. 25:35).

In earlier chapters of my book, *Encountering the Mystery*, I referred to the importance of silence as waiting and depending on God’s grace, and of fasting as not wanting or wanting less. In a sense, then, both silence and fasting anticipate the problems of poverty and hunger inasmuch as they encourage us not to waste. *Waiting* leads to not *wanting*, which in turn leads to not *wasting*. Prayer prepares us for abstinence and moderation, which render us more alert to the problems related to poverty and justice. These virtues are critical in a culture that is indifferent to waste and that stresses the need to hurry and the priority of individual wants over the needs of others.

Concern, then, for ecological issues is directly related to concern for issues of social justice, and particularly of world hunger. A church that

neglects to pray for the natural environment is a church that refuses to offer food and drink to a suffering humanity. At the same time, a society that ignores the mandate to care for all human beings is a society that mistreats the very creation of God, including the natural environment. It is tantamount to blasphemy.

The terms “ecology” and “economy” share the same etymological root. Their common prefix “eco-” derives from the Greek word *oikos*, which signifies “home” or “dwelling”. It is unfortunate and selfish, however, that we have restricted the application of this word to ourselves, as if we are the only inhabitants of this world. The fact is that no economic system – no matter how technologically or socially advanced – can survive the collapse of the environmental systems that support it. This planet is indeed our home; yet it is also the home of everyone, as it is the home of every animal creature, as well as of every form of life created by God. It is a sign of arrogance to presume that we human beings alone inhabit this world. Indeed, by the same token, it is a sign of arrogance to imagine that only the present generation inhabits this earth.

Ecology, then, is the *logos* or study of this world as the home of everyone and everything, while economy is the *nomos* or regulation, as the stewardship of our world as our home. How we understand creation will also determine how we treat the natural environment. Will we continue to use it in inappropriate and unsustainable ways? Or will we treat it as our home and the home of all humanity as well as the home of all living creatures? Will we, with the psalmist, remember that “everything that breathes praises God” (Ps. 150:6)?

As one of the more serious ethical, social, and political problems, poverty is directly and deeply connected to the ecological crisis. A poor farmer in Asia, in Africa, or in North America, will daily face the reality of poverty. For farmers there, the misuse of technology or the eradication of trees is not merely harmful to the environment or destructive of nature; rather, it practically and profoundly affects the very survival of their families. Terminology such as “ecology”, “deforestation”, or “over-fishing” is entirely absent from their daily conversation or concern. The “developed” world cannot demand from the “developing” poor an intellectual understanding with regard to the protection of the few earthly paradises that remain, especially in the light of the fact that less than ten per cent of the world’s population consumes over ninety per cent of the earth’s natural resources. However, with proper education, the “developing” world would be far more willing than the “developed” world to co-operate for the protection of creation.

Closely related to the problem of poverty is the problem of unemployment, which plagues societies throughout the world. It is abundantly clear that neither the moral counsel of religious leaders nor fragmented measures by socio-economic strategists or political policy-makers can curb this growing tragedy. The problem of unemployment

compels us to re-examine the priorities of affluent societies in the West, and especially the unrestricted advance of development, which is considered only in positive economic terms. We appear to be trapped in the tyrannical cycle created by a need for constant productivity rises and increases in the supply of consumer goods. However, placing these two “necessities” on an equal footing imposes on society a relentless need for unending perfection and growth while restricting power over production to fewer and fewer. Concurrently, real or imaginary consumer needs constantly increase and rapidly expand. Thus the economy assumes a life of its own, a vicious cycle that becomes independent of human need or human concern. What is needed is a radical change in politics and economics, one that underlines the unique and primary value of the human person, thereby placing a human face on the concepts of employment and productivity.

The present situation reminds me of the poor widow in the gospel who made her small offering in the treasury; this contribution was the equivalent of her entire possessions. “For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything that she had, all that she had to live on” (Mark 12:44). We are not justified in demanding that the poorer nations make huge sacrifices, especially when some of them may contribute far less than the “developed” nations to the environmental crisis and to socio-economic injustice. Of course, the situation in China and India highlights the alarming danger of such generalizations based solely on economic factors. Nevertheless, people in western societies – as well as those that proclaim western principles – ought to assume greater personal responsibility. They should contribute to the solution of the environmental crisis in accordance with their capacity in order not simply to assist the poor but to help wipe out poverty itself.

Environment, Poverty and Peace

Over the last decade, as already mentioned, it has been a privilege of our Ecumenical Patriarchate to initiate waterborne symposia on themes relating to the preservation of rivers and seas, organized by the Religious and Scientific Committee. Moreover, prior to and alongside these symposia, in five summer seminars held on the island of Halki in Turkey, we focused on the importance of ecological education and environmental awareness, exploring such issues as religious education (1994), ethics (1995), society (1996), justice (1997), and poverty (1998). All of these symposia and seminars have been characterized by an ecumenical, indeed interreligious and interdisciplinary, approach.

We have learned, therefore, that our efforts to protect the natural environment must be interdisciplinary. No single discipline or group can assume full responsibility for either the damage wrought on created nature or the vision of a sustainable future. Theologians and scientists must collaborate with economists and politicians if the desired results are to be

effective. Moreover, we have learned that environmental action cannot be separated from human relations – whether in the form of international politics, human rights or peace. The way we respond to the natural environment is clearly reflected in the way we treat human beings. The willingness to exploit the environment is directly revealed in the willingness to permit or promote human suffering.

It is evident, then, that all of our ecological activity is ultimately measured by its effect on people, especially the poor. There are two examples that come to mind in this regard from the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and from the traditions of the Orthodox Church. I have always carried in my heart a name with which the Ecumenical Patriarchate has been associated through the centuries; it has traditionally been called “The Church of the Poor of Christ”.¹⁰ This has been a constant reminder throughout my environmental listening and learning. Extending our concern and care to nature implies and involves changing our attitudes and practices toward human beings. The entire world is a gift from God, offered to us for the purpose of sharing. It exists not for us to appropriate but rather for us to preserve. If encounter is the consequence of our ecological concern, then ignoring the social dimensions of environmental justice is ultimately not beneficial even to the material creation itself.

The second example is taken from the annual celebration of the Feast of St. Basil (January 1), who was renowned as a “lover of the poor” (or *philoptochos*). Each year, Orthodox Christians cut the traditional *vassilopitta* (“bread of the kings”). It is a way of sharing the joy of the incoming new year while at the same time recalling our immediate responsibility for those in poverty. A coin is placed inside the sweet bread in memory of St. Basil, who used to distribute money anonymously to the poor of Caesarea in Cappadocia. The first portion – after separating those of God the Trinity, as the supreme symbol of encounter and communion, and all the holy people in the communion of saints – is known as the “poor man’s portion”. The poor are a part of our world; we should invite them to share our bread. And this, of course, means the bread that we eat, but also the goods that we enjoy and the equality that we demand for ourselves.

The image of sharing in the Orthodox Church is the icon of the Holy Trinity, which traditionally represents the hospitality of Abraham and Sarah welcoming three strangers in the Palestinian desert. The story is related in Genesis 18 of Abraham sitting under the oak trees of Mamre: ‘The Lord appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day’ (Gen. 18:1)

Not only do the oaks provide refreshing shade for the Patriarch of Israel, but they are the circumstance for the revelation of God. By analogy, then, not only do the trees of the world provide nurture for humankind in diverse ways, but they also reflect the very presence of the Creator. Cutting them down almost implies eliminating the presence of the divine from our lives. Indeed, the Hebrew interpretation of this text insinuates that the oak trees

themselves – like the visitors who appear at the same time – are involved in the revelation of God. For it is not until Abraham recognizes the presence of God in the trees (namely in creation, or the *adamah*) that he is also able to recognize God in his visitors (namely in human beings, or the *adam*). Creation, just like the human beings who appeared in the form of angels, is itself a manifestation of God in the world. We should always make this spiritual connection when we breathe in the oxygen that the trees breathe out; just as, in Christian circles, we recognize the breathing of the divine Spirit, who breathes where it wills (cf John 3:8) – like the rustling of leaves in a forest. It is the Spirit that blows through creation that we worship whenever we share our resources with other human beings. It is the entire world that we sustain when we preserve the earth and offer food to our neighbour.¹¹

In our efforts, then, for the preservation of the natural environment, how prepared are we to sacrifice some of our greedy lifestyles? When will we learn to say “Enough!”? When will we learn that treating all people, including the poor, in a just manner is more beneficial than charitable acts of goodwill? Will we direct our focus away from what we want to what the world needs? We may offer bread to the hungry – indeed, we may feel a sense of self-gratification in so doing – but when will we work toward a world that has no hunger? Moreover, do we endeavour to leave as light a footprint as possible on this planet for the sake of future generations? There are no excuses today for our lack of involvement. We have detailed information; the alarming statistics are readily available. We must choose to care. Otherwise, we do not really care. Otherwise, we become aggressors, betraying our inherent prerogatives as human beings, and violate the rights of others.

“Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called children of God” (Matt. 5:9). To become children of God is to be fully committed to the will of God. This implies moving away from what we want to what God wants, just as Jesus Christ was revealed to be the Son of God when he said: “Yet, not what I want, but what you want” (Matt. 26:39). To be children of God means to be faithful to God’s purpose and intent for creation, despite the social pressures that may contradict peace and justice. In order to be peacemakers and children of God, we must move away from what serves our own interests and focus on what respects and dignifies the rights of others. We must recognize that all human beings – and not only a few – deserve to share the resources of this world.

“Making peace” is certainly painstaking and slow work. Yet it is our only hope for the restoration of a broken world. By working to remove obstacles to peace, by working to heal human suffering), by working to preserve the natural environment, we can be assured that “God is with us” (Matt. 1:23 and Isa. 7:14). Then we are assured that we are never alone, and shall inherit both this world and the Kingdom of Heaven. Then we shall be worthy to hear the words of Christ on the day of truth and judgment:

“Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom that was prepared for you from the creation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

The Fault of the West

It is an easy, perhaps escapist, option to criticize the West for the failures and ills of our world. Western civilization is certainly responsible for philosophical worldviews and practical developments that have negatively affected our minds and behaviour. It has unreservedly promoted a barren sense of *intellectualism*, which has ruptured any balanced sense of spirituality. It has also introduced an unrestrained sense of *individualism*, which has shattered any healthy sense of community. Moreover, it has persistently encouraged the exploitation and abuse of nature through greedy market *consumerism*, which has destroyed the planet’s ecosystems and depleted its resources. And it has uncritically espoused the extremes of economic *globalization* (at the expense of human beings) and exclusive *nationalism* (at the cost of human lives).

Yet the real fault ultimately lies within human nature itself, which is called to a renewed understanding of repentance. It would be more appropriate and beneficial if we were to consider our own responsibility within western society, rather than seeking to blame particular cultures or structures. Not that the latter are insignificant; but the most political statement can sometimes be the most personal statement. What others do is usually what we are also guilty of as individuals. Paying closer attention to the way in which our wasteful ways stem from our propensity toward sin may be the simplest and most successful way of addressing the environmental crisis.

Far too long have we focused – as churches and religious communities – on the notion of sin as a rupture in individual relations either with each other or between humanity and God. The environmental crisis that we are facing reminds us of the cosmic proportions and consequences of sin, which are more than merely social or narrowly spiritual. It is my conviction that every act of pollution or destruction of the natural environment is an offence against God as Creator.

We are, as human beings, responsible for creation; but we have behaved as if we own creation. The problem of the environment is primarily neither an ethical nor a moral issue. It is an ontological issue, demanding a new way of being as well as a new way of behaving. Repentance implies precisely a radical change of ways, a new outlook and vision. The Greek word for “repentance” is *metanoia*, which signifies an inner transformation that inevitably involves a change in one’s entire worldview. We repent not simply for things we feel that we do wrongly against God. Furthermore, we repent not simply for things that make us guilty in our relations with other people. Rather, we repent for the way we regard the world and, therefore, invariably treat – in fact, mistreat – the world around us.

In this respect, the concept of sin must be broadened to include all human beings and all of created nature. Religions must become sensitized to the seriousness and implications of this kind of sin if they are to encourage the right values and inspire the necessary virtues to protect God's creation in its human, animal, and natural expressions. During international negotiations that took place at The Hague in 2000, I strongly emphasized the threat to our planet's fragile ecosystems posed by global warming, as well as the urgent need for all religions to underline a renewed repentance in our attitude toward nature.

Conclusion: A New Worldview

Curiously, I have never been overwhelmed by the ecological problems of our time. We are indeed facing an environmental crisis, which can never be overlooked by politicians or overstated by scientists. Nevertheless, I have always considered in an optimistic way the fundamental goodness and positive intention of humanity "created in the image and likeness of God" (Gen. 1:26). There is a maturity and knowledge in humanity that accounts for this basic hopefulness. If I were not convinced of this, then I would be betraying my Orthodox conviction and firm belief that even the present age – like every age and place – conceals the presence of living saints. Our age is faced with a unique challenge. Never before, in the long history of our planet, has humanity found itself so "developed" that it faces the possible destruction of its own environment and species. Never before in the long history of this earth have the earth's ecosystems faced almost irreversible damage. It may be that future generations will one day view the senseless eradication of the magnificent repositories of genetic information and biodiversity in our age in much the same way as we view, in retrospect, the burning of the library in Alexandria in 48 B.C.E.¹² Therefore, our responsibility lies in accepting the need to respond in a unique way in order to meet our obligations to the generations that follow.

At the same time, I have also learned that the crisis we are facing in our world is not primarily ecological. It is a crisis concerning the way we envisage or imagine the world. We are treating our planet in an inhuman, godless manner precisely because we fail to see it as a gift inherited from above; it is our obligation to receive, respect, and in turn hand on this gift to future generations. Therefore, before we can effectively deal with problems of our environment, we must change the way we perceive the world. Otherwise, we are simply dealing with symptoms, not with their causes. We require a new worldview if we are to desire "a new earth" (Rev. 21:1).

So let us acquire a "Eucharistic spirit" and an "ascetic ethos", bearing in mind that everything in the natural world, whether great or small, has its importance *within the universe and for the life of the world*; nothing whatsoever is useless or contemptible. Let us regard ourselves as

responsible before God for every living creature and for the whole of natural creation. Let us treat everything with proper love and utmost care. Only in this way shall we secure a physical environment where life for the coming generations of humankind will be healthy and happy. Otherwise, the unquenchable greed of our generation will constitute a mortal sin resulting in destruction and death. This greed in turn will lead to the deprivation of our children's generation, despite our desire and claim to bequeath to them a better future. Ultimately, it is for our children that we must perceive our every action in the world as having a direct effect upon the future of the environment.

This is the source of my optimism. As we declared some years ago in Venice (June 10, 2002) with Pope John Paul II (1978-2005), the late Pontiff of the Roman Catholic Church:

It is not too late. God's world has incredible healing powers. Within a single generation, we could steer the earth toward our children's future. Let that generation start now, with God's help and blessing.

The same sentiments were jointly communicated with the late Pope, Benedict XVI, during his official visit to the Ecumenical Patriarchate on November 30, 2006:

In the face of the great threats to the natural environment, we wish to express our concern at the negative consequences for humanity and for the whole of creation which can result from economic and technological progress that does not know its limits. As religious leaders, we consider it one of our duties to encourage and to support all efforts made to protect God's creation, and to bequeath to future generations a world in which they will be able to live.

The natural environment – the forest, the water, the land – belongs not only to the present generation but also to future generations. We must frankly admit that humankind is entitled to something better than what we see around us. We and, much more, our children and future generations are entitled to a better and brighter world, a world free from degradation, violence and bloodshed, a world of generosity and love. It is selfless and sacrificial love for our children that will show us the path that we must follow into the future.

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1. *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Chaereon, 1.
2. *Homily 15*, 38.
3. See the following section, "Orthodox Liturgy and the Natural Environment".
4. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Treatise*, 12.
5. From a prayer in the Matins service.
6. From the Liturgy of St. James.
7. From the Liturgy of St. Mark.
8. *Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, Anthony 36, Paul 1, and Pambo 12.
9. *Ascetic Treatises*, 48 (Wiesbaden: 1986), 30.
10. This phrase was used throughout the Ottoman occupation of Greece and Asia Minor. It was possibly coined by Ecumenical Patriarch Gennadios Scholarios

(1453-56 and 1463-64), the first Patriarch after the fall of Constantinople in 1453, to describe the historical humiliation of the Great Church of Christ, as the Church of Constantinople is also called, as well as to define the spiritual vigour of the Ecumenical Patriarchate that persisted through the centuries.

11. This story from Genesis is a powerful symbol of inter-faith relations, as we shall see in Chapter 8. Nevertheless, since Genesis is a scriptural book accepted by all three monotheistic religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam – this story also becomes one of the first ecological lessons of the Bible; it is a passage to which we should pay closer attention, both theologically and spiritually, as revealing the ways of recognizing God’s presence in our world as well as the ways of responding to this divine revelation.

12. See Lester Brown, *Plan B 2.0: Rescuing a Planet under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble*, updated and expanded edition. (New York: Norton, 2006).

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AN ECUMENICAL ETHIC FOR A RESPONSIBLE SOCIETY IN A SUSTAINABLE CREATION

Catholicos Aram

Humanity seems to have entered a crucial period of its history. Emerging hopes and prospects for a qualitatively new tomorrow, brought about by significant changes in many spheres of societal life, are being overshadowed by new tensions and growing fears of a total destruction of life. Unprecedented economic and industrial progress, accompanied by the unlimited exploitation of the earth's limited resources, has greatly increased poverty, created food scarcity and thus jeopardized the eco-life support system. According to scientists, the world is on the edge of apocalyptic self-destruction. In fact, "as the Cold War fades away, we face not a 'new world order' but a troubled and fractured planet."¹ In a letter addressed to the churches, the World Council of Churches, Conference on "Searching for the New Heavens and the New Earth: an Ecumenical Response to UNCED" (June 1992, Baixada Fluminense, Brazil) stated with a sense of urgency: "The earth is in peril. Our only home is in plain jeopardy. We are at the precipice of self-destruction."² Analyzing the major ecological and economic issues facing humanity in the twenty-first century objectively and stating that "something is wrong – terribly wrong – on earth", the Institute for 21st Century Studies posed the critical question: "What shall we do?"³ The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), otherwise referred to as the "Earth Summit" (June 1992, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), called nations to search for a "sustainable future".

Such a goal can be attained only through an *ethically sustainable* and responsible society: the central issue here is the self-understanding of humanity and its vocation in respect to God and his creation. The churches can no longer merely resist, combat, react; they must discern vision and identify values that will ensure economic justice, political participation and a sustainable creation. These concerns have, in one way or another, always been on the agenda of the Ecumenical Movement. More specifically, what the Ecumenical Movement should do now more specifically is: first, treat the ecological and economic issues in their inseparable interrelatedness and as issues pertaining to Christian faith; and, second, work for ecumenical ethical paradigms that will help the churches to provide clear orientation to societies searching for new meaning and identity.

Towards New Eco-Theological Paradigms

The ecological crisis is a crisis of the whole life system. It is not a socio-technological or environmental problem, as some claim. The destruction of natural resources, ozone shields and forests, the pollution of water and environment, are only symptoms and consequences of the problem, but not the problem itself, which is essentially a theological-ethical one related to humanity's role in the creation. It is important to distinguish between the micro-ecological phenomenon and its macro-ecological essence. Political, ecological, economic and social analyses and prescription will fall short unless they are solidly supported by a theological-ethical perspective and vision.

Therefore, we must deal with the macro-ecological aspect of ecological crises. We must develop a new theology of creation that challenges the prevailing paradigms of humanity-creation relations, namely, anthropocentrism, domination and exploitation, and promote instead a renewed relationship and a new covenant with the creation. We need a new eco-theology and eco-ethic that heal and protect the creation in its original goodness and integrity, and restore the right place and true vocation of humanity within it. Such a theology necessarily implies a clear shift from anthropocentrism to theocentrism, from domination to accountability, from self-centredness to a holistic spirituality.

1. From anthropocentric to theocentric theo-ecology

In view of the prevailing anthropocentric concepts of creation, it is important to spell out some of the significant aspects and important dimensions of creation that are basic for any Christian-biblical understanding of creation:

- Creation is God's gift of life. It is an accomplished yet continuous event (*creatio continua*) in the sense that God constantly re-creates his creation by protecting, sustaining, redeeming and perfecting it through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. The Father is the "original cause", the Son the "creative cause", and the Holy Spirit the "perfecting cause".⁴ In this trinitarian creative act, the specific function of the Holy Spirit is one of "completing", "perfecting", "fulfilling", "guiding", "governing", "freeing", "renewing", "sanctifying" and "deifying".⁵
- The Bible affirms the goodness of creation and the intrinsic value of all beings. Creation is good by its origin, nature and purpose (Gen. 1:32). Evil is not part of creation. It is the negation of creation. Christian faith rejects any dualistic interpretation of creation. Evil is the absence of good; it is a non-being. Evil is due to the rebellion of humanity against the Creator and, as such, it is a threat to creation.
- God's creation is characterized by relationship, order and unity. Each creature has a specific task within the creation and a special

relationship with the Creator. The relationship of non-rational creatures with God is one of sheer dependence and contingency, and that of rational beings is one of obedient response. All creatures are in a permanent relationship with each other within a diversified yet interdependent whole. The wholeness and integrity of creation are to be safeguarded by human stewardship.

- Creation is not an aimless self-sufficient reality. It should be seen in the perspective of the Kingdom of God, since it is the beginning of God's economy and covenant with humanity. Creation has no existence or meaning apart from God, who is both immanent and transcendent in the creation. Creation neither stands apart from God (the deistic view), nor is it confused with God (the pantheistic view).
- In Jesus Christ, God has reconciled the creation to himself (Col. 1:17-20). The Christ-event is God's re-creation of the whole humanity and creation. In Christ, the eschatological future, "the new heaven and the new earth" (Revelation 21) is anticipated; we are in a new creation (Gal. 5:22). Yet, through Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit, creation moves towards its full redemption. The Church is a sign of the "new creation" in Christ.

For too long, we have developed a Christological doctrine of creation. It is time now to re-emphasize the trinitarian understanding, the eschatological perspective and the holistic nature of creation. For a long time our theology of creation has been dominated by the kind of anthropocentrism that made God's transcendence "wholly other" (Barth). It is time now to regain the theocentric concept of creation and immanence of God within it.

2. *From domination to accountability*

Anthropocentric and hierarchical understandings of creation have led humanity to dominate, control and exploit creation. The ecological crisis started when the first human being considered himself to be the master of creation, thereby misusing his free will. The divine command to "subdue the earth" (Gen. 1:28) was misunderstood by the human being who trespassed his God-given mandate and caused destruction and death. The ecological crisis is, "in a sense, the contemporary repetition of the original sin."⁶

Humanity has a special relationship with the creation and a special responsibility towards it. It is important to highlight some of the significant features of that relationship:

1. Humanity cannot have a self-centred existence. It is neither separate from creation nor above it. It is an integral part of it. Any anthropocentric, dualistic and hierarchical view of creation and God is alien to biblical theology. Such an interpretation, one that has dominated Christian thought at certain periods, must be totally

rejected. Humanity must come to recognize its inseparable connection with all God's creation and see that its survival is closely bound up with the future of all life – human and non-human – in the creation. A hierarchical understanding of *imago Dei*, putting human beings above all other creatures, must be replaced by a more relational view. The human relationship to creation is characterized neither by absolute dominion over it nor total subservience to it. This means that we must first reaffirm God's absolute sovereignty over creation. It belongs to God (Ps. 14:1); he is "the King" and "the Lord" of the whole creation. Acting without God is acting against God. Human freedom should not be opposed to God's law and truth. Second, we must consider humanity and creation as interdependent realities. They need each other; they are conditioned by each other. Creation (*oikos*) is the household of humanity.

2. Humanity should rediscover its specific vocation within the creation, which is one of *stewardship*. This is a basic biblical teaching, one that should not be altered. The human being is given the right and responsibility by God to be *oikonomos* (manager, steward, administrator, governor), not the lord, of creation (Gen. 1:26-27; 2:7,15). God's command must be understood in this context (Gen. 1:28). God gave human beings the right to use the earth's natural resources for their survival (Gen. 1:29; 2:16), not to exploit them for their own pleasure and glory. Christian ethic makes a clear distinction between *need* and *greed*, *use* and an *exploitative* approach to creation. We have often used the Bible to justify our unqualified manipulation of creation. We must therefore redefine humanity's role within the creation, a role that calls for managing, enriching and preserving it in love and reverence, as well as being preserved and enriched by it.⁸
3. Human responsibility is not a passive stewardship. The human being is called to become co-worker (1 Cor 3:9) with God. This concept, which is so dominant in the Pauline letters and in the theology of the early Church, has been nearly forgotten in contemporary theology. In fact, being a co-worker with God does not mean simply preserving the creation; it means renewing and transforming it, bringing it to its fulfilment. It also means being always accountable to God. Human freedom is subject to God's absolute sovereignty; it is also conditioned by full accountability to God.
4. Humanity must see creation as a sacrament of God's presence and as a means to communion with him, both as the deacon and the priest of God's creation. As such, humanity must protect the integrity, purity and wholeness of creation and offer it as a sacrament to God, its Creator and Lord: "*Thine own from thine own we offer to thee, in all and for all*" (Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom).

In sum, Christian theology must re-emphasize the specific role of the human being in relationship with creation, as deacon of creation, as mediator between creation and God, and as co-worker with God. The Church must call humanity to conversion from dominion to responsible relationship, and from self-sufficiency and self-glorification to total accountability to God.

3. *From a self-centred to a holistic spirituality*

By its very nature, Christian spirituality is trinitarian, holistic, and eco-centred. Western Christianity has virtually emptied spirituality of these vital dimensions and has confined it to the person-God relationship. This is, in fact, one of the causes of the present ecological crisis. We must go back to a biblical and ancient spirituality that looks at the humanity-creation-God relationship as an integrated, coherent and comprehensive whole. The following points deserve our particular attention:

1. Christian theology has always emphasized both the immanent and transcendental presence of the Triune God in creation through his uncreated energies. The created life shares in the uncreated life of God through the creative and dynamic presence of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, life permeates all creation. In and through him, the community of all created things is realized – a community where all creatures communicate with each other and with God, each in its own way. The role of the Spirit is not only one of renewing and perfecting the creation, but also reconciling and binding us inseparably with all created life. This is not syncretism, but a significant feature of Christian theology and a basic dimension of Christian spirituality.
2. The biblical understanding of creation goes beyond the natural environment. It embraces the “heaven and earth”, “all that lives”, “human and non-human beings” (Rom. 8:20), the whole cosmos in all its aspects, dimensions and manifestations. Christian spirituality is deeply rooted in and expressed through the creation, which has a profound spiritual significance. Creation is a sacramental reality; but it is not sacred, and is not identified with God. God uses the elements of creation as signs and sacraments of his revelation and presence. It is significant that many of the elements of creation are still used today, particularly in eastern Christian spirituality.
3. The human being is the image of the whole creation, *imago mundi*. Being an integral part of the whole creation (Gen. 2:15), he is the meeting point of all created things, spiritual and material. Any dualistic attempt to set humanity apart from or above the creation is theological heresy. The church Fathers have described the human being as a “microcosm”. His God-given task is to reconcile the spiritual and material realms, and become a mediator between the

creation and the Creator. Hence, the relationship between humanity and creation should be one of dynamic interdependence and close partnership. Any power relation that attempts to separate humanity from the creation is a sin against God, since it is the denial of the God-given vocation of humanity.

4. Sin is the perversion and alienation of humanity's relationship with God and also with the whole creation. It is not only a personal, but also an ecological reality. The goodness, wholeness and integrity of creation are constantly threatened by human selfish exploitation and sin: *"The whole of creation groaneth"* (Rom. 8:20-22) because of human sin. Creation shares in the fallen condition of humanity. It needs liberation and sanctification. As the "priest" of creation, humanity is required to liberate creation from the bondage of death and draw it into the fullness of the life of the Kingdom of God.
5. In the Eucharist, God's immanence and transcendence are revealed sacramentally, and creation and humanity are united within one economy of God. The connectedness of humanity to all created life – human stewardship to creation as well as human accountability to God – come alive through the Eucharist. In fact, the Eucharist is, in a sense, the offering of the creation back to its Creator on behalf of the whole humanity. It is the foretaste of the eschatological consummation of creation.

We must rediscover this sacramental character and spiritual dimension of creation that challenges the "utilitarian" view. We must stress the healing, liberating and transforming role of Christian spirituality, which aims at establishing a right relationship with creation. The pneumatological perspective on creation that so forcefully emerged in the Canberra Assembly should constantly remind us of the pivotal importance of a holistic and a deeper eco-spirituality.

Societies in Search of Reorientation

Creation can be healed, renewed and become sustainable only through responsible societies whose relationship with God, creation and each other are guided by binding ethical values and principles. Humanity is in the process of disintegration. Because of the structures, norms and policies currently governing societies, the rich are being enriched, the poor are being impoverished and creation is being destroyed. New models of society must be developed. Communism has failed. Capitalism with its exploitative nature simply cannot become the norm. It is beyond the immediate responsibility of the churches to help societies set up structures that will ensure more participation in political and economic life, and will establish sustainable moral values. The churches should develop an ecumenical

social ethic that clearly outlines the Christian vision of society and engages them in a common struggle for restructuring and reorienting societies.

The First Assembly of the WCC (Amsterdam 1948) proposed as an ethical model the concept of “responsible society”. The Assembly proposed the model as an ethical criterion, not as an alternative to political and economic systems. The churches of the third world then raised the question of “social justice” as a key for any system. Later on, “development” was considered a vital instrument to promote justice. The Nairobi Assembly (1975) brought all these concerns and perspectives together under “Just Participatory and Sustainable Society” (JPSS). The Vancouver Assembly (1983) felt the urgent need for an “ethical guideline” which would be “both ecologically responsible and economically just, and could effectively struggle with the powers which threaten life and endanger our future”.⁷ The “Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation” (JPIC) process that emerged from Vancouver was, in a sense, the continuation of JPSS. In its turn, the Canberra Assembly reaffirmed the crucial importance of JPIC, calling for “new value systems” for the reorientation of societies.

In the Ecumenical Movement, therefore, we have developed the following concepts of society: “responsible”, “just”, “participatory”, and “sustainable”. However, since we live in different situations and are contextually conditioned, we have not been able to reach common and comprehensive ethical guidelines. Should we not try, then, to reach an ecumenical ethical understanding to address together more efficiently the major burning ecological, social and economic issues of our time? Let me propose some perspectives.

(a) From quantitative growth to qualitative development

One of the root causes of the current ecological and economic problems is the commitment to unlimited material growth. Economic production, which has reached an unprecedented scale in the last few decades, has aimed, under the name of development, to promote progress, peace and justice. In actuality, it has failed to eliminate poverty and social injustice, and further deepened the gap between developed and developing countries, and between the haves and the have-nots within the same society. Because economic growth was politicized, becoming for the West a tool to fight against communism, and for the East a means to gain political influence, the third world was further exploited and the creation was further destroyed.

Uncontrolled economic growth remains a serious threat to ecological and human survival. Progress no longer represents an expression of hope and justice, but one of fear and injustice; recognizing this growing threat, UNCED placed a special emphasis on the concept of “sustainable” development as an alternative approach.⁸ This approach aims at developing an economic policy based on the earth’s environmental carrying capacity,

and enhances a just relationship between people, the earth and the economy. In my view, “sustainable” development will remain a mere slogan if it is not sustained and guided by clear ethical values. I would like to make a few observations:

1. Development has become synonymous with growth. It is important to make a clear distinction between mere economic growth and “sustainable” development. We must oppose western growth models by redefining the whole concept of development. Without a clear sense of ethics, “sustainable” development will become simply another expression of economic growth. Therefore, sustainable development must strongly challenge any model of development that encourages indefinite growth, which simply and eventually tends to the destruction of life in the finite system of the planet. It should aim at enhancing the quality of life, which cannot be measured by quantitative growth. In other words, we must move from growth-oriented development to a qualitative development that fully respects ecological laws and concerns, as well as ethical values.
2. Poverty is a concrete consequence of unlimited economic growth and ecological deterioration, and “sustainable” development must ensure its eradication. The environment is being destroyed primarily by major industries and transnational corporations. These industries and corporations are depriving people of their own land and resources, thus making them poorer. In order to survive, the poor destroy their own environment. This action in turn aggravates poverty. According to estimates, some 15 million people are said to die every year as a consequence of starvation and malnutrition. The churches cannot endorse the kind of development that results in the enormous “development” of the few and the impoverishment of the many. The churches cannot support those so-called “developmental” projects that are politically conditioned. Instead of healing the wound, they cause more damage. What is needed is not charity or aid, but structural change, the transformation of systems and the re-evaluation of unjust and sinful policies.
3. Any development that does not serve justice or produce an equitable distribution of wealth becomes a vehicle for oppression. In order to develop poor countries, the rich countries must change their structures of production and patterns of consumption and respond to the needs of the poor. The gap between the rich and the poor is wider than ever. Any development model that claims to be “sustainable” must include sharing of resources and mutual accountability. The poor must become the agents of their own development. In order for development to be truly “sustainable”, the poor must be empowered to become self-reliant and full participants

in the development policies and processes. This major challenge has not yet been met because of its political implications.

Therefore, limiting economic growth and enhancing “sustainable” development are both moral and ecological necessities. If “sustainable” development is not ethically sustainable and does not generate dignity, freedom, participation and justice, it destroys creation and endangers human survival. The rich countries have the primary responsibility of re-evaluating and reorienting their policy of development.⁹

(b) From elite-controlled economy to participatory economy

The present global economic system is an idolatry. Controlled by only a very few countries, it is creating ecological destruction, social injustice and high-level consumerism, alienating people from each other and from the creation. The present economy must be restructured in order to ensure participation and justice, and in order to function in harmony with ecological reality. Such an attempt should, in my judgment, necessarily involve the following perspectives:

(i) With the collapse of communism, the world is now moving steadily from a state-controlled economy towards a free-market economy. In the absence of any other choice, the free-market economy has become for many a new source of liberation. For others, however, it continues to generate poverty, inequality, domination and ecological destruction. Is free-market capitalism a solution? Should we not look for qualitatively different, but realistic, alternatives that meet the needs and concerns of societies and the creation?

At its First Assembly, the WCC criticized the false promises and assumptions of both communism and capitalism, stating that “it is the responsibility of Christians to seek new, creative solutions which never allow either justice or freedom to destroy the other”.¹⁰ The Canberra Assembly spoke of “the immorality of our world economic order”, and clearly stated that the market economy is in need of “reform”.¹¹ We should not idealize any system. Nor should we attempt to initiate an alternative system. This is not the task of the Church. As the “prophetic sign” of the coming Kingdom, the Church must constantly recall the “provisional character” of all structures, systems and ideologies; they will all be judged by the demands of the gospel and the values of the Kingdom.¹² This criterion and approach must constitute the only basis of the churches’ involvement in the reconstruction and transformation of economic systems.

(ii) In a number of places, the free market has become an expression of neo-racism. It has oppressed people and violated human rights in the names of freedom and democracy. It has brought about a dominant and privileged élite and a marginalized majority. Any economic structure that is not participatory produces economic and ecological injustice, and thus is sinful in both a theological and an ethical sense. The people have the right to full

participation. A Christian vision of society condemns any kind of ideology or system that reduces people to by-products of social and economic forces. The World Convocation in Seoul affirmed that any form of human power and authority ought to be subject to God and accountable to people.¹³ Therefore, economic structures and policies should be based on people's participation and empowerment, not on their exploitation as consumers and factors of production.

A Christian ethic stands firmly for a participatory democracy that protects human dignity, value and the right of the people to full justice, freedom and life. "Dictatorial" democracies are emerging in some parts of the world; these actually constitute a new form of totalitarianism. They must be strongly challenged. When the people are neglected and not given a full right in decision-making processes, there is no true democracy. Any structures or ideologies that have an "elitist" character and are not based on the will of the people will become, in the long run, oppressive. The outburst of young people on the streets of Berlin, Bucharest and Beijing in recent years reflects the relentless drive of people for participation, dignity and life.

(iii) One of the major problems with free-market capitalism is the unequal distribution of its fruits. An uncontrolled free-market economy, founded as it is on power and profit, breeds exploitation and domination. We seem to be moving from political colonialism to economic colonialism, since the wealth in the North has its origins largely in the exploitation of the South. We cannot eliminate poverty through aid programmes. We must remove its root causes by redistributing economic access, power and wealth. We endorse ownership that is not detrimental to the common good, provided that it is not perceived in terms of exclusive individualism and is not practised as domination.

Democracy and inequality cannot co-exist. Inequality is the negation of democracy, since it creates a privileged and oppressive minority. In fact, "the mark of an economic system is measured not by its power, wealth or size, but by how it cares for the poorest and weakest members."¹⁴ The world economy has moved from authoritarian collectivism to exclusive individualism, and injustice remains. It can only be healed when the world economy moves from an élite-controlled capitalism to a democratic, participatory and equalitarian economy.¹⁵

I want to conclude this section with the following remarks. We are against centrally planned and controlled economic systems. We are also against the uncontrolled market-economy system. Both dehumanize the human being. Besides measuring all economic structures and policies against its ethical values, the prophetic role of the Church also implies a creative participation in political, economic and social renewal and reconstruction. The churches should, therefore, commit themselves to reshaping and reorienting the present free-market system in a way that transcends the deficiencies and failure of both Marxist collectivism and

liberal capitalism, and practises fully an economic democracy based on participation, shared responsibility, equality and mutual accountability.

(c) From life-destructive consumerism to a pattern of responsible living

The present level of consumerism is such that the resources of the earth can no longer meet human needs. The lifestyles of affluent societies are greatly challenging the sustainability of human life and eco-life. Recognizing the far-reaching consequences of consumer practices in developed countries, UNCED proposed a pattern of “sustainable living”. In this regard, it is important to spell out two basic points:

1. We must restore the quality of human life. This is an ecological, social, economic and, above all, an ethical necessity. God gave to humanity the gift of life and the whole creation. Humanity is called to preserve and enrich it for the glory of God. Life is sacred, not only because its giver is holy, but also because it is given for the building of the Kingdom of God. Christian faith demands that sacredness, integrity and wholeness of life be safeguarded.
2. For a Christian, the question is not one of “sustainable” living, but rather one of responsible living. Life is not only a divine gift to be preserved sacredly; it is also a vocation to be carried on with the sense of responsibility and accountability. Life is a theo-centred and theo-oriented reality. A self-centred and self-sufficient understanding of life is alien to Christian faith. Consumerism is not only a way of life; it is also a way of understanding the meaning and purpose of human life.

Therefore, consumerism is not only at the root of economic injustice, ecological disorder and human survival; it is fundamentally the denial of the sacredness and wholeness of life. It is a moral sin because it generates poverty and threatens life. The Church must deal with consumerism as an ethical issue: first, by condemning the accumulation of wealth, which was a legitimate expression of human rights, but has become a source of injustice and insecurity for many; second, by encouraging the reduction of consumption and waste, and sharing the resources of the earth in ways that enhance the lives of all people and preserve the integrity of creation; third, by promoting a culture that can improve the quality of life and live in harmony with creation’s integrity; and fourth, by aiming at breaking down racial, class and gender prejudice in order to rebuild an all-inclusive community of sharing and participation.

Economic justice and ecological sustainability require fundamental changes in consumption and lifestyles. Christians should become examples of a new way of asceticism by living responsibly and consuming less.

Ecumenical Implications: A Few Considerations

The churches and the Ecumenical Movement should deal with ecological and economic issues on the basis of an ethic that moves the Church from its prophetic role of merely denouncing to the dynamic role of *educating* and *participating*. A responsible society in a sustainable creation can be built up when, first, the churches' theology, liturgy, spirituality, diakonia, mission and evangelism are reshaped and reoriented in a way that provides people with the basic ethical values of the gospel and makes these values relevant and responsive to the present realities and concerns; and second, when the churches become agents of change and conversion by fully participating in reconstructing and transforming the societies, with a programme based on justice, peace, human rights and respect for creation.

Christian faith must be lived out in the midst of the ambiguities of a complex world and be enacted in concrete ethical decisions and commitments. This is not, of course, an easy task in a world full of evil "powers and principalities". But this is the calling of God, a calling more urgent today than ever before. The churches should take this missionary challenge with courage and faithful obedience to the imperatives of the gospel. The following priorities should, in my view; acquire more focal attention on the ecumenical agenda in general, and within the programmatic priorities of the World Council of Churches in particular.

(a) Justice, peace and integrity of creation: more urgency and focus

The Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC) process must continue to remain at the heart of the ecumenical witness of the WCC. The recommendation of the Canberra Assembly to launch a global decade for JPIC to be observed through an annual ten-day celebration deserves serious consideration. Furthermore, it is important that the debate on Just, Participatory and Sustainable Society (JPSS) (1976-79) be revived in a new perspective. I consider this link between JPIC and JPSS of particular importance since it sharpens the ethical and socio-economic dimensions of JPIC. I believe that due consideration should be given to the following concerns: First, the JPIC process needs to be more clearly focused and contextualized, and brought into a dynamic relationship with action-oriented programmes. Second, it must not be confined to a few regions and groups; rather, it should ensure the participation of all people of God, make the voice of the voiceless heard, and establish broader networks of solidarity. Third, more educational work is needed with the churches to make JPIC an integral part of their Christian witness.

(b) Towards a new ecumenical social thinking

Because it is predominantly anthropocentric and dualistic, western Christian ethics is contributing to the present ecological and economic

crises. As we enter a new period of ecumenical history, we must pay serious attention to issues related to Church and society. The Canberra Assembly said that the WCC should “focus on the central ethical concerns of our time”.¹⁵ The Ecumenical Movement is not only responsible for reminding, serving and challenging the churches. It must also develop an ecumenical social thinking that will help the churches seek the most appropriate ethical responses to the burning questions facing humanity. While this concern should permeate all the programmes of the WCC, it should also find a clear point of expression, particularly in the work of Unit III.

(c) A life-centred theology of creation

Being immediately concerned with unity, the Ecumenical Movement turned its attention mainly to Christology. Therefore the subject of creation has remained on the periphery of ecumenical discussion. To correct this situation, the WCC should make the development of a life-centred and eco-oriented theology of creation a major thematic priority for the coming period. In this initiative, the Council should focus on pneumatological perspectives provided by the Canberra Assembly and the growing emphasis on trinitarian theology in the Ecumenical Movement. Particular consideration should also be given to the inseparable interconnection that exists between humanity and creation, with particular emphasis on the whole meaning of life. Faith and Order and JPIC could become appropriate contexts to treat the issue in a comprehensive manner.

(d) Population explosion: study and action

I have already referred to the urgency of this problem. Our churches are not well prepared to deal with this global issue. The WCC should embark immediately on a study process tackling the issue in all its dimensions and manifestations. Two factors must be taken into account: first, demographic explosion and ecological and economic issues are interdependent; second, the problem of population growth is not primarily about numbers of people; it is also about human rights, women's rights, consumption patterns and sustainable development. The WCC must be ready to build public awareness, collaborate with international organizations and establish guidelines for action. The WCC should also make a specific contribution to the forthcoming UN International Conference on Population and Development (cf 1994 Cairo).¹⁶

(e) Christian understanding of the human being

UNCED, the WCC Conference on ecumenical response to UNCED, and the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order all asked for a renewed

Christian anthropology. I consider this great challenge, crucial for the future of the Ecumenical Movement. The Humanum Studies, concluded in 1975, helped the churches and the Ecumenical Movement to refocus on anthropology as a major theological, ethical and ecumenical issue. A separate programme within the programmatic framework of the WCC may not be appropriate at this time. What is vitally needed, in my opinion, is a renewed understanding of the place and vocation of the human being in creation. Anthropology must become a permanent concern of the Ecumenical Movement, as it attempts to grapple with issues emanating from the relationship between church, humanity and creation. An inter-Unit approach, including Faith and Order, must be established to provide a clear focus for this concern.¹⁷

(f) Towards a culture of non-violence

Societies are searching for the kind of culture that transforms unjust structures and promotes non-violence, sacredness of life and human rights; a culture that can live in immediate nearness and harmony with the whole creation; a culture that enhances the equal dignity of all peoples and races, and the partnership between men and women. In fact, commitment to a culture of non-violence, dialogue and solidarity has become a major concern for the pluralistic societies of today. The Ecumenical Movement must take this concern much more seriously. In my view, the WCC could treat this matter through many of its major programmatic priorities including, particularly, Gospel and Culture and Education for all God's People.

(g) An ecclesiological basis for the "civil society" debate

The concept of "civil society" has become a challenging one in this transitional historical moment. There are, of course, different understandings of the concept. For some, civil society involves enabling a society to preserve its autonomy. For others, the role of civil society is the critique of the state and the search for "post-statist policies". In spite of its different meanings in different socio-political contexts, the concept of civil society provides a new terrain for democratization and the protection of human rights. The debate on civil society that has just emerged in the WCC is a helpful one, particularly for the JPIC process. It needs, however, to be more clearly defined and focused. It particularly needs a clear ecclesiological basis, since churches are part of civil society.

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The parliament of World Religions (Aug 28-Sept 5, 1993, Chicago) emphatically stated: "No global order without a new global ethic."¹⁸ It

attempted to develop a consensus on binding values and basic moral attitudes for a global ethic.

Can the Ecumenical Movement by its prophetic and renewing power promote “sustainable value systems” (Canberra Assembly) that will undergird the ecological and economic decisions of nations and build a responsible society in a sustainable creation? Can the churches become a sign of hope and an instrument of a socially just, politically participatory and economically equitable society? Can the churches act as the avant-garde of one earth community, built on binding global ethical values and principles?

The Ecumenical Movement is called to give to Christendom and the whole world “a vision in which the promise of life is stronger than the accusation of death..., critical hope that does not bow to the powers of destruction but is turned towards the future of life”.¹⁹ This is a challenge with which the Ecumenical Movement must seriously grapple.

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1. F Kennedy, *Preparing for the Twenty-first Century* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 1993), 349.
 2. W Grandberg-Michaelson, *Redeeming the Creation* (WCC: Geneva, 1992), 70. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. The “Earth Summit” raised the awareness of the threats to sustainability and the life for future generations. The WCC organized a major conference under the title “Searching for the New Heavens and New Earth” alongside UNCED. Increasingly, the WCC questioned the misuse of the term “sustainable development” to legitimize current economic approaches which are based on unlimited growth and on continuous and unregulated expansion of production and consumption by the world’s rich. After the Eighth Assembly, the WCC emphasized even more the conflict between the quest for life in dignity in socially just and sustainable communities, and the expansion of world trade and international finances.
 3. GO Barney with J Blawett and KR Bamey, *Global 2000 Revisited: What Shall We Do?* 1993, 15 (mimeographed).
 4. Basil, “On the Spirit”, P Schaff and H Wace (eds), *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, Vol. VIII, 23.
 5. Gregory of Nyssa, “On the Holy Spirit” and “On the Faith”, *A Select Library*, Vol. V, 320, 338.
 6. EB Economou, “An Orthodox View of the Ecological Crisis”, reprinted from *Theologia* (Athens: 1990), 61.
 7. David Gill (ed), *Gathered for Life: Official Report of the WCC’s Sixth Assembly* (Geneva: WCC, 1983), 242.
 8. In March 1995, the representatives of 186 nations gathered together in Copenhagen for the World Summit for Social Development, and concluded an ambitious and comprehensive plan of action intended to put people at the centre of development. The three major social issues, which the plan of action was particularly intended to address, were poverty, full employment and social integration. The centrepiece of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action is a series of ten principal commitments: to eradicate poverty, as an ethical,

social, political and economic imperative of humankind (Commitment 2); to promote full employment as a basic policy goal (Commitment 3); to attain universal and equitable access to education and primary healthcare (Commitment 6); to foster social integration through the promotion and protection of all human rights (Commitment 4); to achieve equality and equity between women and men (Commitment 5); to accelerate the development of Africa and the least developed countries (Commitment 7); to ensure that structural adjustment programmes include social development goals (Commitment 8); to increase resources allocated to social development (Commitment 9); to create an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development (Commitment 1); to strengthen co-operation for social development through the UN (Commitment 10). The WCC monitored the Copenhagen follow-up through delegations to the meetings of the Commission on Social Development. The next meeting of the UN Social Summit took place in June 2000 in Geneva. The WCC is actively involved in a conscientization process. To this effect, a letter will be sent to member churches, world communions, ecumenical organizations and other partners, inviting them to issue public statements that, first, affirm their own engagement to people-centred development as a response to God's option for the poor; and second, call for a renewed commitment of governments and the UN for the eradication of poverty, the cancellation of foreign debt and other means to support people-oriented social development.

9. *Christian Faith and the World Economy Today: A Study Document from the WCC* (Geneva: WCC, 1992), 23.

10. WA Visser 't Hooft (ed), *First Assembly of the World Council of Churches*, 80.

11. Michael Kinnamon (ed), *Signs of the Spirit: Official Report of the WCC Seventh Assembly* (Geneva: WCC, 1991), 242.

12. *Towards Koinonia in Faith, Life and Witness* (Geneva: WCC, 1993), 36; C Villi-Viceno, *A Theology of Reconstruction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 232.

13. *Now is the Time: World Convocation on Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, Seoul, 1990* (Geneva: WCC, 1990), 12.

14. *Christian Faith*, 25.

15. Kinnamon, *Signs of the Spirit*, 187.

16. The WCC first addressed the issue of population policy in the early 1970s, following the Fourth Assembly in Uppsala. In 1973, the Central Committee adopted a report on "*Population Policy, Social Justice and the Quality of Life*". It was intended to stimulate discussion within the churches at the time of World Population Year in 1974 and the UN World Population Conference in Bucharest, also in 1974. The study challenged the tendency to put the chief responsibility for the population crisis on the developing nations. Both developed and developing countries have an obligation to meet the needs of growing populations. The report stressed the role of the churches in helping to promote "the acceptance and practice" of responsible parenthood by both husbands and wives, involving also the right of parents to "the means of family planning acceptable to them on conscience". With regard to state programmes to limit births, the report recommended "non-coercive" proposals.

For a long time, the 1973 report remained the only major WCC statement on the population issue. Subsequent WCC Assemblies made only passing reference to the concern. The Canberra Assembly stated that we can no longer "ignore the root causes of population growth which lie, more than in anything else, in the poverty

and the lack of social security still prevailing in two thirds of our world". Educational programmes on environmental and ecological concerns "should include the matter of responsible stewardship of human fertility and should lead to an appreciation of and reverence for creation". This emphasis on the link between population issues and environmental concerns was reaffirmed by a study document "*Christian Faith and World Economy Today*" (1992). The report reflected the growing conviction that a new study of population issues was needed. The most explicit challenge to review and restate ecumenical positions came from the ecumenical meeting held in Rio de Janeiro on the occasion of the UNCED meeting (1992). A letter was sent to all member churches asking them to share with the WCC all the relevant information about policy statements of the churches on the topic of population, ongoing programmes and reflection processes in this area. Only very few replies were received and it became obvious that the issue so far had not been dealt with as a priority in the WCC member churches.

After the Cairo meeting, the WCC Executive Committee at its meeting in February 1995 suggested that a briefing paper be prepared for discussion in the churches on the issues of population and development. It was hoped that this paper could build on the results of the Cairo Conference and identify those issues which required particular attention in the churches in the light of the recommendations from the Cairo Conference. A discussion paper, "*Churches, Population and Development: Cairo and Beyond*" was prepared by an international group of experts. The objective of this paper was to stimulate further reflection and discussion within the churches.

17. It is important to note that Faith and Order has, in its first meeting after Harare, included in its agenda the Christian understanding of human beings as a major item for the coming period. In March 2000 a small Faith and Order consultation took place in Boston, USA, on this subject.

18. *A Global Ethic: 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions* (Chicago: IL, 1993).

19. W Hubier, "Perspectives for Ecumenism in the Nineties", in *The Ecumenical Movement Tomorrow: Suggestions for Approaches and Alternatives*, M Reuver, F Solms and G Huizer (eds) (Geneva: WCC-KEK Publishing House, 1993), 378.

TRADITION AS IMPULSE FOR RENEWAL AND WITNESS: INTRODUCING ORTHODOX MISSIOLOGY IN THE IRM

Athanasios N Papathanasiou

The Process of Introducing Orthodox Missiology in the *IRM*

A beginning with an absence

The very first words of the *International Review of Mission* pointed to the desire for inter-Christian co-operation: “The study of missionary problems will be undertaken in international co-operation [...]. We stand unreservedly for the principle of interdenominational co-operation as distinct from undenominational or extra-denominational action.”¹

Indeed, this first issue had an interdenominational character, but there were no references to the Orthodox churches, nor any articles by Orthodox theologians. The Orthodox churches had not yet taken their historic decisions which led to the formation of the Ecumenical Movement. The famous Encyclical of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, calling upon the Orthodox churches to carefully examine the issue of inter-Christian communication and co-operation, was published in 1920,² almost eight years after the launch of the *IRM*.

In Protestant circles which had played a leading role in Edinburgh in 1910, Orthodoxy was not unknown. Nikolai Kasatkin, the Russian clergyman who was working as a missionary in Japan, had been invited but had not responded.³ Kasatkin died in 1912, shortly after the *IRM* came into being. Shortly afterwards, an article was published by Charles F Sweet, an Anglican vicar who had personally known Kasatkin.⁴ Sweet recounted Kasatkin’s story and highlighted his missionary principles: the acceptance of indigenous culture, his extensive translation work, and the formation of a local church. He noted that “no mission is so copiously supplied with publications for every sort of learner as the Orthodox Mission; it has been said that it might well be called the Church of the Translations”.⁵

Sweet’s essay was the first and, for a long time, the only article which spoke about the basic principles of Orthodox missiology. Over the next twenty years (1913-38), only one article in the field was published, a purely historical one dealing with the evangelism of Russia in the tenth century.⁶

Obviously the Orthodox churches were considered to be non-missionary, and limited by their various national identities.

Three new bricks in the wall

This image of Orthodox inertia changed decisively during the 1960s. Yet before then, from the 1930s to the 1950s, something significant took place. Soon after the Bolshevik revolution in Russia (1917), many Russian intellectuals and theologians began emigrating to western Europe, with the result that many western Christians became acquainted, often profoundly so, with Orthodoxy. During these decades, three very important articles written by Orthodox theologians appeared in the *IRM*. These articles could be described as precursors of what was to emerge later.

The first of the three articles in 1934, by the Russian lay theologian Nicolas Zernov (1898-1980), gave a systematic introduction to Eastern Christianity. Features of the Orthodox tradition that were highlighted included the emphasis on the resurrection, the cosmic understanding of salvation, the focus on the Holy Spirit (in contrast to western Christocentrism), the epicletic character of liturgy (that at every Divine Liturgy the Holy Spirit is called to act anew), and many other aspects. At the same time, Zernov sought to deepen western and eastern Christians' acquaintance with each other's traditions.⁷

The next published text, in 1942 by Lev Gillet (1893-1980), a French convert to Orthodoxy, was truly pioneering. Taking as his starting point two articles that had been published in *IRM* on the mission to the Jews, Gillet proposed a new understanding of mission as dialogue, and not simply as a one-sided movement towards the other.

Gillet realized that only a very few people shared this understanding, even though it was rooted in the ancient Christian tradition and had been expressed typically in the second-century work of the Martyr Justin, *Dialogue with the Jew Trypho*.⁸ After Gillet's article, three decades passed before mission as dialogue came to the forefront of the Ecumenical Movement through the WCC sub-unit on Dialogue,⁹ which developed a very interesting bibliography but seems to have ignored Gillet's prophetic voice.¹⁰

The third article appeared in 1954, again by Nicolas Zernov. With exceptional vividness, Zernov used his experiences from teaching in the Oriental Orthodox Church in India to point out the danger faced by Eastern churches of being locked into a national and cultural collectivism:

Each nation has its own gifts and its own temptations. The family is the gift and the stumbling block for the Indian people. For the sake of the family they are ready to bear great sacrifice: their attachment to their relatives is deep and lasting, but it is also on account of their family allegiances that they often refuse to serve still greater causes and to be followers of Christ... Instead of serving others they have subordinated their religion to their family interests. [...] This withdrawal from missionary responsibilities must not, however,

obscure the fact that the Eastern Church of Travancore has great spiritual achievements on its credit side. It has preserved Orthodox faith in its integrity, it enjoys a rich and uninterrupted sacramental life and it has succeeded in blending many Indian customs and traditions with Christian faith in one true Redeemer of the world.¹¹

Apart from these three articles, until the 1960s only a very few other articles dealt with Orthodox perspectives.¹² Most spoke of the history of the Eastern churches or current situation in the Soviet Union.¹³

The great turning point

In 1961, “Syndesmos, The World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth” established a pan-Orthodox missionary centre, called *Porefthentes*, or “Go Ye”. This centre was a catalyst for awakening missionary consciousness in the Orthodox Churches, for producing missiological theory and for participating ecumenically.¹⁴ The same year, the Russian Orthodox Church became a member of the WCC (the Greek Orthodox churches had been there at its founding). This enhanced Orthodox presence was noted in the *IRM*:

Eastern Orthodoxy is once again asserting its former interest in missionary activity. This will come as a surprise to the majority of Protestants and Roman Catholics. It has long been assumed and accepted that Orthodox churches are nationalist churches and therefore lack the missionary concern necessary for them to break out from these self-imposed boundaries [...]. There are some noteworthy signs of revival for us to examine. First and foremost is the establishment, in 1961, of an Inter-Orthodox Missionary Centre under the name “Porefthentes”, in Athens.¹⁵

Published the same year was an article by Anastasios Yannoulatos, the first director of *Porefthentes*, who became a well-known (Greek) Orthodox missiologist. He based missionary activity on the liturgical experience, and showed how worship in and of itself bears within it the concern for the world outside the worshipping community.¹⁶ Yannoulatos had been inspired by his first ecumenical experience at the 1963 missionary conference of the CWME, and he called upon other Orthodox to realize the missionary nature of their Church and to reflect upon the wealth of its missionary heritage.¹⁷

The increased Orthodox presence was also stressed in 1965 by the *IRM* editor, Lesslie Newbiggin, when in referring to the merging of the International Missionary Council with the WCC, he highlighted valuable criteria of the Orthodox tradition:

When the proposal to put the International Missionary Council and the World Council of Churches together was being hotly debated, no point glowed hotter than the question, “Can the Orthodox churches really be part of a missionary council?” There were those on both sides who said no [...]. More successfully than any other missions, Orthodox missions seem to have grasped the fact that mission is not the same as church extension, that it involves the birth of a new church – the church of a nation baptized (with its

language and its culture and all its common life) into Christ. It has not been characteristic of Orthodox missions in their greatest days to use the old shell for self-protection against the new culture.¹⁸

Important articles by Orthodox writers were published in 1965. Yannoulatos stressed the cosmic character of salvation, the eschatological nature of mission and the duty to incarnate the gospel in every culture.¹⁹ Elias Voulgarakis, a lay theologian and later missiology professor at the University of Athens, defined love as the motive for mission. He disagreed with the competition between Christian denominations and contrasted proselytism with free conversion.²⁰ The Russian theologian Nikita Struve studied the work of the nineteenth-century Siberian missionary Macaire Goukharev and his methodology (emphasizing catechesis, acceptance of local languages, avoiding mass baptism, and so on), and made the following observation:

At the present time, there no longer exists any organized missionary work. The contributions in this issue by Archimandrite Yannoulatos and by Elias Voulgarakis speak of missionary renewal in the Greek Orthodox Church; but at present more has been accomplished in the realm of theory than in practice.²¹

Struve was correct. Mission is about action, crossing boundaries – not as an extension of Christendom, but as witness to the gospel in every human context.

A new impetus

Shortly before the 1970s, the debate over the nature of salvation started to shake the foundations of the Ecumenical Movement: does salvation concern only the individual, is it social in scope, or both? In this discussion, the contribution of the Orthodox was considered particularly useful. As the Romanian Orthodox priest Ion Bria (1929-2002) explained:

At the beginning of the 1970s, when critical dissonances in the missiological debate were becoming sharper and the urgency of a holistic articulation of mission was increasingly evident, the WCC encouraged the Orthodox churches to become more active in this discussion and to articulate their position in an ecumenical framework. Consequently, since the WCC's world mission conference on "Salvation Today" (Bangkok 1972-73), Orthodox theologians from both Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches have met on several occasions to reflect on the elements of a missiological typology of the Orthodox churches. The typology proposed corresponds to the history of their own mission and especially to the constant tradition in which worship and liturgy are an essential factor of proclaiming and confessing Christ. We call this typology the "liturgy after the Liturgy".²²

This was revelatory for at least one western Christian:

Can we speak of a specific Orthodox understanding of the word "mission"? Western churches have been very much preoccupied with this concept for

many decades. But Orthodox voices were absent in past missionary conferences. In Bangkok we discussed these questions on an equal footing for the first time, only to discover that we spoke different languages. The Orthodox thinking on this crucial subject in Etchmiadzine has clarified the issues. For me, this was a new approach, a discovery, because categories which I tended to accept without questioning were deeply challenged.²³

The “liturgy after the Liturgy” was a new perspective, although rooted in the heart of tradition. The meaning of this outlook is that the vision of the Kingdom, which is revealed in the Divine Liturgy, concerns the whole world, and that it has to be diffused as witness and service to the whole of society. The witness that is given after the Liturgy is an organic part of it, not something added on and therefore of secondary importance. The formula “liturgy after the Liturgy” was first articulated by Anastasios Yannoulatos in 1975 in Etchmiadzine, Armenia, and since then, along with the valuable contribution of Ion Bria, has become an established phrase that is used often in the *IRM*.²⁴ How this phrase has contributed to a more holistic approach is evident in these words of Yannoulatos:

Worship and service are two aspects of one breathing rhythm: inspiration and expiration. For there cannot be a dynamic expiration, in service, without a dynamic inspiration, in worship, and vice versa. One cannot have the illusion of living “in him”, who was “the one who serves” (Luke 22:27), who “went about doing good” (Acts 10:38), unless one’s life is a dynamic expression of this transfiguring act, an act of resistance against demonic powers that corrupt human existence through injustice, greediness, distortion of the thought and meaning of life exerting a continuous pollution of man’s imagination. One cannot remain indifferent to the unjust domination over people just because they are poor, to unjust discriminations because of race, sex or age, or to the many forms of human egocentricity that are the *ultimate sin* and rebellion against the love of the Triune God.²⁵

From this point onwards there was a more regular Orthodox presence in the *IRM* with the help of theologians such as the Greek professor Petros Vassiliadis, the Romanian Fr Ioan Sauca, and others. Yet to give an account of the course of the Orthodox contribution to the journal over the following decades is beyond the constraints of this article.

Main Features of Orthodox Missiology

Orthodox writers characteristically attempt to show the dynamics of their tradition. The essence of this is found in the osmosis of Christology, Pneumatology, and Trinitarianism, and all these within the horizon of the coming Kingdom.²⁶ This eschatological outlook is the yardstick for every ecclesiastical institution, tradition and mindset.

Perhaps the only recent Orthodox practical example of inculturation in missionary work is found in an article by Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Ostathios of the (Oriental) Malankara Orthodox Indian Church, who examined the concept of love in Hinduism and Buddhism.²⁷ However, the

Orthodox make an important contribution on the theoretical and theological level.²⁸ Especially important are articles that stress not only respect for the existing cultures, but also cultural creativity; that is, when the gospel not only meets cultures but also contributes to the formation of new cultures.²⁹ Exceptional in this regard is a paper by the Romanian Viorel Ionita, who speaks not only of *inculturation*, but also of *inter-culturation*.³⁰ Whereas inculturation can slip into an essentialistic understanding of cultures (as if static and unchanging), inter-culturation emphasizes that cultures are in a state of flux, and that a process of osmosis always occurs between them.

“The Orthodox cannot separate the gospel values from the Christian community, which carries these values.”³¹ The Kingdom concerns the whole world, and God unceasingly works for the transfiguration of the whole creation into God’s Kingdom. The Church as a new reality reveals and serves the vision of the Kingdom, through its witness but also through how it lives. “The church [...] exists as ‘leaven’, ‘sign’ and ‘sacrament’ of the Kingdom that has come and is coming. What the church has, it has to radiate and offer for the sake of all the world.”³²

Mission points to the event of communion which God offers to the world as the Body of Christ, the Church, that is, a community in history which reflects the life of God as communion. Mission cannot be exercised without reference to the Church. [...] A confessing Church today can only proclaim the Gospel if it is a living and transparent icon of Christ, both as suffering servant and the Lord of the world.³³

If Christ’s Mission brings about essentially nothing less than the self-giving of God’s trinitarian life to the world, it follows that mission is ultimately possible only in and through *an event of communion which reflects in history the trinitarian existence of God himself*. The church is meant precisely to be that. Therefore, mission suffers and is seriously distorted or disappears whenever it is not possible to point to a community in history which reflects this trinitarian existence of communion. This happens whenever the church is so distorted or divided that it is no longer possible to recognize it as such a communion, or whenever Mission is exercised without reference to the Church, but with reference simply to the individuals or the social realities of history. Ecclesiological heresy, therefore, renders Mission impossible or distorted.³⁴

This Orthodox affirmation that mission is of the very essence of the church³⁵ and not only the work of individuals, provided new inspiration for some Protestant partners in the Ecumenical Movement.³⁶

It is likely that Orthodox writings such as the above were a response to pluralist theologies emerging since the 1970, which seemed to question the role of the institutional Church and the finality of Christ. At a 1974 consultation of the Eastern and Oriental churches, the Romanian theologian Fr Dimitru Staniloae emphasized not only the centrality and finality of Christ, but also his presence throughout all creation and in the honourable works of every person.³⁷ This view allowed for a rejection of Christomonism and aggressive mission proselytism, and for the

development of Christology in synthesis with Pneumatology and Trinitarianism,³⁸ so that the universal and free action of God can be acknowledged everywhere. But this should not be understood as a position opposed to conversion.³⁹ In any case, there is always the need for conversion to God's Kingdom.⁴⁰

As argued earlier, dialogue as rooted in the very being of the Church, has appeared since the 1970s as a new paradigm in the Ecumenical Movement. Within this framework, Petros Vassiliadis makes some crucial clarifications:

Dialogue is the new term that now runs parallel to, and in some cases in place of, the old missiological terminology. This development, of course, does not by any means imply that there has been a shift in Christian soteriology from the slogan "No salvation but through Christ" – overcoming the classical Catholic view "*extra ecclesiam salus non est*", first expressed by Cyprian of Carthage and later misinterpreted to mean exclusively the "institutional" (Catholic?) Church – to a novel one: "No salvation but through God." Rather it is a radical reinterpretation of Christology through pneumatology, through the rediscovery of the forgotten Trinitarian theology of the undivided church.⁴¹

One aspect of ecclesiology is especially important. The Church does not exist in some automatic way, but has to prove itself faithful to its Lord in order to be truly the Church. This protects ecclesiology from sliding into institutionalism and ritualism, and in this way, the renewal of the Church is a missionary act. Renewal is the movement which enables the Church to address itself to the present, to enter into dialogue with it and not remain locked in the past. This is not a denial of its tradition, but – on the contrary – what its tradition demands. It is a duty that stems from the very nature of the Church:

Orthodoxy insists and has always insisted that the Church will remain the Church only if it mediates the communion of man with God, but that any one-dimensional interpretation of that communion will fail to encompass the totality of the act of salvation. Therefore, not only *theosis* – deification – but freedom, liberation, justice: all are part of the total reality of salvation.⁴²

The mission of the Church and the institutional church itself can hide Christ if they are a mere expression of historical continuity. Where there is a renewal of the Church, there is a mission. This mission does not necessarily require anyone to "go out" anywhere.⁴³

Despite their slight differences, Orthodox texts usually maintain an inclusivist position. That is, they express the conviction that God acts everywhere, within and outside the Church, and that God meets all persons, all peoples, all traditions and all historical epochs. In this sense, the Church is not the owner of salvation but the one who serves at the side of God who saves, and witnesses to the dignity of the human person, that is, to the promise that every person will be resurrected.⁴⁴

At an inter-Orthodox consultation in the early 1970s, this discussion took place:

We encountered more difference of opinion among ourselves when we began looking for God's saving work outside the church, not only in secular movements of liberation but also in the reality of religions in the lives and traditions of people who follow them. [...] It is possible for Christians to regard the traditions, scriptures and practices of other religions in a very positive light as reflecting the widespread human search for and response to the Spirit of God. A second method of approach would be to see them, from a Christian interpretation, as containing a preparation for the Gospel and many hidden and unrecognized expressions of the one truth which is Christ. It was, thirdly, felt necessary to point out that religions and philosophies have also been regarded as putting barriers in the way of the coming of men to Christ. In any case we feel convinced that if God's love is both the source and the expression of salvation, then Christian love demands a relationship characterized by more respect for and interest in the faith and the aspirations of adherents of other religions.⁴⁵

Almost two decades later, Anastasios Yannoulatos' position was more decisive, grounded as it is in the tradition of the ancient Church:

Those outside the Christian faith who still have no knowledge of the will of God in its fullness, do not cease to move in the mystical radiance of his glory. God's will is diffused throughout the whole of history and throughout the whole world. Consequently it influences their own life, concerns them and embraces them. It is expressed in many ways – as divine providence, inspiration, guidance, etc.⁴⁶

In the same spirit, the Arab bishop Georges Khodr maintained that there are

small groups of semi-evangelical souls and people who follow to some extent the ethical patterns of the Sermon on the Mount. They form a kind of church *extra muros* outside the established historical Church [...]. The *imago Dei* can work very dynamically in a non-Christian. The cosmic Christ, in whom man can partake without naming him, is very real.⁴⁷

Metropolitan Ostathios linked this traditional inclusivism with the “anonymous Christians” theology:

My evangelistic brothers are in the habit of numbering the lost and those who have never heard the Gospel. I feel that this is a very wrong approach biblically, theologically, psychologically and factually. [...] We must find a new motivation for mission and evangelism other than this “lostness” of the so-called “lost”. [...] Mission must become the spontaneous expression of the joy of Christian discipleship. [...] Evangelism is the sharing of a joy freely given to us by Christ.⁴⁸

The fundamentalist missiologists, whose emphasis seems to be on the two billion people who are perishing without knowing or naming the name of Christ, are requested to increase the emphasis on the love of Christ... One who is baptized and made a Christian without the inwardness of the gospel is not a Christian. The mark of a Christian is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, the

indwelling of Christ, the manifestation of the sharing love of God. Those outside the visible church with the indwelling of the Logos are also the saved ones and are Christians “inwardly”. Yet mission is indispensable to make them realize that their life in Logos will become abundant life when they know that Christ is the Logos. In other words, there is an element of truth in the theory of latent church or the scattered seeds that are hidden that theologians like Karl Rahner and Paul Tillich have developed in their inimitable ways. The Holy Bible is not the book of one party or one denomination or one single theology. It is too big to be limited to one point of view.⁴⁹

The Russian Vitaly Borovoy maintained an interesting, rather idiosyncratic kind of universalism, but which seems to move outside the bounds of official Orthodox teaching:

Only the Kingdom of God will last without end. A last judgment, “eternal punishment”, torments will not be without end. From this situation there will be for everybody a transition through gradual *apokatastasis*. The transition will be multiform and realized in several stages. The process will not start within the historical space-time of biblical salvation, but it will be outside of biblical “eternity”, in the post-eschatological ages to come, with “new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells” (2 Pet. 3:13; cf Rev. 21:1).⁵⁰

Finally, I refer to Fr Michael Oleksa, a spokesman of the Orthodox Alaskan missionary legacy, who aptly described the double task of the Church: on the one hand, it has to acknowledge the freedom of the Spirit to act wherever it pleases; on the other, it has to discern the demonic forces which constantly strive to enslave humans in this fallen world, where reality is always mixed.⁵¹ I dare say that every time missiology contributes toward the accomplishment of this task, the Church may be truly experienced as the deacon of the resurrection promised by the One who renews all creation.

1. “The Editor’s Note”, *IRM*, 1 (1912), 2-3.

2. WA Visser ’t Hooft, *The Genesis and Formation of the World Council of Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1982), 1-6. The cited encyclical is thought to have contributed greatly to the creation of the WCC, of which the Orthodox Church was a founding member.

3. Viorel Ionita, “Co-operation and the Promotion of Unity: An Orthodox Perspective”, *Edinburgh 2010: Mission Then and Now*, David A Kerr and Kenneth R Ross (eds) (Oxford: Regnum, 2009), 263.

4. Charles Filkins Sweet, “Archbishop Nikolai and the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission to Japan”, *IRM*, 2 (1913), 126-47. Elsewhere Sweet provided the information that “in early Spring of 1909 an effort was made in Tokyo towards bringing about open communion between the Nippon Sei Ko Kwai (that is, the Japanese Church in communion with the Anglican Church) and the Haristos Sei Kyo Kwai (or the Japanese Church founded by Archbishop Nicolai of the Russian Church)”. See Sweet, “An Attempt at Unity in Japan: Anglican and Eastern

Orthodox Churches”, Tokyo, http://anglicanhistory.org/orthodoxy/sweet_attempt (1912). However, the Orthodox did not participate in the move towards unity made by the Protestant Churches of Japan in 1911. See GW Fulton, “The Distribution of Christian Forces in Japan”, *IRM*, 4 (1915), 109-119.

5. Sweet, “Archbishop Nikolai”, 144.

6. Charles H Robinson, “The Conversion of Russia”, *IRM*, 5 (1916), 398-422. During this period four articles on various parts of the East were published, although no mention was made of the Orthodox presence, despite the fact that there were Orthodox populations in those areas. See Howard Bliss, “The Balkan War and Christian Work among Moslems”, *IRM*, 2 (1913), 643-65; John R Mott, “Some Present-Day Trends in the Life of the Orient”, *IRM*, 16 (1927), 3-13. FL Hawks Pott “The Conversion of the Roman Empire and the Conversion of China: A Comparison and a Contrast”, *IRM*, 4 (1915), 546-551. Hiromichi Kozaki, “Christianity in Japan: 1. Characteristics of the Church”, *IRM*, 27 (1938), 358-60.

7. Nicolas Zernov, “The Christian Church of the East”, *IRM*, 23 (1934), 539-46.

8. Lev Gillet, “Dialogue with Trypho”, *IRM*, 31 (1942), 172-79, esp. 172. Gillet characteristically wrote: “May an ‘outsider’ who, without having ever taken part in any missionary work concerning the Jews, has none the less been in close contact with them not only through literature, but through many personal friendships, present here some views about the Christian approach to Israel? None of these views is really new. But the main idea – the idea, that is, of a ‘dialogue’ (of which the *Dialogos pros Tryphona* of Justin Martyr was the first and irenic model) substituted for the idea of a one-sided ‘mission’ to the Jews – has never yet obtained a wide hearing among the Christian public. It is this idea, nowadays the idea of a small minority, which the following lines will try to express.”

9. See, for example, Michael Amaladoss, “Dialogue and Mission: Conflict or Convergence?” *IRM*, 75 (1986), 222-24, which considers Dialogue as a paradigm shift. In the inter-Christian field, the understanding of other faiths as partners in dialogue can first be seen at the end of the 1930s (at the third Missionary Conference at Tambaram, India, 1938). However, the discussion became much more prominent in the 1970s.

10. According to Paul Löffler, the first Orthodox participation in the discussion was the address by the Arab Orthodox Georges Khodr to the WCC Central Committee of Addis Ababa in 1971. See Paul Löffler, “Representative Christian Approaches to People of Living Faiths: A Survey of Issues and its Evaluation”, *Faiths in the Midst of Faiths: Reflections on Dialogue in Community*, SJ Samartha (ed) (Geneva: WCC, 1977), 19.

11. Zernov, “Christianity in India and the Eastern Orthodox Church”, *IRM*, 43 (1954), 394. As in his previous work, Zernov again stressed the need for co-operation: “The Orthodox Church of India must be brought into this picture, but it can be an effective co-worker only in conjunction with other eastern churches. The majority of the problems of today have become worldwide, and such, it seems to me, is also the problem of the Church in India. It cannot be solved by western Christians alone. Only the East and the West together can find the real solution” (396).

12. Paul B Anderson, “The Church in the Slav World”, *IRM*, 36 (1947), 191-25. Matthew Spinka, “Berdyayev’s Critique of Communism”, *IRM*, 37 (1948), 264-72. CE Abraham, “Three Leaders of the Syrian Church of South India” (1948), 285-91. Matthew Shaw, “Impressions of the Russian Orthodox Church”, *IRM*, 47 (1958), 439-44.

13. One exception to this is the article by S Bolshakoff on the missionary history of the Russian Orthodox Church (in America, China and Japan), as well as the endeavour to continue missionary work in the USSR and among the Russian diaspora. At the same time, Bolshakoff underlined fundamental Orthodox missiological principles: the acceptance of the vernacular, avoiding the imposition of Russian customs, and the ordination of indigenous clergy. See S Bolshakoff, "Orthodox Mission Today", *IRM*, 42 (1953), 275-84.
14. Athanasios N Papatthanasiou, "Missionary Experience and Academic Quest: The Research Situation in Greece", *European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa*, Frieder Ludwig and Afé Adogame (eds) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 301-12.
15. C Samuel Calian, "Eastern Orthodoxy's Renewed Concern for Mission", *IRM*, 52 (1963), 33.
16. Anastasios Yannoulatos, "Orthodox Spirituality and External Mission", *IRM*, 52 (1963), 300-02.
17. Bishop Anastasios of Androussa, "Mexico City 1963: Old Wine into Fresh Wineskins", *IRM*, 67 (1978), 354-64. See also "Monks and Mission in the Eastern Church during the Fourth Century", *IRM*, 58 (1969), 208-26.
18. "From the Editor", *IRM*, 54 (1965), 273, 277-78.
19. Anastasios Yannoulatos, "The Purpose and Motive of Mission", *IRM*, 54 (1965), 281-97.
20. Elias Voulgarakis, "Mission and Unity from the Theological Point of View", *IRM*, 54 (1965), 298-307.
21. Nikita Struve, "Macaire Goukharev, a Prophet of Orthodox Mission", *IRM*, 54 (1965), 308.
22. Ion Bria, "The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective" (Geneva: WCC, 1996), 7.
23. Paul Fueter, "Confessing Christ Through Liturgy: An Orthodox Challenge to Protestants", *IRM*, 65 (1976), 123.
24. Bria, "The Liturgy after the Liturgy" *IRM*, 67 (1978), 87-90. "On Orthodox Witness", *IRM*, 69 (1980), 527-28. "Dynamics of Liturgy in Mission", *IRM*, 82 (1992), 317-25. Munduvel L George, "Incarnational Mission and Liturgical Proclamation", *IRM*, 63 (1974), 38-43. Michael J Oleksa, "Overwhelmed by Joy", *IRM*, 72 (1983), 415-20. See also my critique on some misuses of the formula: Papatthanasiou, "The Church as Mission: Fr Alexander Schmemmann's Liturgical Theology Revisited", *Proche-Orient Chrétien* 60 (2010), 6-41.
25. Anastasios Yannoulatos, "Worship-Service-Martyria", *IRM*, 72 (1983), 637. See also Metropolitan Geevarghese Mar Ostathios, "Kingdom of God and Identification with the Poor", *IRM*, 69 (1980), 503-07. Anastasios Yannoulatos, "Eastern Orthodoxy and Human Rights", *IRM*, 73 (1984), 454-66. Petros Vassiliadis, "Your Will be Done: Reflections from St. Paul", *IRM*, 75 (1986), 376-82. T Paul Verghese, "Salvation: The Meanings of a Biblical Word", *IRM*, 57 (1968), 399-416.
26. See for example Emmanuel Clapsis, "What does the Spirit say to the Churches? Missiological Implications of the Seventh Assembly of the WCC", *IRM*, 80 (1991), 327-37.
27. Geevarghese Mar Ostathios, "Conviction of Truth and Tolerance of Love", *IRM*, 74 (1985), 490-96.
28. Bria, "Orthodoxy and Mission", *IRM*, 89 (2000), 54, spoke of inculturation as an "urgent task today". See also Ioan Sauca, "One Gospel – Diverse Expressions", *IRM*, 85 (1996), 253-56. "Confessing Christ Today: Reports of Groups at a

- Consultation of Orthodox Theologians”, *IRM*, 64 (1975), 85. Oleksa, “Icons and the Cosmos: The Missionary Significance”, *IRM*, 72 (1983), 415-20. Elias Voulgarakis, “A Lesson in Evangelism: The Lives of Cyril and Methodius”, *IRM*, 74 (1985), 230-36. Emilianos Timiadis, “Unity of Faith and Pluralism in Culture: A Lesson from the Byzantine Missionaries”, *IRM*, 74 (1985), 237-45. John Meyendorff, “Christ as Word: Gospel and Culture”, *IRM*, 74 (1985), 246-57. Oleksa, “The Orthodox Mission in America”, *IRM*, 71 (1982), 78-87. Erkki Pioroine, “The Orthodox Church in Finland”, *IRM*, 62 (1973), 51-56. Miltiades Chryssavgis, “The Role of Orthodoxy in Australia”, *IRM*, 68 (1979), 22-25. Metropolitan Anthony, “Christian Witness Today in a Socialist Society”, *IRM*, 68 (1979), 294-300. Archbishop Sylvester, “Early Orthodox Mission in Canada”, *IRM*, 71 (1982), 282-87. Bishop Sotirios, “The Orthodox Church in Canada”, *IRM*, 71 (1982), 510-16. Metropolitan Dorotheos, “The Influence of the Moravia Mission on the Orthodox Church in Czechoslovakia”, *IRM*, 74 (1985), 219-29. John Chryssavgis, “From the Australian Bush – Back to the Egyptian Desert”, *IRM*, 80 (1991), 399-403. Nicholas C Triantafylou, “Greek Orthodox Christianity in Texas”, *IRM*, 78 (1989), 197-201. Oleksa, “The Orthodox Church and Orthodox Christian Mission from an Alaskan Perspective”, *IRM*, 90 (2001), 280-88.
29. Bria: “A new typology for Gospel and Culture syntax: From an Eastern European Perspective”, *IRM*, 84 (1995), 273-83. “It is the local church,” said Bria, “that creates culture in the process of reception and transmission of the gospel, through the worship, order, ethos and spirituality” (280).
30. Viorel Ionita, “One Gospel and Diverse Cultures: Towards an Intercultural Mutuality”, *IRM*, 86 (1997), 53-56.
31. Bria, “Postmodernism: An Emerging Mission Issue”, *IRM*, 86 (1997), 420.
32. Bishop Anastasios, “Address by the Moderator (at the San Antonio Conference)”, *IRM* 78 (1989), 325. For the sacramental character of the Orthodox understanding of the Church, see Ysevolod Spiller, “Missionary Aims and the Russian Orthodox Church”, *IRM*, 52 (1963), 33-37.
33. Bria, “Confessing Christ Today: An Orthodox Consultation”, *IRM*, 64 (1975), 67.
34. “Confessing Christ Today: Reports of Groups at a Consultation of Orthodox Theologians”, *IRM*, 64 (1975), 79.
35. Bria, “Reflections on Mission Theology and Missiology”, *IRM*, 73 (1984), 66-72. Also Papatthanasiou, “Is Mission a Consequence of the Catholicity of the Church?” *IRM*, 90 (2001), 409-16.
36. Paul Fueter, “Confessing Christ Through Liturgy: An Orthodox Challenge to Protestants”, *IRM*, 65 (1976), 124-6.
37. Bria, “Confessing Christ Today”, *IRM*, 64 (1975), 68. “Renewal of the Tradition through Pastoral Witness”, *IRM*, 65 (1976), 182-85.
38. Vassiliadis, “Mission and Proselytism: An Orthodox Understanding”, *IRM*, 85 (1996), 360-61. See also his “Reconciliation as a Pneumatological Mission Paradigm: Some Preliminary Reflections by an Orthodox”, *IRM*, 94 (2005), 31.
39. “The wrongdoings of missionaries in the history of Western mission [...] brought about in the West a tremendous sentiment of guilt and opened the way for expressing remorse, repentance and apologies for the past. Unfortunately, the very notion and content of mission itself were also greatly affected. In some contexts the very word ‘mission’ got a very bad connotation and there have been voices clearly speaking against it. Within some academic frameworks, due to a certain extent also to the process of restructuring, among the first chairs to have been eliminated were

the chairs on missiology.” Ioan Sauca, “Reaffirming Mission at the Centre of the Ecumenical Movement”, *IRM*, 88 (1999), 51. Also Anastasios, “Address by the Moderator”, 327: “It is another thing the imposition by force, that is unacceptable and has always been anti-Christian, and a quite different thing a withholding or diminution that leads to a double betrayal, both of our own faith and of other’s right to know the whole truth.”

40. Papatthanasidou, “Reconciliation: The Major Conflict in Post-Modernity. An Orthodox Contribution to a Missiological Debate”, *Come Holy Spirit, Heal and Reconcile! Report of the WCC Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, Athens, Greece, May 2005*, Jacques Matthey (ed) (Geneva: WCC, 2008), 178-86. See also the comments on this by Dieter Becker, “Listeners’ report”, *IRM*, 94 (2005), 354-65, and Agnes Charles, “Reflectors’ Report”, *IRM*, 94 (2005), 366-72.

41. Vassiliadis, “Mission and Proselytism”, 260-61. “Reconciliation as a Pneumatological Mission Paradigm”, *IRM*, 94 (2005), 31.

42. Bria, “Renewal of the Tradition”, *IRM*, 65 (1976), 182. Cf his “The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective” (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), 26.

43. George Khodr, interviewed by Paul Löffler, “An Eastern Orthodox Viewpoint”, *IRM*, 82 (1971), 67, 69.

44. Anastasios, “Address by the Moderator”, 322.

45. “Salvation in Orthodox Theology” (an aide-memoire drawn up and agreed upon at the end of a consultation of Orthodox theologians on “Salvation Today”, organized by the CWME), *IRM*, 61 (1972), 405-06.

46. Anastasios, “Address by the Moderator”, 327. “Eastern Orthodoxy and Human Rights”, *IRM*, 74 (1985), 188-89.

47. George Khodr, interviewed by Paul Löffler, “An Eastern Orthodox Viewpoint”, *IRM*, 60 (1971), 67.

48. Geevarghese Mar Ostathios, “Worship, Mission, Unity – These Three: Response to Bishop Mortimer Arias”, *IRM*, 65 (1976), 41-42.

49. Geevarghese Mar Ostathios, “Divine Sharing: Shape of Mission for the Future”, *IRM*, 76 (1987), 18-19. See also John Hill, “Jesus is Lord of All: An Eastern Orthodox Response”, *IRM*, 74 (1985), 481-82.

50. Vitaly Borovoy, “What is Salvation? An Orthodox Statement”, *IRM*, 61 (1972), 38-45.

51. Oleksa, “The Holy Spirit’s Action in Human Society: An Orthodox Perspective”, *IRM*, 79 (1990), 334.

**PART TWO
ORTHODOX
CONTRIBUTIONS AT
EDINBURGH 2010**

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MISSION AS LITURGY BEFORE LITURGY AND AS CONTESTATION

Geevarghese Mor Coorilos

I greet you all in the name of the Holy Trinity! It is indeed a great honour for me and for the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches that I represent here, to be part of this historic moment when we together celebrate one hundred years of our ecumenical missionary journey which started right here in 1910. The leaders of the 1910 Conference would not have anticipated the kind of sea changes in the global Christian landscape that we have witnessed over the years: the crisis in western civilisation, disintegration and collapse of colonial imperialism, emergence of new forms of colonialism (economic and cultural globalisation) and war ('war on terror'), growing secularisation, and the challenges of post-modernity are just a few aspects of the ever-changing global landscape. On the ecclesial front, the phenomenal growth of charismatic and Pentecostal churches today is a major development. All of these, as Dana Robert has articulated in her keynote presentation, pose new challenges for conventional understandings of Christian unity and mission and evangelism.

For want of time, I should like to lift up only a couple of concerns here:

Mission as 'Liturgy Before Liturgy'

Dana Robert, in her presentation, has likened the process of mission in unity to the act of breathing. According to her, 'mission is the church breathing: we inhale in worship, exhale in witness'. She has also made reference to the classic Orthodox notion of mission as 'the liturgy after the liturgy', popularised by Ion Bria. Standing in today's context, marked by division amongst churches, lack of intercommunion even among members of same ecclesial family, exclusion of various sections of people within and without churches, brokenness of relationship between humanity and nature; my own sense is that it's time we also started talking about 'liturgy before liturgy' if we as churches are to be credible in our being and becoming. Perhaps it's also time we practised inhaling in witness and exhaling in worship. How can we possibly claim to be a credible worshipping community if we are still far from being able to practise equality, sharing, justice and mutuality in our ecclesial and social engineering? How can we

possibly call ourselves a liturgical community if churches continue to discriminate against people on the bases of caste, race, gender and so on, even within their worship life? What is Holy Communion without social communion? To me, the challenge seems to lie in taking up 'liturgy after liturgy' (the ministry of healing and reconciliation) before liturgy. The actual practice of healing and reconciliation needs to be reflected in the liturgical life of the Church. In fact, the biblical tradition does take us in that direction: 'Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift before that altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.' (Matt. 5:23,24)

As the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Athens (2005) reminded us, we, as churches, are essentially called to be healing and reconciling communities. Our worship and liturgy will stand discredited, as Isa. 1:10-15 suggests, if we do not embody the values of equality, peace, justice and integrity of creation. Liturgy before liturgy, therefore, is just as important as liturgy after liturgy.

Mission as Contestation

Dana Robert has pointed out an important matter in her keynote presentation: that is, the 1910 macro-context of colonialism has now been supplanted with the current macro-context of (economic) globalisation. The question of whether churches and mission agencies, in particular, are also being negatively influenced by the logic of globalisation and market imperialism needs to be addressed seriously, especially in a context where there is a growing concern that the prophetic voice has been gradually diminishing in ecumenical circles, including in the World Council of Churches. While it is true that the false dichotomy between evangelical and ecumenical strands is irrelevant, our attempts in widening the ecumenical umbrella should not result in diluting the prophetic dimensions of mission. Passion for evangelism and quest for social justice should be held together.

David Bosch has written that our response to *missio Dei* should be to turn to God. And to turn to God is to turn to the world.¹ Differently stated, mission is the Church's engagement with the world in a prophetic manner. In today's context of neo-colonialism, of systemic injustice and violence, manifested in increasing globalisation of poverty, economic and social marginalisation of people and exploitation of Mother Earth, mission as a quest for justice is not simply an option but a mandate. One hundred years since 1910, we need to underscore this affirmation in no uncertain terms. We must also recognise that the Church is not the sole agent of the *missio Dei*, God's transformation of the world. She must witness to God in Christ alongside all God's people, including people of other faiths and civil society initiatives. When the Church engages the world, she is called to act like salt and get dissolved in it. Even after one hundred years of the

missionary movement, I sense an obvious lack of courage and commitment on the part of the global Church to address issues of global justice (social, economic and ecological justice) and religious pluralism, and their specific challenges, as fundamental mission concerns. While the 1910 Edinburgh Conference was marked predominantly by a western colonial missionary ethos, what seems to influence the global ecclesial and missionary context of today is a neo-colonial project of sidelining issues of global justice. The representation of the global South in this conference may have significantly increased from that of 1910, but the question is whether the pressing concerns of the global South, such as poverty, economic and social injustice, ecological violence and marginalisation of indigenous peoples, actually form the main mission agenda. For instance, it was quite appropriate that we decided to meet here in Edinburgh where the modern Ecumenical Movement was born one hundred years ago. But do we all share the same strong feelings about the place which is the very ground of our faith and of the Ecumenical Movement, the land where Jesus Christ himself was born? If we do not address the issues of the unjust and illegal occupation of Palestine and the continuing aggression of the State of Israel toward the people and land of Palestine, which world are we turning to in the *missio Dei*? If this conference does not have anything to say in missiological terms about the islands and their peoples, who are going to simply disappear due to climate change, which world are we turning to in God's mission? It is here that we need to highlight the importance of mission as contestation.

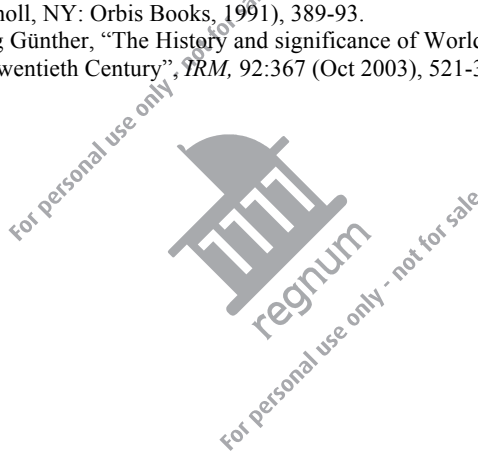
The miracle account in Mark 5:1-20 offers us some insights as to how mission can be perceived vis-à-vis contestation. Mission, here, can be understood in terms of exorcism, as 'casting out demons', confronting satanic forces. The most striking thing about the Markan story is that Jesus confronts the satanic forces by naming them. The name 'Legion' (meaning 'a battalion of soldiers') is suggestive of the context of Roman military imperialism. The word 'legion' also is indicative of the fact that Satan here is not an individual but an army, a system, a structure of evil. In today's context of neo-colonialism, we are challenged by Jesus Christ to confront systemic demons and satanic forces that express themselves in the guise of economic globalisation, casteism, racism, patriarchy, ecocide and so on. Mission in this context is about calling them by name and casting them out. It is important that Dana Robert has lifted up the Revelation vision in her presentation. However, it is even more important to remind ourselves of the fact that this was a church daring to articulate alternative visions in a context of imperial domination. The early Church's model of confronting the Roman Empire, as recorded in the Book of Revelation, is a classic example of how mission of contestation is called out in specific contexts. Revelation 18 is truly a prophetic passage on the doom of the then empire. This is how it is announced, proleptically: 'He cried with a loud voice saying: Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great. She has become a dwelling

place of demons, and a stronghold of every unclean spirit... with the wealth of her wantonness' (Rev. 18:2). John here speaks of the fall of the empire as if it had happened. This is the missionary spirit in which we need to contest the demonic forces of our times.

In sum, all mission conferences are meant, as Wolfgang Günther has put it, to 'make new discoveries of the grace and power of God for ourselves, for the Church, and for the world, to face the new age and the new task with a new consecration'.² Edinburgh 2010 is yet another opportunity to discover anew the grace and power of God for us, the Church, and for the whole created order. May the Triune God help us discover that divine grace and power.

Notes

1. David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 389-93.
2. Wolfgang Günther, "The History and significance of World Mission Conferences in the Twentieth Century", *JRM*, 92:367 (Oct 2003), 521-37, 521.



A BIBLICAL MESSAGE FOR TODAY

Targoviste Nifon

We listened today to the first fourteen verses of the second Epistle addressed by St. Apostle Paul to his disciple Timothy. It is not the first contact between the mentor and his disciple and not even the first epistle addressed to him. That is why St. Paul, who called himself 'an Apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God', began immediately with the message he wanted to bring to his 'beloved child', the message which is clearly expressed in 2 Timothy 1:13-14: 'Hold the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.'

But before we focus on this message, let us have a look on the verses in front of it and try to understand the context behind this epistle and of this message. It seems that St. Paul wrote to Timothy in a difficult moment of his mission. St. Paul recalls Timothy's 'tears' and makes mention of a 'spirit of cowardice' (2 Tim. 1:7), which is clearly present in this moment in Timothy's life. St. Paul knows that Timothy needs to be encouraged in his mission and he is ready to do it. His words of encouragement speak not only to Timothy, but also to all those who are called 'with a holy calling' (v. 9), to all those involved in spreading the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the centuries, to all the world.

The main strength of Timothy is 'the power of God' (v. 8) which lives in him. That is why St. Paul reminds him 'to rekindle the gift of God that is within you' (v. 6). The rekindled power and gift of God was the source of strength helping the apostles to announce the resurrected Christ to the world. The power and gift of God made the Christians in the first centuries ready to die with joy confessing their belief in our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the same power and gift of God that brought strength to all those who preached the gospel in these last one hundred years throughout the entire world. The power and gift of God supported Christians of all confessions while they suffered abuse from totalitarian and atheistic regimes, from intolerant ideologies, or even from other Christians, because of their witness and commitment to the gospel.

Alongside the strength from God, St. Paul also mentions and values the strength which may come from Christian to Christian through fellowship in Christ. Timothy is encouraged by St. Paul, who appreciate his 'sincere faith' and to appreciate also the support and strong faith of his grandmother

and his mother (v. 5). Preaching the gospel is not an individual mission, but a communitarian concern, an ecclesiological charge. St. Paul was aware of this reality. The Church throughout the centuries was aware of this. And last but certainly not least, those who called the Edinburgh Conference one hundred years ago were aware of it.

Timothy and all missionaries can and must be good guardians of the 'good treasure' entrusted to them because we are assured that it is guarded by our Saviour Jesus Christ to whom it actually belongs. He is the one who brought it into the world for our salvation. He is the one who appointed for its gospel heralds, apostles and teachers like St. Paul, Timothy and all those called for this. He is the one who sent the 'Holy Spirit living in us' (v. 14) to help and assist us in holding and guarding the gospel. Holding and guarding the gospel does not mean hiding it or keeping it away from the world; rather it means preaching it in the way it has been entrusted to us; without changing, modifying or altering its nature. This is the challenge we have as missionaries: to bring the gospel to everyone but to hold and keep it unmodified; to be aware that while preaching it we may suffer. More than this, we are called to suffer for it (v. 8), but in spite of this we are asked to be joyful. How is this possible? Humanly, it is not possible. Or even more than that, it is nonsense; it is a frenzy; it is just 'not according to our works' (v. 9). But if we look to the words of St. Paul to his 'beloved child' then, yes, this is possible 'in our Lord Jesus Christ', 'with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us' (v. 14) who brings us from God 'a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline' (v. 7).

Dear friends, sisters and brothers, missionaries of our Lord Jesus Christ in the world today, let us not forget that the Lord Jesus Christ has stirred up in Christians a deep yearning for unity. He has enabled us to see that this longing is found among so many Christians of different traditions. It is a sign that this Spirit has been at work in all of us, prompting us to recognize that in this too we must obey his will. When we look up, we now see brothers and sisters, from other Christian communities, offering us gifts that are the fruits of grace. Painfully, often too slowly, we have acknowledged how much already unites us through our baptism into Christ and the faith we profess. Hesitantly, then with increasing confidence we have said to one another: 'Let us not settle here; let us journey on our way, and I will go alongside you.' The Lord's own prayer is being answered: he has opened the way for us through his blood and his Spirit in guiding us along that way. His most precious gift will be when we do indeed dwell together in unity.

There is no turning back now. This road leads to the fulness of communion with one another and with the Blessed Trinity. Let us encourage one another to persevere in this search for full visible unity among Christians. Such a unity of faith and life will make possible a profoundly common witness, no longer marred by division, discord and rivalry. If there is one communion among Christians, who truly live and

experience their healing and reconciliation, the world will see the truth of our words proclaiming Jesus Christ as the one the Father has sent, their Lord as well as ours. 'He who has promised is faithful,' so we can hold fast to this hope without wavering. Even while the Lord has been revealing to us what we already share, he has been urging us to go the whole way with him, to be fully united in his truth and in his life with the Father and the Holy Spirit. We can rightly feel responsible for each other since we see that we are brothers and sisters. We can give encouragement, pray together, explore our differences and work for their healing, provoke one another to love and to hear afresh the call to deeper conversation.

Father, on the very night your Son offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he prayed that we and all who would come to believe in him might be one, as you are in him and he in you. Hasten the day when your will is done and we are so completely one that the world may believe in Jesus Christ whom you have sent. So may all women and men know that you love them as much as you love your only Son. Help us by your Holy Spirit to persevere courageously and confidently along this way together, through Christ our Lord. Amen.



ECUMENICAL CHARITY AS CHRISTIAN WITNESS

Antonios Kireopoulos

As I begin, I wish to thank the organisers of this centenary commemoration of the Edinburgh 1910 World Missionary Conference. And let me also express my appreciation for being on this panel with these valued colleagues.

When I was a teenager, I belonged to a very active youth group in my local church. The group was led by a lifelong member of the Greek Orthodox community, a good-natured man whose religious experience included a kind of conversion of the heart that led to what I'd call an evangelical zeal, both for Christ and for Orthodoxy. His goal in our group, and thus his mission, was to help young people keep their faith at the centre of their lives.

One time in a private conversation, he told me that, in evangelising, if necessary to seal the deal with a potential convert, he would not hesitate to be less than honest, say about a particular biblical claim or an Orthodox doctrine, in order to win the person over to Christian faith. At the time, I was equally shocked and I must admit quite amused. I knew he was sincere in his concern for the spiritual life of his hypothetical interlocutor. But even at that time, when I was still a long way off from a theological vocation, I wondered if such a contradictory approach could lead to a genuine conversion.

Ecumenical Charity

Thinking about my remarks here today, I remembered this conversation from my past. And I believe it has significant relevance as we talk about mission. And I suggest that it begs questions about what makes for authentic mission, about the complex mix of sincerity of witness and church growth goals, and even about the genuineness of conversion. These questions are made that much more urgent when we contemplate the extent to which churches favourably or unfavourably regard one another. This regard can be called 'ecumenical charity'.

'Ecumenical charity' is here defined as care, concern, and even affection of one church for another; a kind of relationship that is characterised by respect between the churches. These kinds of relations reveal an appreciation for the gifts of the other churches involved, and a willingness to share their respective burdens. In the presence of such relations, genuine evangelisation and authentic conversion can take place. In the absence of

such relations, missionary efforts can clash rather than complement each other; they can introduce a denominational Jesus instead of the universal Christ, and they can lead to a diseased proclamation of the gospel in place of the healing touch of the good news.

The Roman Catholic/World Council of Churches working group addressed some of these issues. Particularly helpful was the delineation between what I like to call good (or appropriate) evangelism and bad (or inappropriate) proselytism. Proselytism gets a lot of attention these days when used in the context of missionary efforts in Muslim countries. But its most harmful use is when Christians, while ostensibly seeking to make Christians from among people of other faiths, instead strive to make Christians from among people that are already Christians. What kind of evangelism is that?

I was asked to illustrate two contemporary case-studies that illustrate how various degrees of ecumenical charity impact mission. I will describe one negative example, and one positive example. I will also use examples of mission activity that stem from my own country, the United States. One example will illustrate mission understood in traditional terms, in which Christians go from one context to another in order to preach the gospel; the other example will illustrate an expanded definition of mission, that of standing with the oppressed as a witness of the gospel's message of justice that is inherently part of its message of salvation. It is important to note that I do not intend to generalise about a particular tradition or another, but to highlight sharply emblematic examples that are illustrative of intentional ecumenical charity and its opposite.

Mission which Takes Advantage of the Weak

On the negative side, I could cite, of course, numerous examples of this kind of dubious behaviour. We are all familiar with the experience in Russia and other countries of eastern Europe immediately after the fall of the Soviet system, when missionaries, generally but not only from evangelical or fundamentalist Protestant communities in the US, took advantage of the weak situation of the people, seeing them as 'heathens' who needed to be converted rather than as brothers and sisters whose Orthodox Christian self-understanding was just beginning to be resurrected after some seven decades in a virtual tomb. Even the unfortunate use of traditionally Orthodox ecclesiastical titles by the local Roman Catholic hierarchy in this same period and context could be understood in these terms. Likewise, I could lift up the example of Sri Lanka after the tsunami of 2004, when some apparently fringe missionary groups reportedly exploited the people's suffering in order to attract them to the Christ of certain material blessings, to their brand of Christ at the expense of the local Christians who were certainly suffering and in need of consolation from fellow Christians. Or, I could point to the Orthodox experience in the

United States, which as a diverse immigrant community has often preoccupied itself more with ‘protecting’ a Diaspora flock in a sort of self-satisfied isolation than with intentional critical engagement, and thus witness, alongside other Christian communities in social issues that confront all of us.

But I would like to focus on one particularly egregious missionary effort, this one in Iraq. We all know the terrible suffering that has gone on in Iraq since the beginning of the war of choice begun by the United States, and how much of this suffering has been borne by the Christian communities that have lived in that country since time immemorial. At the National Council of Churches USA, we have had visits from two of these communities, the Armenian Orthodox and the Chaldean Catholic.

One evening a few years ago, I was winding down in a hotel room after a long day at one of our annual General Assemblies, and I was flipping channels on the television when I happened upon a religious programme about Christians in Iraq. I was pleasantly surprised – at first – because this was a channel owned by the ministry of one of the most famous, or infamous, televangelists on the religious right, and here was the announcer talking about the suffering, and even martyrdom, of Christians in these ancient communities. There was film of liturgical celebrations and social ministries being shown, and the speaker offered complimentary comments about these men, women and children, about their bravery, and he lamented the fact that so many of them nevertheless felt compelled to flee their country to escape the ravages of war.

So far, so good. But these charitable sentiments were not to last. The announcer immediately began to contrast these Christians with converts to a mission community supported by the televangelist. He praised the latter for not leaving, for sticking it out through the difficulties of war, basically characterising them as true Christians, thus giving a robust witness to Christ and by implication not wavering in their faith like their apparently feckless neighbours. I don’t doubt the sincerity of the Iraqis who made up this mission community; but it was dismaying to see these Christians set up as the faithful over and against other Christians as the faithless.

I do not know if the Iraqis in that particular mission community were converts from Islam – a logical conclusion, one would think, if watching this broadcast – or converts from one of the local Christian communities, as was probably the case here, and a common phenomenon across the last couple hundred years in every mission field, such as in the Middle East in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or eastern Europe even until today. Nevertheless, in a land of other faiths, the focus of this story was on how one brand of Christianity was witnessing better than another brand of Christianity, even at the expense of the latter.

And yet, how much more powerful would the witness to Christ have been if the missionaries sent to Iraq were there in support of the local Christians, to work with the local Christian churches to foster reconciliation

in their communities torn apart by war? In other words, where, my friends, was the notion that, instead of fragmenting the Iraqi Christian community by such divisiveness, it might have been a good idea to mount a missionary effort precisely to build up the Christians who were there already, as we are exhorted to do in 1 Thessalonians 5:11?

Ministering to the Needs of the People

Conversely, on the positive side, I could cite numerous examples of good behaviour in the mission field. For example, there is an American Jesuit engaged in building projects at a local Catholic parish in Ghana who, side-by-side with his Orthodox and Protestant counterparts, works to alleviate the suffering of the poor. I could also point to the example of the partnership of the Orthodox Christian Mission Centre (an American pan-Orthodox initiative) with the Orthodox Church in Albania, whose leader His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos is widely respected, and whose Christian vocation has nurtured the rebirth of the Church in Albania even as it has led to the betterment of the situation of all people, Christians and Muslims alike, after years of totalitarian oppression.

You will note in these two examples that, in proclaiming the Word of Christ, central to the proclamation is ministering to the needs of the people. In the Ghanaian example, digging water wells is as much a part of Christian mission as preaching in the church. In the Albanian example, Archbishop Yannoulatos, when asked once what he needed most to help in his ministry, is famously quoted in the US (and probably elsewhere) for answering, 'a tractor'. I could add to this list the ministry of the prominent American preacher, with his televised globe-trotting revivals which still serve as a positive template for mission. He sought to console people in their difficult circumstances, different in each context – even as he urged zealous converts to attend local churches or to return to their own churches after answering his altar calls if they were already, although now re-energised, Christians.

But here I want to focus on a different type of mission, one that impresses itself in solidarity with the oppressed (which could be understood in any number of ways but is herein understood in terms of the poor and politically downtrodden). And this is the work of the Friends community. Like, and along with, many mainline Protestant communities – and through ecumenical ties, the Orthodox and Catholic communities – the Friends have a long history of advocating for peace in the Middle East. Today their work centres on development, primarily through the American Friends Service Committee.

The American Friends Service Committee's work in the Middle East today is primarily in development and peace-building. This takes the form of developing youth as bridge-builders in Palestine, of fostering dialogue between Muslims and Christians in Iran, and advocating (based on

indigenous input from the region) for constructive US policy with regard to its peacemaking role throughout the region. This latter witness is generally done in partnership with other Christian communities. Their folks engaged in mission – certainly in mission more broadly defined than usually understood – seek to proclaim Christ through living out the gospel they preach.

What does this type of witness say to the people of other faiths that live in the region? That being a Christian compels a believer, no matter their tradition or denomination, to seek peace and justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed. It may ‘win’ converts from other faiths; it may not. God is the director of all hearts. And this is the attitude that leads to genuine proclamation, and if God ordains, to genuine conversion.

Mission and Unity

These are just two examples, set within the context of many. These stories can be complemented by scores of others – good and bad in every tradition – that are rooted in your own homelands. I offer them here today as fodder for discussion.

At the opening event of the conference, in one of the prayers we remembered that:

One hundred years ago in this city, men and women who were engaged in mission came together from every part of the globe. As they told their stories and prayed for each other, they were surprised by the Spirit with a moment of inspiration, when they glimpsed a vision of a united church speaking with one voice the name of Christ, and saw within grasp a world won for the gospel.

It is my hope that, at this conference, we would reflect upon what it means to be ecumenically charitable – to trust the witness of each church as good and pointing to salvation – which, my friends, is at the heart of the issue – and how our witness might contribute to this dream that we ‘may all be one... so that the world may believe...’ (John 17:21).

Again, I thank the organisers of this conference for giving us the opportunity to indeed converse about what it means to be engaged in ‘mission worldwide’. I thank my colleagues up here on the dais with me for their important contributions. And I thank you for what I know will be a good discussion to follow.

AN ORTHODOX REFLECTION ON THE CENTENARY OF THE EDINBURGH 1910 WORLD MISSION CONFERENCE

Anastasia Vassiliadou

We gathered this year in Edinburgh and in so many other places around the globe to celebrate the 100 years from that first World Missionary Conference, to reflect and to pray together. To rejoice for what has been achieved all these years with the help and power of the Holy Spirit, to repent for things we have done when we failed to listen to and follow the Spirit, and to ask for a renewed energy, to look together for a renewed vision of the mission of the Church of the Triune God.

It is a common conviction that we have come a long way in the last 100 years. We do live in a very different world: the face of Christianity is very different worldwide, and our theology and practice of mission could not but change significantly. And the main aim of Edinburgh 2010 was indeed to reflect together on that changed reality in relation to God's ever unchanged call to participate in his love, and our responsibility in response to it. It came out very clearly from the study process as well as from the Edinburgh Conference itself that our understanding of mission can no longer be a triumphalistic one. Neither can it have an expansional character with imperialistic attitudes and behaviour, as was the case in the past. The shift was clear, from *evangelization* of the whole world, to *witnessing* to Christ in humility; from a tendency to *proselytize*, to *reconciliation* and *dialogue* with people of other faiths and ideologies; from *triumphalism* and power, to *humbleness*, vulnerability and mutuality. As you all know, there were no Orthodox participants in 1910. In 2010 there weren't many either, but I believe that the encounter with Orthodox theology in the nineteenth century played a role in that paradigm shift, especially in regard to the emphasis on the Holy Spirit, the understanding of mission as witness, the relation with people of other faiths, etc. It remains after all an Orthodox position that, before and above all, mission should not aim at the propagation or transmission of intellectual convictions, doctrines, moral commands, etc., but at the transmission of the life of communion that exists in God.

Being an Orthodox myself and coming originally from the "ecumenical" tradition (this is not a contradiction in terms as some may believe!), I found my home in mission and in CWME. It was in the light of mission that the search for unity and the struggle for justice made sense to me. And I cannot imagine mission but through unity and through justice. A Liturgy *after*

(mission) but also – as rightly underlined in Edinburgh by our Moderator Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos – *before* the Liturgy (reconciliation), as the Orthodox often like to refer to mission. My understanding of the Church can only be in the sense of a missional one. And by that I mean a Church that is not closed to herself, but opening up to the world, reaching out to the entire cosmos, embracing the whole creation, giving witness to the Kingdom of God. I was pleased to see that holistic understanding of mission reflected in the Common Call which, in spite of any criticism one might make, is a great text in the sense that it covers a great range of issues and is at the same time affirmed by a great range of Christian churches.

I am not here tonight to give you an account or an evaluation of this Conference that is ending tonight or rather tomorrow with the worship. I am called to share with you my personal reflection on this event and invite you to do the same, here among ourselves, and back home in our communities. I wish to stay in one aspect of this Conference that is very important to me.

That is the uniqueness of this event. And I would like to congratulate and thank the organizers, the stakeholders, the General Council, those who contributed to the Study process in one way or another, the hosting churches and the staff, for believing in this common celebration and working so hard for it, often against all odds. For the first time so many different churches and Christian traditions came together to help make this mission conference happen. And I see hope in that; I see an opportunity to heal the wounds of the past and hold together the call for mission and the call for unity. Not just the one at the expense of the other. Not by softening the disagreements nor by hiding the burning issues, but by listening carefully to each other, engaging in genuine dialogue, disagreeing and challenging each other, but nevertheless staying together. We have been arguing for too long over the priority of evangelism versus unity and hence over the authentic inheritance of Edinburgh 1910. In a world that is suffering from fragmentation, alienation and despair, our determination to continue staying and working together is more than anything else a sign that our witness is both a credible and an authentic one.

I do not know to what extent all of us (my Orthodox constituency and my ecumenical partners, together with the Evangelical and Pentecostal sisters and brothers) would at the end of the road feel comfortable with the enlarged constituency we find ourselves in after Edinburgh 2010 (although this process of reintegration had already started for CWME in Athens in 2005). We probably would not, but that is OK. Our human weakness and failure are scattered when we listen to “what the Holy Spirit says to the Churches” (Rev 2:7). It was after all when our churches felt comfortable that they failed to listen to the Spirit.

I personally very often struggle with the notion of *evangelism*, as well as with the *Great Commission*, as these terms are often understood – and at

the same time revered – by the evangelical constituency. I might even feel uncomfortable with the spirituality and the mentality of the rising Pentecostal communities in Korea, in China, in Africa, in Latin America and elsewhere. I might be confused by the practice and the theology of some of the African Instituted Churches. I am sure many of you also struggle to come to terms with, or even feel uncomfortable and confused by, the theology and the practice of the Orthodox Church! Especially when some quarters of her do not leave any ecclesial space to the non-Orthodox! But I cannot hide my personal feeling that I am inspired by the zeal, the creativity, the enthusiasm, and the deep and authentic faith of so many men and women from all over the world and from all spectrums of Christianity.

One may ask, “Have we reached a common understanding or even a common language on issues of missiology, ecclesiology and anthropology?” The answer is definitely, no. It would be dishonest and superficial to say the opposite. Does that mean we have failed? By no means! A great deal of progress has been made in the past 100 years in the field of ecumenical dialogue – which in fact started as a necessity for mission itself – and has shaped our mission theology and practice. It is true that in Edinburgh we did not really touch many difficult issues that remain controversial and divisive among us. Is this the price of being together? It shouldn't be and it doesn't have to be. I believe that is the challenge lying ahead of us: to continue our journey together and include more partners on the way, no matter how uncomfortable and disturbing that might be, without compromising the truth and without hiding the divisions and disagreements. We have everything to gain by continuing to talk to each other, as Bishop Kallistos Ware reminds us.

Only if we remain together will we learn to appreciate and understand each other better. We will be mutually accountable and will be challenged and even changed in the direction of being faithful to the “will of God”. But isn't that part of the new understanding of mission that we are advocating? Risking vulnerability, being humble, receiving the other instead of being powerful, self-sufficient, triumphant and imposing our perspective to the other?

Let us make sure that for the next centenary celebrations we (in fact, our children or our children's children) will all be there as one to give praise, ask for forgiveness and seek enlightenment for the mission of the Church, the mission of God.

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MISSION: AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

Petros Vassiliadis

The foundation of mission is deeply theological in the Orthodox world. It is important to note, that the approach to any aspect of Christian life from an Orthodox perspective is normally determined by the Church's uninterrupted theology. From the very beginning of its life the Church has never understood her existence, her life, and her mission without a reference to theology. Theology, of course is not understood as a set of theoretical convictions, but as the living experience of the people God embarked to proclaim the good news to the end of the world. In this respect, the importance placed on theology by the Orthodox does not by any means result in surrender to a "theology from above" at the expense of a "theology from below". As a great theologian of the East, being also a bridge between East and West, St. Maximus the Confessor has clearly affirmed, "a theology without action is a theology of the Devil."

Although Orthodoxy is normally defined in ecclesial rather than denominational terms, thus making ecclesiology the primary criterion of Orthodoxy is, there are quite a number of distinctive characteristics of what is normally identified as the historical Orthodox Church. And these characteristics have been instrumental in shaping her understanding of mission: her *ecclesiological* awareness as the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church", her peculiar *Pneumatology*, and her *anthropology*, i.e. her characteristic teaching of *theosis*.

(a) From the very beginning of their existence the Orthodox have never lost sight of the heart of their *ecclesial* identity, which was – and still is – manifested in the *Eucharist*, the mystery par excellence of the coming together of the people of God in communion, the *proleptic* manifestation of God's glorious Kingdom in our present-day realities. Centred on the Eucharist and believing in all humility to be the authentic bearer of the apostolic tradition, the Orthodox are commissioned to witness to the whole gospel to the whole world. Without losing sight to the fundamental conviction that Jesus Christ is "*the way, the truth and the life*" (John 14:6) they invite all those who left the undivided Church to return to that authentic apostolic tradition (without rejecting their local traditions) and together restore the "given by God" unity of the Church. The Orthodox Church humbly believes that although she is the authentic bearer of the apostolic tradition, she is merely the *pre-eminent* instrument in the "mission" of the Triune God (*missio Dei*); that God uses not only the

Church, but many other powers of the world for his mission for the salvation of humankind and the entire creation. In this way the emphasis in mission is no longer placed on mere *proselytic* activities, but on full-scale *conversion* of both the Christian evangelizers and those to whom the witness is rendered. With such a total transformation, the implementation of God's rule becomes easier a reality, since according to the biblical *Magna Carta* (Matthew 25), God judges humanity with criteria other than the conventional religious ones. With the "*economy of the Spirit*", the narrow boundaries of the Church are widened, and the cultural (and religious) superiority syndromes give place to a "common witness" and a humble "inter-faith dialogue".¹

(b) This brings us to the second characteristic of Orthodoxy, its ***Pneumatology***, which offers even more radical implications, compared with the normal western missionary standards. On the basis of the biblical pneumatological foundations, according to which the Holy Spirit is the "*Spirit of Truth*" that leads us to the "*whole truth*" (John 16:13) and "*blows wherever he/she wills*" (John 3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos, the Orthodox have developed a Pneumatology, not always familiar to the West. Almost thirty years ago Metropolitan John Zizioulas presented to the ecumenical community an interesting scholarly analysis on the theology of the Holy Spirit, and argued that from the very beginning of the life of the Church – actually from the time of the New Testament and the early patristic writings – till the ecumenical era, there were two understandings of Pneumatology: one familiar in the West, even to the present day, which conceives of the Holy Spirit as fully *dependent on* Christ, and therefore understood as an agent of Christ to fulfil the task of mission; and another one, which was more consistently developed in the East, which understands the Holy Spirit as the *source of* Christ. The former was called by Zizioulas "historical" and the latter "eschatological".²

Since these two understandings of Pneumatology are obviously contradictory to each other, two completely different approaches to mission have emerged in the history of Christianity, resulting also in two almost opposite approaches to ecclesiology. The Orthodox generally understand the Church in terms of *coming together* (i.e. as the eschatological *synaxis* of the people of God in his Kingdom) with mission coming only as a consequence of it, as a *Liturgy after the liturgy*, and the faithful *going forth* in peace (in mission) only after they had experienced as a glimpse and foretaste the eschatological Kingdom of God in their Eucharistic liturgical service. In the West it was normally the other way round: Mission was a constitutive element of their identity and in some cases prior to the Eucharist.

In view of the close connection between Pneumatology and eschatology,³ if one takes the Orthodox type of Pneumatology seriously into consideration, and builds upon Christ's self-understanding as the *Messiah of the Eschaton*, i.e. his conviction that he was the centre of the

gathering of the dispersed people of God (cf John 11:52), a completely new theological foundation of mission can emerge. It was actually on the eschatological teaching of the historical Jesus about the Kingdom of God that the early Church developed, not only her understanding of the Church (ecclesiology), but also her theology of mission (missiology).

With regard to ecclesiology in the Orthodox Church, even the episcopocentric structure of the Church is seen as an essential part of the eschatological vision of the Church. The bishop, e.g. as the presiding *primus inter pares* in love over the Eucharistic community, is not understood as a vicar or representative, or ambassador of Christ, but as an *image* of Christ. So with the rest of the ministries of the Church: they are not *parallel to*, or *given by*, but *identical with* those of, Christ. That is also why the whole Orthodox theology and life, especially as this latter is expressed in Sunday's liturgical offices, are centred on the resurrection. The Church exists not because Christ died on the Cross, but because he is risen from the dead, thus becoming the *aparche* (beginning) of all humanity.⁴

As to missiology, the apostles – and all Christians thereafter – were commissioned to proclaim not a set of given religious convictions, doctrines, and moral commands, but the coming Kingdom, the good news of a new reality to be established “in the last days”. But this Kingdom has as its centre, not the powerful emperor, but the humble, crucified and resurrected Christ.⁵ It was based on the Incarnation of God the Logos and his dwelling among us human beings, and on his continuous presence through the Holy Spirit in a life of communion, in a life of full-scale reconciliation.⁶

(c) The above “ecclesiological” and “pneumatological” understanding mission is also reinforced by a peculiar “anthropology” which in the Orthodox East is expressed by such terms as *theosis* or *deification*. Whereas in post-Augustinian western Christianity a clearly static dichotomy between “nature” and “grace” was developed as a result of “original sin”, in the East a more inclusive and dynamic anthropology was theologically elaborated. In the Orthodox tradition, human nature was never a closed, autonomous and static entity; its very existence was always determined by its *relationship* to God. Guided, therefore, by a vision of how to “know” God, and “participate” in his life, the Orthodox considered their witness in close connection with the notion of a *synergetic* soteriology and the anthropology of *theosis* or *deification*. Human beings are “saved” neither by an extrinsic action of God (as e.g. the “irresistible grace” of Augustine), nor through the rational cognition of propositional truths (cf the scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas), but by “becoming God”. In addition to their “given” status at God's creation in his “image” (*kat' eikona*), the Christian understood as their permanent task – and consequently to proclaim this truth to the world – to achieve his “likeness” (*kath' omoiousin*) – restoring, in other words, their “nature” to its original

status.⁷ Rooted in the normative biblical (Pauline) expressions of life “*in Christ*” and “*in communion of the Holy Spirit*”, and inextricably connected with Christology, as it was first articulated by St. Athanasius (“*Christ became human, so that we may become God*”), this later Orthodox (soteriological, anthropological, and missiological) notion of *theosis* is not to be confused with the neo-Platonic return to an impersonal One, nor a replacement of the biblical (Pauline) *justification by faith*. It is quite inadequate to contrast the much celebrated in the Protestant world *dikaiosis* (justification) with the Orthodox *theosis* (deification) as mutually exclusive terms, although this has been the case among the fundamentalists on both sides. Deification is rather a further development of the traditional biblical justification view and a true continuation of the “social” (Cappadocian, compared to what is labelled as “Latin”) understanding of the Holy Trinity.⁸

This *relational* and *synergetic* theology has resulted in a much more inclusive understanding of mission than the conventional exclusivist one that has developed in the pre-ecumenical era in almost all missionary endeavours in the West. Of course, we should be cautious not to dissociate the “economy of the Spirit” from the “economy of Christ/the Word”; the Pneumatology should never overshadow Christology. Rather one should keep Christology at the centre, allowing it only to be conditioned in a dynamic way by Pneumatology. The Orthodox understanding of mission has never insisted on a *universal proselytism*, but on the authentic *witness* of the Church’s eschatological experience. This was, in fact, made possible by defining *missio Dei* on the basis of John 21 and the fundamental assumption of trinitarian theology, “that God in God’s own self is a life of communion and that God’s involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion with God’s very life.”⁹ This ultimate expression of *koinonia* and love is transmitted to the whole world not as dogmas or ethical commands, but as a communion of love.

Taken a little further, this understanding of Christian witness suggests that the problem of ethics, i.e. the problem of overcoming the evil in the world, and at the end the quintessence of mission, is not only a moral and social issue; it is also – and for some even exclusively – an *ecclesial* one, in the sense that the moral and social responsibility of Christians, i.e. their mission in today’s pluralistic world, is the logical consequence of their ecclesial self-consciousness.

Today in the field of world mission we speak for the “*oekoumene which is to come*” (Heb 2:5 cf 13:14), as it is described in the book of Revelation (chs. 21 and 22), as an open society, where an honest dialogue between the existing living cultures can take place. The world pluralistic society can and must become a *household (oikos)*, where everyone is open to the “other” (as they are open to the Ultimate Other, i.e. God), and where all can share a common life, despite the plurality and difference of their identity. As

Konrad Raiser has rightly pointed out,¹⁰ the term *οικουμένη* and its derivatives (ecumenism, etc.) no longer describe a given situation. When we talk about the *οικουμένη* we no longer exclusively refer to an abstract universality, such as the entire inhabited world, or the whole human race, or even a united *universal Church*. What we actually mean is substantial – and at the same time threatened – relations between churches, between cultures, between people and human societies, and at the same time between humanity and the rest of God’s creation.

The consequences of such an understanding of mission are far-reaching, encompassing not only the “inter-faith” encounter and dialogue, but also all kinds of social engagements, including the struggle to implement justice and peace, to eradicate poverty in the world, to reverse the unjust and contrary to God’s will world economic system, and above all to protect the integrity of creation.

(a) With regard to the former, this *pneumatological* and *deification* understanding of mission has nothing to do with *syncretism*. Those who believe in the importance of the **inter-faith dialogue**,¹¹ mainly on the basis of the “economy of the Spirit” – and the Orthodox also on the basis of the anthropology of *deification* – insist that the mutual respect and peaceful relations and co-existence with faithful of other beliefs (or even non-believers) do not by any means lead to the naïve affirmation that *all religious are the same*. On the contrary, the dialogue and the co-operation are necessary, exactly because the various religious traditions are different and promote different visions of the reality. In the inter-faith dialogue the encounter between religions (more precisely between *faithful* of different religions) is understood as an encounter of mutual commitments and responsibilities to the common goal of humanity to restore communion with God, and thus restoring God’s rule “on earth as it is in heaven”.

This kind of Christian witness does not aim at the creation of a new “pan-religion”, or a new “world religion”, as it is quite naïvely claimed by ultra-conservatives from all Christian confessions, but would inevitably lead to a “communion of faithful from different religious traditions”. After all, this is the ultimate goal of the divine economy, as it is clearly stated in our normative biblical foundations (cf Eph. 1:10, Col. 3:11, etc.). The inter-faith endeavour not only decreases the enmity and the hostilities between people of different religions,¹² but it is also a call to the faithful of all beliefs and to the people of all convictions to engage in an effort to universally promote – in addition to human rights – the much needed in our days human responsibilities.

(b) As to the latter, the place of Orthodoxy, as all pre-eminent Orthodox theologians insist, is not on the margins of history, but at the centre of **social struggles**, the social fermentations as a pioneer agent in the reconciling work of the Holy Spirit. Mission is conceived by the Orthodox as a response to the call of the Triune God for a common journey and a participation in the love of God. Hence the importance it gives to a

martyria-mission – which extends even to *martyrdom*, hence they prefer the term *witness* to the conventional *mission* – and to the doxological praise of God in liturgy. For the Orthodox the liturgy is not only a springboard for mission (that is why they call it the *Liturgy par excellence* or *Liturgy after the liturgy* – which can also mean that mission is a *Liturgy before the actual liturgy*), but a proleptic manifestation of God’s Kingdom and an offering and thanksgiving for the *oikoumene*, in fact for the entire world. Above all, it makes the “other” a partner in mission, not an “object” of mission. Viewing all people to whom the Christian witness is rendered as co-workers in God’s mission, the Orthodox believe that they *synergetically* assist in the realization of the work of the Holy Spirit for a new world order, a new world economy based on the biblical truth that “*the land belongs to the Lord*” (Ps 23:1) and caring for the “fulness of life”. The Orthodox Pneumatology results in a Christian witness that unceasingly promotes the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ, but does not obliterate God’s dynamic involvement through the Holy Spirit into the whole created world.

1 Metropolitan George Khodr, “Christianity in a Pluralistic World – The Economy of the Holy Spirit” *FER*, 23 (1971), 118-128. Also *idem*, “An Orthodox Perspective on Inter-Religious Dialogue”, *Current Dialogue* (January 1991), 25-27.

2 John D. Zizioulas, “Implications ecclésiologiques de deux types de pneumatologie”, *Communio Sanctorum: Mélanges offerts à Jean Jacques von Almen* (Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1982), 141-154. Zizioulas’ views were presented within the context of the *ecclesiological* discussions in an attempt to promote the visible unity of the Church. With the exception of a reference to their consequences for mission, these views had in mind the *unity* of the Church, not her *mission*.

3 Cf Acts 2:17: “*And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.*”

4 Zizioulas, “The Mystery of the Church in Orthodox Tradition”, *One in Christ* 24 (1988), 294-303. More on all these in Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: 1985).

5 More in my “The Eucharistic Perspective of the Church’s Mission”, *Eucharist and Witness: Orthodox Perspectives on the Unity and Mission of the Church* (Geneva/Boston: WCC/Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 49-66.

6 Cf Petros Vassiliadis “Reconciliation as a Pneumatological Mission Paradigm (Some Preliminary Reflections by an Orthodox)”, *IRM*, 94:372 (January 2005), 30-42; also P Vassiliadis and D Passakos, “Versöhnung als ein pneumatologisches Missionsparadigma. Oder was es bedeutet, sich zu einer Missionskonferenz in Athen zu treffen”, *Oekumenische Rundschau*, October (53) 2004, 444-58.

7 More in John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: FUP, 1974), 2, 138, 143.

8 Theodore de Régnon (*Etudes de théologie positive sur la sainte Trinité*, Paris: 1898) has first in modern scholarship introduced the distinction between the “social” (Cappadocian) and the “Latin” (Augustinian) trinitarian theology. Cf however also MR Barnes, “De Régnon Reconsidered”, *Augustinian Studies* 26 (1995), 51-79, as well as John Behr, “Calling upon God as Father: Augustine and

the Legacy of Nicaea”, A Papanikolaou and GE Demakopoulos (eds), *Orthodox Reading of Augustine* (Crestwood: SVS Press, 2008), 153-165.

9 Ion Bria (ed), *Go Forth in Peace* (Geneva: WCC, 1986), 3.

10 Konrad Raiser, *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC Publications 1991), translated with modifications from the German original *Ökumene im Übergang* (München: C Kaiser Verlag, 1989), 79ff.

11 For an early contribution to the debate cf (Archbishop of Albania) Anastasios Yannoulatos, *Various Christian Approaches to the Other Religions (A Historical Outline)* (Athens: 1971).

12 If one surveys the diverse religio-cultural contexts of the Orthodox churches, one can observe that there is a long history of peaceful co-existence between Orthodox and people of other religions. When the Crusaders in the Middle Ages launched that dreadful campaign to liberate the Holy Land, they accused the Orthodox of “being too tolerant toward the Muslims” (!).

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MISSION AMONG OTHER FAITHS: AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

KM George, Petros Vassiliadis, Niki Papageorgiou
and Nikos Dimitriadis

The overall approach of the Eastern Orthodox Church to people of other faiths grows out of her theology. The importance of theology, however, does not necessarily mean surrender to a “theology from above”. After all, as St. Maximus the Confessor has insisted, a theology without action is a theology of the Devil. There are three distinctive characteristics of Eastern Orthodox theology which determine the Church’s attitude toward other religions: her *ecclesiological* awareness, the *pneumatological* dimension of her understanding of the Holy Trinity, and her teaching of *theosis*.

The Orthodox Church – without setting aside her conviction that she is “the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church” and her task to witness the whole gospel to the whole world, and without forgetting that her Lord Jesus Christ is “*the way, the truth and the life*” (John 14:6) – humbly believes that, although she is the authentic bearer of the apostolic tradition, she is only a simple servant in the “mission” of the Triune God. This conviction of hers is the result of the “economy of the Holy Spirit”. According to this chapter of trinitarian theology – for centuries marginalized in the West – the Holy Spirit, the “*Spirit of Truth*”, which leads us to the “*whole truth*” (John 16:13), “*blows wherever he/she wills*” (John 3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos.

The Orthodox, therefore, believe that God uses not only the Church, but many other powers of the world, for his mission to save humankind and the entire creation. With the contribution, therefore, of the theological vision, the missionary task expands to new, previously unimaginable areas of action: the emphasis is no longer placed on mere proselytizing activities, but on full-scale conversion of both the Christian evangelizers, and those to whom the witness is rendered. In this way a total transformation occurs and the implementation of God’s rule becomes a reality, since according to the biblical *Magna Carta* (Matthew 25), God judges humanity with criteria other than the conventional religious ones. With the “economy of the Spirit”, the narrow boundaries of the Church are broadened, and the cultural (and religious) superiority syndromes give place to a “common witness” and a humble “inter-faith dialogue”.

However, the Orthodox never dissociate the “economy of the Spirit” from the “economy of Christ/the Word”; while her Pneumatology never

overshadows Christology, being in fact conditioned in a dynamic way by Pneumatology. Defining *missio Dei* on the basis of John 21, the Orthodox believe that God in his own self is a life of *communion*, and that God's involvement in history (and consequently our missionary task) aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into this communion with God's very life. This ultimate expression of *koinonia* and love through this kind of "inter-faith" encounter is transferred to the whole world not as dogmas or ethical commands, but as a communion of love. This openness toward the faithful of other religions is also reinforced by its unique anthropology, developed especially by the Byzantine Orthodox theologians of the second millennium, and expressed in such terms as *theosis* or *deification*. This Orthodox theological formulation doctrine, being the result of the Christian doctrine of *incarnation*, was a further elaboration of the *justification by faith* biblical notion, and St. Athanasius' famous dictum: "God became man, so that human beings may become God (acquire *theosis*)." According to this dynamic theology, human nature in the Orthodox Byzantine tradition is not a closed, autonomous entity (as it was believed in the post-Augustinian western Christianity, which was trapped by the static dichotomy of "nature/grace"), but a dynamic reality, determined in its very existence by its relationship to God. Guided by a vision of how to "know" God, to "participate" in his life, and of course to be "saved" neither by an extrinsic action of God nor through the rational cognition of propositional truths (contrary to the medieval scholastic views), but by "becoming God", this soteriological notion is much more inclusive to non-Christians than the old conventional exclusivist mission theology of western Christianity. Together with the *relational* understanding of the "social" (Cappadocian) Trinity, the Orthodox permanent task of *theosis* – a task but at the same time a "given" at God's creation of humans in his "image" – is neither a neo-Platonic return to an impersonal One, nor a replacement of the biblical (Pauline) *justification by faith*, but a true continuation of the biblical expressions of life "in Christ" and "in communion of the Holy Spirit".

This *pneumatological* and *deification* understanding of mission has nothing to do with *syncretism*. Those who believe in the importance of inter-faith dialogue, mainly on the basis of the "economy of the Spirit" – and the Orthodox also on the basis of the anthropology of *deification* – insist that the mutual respect and peaceful relations and co-existence with faithful of other beliefs (or even non-believers) do not by any means lead to the naïve affirmation that *all religious are the same*. On the contrary, dialogue and co-operation are necessary, exactly because the various religious traditions are different and promote different visions of reality. In inter-faith dialogue the encounter between religions (more precisely between *faithful* of different religions) is understood as an "encounter of mutual commitments and responsibilities" to the common goal of humanity to restore communion with God, and thus restoring the rule of God "on earth as it is in heaven".

This kind of Christian witness does not aim at the creation of a new “pan-religion”, or a new “world religion”, as it is quite naïvely claimed by ultra-conservatives from all Christian confessions, but would inevitably lead to a “communion of faithful from different religious traditions”. After all, this is the ultimate goal of the divine economy, as it is clearly stated in our normative biblical foundations (cf Eph 1:10, Col 3:11, etc.).

This endeavour does not only decrease the enmity and the hostilities between people of different religions; it is also a call to the faithful to engage strongly in social development. Above all, it makes the “other” a partner in mission, not an “object” of mission. Viewing the faithful of other religions as co-workers in God’s mission, the Christian *synergetically* assists in the realization of the work of the Holy Spirit for a new world order, a new world economy based on the biblical truth that the “land belongs to the Lord” and caring for the “fulness of life”, i.e. a global communion of love, which transcends his/her personal as well as cultural and ethnic *ego*. The common Christian witness unceasingly promotes the salvific power of God through Jesus Christ, but does not obliterate God’s dynamic involvement through the Holy Spirit into the whole created world. It is a useful means to carry out the unity within a more and more divided world.

The place of Orthodoxy, as all pre-eminent Orthodox theologians insist, is not on the margins of history, but at the centre of social fermentations as a pioneer agent in the reconciling work of the Holy Spirit. Mission is conceived by the Orthodox as a response to the call of the Triune God for a common journey and a participation in the love of God. Hence the importance it gives to a *martyria-mission* – which extends even to *martyrdom* – and to the doxological praise of God in liturgy. For the Orthodox the liturgy is not only a springboard for mission (that is why they call it *liturgy after the liturgy* – which can also mean that mission is *a liturgy before the actual liturgy*), but a proleptic manifestation of God’s Kingdom and an offering and thanksgiving for the *oikoumene*, in fact for the entire world, regardless of religious convictions.

If one surveys the diverse religio-cultural contexts of various Eastern Orthodox churches (but also the non-Chalcedonian Oriental Orthodox churches) one can observe that there is a long history of peaceful co-existence between the Orthodox and people of other religions. When the Crusaders in the Middle Ages launched that dreadful campaign to liberate the Holy Land, they accused the Orthodox of “being too tolerant toward the Muslims” (!). The Indian example is even more telling, certainly deserving special mention. India is the home of major religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, and despite this there is no historical incident of any real conflict between Christianity and the other faiths. The life and historical memory of a genuinely Indian and oriental church like the Malankara Orthodox Church, for instance, would illustrate the peaceful co-existence and good relations between Christianity and other religions in

India. Ironically the Orthodox in India experienced oppression and persecution for the first time in their history, not from Hindus or Buddhists but from the colonial Portuguese Christian (Roman Catholic) authorities in the sixteenth century. Additionally, this colonial western Catholic mission divided the Indian Church, which was one and united until that time.

Indian Christianity maintained naturally the uniqueness of its Orthodox faith while in social and cultural matters it was fully inculturated in the indigenous Indian context. Furthermore, the profound philosophical-spiritual-ethical context of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions provided support for the spiritual-ethical ethos of Orthodox Christianity. There had always been a dialogue of life and an underlying, though not always articulated, feeling of fraternity, mutual respect and a sense of common ground between Orthodox Christianity and the major religions of India. The old “western” aggressive “mission paradigm” with its brutal and intolerant attitudes (from the Roman Catholic and the Protestant missions) did a lot of harm in India. As a consequence, in recent years many contemporary Indian theologians have attempted to draw from the wealth of the Indian philosophical and spiritual tradition, and the long legacy of mutual respect and openness experienced by the Orthodox presence.



TWO ORTHODOX COMMENTS ON THE STUDY PROCESS ON MISSION AND POWER

Anastasios Elekiah Kihali

There are two comments that I would like to make from an Orthodox point of view to the otherwise very insightful study document on “Mission and Power”:

(1) Being an African theologian who studied, among other places, in an Orthodox country (Greece, where I was honored to receive my PhD in Missiology), I was very eager to see the Edinburgh 2010 World Mission Conference inviting the world’s churches and mission agencies to bear witness to our faith by resisting the powerful system of the global economy and placing ourselves more clearly on the side of the victims of it (Greece being lately one of them, as Africa has been for generations). There is a clear biblical and patristic basis that God’s will is for an alternative people-centred, communion-oriented and not market-centred and individual-oriented economic system, a system based on the biblical “The land and everything in it belongs to God” and not to private property. The *Kairos* movement has been desperately trying to make this issue central to the agenda of Christian mission, but very few Christians have so far listened to it. The churches are invited to resist the system and work for practical alternatives, in alliance with social movements, thereby bearing witness to our faith in God who is God of life, justice and love for the poor and the marginalized.

(2) In the eastern Roman or Byzantine empire, the Church has come to a solution, according to which *religion* and *polity* cannot be divorced or even separated from each other, despite the lack of any visible spectacular victory of the Church over the empire, and despite the detrimental impact of the imperial forces on ecclesiastical affairs (dethronements and exiles of bishops and patriarchs). G. Florovsky in his monumental essay “Antinomies of Christian History: Empire and Desert” (in *Christianity and Culture*, Vol. II of *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* (Belmont: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974), 67-100), although he admitted that “Byzantium collapsed as a Christian Kingdom, under the burden of its tremendous claim to be the Kingdom of God on earth as it is in heaven” (page 83), he praised the painful decision of the Church to choose the “empire” – in other words, the close connection with the powerful imperial state, and not the “desert”, a clear trend of resistance in early Christian history against the official secularized ties of the Church with the Empire –

and even canonize the Emperor Constantine, exactly because she felt it as her missionary obligation.

The Orthodox are satisfied with the document's critical approach to Christian mission in the colonial period, even as early as the post-Constantinian era. However, they would recommend as more appropriate and more balanced an assessment that takes into consideration the model of Church-state relations adopted by Christians in the fourth century, known as the model of "symphony" or *synallelia*. Religion as a separate sphere has never found a solid footing in the theological thinking of the Orthodox Church. It would have been impossible to relegate the Church, holistic in conception – and relational rather than confessional in character – to a private sphere in civil society. This idea of privatizing the Church, together with individualism – which for historical reasons was adopted in western Christianity – was developed in modernity.

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THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IN THE ORTHODOX WORLD

Petros Vassiliadis, Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Eleni
Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi

1. The Theological Foundations of Traditional Orthodox Theological Education

The overall approach to theological education in the Orthodox world is determined by their theology. The importance of theology, nevertheless, does not necessarily mean surrender to a “theology from above” at the expense of a “theology from below”. As St. Maximus the Confessor clearly affirms, “a theology without action is a theology of the Devil.” There are three distinctive characteristics of Orthodox theology which have been instrumental in shaping Orthodox theological education: the *ecclesiological* awareness of the Orthodox Church, the *pneumatological* dimension of her understanding of the Holy Trinity, and her *anthropology*, i.e. her unique doctrine of *theosis*.

These theological foundations have resulted in the Orthodox churches’ (both Eastern and Oriental) awareness that theological education is fundamental to the life and mission of the *Church*. After all, from the very beginning of its life, the Church has never understood its existence, its life, and its activities without reference to theology. Although all forms of theological education were shaped by the various religious, educational, social, political and historical conditions within which the Church lived, it was within the liturgical framework that it was mainly practised. Even in cases where educational institutions developed outside the liturgical framework, such as the School of Alexandria (Clement, Origen, etc.), they have never lost sight of the heart of the Church’s life, which was – and still is – the coming together in communion of the people of God, i.e. the *Eucharist*.

Centred on the Eucharist and believing itself to be the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church”, the Orthodox Church utilizes theological education to witness the whole gospel to the whole world. Without losing sight of the fundamental conviction that Jesus Christ is “*the way, the truth and the life*” (John 14:6), theological education in the Orthodox world has for centuries insisted on the exposition of the apostolic tradition as it was explicated by the great theologians of their churches’ tradition. Always believing that their churches are but simple servants in the “mission” of God, and basing their theology on “the economy of the Spirit” (side-by-

side, of course, with the “economy of Christ/the Word”), Orthodox theological institutions generally believe that God uses not only the Church, but many other powers of the world for the salvation of humankind and the entire creation. After all, it is the Holy Spirit, the “*Spirit of Truth*”, that leads us to the “*whole truth*” (John 16:13) and “*blows wherever he/she wills*” (John 3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos.

This “ecclesiological” and “pneumatological” perception of theological education is also reinforced by a unique “anthropology” which, in the Orthodox East, is expressed by such terms as *theosis* or *deification*. Whereas in post-Augustinian western Christianity a clearly static dichotomy of “nature/grace” was developed, in the East a more inclusive and dynamic anthropology was theologically elaborated. In the Orthodox tradition, human nature was never a closed, autonomous, and static entity; its very existence was always determined by its *relationship* to God. Guided, therefore, by a vision of how to “know” God, and “participate” in his life, theological education was closely connected with the notion of a *synergetic* soteriology, and also with the anthropology of *theosis* or *deification*. Human beings are “saved” neither by an extrinsic action of God (as, for example, with Augustine’s “irresistible grace”) nor through the rational cognition of propositional truths (cf the scholastic theology of Thomas Aquinas), but by “becoming God”. In addition to its “given” status at God’s creation of humans in his “image” (*kat’ eikona*), Christians understood their permanent task to be the achievement of his “likeness” (*kath’ omoiousin*), restoring, in other words, their “nature” to its original status. Rooted in the normative biblical (Pauline) expressions of life “in Christ” and “in communion of the Holy Spirit”, and inextricably connected with Christology, as it was first articulated by St. Athanasius (“*Christ became human, so that we may become God*”), this later Orthodox (soteriological but at same time anthropological) notion of *theosis* is not to be confused with the neo-Platonic return to an impersonal One. It is a true continuation of the “social” (Cappadocian) understanding of the Holy Trinity.

This *relational* and *synergetic* theology has resulted in a much more inclusive understanding of theological education than the conventional exclusivist one that has developed in the West.

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(a) *The reorientation of theological education in modernity*

However, from the time of medieval scholasticism, and especially after the Enlightenment, theology (the central aspect of theological education) became an independent discipline using almost exclusively the methods of Aristotelian logic. Rational knowledge was – and in some cases still is – considered the only legitimate form of knowledge. Thus, theological education gradually shifted away from its Eucharistic-liturgical framework, i.e. away from its ecclesial, community and local context. The rational

understanding of God and humanity has in fact led to a *knowledge*-centred and, especially in the West, to a *mission*-oriented theological education. Even today most theological institutions around the globe and across denominational boundaries, the Orthodox ones included, have been structured in such a way as to educate church 'leaders', not the entire people of God; to equip priests, pastors or missionaries with the necessary means to preserve and propagate certain Christian truths or ethical norms, and in some cases even to defend old-fashioned institutions, not to build up local Eucharistic communities. They lost, in other words, the *community*-oriented and *liturgically/eschatologically*-centred dimension of theological education.

Naturally, therefore, all those engaged in the planning of theological education unconsciously lost sight of the most significant parameter that really makes theology viable: The very often forgotten truth that *theology* is the real conscience of the living Church, constantly reminding the world of its need to restore communion with God; that theology is first and foremost the voice of the (sometimes voiceless) Christian community and one of its most fundamental tasks; even further, that theology is neither a discipline for young people at the end of adolescence, nor a prerogative of the professionals, be they clergy or academics, but the task of the entire Christian community, the whole *laos tou Theou*, who is the only guardian of the Christian faith (cf the famous and frequently quoted 1848 Encyclical of the Orthodox Patriarchs to the Pope).

Consequently, little – if any – attention has been given to the fact that theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the Church, yet not in its institutional form but in its eschatological awareness of being a proleptic manifestation, a glimpse and foretaste, of the *Kingdom of God*. The Church, understood mainly in its institutional dimension, gave rise to justified criticism and to a pressing demand to disconnect theology from the Church (cf Moltmann and others), the argument being that theology is accountable and related not to the Church but only to the Kingdom of God. Of course, no one can deny the negative consequences for theological education of an institutional understanding of the Church. But in the East, where by and large the Church was understood in ecclesial (i.e. Eucharistic) rather than institutional terms, a clear-cut distinction between Kingdom and Church has never developed.

(b) Theological education and contextuality

This vision of the Kingdom, which is so prominent in the Orthodox liturgical tradition, was unquestionably rediscovered and reinforced in modern times through sound theological reflections within the Ecumenical Movement. For a time, this awareness created an unprecedented enthusiasm among deeply divided Christianity that the centuries-long divisions of the Church might find some sort of agreed solution, that the unity of the

Church, given by the Triune God, might be restored. Unfortunately, the momentum created with the establishment of the WCC and reaching its climax in the 1960s with the historic event of Vatican II, did not have an equally optimistic follow-up. Ironically, the ecumenical optimism and enthusiasm towards the goal of the visible unity of the Church was interrupted at the very moment an important achievement in the field of theological hermeneutics was reached with the affirmation at the global level of *contextuality*, as well as its wide application as a method from the 1970s onwards – in other words, the recognition of the *contextual* character of theology.

This great achievement has in fact created a psychological gulf between the traditional churches and the new and most vibrant younger Christian communities, especially from the global South. The main reason for this unexpected, and at the same time unfortunate, development in the Ecumenical Movement was the complete negation of any stable point of reference. In the post-Uppsala period, culminating at Canberra, and finally coming to the “tension” in WCC-Orthodox relations in Harare, all authentic criteria in the search for unity and the ultimate truth were practically abandoned.

There is no question, of course, that it is impossible to make a case for the *unity of the Church* whilst being indifferent to the *unity of humankind*. Today it is a widely held view in ecumenical circles that one can definitely speak of “differing, but legitimate, interpretations of one and the same gospel”. It has become a slogan that “*every text has a context*”, a context that is not merely something external to the text (theological position, theological tradition, etc.) which simply modifies it, but something that constitutes an integral part of it. No one can any longer deny that all traditions are inseparably linked to a specific historical, socio-cultural, political, and even economic and psychological context. All these mean that the traditional data can no longer be used as a rationale for an abstract universal theology that carries absolute and unlimited authority. Finally, through contextuality, in contrast to the classical approach to theology, we are no longer concerned whether or to what extent the theological positions we have to take today, and the affirmations we are asked to make, are in agreement with the uninterrupted *tradition* of the Church, but whether these positions have any dynamic reference and relation at all to given contemporary conditions. All these achievements were further reinforced in post-modernity, which focuses attention on the particulars, the peripherals, minorities, etc., completely disregarding the unifying elements in all considerations, the theological ones of course included.

At this point a parenthesis should be opened with regard to the real causes of the crisis, which contemporary Orthodoxy has experienced vis-à-vis the WCC and the Ecumenical Movement in general. Perhaps not all theologians in the West engaged in ecumenical dialogue are aware that the real theological rift – after almost a generation of positive contributions to

the ecumenical discussions from renowned Orthodox theologians – occurred early in the 1970s, when the late Fr John Meyendorff, President of Faith and Order at that time, warned against the danger of the Ecumenical Movement losing its momentum and coherence, and its determination for the quest of the visible unity if contextuality were to be adopted in ecumenical discussions and become the guiding principle in future theological education. His reservations, we must confess, were proved right, despite the fact that twenty years later an Orthodox theological institution, the Theological Department of the University of Thessaloniki, in co-operation with the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey, attempted to clarify the relationship between Orthodox theology and contextuality, and in fact positively assessed the somewhat contextual character of theology.

(c) *Contextuality and coherence in theological education*

The future of ecumenical theological education lies in reconciling these two currents of modern ecumenism. Orthodox theological institutions must immediately start a process in order to soften the existing antithesis between contextuality and catholicity; for there is not a single Orthodox theological institution that takes contextuality seriously into consideration. The future of the Ecumenical Movement depends to some extent on the willingness of the ecumenical partners to work towards a *synthesis* between the legitimacy of all contemporary local/contextual theologies on the one hand, and the necessity – in fact an imperative, and not simply an option – of a core of the apostolic faith on the other. For theological education, in order to survive, but also to give life and lead the Church and society at large to renewal, must have a *common point of reference*. One cannot exclude the possibility of a universal and fully authoritative theology, perhaps even on the basis of contextual theology's transcendent anthropology (Nissiotis). Otherwise we run the danger of viewing any local context and experience as authentic expressions of our Christian faith.

To cut a long story short, the most important and necessary perspectives in contemporary theological education are both catholicity and contextuality: *catholicity*, in the sense of the search for a coherent, ecumenical, global, and catholic awareness of the theological task, and *contextuality* as the unique expression of it in the various particular contexts. Coherence is important in that it expresses the authenticity and distinctiveness of different contextual theologies, as well as the need to bring these contextual theologies into inter-relationship with others.

Of course, the way in which this coherent, ecumenical, global and catholic perspective is to be achieved is not an easy task. And central in this respect is the concept of *unity*. In other words, for theology to seek for a coherent, ecumenical, global perspective requires the recognition that Christian theology, no matter how many and varied its expressions may be, must have a *common point of reference*, a unifying element within all

forms of ecumenical theological education and ministerial formation. It is necessary to focus upon the issue of unity in both general terms and in the specific ecclesiological use of the term as the ongoing search to restore the given unity of the Church. This includes consideration of the unifying and saving nature of the Christ event, continually re-enacted through his body, the Church, in the life-giving and communion-restoring Holy Spirit. After all, it bears repeating that theological education is a worldwide enterprise fundamental to the mission of the Church.

(d) Theological education and the unity of the Church

This given unity of the Church does not necessarily mean a strict unified structure, but it is given expression in a *broad understanding of Christian tradition*. Such an understanding affirms not only the centrality of Christology, but also the constitutive nature of Pneumatology, i.e. the normative nature of a trinitarian understanding of Christian revelation. This trinitarian understanding affirms the ultimate goal of the divine economy, not only in terms of Christ becoming all in all both in an anthropological, i.e. soteriological, and cosmological way, but also in terms of the Holy Spirit constituting authentic communion and restoring the union of all.

The communion God seeks and initiates is not only with the Church in the conventional sense, but with the whole cosmos. Thus the unity of divine revelation, as represented in the broad understanding of Christian tradition, is for the entire created world, not only for believers. This understanding of unity is important to keep in mind as it challenges a potential distortion wherein unity is identified with the maintenance of denominational loyalty. This in turn can be an exercise of oppression, excluding the suffering people from salvation and from the community of the people of God, insisting in most cases on strict juridical boundaries.

This understanding of unity in Orthodox and ecumenical theological education informs and challenges all expressions of contextual theology. It does not locate the unity inherent within Christian theology with any ecclesiastical or doctrinal system, and recognizes the varied forms of human and social existence. In this way, it is congruent with the methodologies and goals of contextual theology. However, it also challenges these theologies in pointing out the indispensability of the Christian tradition as that which gives expression to the given unity of the Church. This is usually referred to as *unity in time*.

(e) Criteria of truth in theological education

The main reason for modern Christianity's inability to overcome the existing divisions and "theological misunderstandings" is the issue of the *criteria of truth*. And this is due to its inability to reconcile contextuality with the text/logos syndrome of modern Christian theology. The time has

come to distance ourselves as much as possible from the dominant tendency in modern scholarship to give priority to texts over experience, *theology* over *ecclesiology*, of *kerygma* and mission over the Eucharist. There are many scholars who cling to the dogma, imposed by the post-Enlightenment and post-Reformation hegemony over all scholarly theological outlook (and not only in the field of biblical scholarship or of western and in particular Protestant theology), which can be summarized as follows: what constitutes the core of our Christian faith should be extracted exclusively from a certain *depositum fidei*, be it the Bible, the writings of the Fathers, the canons and certain decisions of the Councils, denominational declarations, etc.; very rarely is there any serious reference to the *Eucharistic communion event*, which after all has been responsible and produced this *depositum fidei*.

The importance of Eucharistic ecclesiology in the ecumenical debate has only recently been rediscovered and realized. The proper understanding of the Eucharist has been always a stumbling block in Christian theology and life; not only at the start of the Christian community, when the Church had to struggle against a multitude of mystery cults, but also much later, even within the ecumenical era. In vain, distinguished theologians (mainly in the East) attempted to redefine Christian sacramental theology on the basis of trinitarian theology. Seen from a modern theological perspective, this was a desperate attempt to reject certain tendencies which overemphasized the importance of Christology at the expense of the importance of the role of the Holy Spirit. The theological issues of *filioque* and the *epiclesis* have no doubt been thoroughly discussed and great progress has been made in recent years through initiatives commonly undertaken by the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church; but their real consequences to the meaning of the sacramental theology of the Church, and consequently to theological education, have yet to be fully and systematically examined. Theological education should no longer treat the Church either as a cultic religion or as a proclaiming/confessing institution.

The Eucharist, interpreted from the perspective of “trinitarian theology”, is not only *the* Mystery of the Church, but also a projection of the inner dynamics (love, communion, equality, diakonia, sharing, etc.) of the Holy Trinity into the world and cosmic realities. Ecumenical theological education, therefore, and ministerial formation in particular, should focus not so much on doctrinal accommodation or only on organization and structure (Faith and Order), or even only on a common and effective mission of the church(es), but also on a diaconal witness with a clear eschatological orientation. In other words, theological education should always have a “*costly Eucharistic vision*”, which dares to challenge the present economic system that leads to poverty and ecological destruction. In order to be authentic, theological education has to be determined by the “Liturgy after the Liturgy”.

With such a *costly Eucharistic vision*, which of course has to undergo a radical liturgical renewal, our future theological education will develop gender-sensitivity. It will also articulate a new paradigm to equip the whole people of God. And it will allow an innovative, experimental, people-centred approach to knowledge and education. Finally, it will ensure that the processes of formation be relevant and renewing to individuals and communities of faith.

After all, Christian theological education can no longer be conducted *in abstracto*, as if its object, God (cf *theo-logia* = *logos*-word about God), were a solitary ultimate being. It should always refer to a Triune God, the perfect expression of communion, and a direct result of the Eucharistic eschatological experience; an experience which is closely related to the vision of the Kingdom, and which is centred around communion (*koinonia*), thus resulting in justice, peace, abundance of life and respect for the entire created world.

(f) *The relational aspect of theological education*

What comes out of such an affirmation is self-evident: theological education should always refer to *communion* as an ultimate constitutive element of being; in other words, it should always be guided by the *relational* dimension of life, and therefore be in a continuous and dynamic dialogue, not only in the form of theological conversation among churches or Christian communities in order to promote the visible unity of the one body of Christ, but also with people of other faiths, even with the secular world.

Paulo Freire, in his celebrated book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1971), has rightly criticized the traditional forms of pedagogy, the “banking” concept of education as he called it, because it became a powerful agent in preserving the *status quo*, which many underprivileged people experience as oppressive and dehumanizing. Freire suggested a new form of education, the “problem-posing” concept, which is dialogical in nature, whereby both the educator and the educated become partners on the journey in search of the truth. These observations, provided that they also address the inner life, can be fully subscribed to by the Orthodox, not to mention of course that a dialogical approach promises an atmosphere of creativity, and above all liberates humankind from all kinds of oppression, spiritual and physical.

In view of all the above, theological education, seen from an Orthodox perspective, can only survive, it can only be of some real service to the Church, if it decides to deal with current issues; if it focuses attention in a substantial way on history, without denying its eschatological orientation. Christian theology, after all, is about the right balance between history and eschatology. It is about the struggle to apply the eschatological vision of the Church to the historical realities and to the social and cosmic life. Theology and the Church exist not for themselves but for the world. These

issues are global in their impact, impinge upon most particular societies, and are of central importance to the mission of the Church: a. Spirituality, human rights, especially the rights of women; b. The globalized neo-liberal economy vis-à-vis the Divine economy; c. The growth of materialism and the consequent marginalization of religious values; d. Intolerance coupled with increasing ethnic and religious conflict; e. Bio-ethics, the AIDS epidemic, etc.; f. The integrity of creation in view of the ecological crisis; and, finally, g. Issues associated with the fulness and future of human life and human communities. Needless to say, the list is indicative and by no means complete.

*(g) Ecumenical theological education
and the present situation in the Orthodox world*

All the above developments in theological education have convinced Christian communities around the globe of the need for a shift from a “confessional” to an “ecumenical” perspective in theological education. Nevertheless, to be honest, in some theological institutions, especially in the Orthodox world, there is no such thing as *ecumenical theological education*. There is no doubt that the Orthodox churches, on the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, have played an important role in the ecumenical endeavours of the past; there is no doubt that their participation in the WCC, the principal forum of multilateral ecumenical dialogue, have been vital in almost all areas of its activities; and above all, their ecumenical commitment has now been officially, and I would dare add synodically, pronounced on a pan-Orthodox level by such high-ranking fora as the 1986 Third Preconciliar Consultation and all four Meetings of the Primates of the Orthodox churches, initiated by Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew. However, what George Florovsky, a leading Orthodox ecumenist, believed more than fifty years ago can hardly be subscribed to by all the Orthodox. On the occasion of the establishment of the WCC at the First General Assembly of the WCC in Amsterdam, Florovsky made the following bold statement: “It is not enough to be moved towards ecumenical reconciliation by some sort of strategy, be it missionary, evangelistic, social or other, unless the Christian conscience has already become aware of the greater challenge, by the Divine challenge itself. We must seek unity or reunion not because it might make us more efficient or better equipped... but because unity is the Divine imperative, the Divine purpose and design, because it belongs to the very essence of Christianity.” Today, with the rise of nationalism, fundamentalism and confessionalism, Orthodoxy’s ecumenical commitment is being seriously challenged by small but vocal minority groups. Theological educators, therefore, should unite their forces to protect the ecumenical character of Orthodoxy.

There are, of course, quite a number of excuses: the growing dissatisfaction with the results of the ecumenical dialogue so far; the

necessity for Orthodoxy – which has come out of the ashes in eastern and central Europe, where the bulk of her faithful traditionally live – for a time of recollection and search for identity. What, however, cannot be tolerated is the dangerous shift towards fundamentalism, to such an extent that some circles within Orthodoxy seriously consider, and even press in the direction of, abandoning any ecumenical effort, even withdrawing from all multilateral and bilateral fora of ecumenical dialogue. Even the term “ecumenism” arouses reactions and suspicions among many Orthodox, not to mention that even the official theological dialogue between families of Orthodox Christianity, namely between the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches, in some circles is still questioned and even disapproved, or at least failed proper “reception”. All these are mainly due to a number of inherent perennial problems, which obviously need to be openly addressed. And this is exactly the task of Orthodox theological education in the third millennium.

(h) Areas of special concern in Orthodox theological education

Orthodox theology in the last fifty years or so, produced mainly in academic theological institutions, has positively contributed to a “paradigm change” in mission theology. It played a catalytic role in helping the (ecumenically oriented) world Christian mission move towards a *martyria-witness* and *inter-faith dialogue*, and away from an *imperialistic* and *proclamation-only* missional ethos. In other words, it adamantly insists on a *holistic* understanding of mission. Mission as reconciliation, or to put it in better (biblical) terms as “a ministry of reconciliation”, provides a more authentic and spiritual sense of the Church’s witness which, starting from the primary significance of *metanoia* and *conversion*, actually aims at the ultimate reality of the *Kingdom of God*, at the realization on earth “as it is in heaven” of the reality of the *oikos* or “*household of God*”. It will be a catastrophic development if the blossoming of missionary zeal in recent years within Orthodoxy ends up with the adoption of the aggressive and proselytic missionary methods reminiscent of western Christianity, in some cases full of nationalistic fervour, and alien to the spirit of “common Christian witness”. And to take the argument even further, it would be a contradiction in terms to avoid inter-religious initiatives, to denounce them as symptoms of syncretism, especially in view of the fact that the Orthodox theology of the “economy of the Spirit” contributed to the importance of the inter-faith dialogue programme within the WCC.

One should not forget that the Orthodox faithful for centuries lived peacefully with people of other living faiths, avoiding as much as possible practices that run counter to reconciliation. And if one goes back in history, the Byzantines were even accused by the crusaders of being too tolerant towards the Muslims! The case of the Malankara Oriental Orthodox Church in India is even more telling: there a peaceful co-existence and good

relations between Christianity and the other major religions of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism has always been an example to be imitated. Indian Christianity, while maintaining the uniqueness of its Orthodox faith, was fully inculturated in the indigenous social and cultural Indian context. Nowadays all these theologies and traditional missionary practices tend to be forgotten, unless the ecumenical vision is strongly reinforced in contemporary Orthodox theological education.

Orthodox theology has time and again insisted on the paramount importance of the *eschatological* identity and vision of the Church. Of course, the tension between eschatology and history, or – to put it more sharply – the relationship between the ecclesial community and our pluralistic, post-modern, post-colonial, post-industrial, etc. society, is one of the most challenging chapters of our witness. In order to overcome today's real challenges of economic globalization, some Orthodox seem to want to retreat to their glorious past. By doing this, they automatically become vulnerable at best to a kind of traditionalism, and at worst to an anti-ecumenical, nationalistic, and intolerant fundamentalism, attitudes of course totally alien and unacceptable to the traditional Orthodox ethos. The emphasis on theology does not necessarily mean that a "theology from above" neglects the importance of a "theology from below". As St. Maximus the Confessor has stated: "A theology without action is a theology of the Devil." The challenge for contemporary Orthodoxy is to develop a new *martyria*, and respond in a creative way to the tension between history and eschatology. And this can be achieved only with a proper ecumenical theological education.

Last, but not least, the most serious challenge for an Orthodox ecumenical witness is the inconsistency with what is set as a priority of the Orthodox identity, i.e. the Eucharistic self-consciousness, the liturgical understanding of the Church, as well as the prayerful nature of human beings (*homo orans*). For centuries, Orthodox theologians have been underlining the western churches' rational stance to faith, as well as the insufficient liturgical dimension in both bilateral and multilateral dialogues. Now that the Pentecostals have entered dynamically into the ecumenical field, now that Pneumatology has been seriously reintroduced in almost all theological reflections, now that almost all Christians have rediscovered the liturgy, most Orthodox still feel uncomfortable when they come face-to-face with the "common Christian witness". In most ecumenical meetings, the Orthodox presence in common prayer is regrettably minimal. What, however, is still more inexcusable, is that after their insistence that the WCC address the issue of Orthodox participation in this privileged ecumenical forum, after the establishment of the Special Commission, after their endorsement of its radical decisions, especially on matters of common prayer, to the Central Committee, most of the WCC member churches still have reservations about whether the Orthodox should pray at all together with non-Orthodox! Despite the serious challenge the Orthodox faced from

some fundamentalist minorities, and despite the ambiguity of the official position of some Orthodox churches, the contribution of Orthodox theological education is of paramount importance. Its ecumenical orientation and determination on all these issues must be unconditional.

2. Orthodox Theological Education in the Post-Modern Era: Challenges, Questions and Ambivalences¹

(a) The “Return to the Fathers” as dominant theological paradigm for Orthodox theological education

For most of the twentieth century, the “Return to the Fathers” seems to be the dominant theological paradigm for Orthodox theological education, both in traditional Orthodox countries and in the Diaspora, in the East as well as in the West, transcending political and social systems, cultural and educational milieu. This theological trend, related to different renewal movements in the Orthodox world and among the schools of theology, was crystallized at the First Orthodox Theological Conference, which was held in Athens in 1936. In this Conference, Fr Georges Florovsky, perhaps the greatest Orthodox theologian of the twentieth century and modern Orthodoxy’s most important ecumenical figure (being one of the co-founders of the World Council of Churches, and a distinguished member of and speaker for the Faith and Order Commission), proclaimed Orthodox theology’s need to “Return to the Fathers” and to be released from its “Babylonian captivity” to western theology in terms of its language, its presuppositions, and its thinking. Indeed, he would often return to this text with his use of the term “pseudomorphosis” to describe the long process of the Latinization and westernization of Russian theology. His call was quickly adopted and shared by many theologians of the Russian Diaspora and gathered fervent supporters in traditionally Orthodox countries, such as Greece, Serbia, and Romania. The theological movement of the “Return to the Fathers” became the hallmark of and the dominant “paradigm” for Orthodox theology for the better part of the twentieth century, and for many its primary task, to such a degree that this celebrated “Return to the Fathers” and the effort to “de-westernize” Orthodox theology overshadowed all other theological questions, as well as all the challenges the modern world had posed – and continues to pose – to Orthodox theology, while other Orthodox theological trends, such as the Russian school theology, faded from view. While the emblematic figure of this movement was, without question, Fr Georges Florovsky, we must not ignore or underestimate the decisive contributions of other theologians in its crystallization – to such a degree, in fact, that many of the positions which ultimately prevailed stand in stark contrast to the known theological sensibilities of Florovsky himself (e.g. “ahead with the Fathers”, the

openness of history, etc.), thus attributing even more conservative features to a movement that already by its very nature (“return”, etc.) included such elements.

The twentieth century was, therefore, a time of renewal for Orthodox theology, which for the first time in many centuries, due to the influence of the Orthodox Diaspora and ecumenical dialogue, ventured out from its traditional strongholds and initiated a discussion with other Christian traditions. It thus attempted to move its identity and self-consciousness beyond the dominant academic scholasticism and pietism of the late nineteenth century by adopting the form of a “neo-patristic synthesis”, the distinctive mark of which was the “existential” character of theology, and the definition of which contrasts repetition or imitation to synthesis, while combining fidelity to tradition with renewal. But, despite its innovative moments, it seems that the twentieth century – precisely because of the way in which this “Return to the Fathers” was perceived and of the corresponding programme to “de-westernize” Orthodox theology – was also for Orthodox theology a time of introversion, conservatism, and of a static or fundamentalist understanding of the concept of Tradition, which very often came to be equated with traditionalism. Thus, just as some Protestant churches still suffer from a certain level of fundamentalism regarding the Bible or biblical texts, the Orthodox Church, for its part, often finds itself trapped and frozen in a “fundamentalism of tradition” or in a “fundamentalism of the Fathers”, which makes it hard for it to work out in practice its Pneumatology and its charismatic dimension. This prevents it from being part of or in dialogue with the modern world, and discourages it from displaying its creative gifts and strengths.

Indeed, the particularly defensive way of understanding Florovsky’s “Return to the Fathers” and the systematization of his theory about “Christian Hellenism”, which considers the latter to be “the *eternal category* of Christian existence” and “something more than a passing stage” in the Church, and which is integrally connected with Hellenism, patristics, and catholicity, eventually helped consolidate the idea that we needed to constantly take refuge in the Church’s past – and the Fathers in particular in this case – so that we could be certain that we were within the limits of the truth. This version of the “Return to the Fathers”, moreover, seems to never return to a focus on the future “together with Fathers” (as Florovsky himself advocated in both his writings and his talks), thus rendering Orthodox theology mute and uneasy in the face of the challenges of the modern world. Orthodox thus seem to be satisfied with the strong sense of tradition that distinguishes us, inasmuch as the Orthodox, more than any other Christian confession, have preserved the wholeness of the theology, spiritual inheritance and piety of the undivided Church. As a result of this perception, very often the Orthodox world is unable to see another mission and another function for theology today apart from the continual return to its sources and roots, or the repetition and “translation” into

modern parlance of the writings of the Fathers of the Church, which the past, guided by the Holy Spirit, has deposited into the treasury of the faith.

It is true that Florovsky always emphasized that the “Return to the Fathers” did not mean the repetition or imitation of the past, confined to its various forms, or an escape from history, a denial of the present and history. On the contrary, what he continually stressed and highlighted was a creative return and meeting with the spirit of the Fathers, the acquisition of the mind of the Fathers (*ad mentem patrum*), and the creative fulfilment of the future.

Florovsky’s insistence, however, on the timelessness and eternalness of Christian Hellenism, i.e. in the necessity of Greek categories of thought for the formulation and expression of the eternal truth of the gospel in every time and place, as well as his refusal to examine – along with “back to the Fathers” and “ahead with the Fathers” – even the possibility of “beyond the Fathers”, largely negates his theology’s openness and orientation to the future. Florovsky could understand the “Return to the Fathers” in terms of creativity and renewal; he could also passionately proclaim “ahead with the Fathers”; however, what ultimately seems to prevail in his work, primarily in how it was understood and interpreted by his followers, is the element of “return”. The call to “Return to the Fathers” did not simply offer an identity and a character with which Orthodox theologians could move through the terrible upheavals of the twentieth century and survive spiritually and intellectually. He provided an easily digestible slogan and a sense of security and warmth amid a collapsing Christendom.

We should note here that the movement to “Return to the Fathers” is not a unique phenomenon that has taken place only among the Orthodox. The starting point for every church “reform movement” has been a movement to “return to the sources”, and this is precisely what we see in the same period in the Protestant world with dialectical theology, and in the Catholic milieu with the biblical, patristic, and liturgical renewal movements. Moreover, just as these western movements are inconceivable outside of the challenges posed by modernity, so were they basically efforts to respond to modernity also in the Orthodox Diaspora, where the movement to “Return to the Fathers” first appeared, as well as its rival, the Russian school theology, which is represented primarily by the great Russian theologian and priest Fr Sergei Bulgakov. The difference is that, while the respective western theological movements were ultimately being created within the framework of modernity, the corresponding Orthodox movement of “return” that was represented by the neo-patristic school – which won out over the Russian school theology – served as a bulwark against modernity.

The two (Orthodox) theological schools pursued different or even opposite approaches to the modern world’s challenges to Orthodoxy’s self-consciousness. It seems that the Russian school theology held a world-affirmative stance which sought to open Orthodoxy to the conditions and demands of modernity, while the neo-patristic theology supported a more

or less restrained and contemplative approach, calling for a “Return to the Fathers” and for Orthodoxy’s liberation from the western and modernist influences of the past centuries, thus preventing Orthodox theology from becoming really involved in modern issues. As some scholars suggest, the conflict between the two opposite schools was a debate between modernists and traditionalists, liberals and conservatives, and a confrontation over Orthodox theology’s orientation either “back to the Fathers” or “beyond the Fathers”.

(b) *The Consequences of the theological movement to
“Return to the Fathers”*

The consequences of this “Return to the Fathers” and the subsequent over-emphasis on patristic studies were, among other things:

(1) Within the Orthodox milieu, biblical studies had already suffered neglect; now there was a theoretical justification for it. Biblical studies were viewed as “Protestant” while patristic studies and the rediscovery of the Orthodox ascetic and neptic tradition were considered the truly “Orthodox” subjects. In spite of the proliferation of patristic studies in the second half of the twentieth century, both in the Orthodox Diaspora and in the traditionally Orthodox countries, and the subsequent strengthening of the characteristic theological features of Orthodox “identity”, the role of biblical studies in our theological bedrock was still an open question, such that, as is well known, we Orthodox continue to underestimate or even be suspicious of biblical studies and biblical research, even to the point that we regard the reading and study of the Bible as a Protestant practice that is at odds with the Orthodox patristic and neptic ethos. Indeed, imitating the old “Protestant” principle of the objective authority of the text, we often simply replace the authority of *sola scriptura* with the authority of the *consensus patrum*. Ultimately, in practice, the authority and the study of the patristic texts – the vast majority of which are essentially interpretive commentaries on the Bible – has acquired greater importance and gravitas than the biblical text itself. Thus, Orthodox theology overlooked the biblical foundations of the Christian faith, the indissoluble bond between the Bible and the Eucharist, the Bible and the Liturgy. And while we based our claims to be Orthodox on the Fathers, we ignored the fact that all the great Fathers were major interpreters of the Scriptures. It was forgotten that patristic theology is simultaneously *unconfused and indivisible* biblical theology, and Orthodox tradition, as well as Orthodox theology, are patristic and biblical at the same time; they are patristic and Orthodox only to the extent that they are also biblical.

(2) Patristic theology was mythologized, removed from its historical context and approached unhistorically, almost metaphysically. The particular historical circumstances in which the patristic works were written, the Fathers’ continuous interaction and dialogue with the

philosophy and outside philosophical trends of their era, their study and free use of the hermeneutical methods of their time – all this was forgotten. And we have not yet adequately considered what appears to be the most characteristic example of the Church taking up elements initially foreign to its own theological and ontological assumptions, and fruitfully assimilating them into its life and theology. Today, we have come to regard that encounter as self-evident, forgetting the titanic battles that preceded it. Perhaps we are unaware or fail to notice how difficult and painful it was for primitive Christianity (with its Jewish and generally Semitic roots and origins) to accept and incorporate Hellenic concepts and categories such as nature, essence, *homoousion*, *hypostasis*, person, *logos*, intellect, *nous*, meaning, cause, power, accident, energy, *kath' holou*, cosmos, etc. But this unhistorical approach to patristic theology is in fact a “betrayal” of the spirit of the Fathers inasmuch as it betrays and ignores the very core and essence of their thought, i.e. a continuous dialogue with the world, and an encounter with and assumption of the historical, social, cultural, and scientific context of their time, as is particularly well illustrated by the great fourth-century Fathers’ engagement with Hellenism. Today, in contrast to the boldness and breadth of the Fathers, the widespread propagation, popularization, and “necessity” of the call to “Return to the Fathers” not only made the Fathers an integral part of an Orthodox “fad” and of the dominant Orthodox “establishment”, but has also come to characterize and accompany every kind of neo-conservative and fundamentalist version of Orthodox theology. And the constant invocation of the authority of the Fathers for every sort of problem – even those issues that could not have existed in the patristic age – led to the objectification of patristic theology and to a peculiar “patristic fundamentalism” not unlike the biblical fundamentalism of extremist Protestant groups. Finally, this unhistorical approach to patristic thought led to the suppression of the contribution of western theology in the movement to rediscover the theology of the Greek Fathers and to liberate theology from scholasticism. In fact, as is well known, starting as early as the first half of the twentieth century, western theology in all its forms has been traveling its own path of repentance and self-critique, making its own attempt to be liberated from the confines of neo-scholastic and rationalistic theology; its most eminent representatives have been searching for the tradition of the undivided Church, and seeking dialogue and contact with the modern world. The rediscovery of the eschatological identity of the Church, primarily in the realm of German Protestantism, and the renewal movements within Roman Catholic theology, such as the movement to Return to the Fathers (the most representative examples of which are Fourvière’s school in Lyons and the publication of the patristic works series “Sources Chrétiennes” by its pre-eminent collaborators), the liturgical renewal movement, the reconnection of the Bible with the Liturgy, as well as the Church’s and theology’s social commitment, are only some of the aspects of western theology’s attempt at

liberation and self-critique, which were connected with the so-called “nouvelle théologie” movement, without which the Orthodox movement for the “Return to the Fathers” would probably have been impossible.

(3) Concerned as it was with the very serious matter of freeing itself from western influence and “Returning to the Fathers” – dealing, in other words, with issues of self-understanding and identity – Orthodox theology, with a few exceptions, was basically absent from the major theological discussions of the twentieth century and had almost no influence in setting the theological agenda. Dialectical theology, existential and hermeneutical theology, the theology of history and culture, the theology of secularization and modernity, the “nouvelle théologie”, contextual theologies, the theology of hope and political theology, liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology, ecumenical theology, the theology of mission, the theology of religions and otherness – this whole revolution that occurred in the theological work of the twentieth century barely touched Orthodox theology. Rather, during this period, Orthodox theology was concerned with its own “internal” problems; escaping “western influence” had become one of its priorities. These theological trends, with the exception perhaps of ecumenical theology, the theology of mission, and the movement for patristic and liturgical renewal, do not appear to have been influenced by Orthodoxy, despite the fact that important Orthodox theologians actively participated in the Ecumenical Movement from its inception. Orthodox theology’s silence and absence from the contemporary theological discussions does not seem to have gone unnoticed by modern western theologians, who have not failed to point out Orthodoxy’s inability to be expressed in contemporary terms and its continued invocation of the authority of the Fathers and of tradition.

(4) Judging from the results, it can hardly be denied that the “Return to the Fathers” has contributed decisively – and negatively – to the polarization between East and West, to Orthodoxy’s total rejection of the West, and to the cultivation and consolidation of an anti-western and anti-ecumenical spirit. Here we run into a major paradox, which is worth stopping to analyze. Fr Georges Florovsky, who was the main proponent of the “Return to the Fathers”, and the most important theologian both within this movement and within Orthodoxy as a whole during the twentieth century, was reared not only on patristic literature, hymnology, and even the Bible, but also by the great works of contemporary western theology, which he took into consideration or with which he was in constant dialogue. Moreover, Florovsky never adopted the idea of a polarization between East and West; he utilized the Latin Fathers, such as Augustine, in his ecclesiological works; he wrote many of his classic studies for an ecumenical audience or as an Orthodox contribution to ecumenical meetings; and, above all, he was always quick to maintain that the catholicity of the Church not only could not exist with only the West, but also that it could not exist with only the East, and that catholicity requires

both lungs of the Church, western and eastern, like Siamese twins. However, as we already noted above, the movement for a “Return to the Fathers” was significantly influenced by the participation and the work of other theologians (Lossky, Staniloae, Popovic, et al.), while the positions and the general theological line of thought which ultimately prevailed was, in many places, at odds with Florovsky’s positions, such as, most notably, an intense anti-westernism and anti-ecumenism. The Fathers and their theology were often seen as the unique characteristic and exclusive property of the East – thus blatantly ignoring the Christian West’s important contributions in rediscovering the Fathers – while more than a few times patristic theology was used to wage an outdated and illogical invective against the West. Thus Orthodoxy was seen as having the wealth and authenticity of the Fathers’ thought, a rich liturgical experience and mystical theology, while the spiritually emaciated West lacked all these things and instead was content with scholasticism and pietism, theological rationalism, and legalism. As a result, younger Orthodox theologians, particularly in traditionally Orthodox countries, learned not only the interpretive schema of an Orthodox East versus a heretical West, but it also became commonplace to contrast, in a self-satisfied way, the “best version” of Orthodoxy (with the Cappadocian Fathers, Maximus the Confessor, so-called “mystical” theology, St. Gregory Palamas, the Russian theology of the Diaspora, etc.) with the “long gone by” version represented by the West (with its scholastic theology, Thomas Aquinas, the Holy Inquisition, a theology of legalism and pietism, etc.). This is how the modern West remains understood today in many Orthodox countries. Despite the significant progress that has taken place in the fields of patristic studies, the theology of the local church, and Eucharistic ecclesiology, the West is still seen through this distorted lens for reasons of convenience and simplicity or, more simply, from ignorance. This climate has abetted in depriving the newer Orthodox theological generation of both the right and the possibility of becoming familiar and interacting with the fundamental works of western theology, which remain, for the most part, untranslated or unknown in the Orthodox world.

What is beyond doubt, however, is the fact that both the Russian theology of the Diaspora and other theological movements for renewal in other Orthodox countries flourished and developed in an environment of dialogue with the West, and not in an environment of zealotism and Orthodox introversion. And so, as strange or even scandalous as it may seem to some, it was the meeting and dialogue with the West that led to the renaissance of Orthodox theology in the twentieth century and to its release from its “Babylonian captivity” to western scholastic and pietistic theology. The opportunities and fruitful challenges posed to the Orthodox by the ecumenical dialogue ultimately led Orthodox theology out of its parochial introversion and its insular self-sufficiency, and contributed decisively to the emergence of the great forms of the theology of the Diaspora, and to the

original syntheses of Greek-speaking theology, such as the theology of the person. Orthodox fundamentalism – which very often thrives in monastic or pro-monastic environments, and which considers anti-westernism and anti-ecumenism as constitutive elements of the Orthodox self-consciousness and as the most defining characteristics of patristic theology – obscures and obstinately refuses to accept these truths.

(5) In spite of the theological interests of Florovsky and other Orthodox theologians who followed him (e.g. the Incarnation, the historicity of theology and the openness of history, the contextualization of the word of gospel, the catholicity of the Church, which includes both East and West, etc.), and their lasting concern for a creative and rejuvenating engagement with the spirit of the Fathers, i.e. for a neo-patristic synthesis and renaissance, we must admit that the “Return to the Fathers” and “Christian Hellenism”, as a proposal for a theological agenda, is basically a conservative choice, inasmuch as they ultimately refer more to theology’s past than to the present and the future. And while this theological movement’s intention is to push Orthodoxy out of its inertia and into a dialogue with the contemporary world on the basis of the neo-patristic synthesis, the broader historical context of this dialogue, viz. modernity and late modernity, is essentially absent from its theological agenda. We should, of course, remember that, for primarily historical reasons, the Orthodox world did not organically participate in the phenomenon of modernity. It did not experience the Renaissance, the Reformation or the Counter-Reformation, religious wars or the Enlightenment, the French or the Industrial Revolutions, the rise of the subject, human rights, or the religiously neutral nation-state. What has been recognized as the core of modernity seems to have remained alien to Orthodoxy, which continues to be suspicious of modernity. This uncertainly helps to explain Orthodoxy’s difficulty in communicating with the contemporary (post-)modern world, and it raises at the same time the question of whether or not Orthodox Christianity and (neo-)patristic theology came to an end before modernity.

Indeed, if we consider the precedent of the Roman Catholic Church, we will see that scholastic philosophy and theology – when it was reinstated in the second half of the nineteenth century with Neo-Thomism at the forefront – was meant to be, among other things, a defence against the challenges that modernity posed to the inflexible theological establishment of the Roman Catholic Church at that time; therefore, *mutatis mutandis*, the crucial question in the present context is the following: has not the celebrated “Return to the Fathers”, as it has been understood and applied by several Orthodox theologians, served also as a bulwark against modernity and the challenges it posed, in spite of itself and contrary to its declared aim of renewal? Has it not thus hindered both the word of God in its incarnation and revelation within each particular social and cultural context, and the development, within Orthodox theology, of hermeneutics, biblical and historical research, systematic theology, anthropological and feminist

studies, and political, liberation, and ecumenical theology? Has it not contributed in its own way to making the entire Orthodox ecclesial life a prisoner to pre-modern structures and practices, and to a conservative mentality?

In any case, modernity and post-modernity (or late modernity) and the framework they provide constitute the broader historical, social, and cultural environment within which the Orthodox Church is called to live and carry out its mission; it is here that the Church is called upon time and time again to incarnate the Christian truth about God, the world and humanity. Certainly, modern Orthodox theology, inspired mainly by the spirit of the Fathers, reformulated during the twentieth century an admirable theology of the Incarnation, of “assuming flesh”. However, its position on a series of issues revolving, essentially, around aspects of the modernist phenomenon, but also the core of its ecclesial self-understanding, has often left this otherwise remarkable theology of Incarnation in abeyance and socially inert. Such issues include human rights, the secularization of politics and institutions, the desacralization of politics and ethnicity, the overturning of established social hierarchies in the name of a fairer society, the affirmation of love and corporeality and the spiritual function of sexuality, the position of women, social and cultural anachronisms, and so forth. The typical Orthodox approach to such issues, sadly, confirms yet again the view that Orthodox people content themselves with theory, and make no progress or fall tragically short when it comes to practice; that we prefer to “contemplate” and “observe” rather than to act, forgetting or side-stepping the fundamentally antinomic and anti-conventional character of the ecclesial event and settling down in the safe confines of “tradition” and customs handed down from the past, and the comfort of traditional society which, in the minds of many, is by its very nature identical with “Tradition” itself. Yet theology at least ought to be incarnate, to remind us constantly of the antinomic and idoloclastic character of the ecclesial event, but also to commit itself to the consequences and repercussions of the theology of the Incarnation.

*(c) The need for a new incarnation of the word
and the challenges of contextual theologies*

If every text always has a “con-text”, and if we agree that the specific and determinant context of patristic theology was the then-dominant Greek philosophy and culture, then we must seriously and honestly consider whether we are facing today the same context, and whether we are living and creating in the framework of the same type of culture, or whether we are facing the challenges of a post-Hellenic and consequently post-patristic era. And if we do, the next crucial question is if the duty and the task of theology is to defend or to preserve a certain era, a certain culture, a certain language, or, on the contrary, to serve the truth of the gospel and the people

of God in every time, in every space, and through every culture or language. Because there is no such thing as a universal theology in abstract, a kind of unhistorical, unaltered, and timeless tradition and monolithic conception; theology occurs only in specific historical and cultural contexts and in response to specific questions and challenges. Accordingly, *contextual theology* refers to both a way of understanding the theological project and a methodological framework for “doing theology”. It is evident that the above analysis presupposes an approach, at once constructive and critical, of contextual theology. While it can sometimes go too far, contextual theology highlights the close link between the text and its context, and reminds us that we cannot do theology in a purely intellectual or academic way, abstracted from time, history and the socio-cultural context, from pastoral needs and from the myriad different forms of human culture and theological expression.

Therefore, theology, as the prophetic voice and expression of the Church’s self-understanding, must function in reference to the antinomic and dual-natured character of the Church. Just as the Church is not of this world, so theology aims, at expressing a charismatic experience and a transcendent reality, over and above words, concepts, or names. Just as the Church lives and goes forth into the world, so theology seeks dialogue and communication with the historical present in every age, adopting the language, the flesh and the thought-world of each particular era, of the historical and cultural present at any given time. Theology is not co-extensive with history and cannot be identified with history; but neither can it function in the absence of history and, more importantly, it cannot keep ignoring the lessons of history. Without this process of unconfused osmosis and reception of the world and of history, without this gesture of dialogue, moving towards the world and “witnessing” to it, neither the Church nor theology can exist, nor can God’s revelation, since the Church does not exist for itself but for the world and for the benefit of the world: “for the life of the world.” After all, God’s revelation has always taken place within creation and history, not in some unhistorical, timeless universe unrelated to the world.

It is imperative, then, for Orthodox theology to examine the possibility of devising, through the Holy Spirit, new terms and new names (“to coin new names,” in the words of St. Gregory the Theologian), correlated to today’s needs and challenges, just as the need for a new incarnation of the Word and the eternal truth of the gospel is also urgently necessary. A theology of repetition, a theology that is satisfied simply with a “return to the sources”, or that relies on the “Return to the Fathers” and the neo-patristic synthesis, cannot, by definition, respond to this need and the manifold challenges of the post-modern pluralistic world. What is therefore required is not a repetition and a perpetuation of the denial and the reticence often adopted by the Orthodox in their stance towards modernity and pluralism, but a creative encounter and a serious theological dialogue

with whatever challenges modernity and post-modernity pose, a “reorientation (of modernity) from inside”, to use the fine expression of His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV of Antioch. Will the Orthodox Church be faithful to a renewed “*theanthropism*” and an authentic theology of Incarnation, and, inspired by the vision and the experience of the resurrection, internalize the tradition, the boldness, and the mind of the Fathers and the grand theological syntheses that they worked out, mainly in the East? Will it enter into dialogue and even attempt (why not?) a new synthesis with the best in modernity, actualizing the encounter between East and West that we have been hearing about for decades?

From an Orthodox point of view, the key to addressing all the above topics and to answering all these questions can be found in eschatology. Eschatology introduces an element of active expectation accompanied by the dimension of the future and the renewing breeze of the Spirit, dimensions so definitive for the life and theology of the Church and yet so lacking today. For in response to the challenge of globalization, cosmopolitanism and internationalism, today the wind of traditionalism and fundamentalism is once again blowing violently through the life and theology of the Church. Whereas fundamentalism is a flight into the past of pre-modernity and involves turning back the course of history, eschatology is an active and demanding expectation of the coming Kingdom of God, the new world which we await; as such, it feeds into a dynamic commitment to the present, an affirmation and openness to the future of the Kingdom in which the fulness and identity of the Church is to be found. In other words, the Church does not derive its substance principally from what it is, but rather from what it will become in the future, in the eschatological time which, since the resurrection of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, has already begun to illuminate and influence the present and history.

In the light of eschatology, even the Tradition of the Church itself acquires a new meaning and a different dimension, an optimistic and hopeful perspective. Looked at from this angle, Tradition is not the letter that kills, a nostalgic repetition or uncritical acceptance or continuation of the past, but a creative continuity in the Holy Spirit and an openness to the future, to the new world of the Kingdom of God, which we actively await. Seen in this light, it seems that the patristic tradition with its various expressions acquires another meaning and another perspective, inasmuch as it, in turn, is judged and investigated in light of the *eschaton* and the coming Kingdom of God, while the celebrated “Return to the Fathers” is a mile-marker in a dynamic journey of the broader renewal, in the Holy Spirit, of Orthodox theology, a renewal that is not yet complete. And “Christian Hellenism” is a type or paradigm of the Church’s relationship to the world and not an “eternal category of Christian existence”, or an unalterable and timeless paragon.

*(d) Conclusions for Orthodox theological education
in dialogue with post-modernity*

The crucial and decisive question that naturally arises from all of the above is if there is a possibility for an Orthodox theology and tradition that is *not* patristic; if it is possible, in other words, for us to speak within Orthodoxy of a “post-patristic theology” (in both the temporal and normative sense of the term).

If the Orthodox theology of the last few decades was inspired and renewed by the call to “Return to the Fathers” and the call of liberation from the captivity of academic and scholastic theology – without, however, ever managing to avoid its identification with the caricature of traditionalism, patristic archaeology and confessional entrenchment – today, in the globalized, post-modern pluralistic world, there is a clear and imperative need for a breath of fresh air, for the overcoming of a certain provincialism and a complacent introversion within Orthodox theology. There is a need for openness to the ecumenicity of Christianity, to the challenge of religious otherness, and the catholicity of human thought. Theology’s prophetic function calls it to continually transcend itself, to continually transform and renew every kind of established expression and creation – even those inherited from patristic thought – to make a new leap similar to or perhaps even greater than what Greek patristic thought needed to make in relation to primitive Christian thought. Is it, perhaps, time for us to realize that fidelity to the patristic tradition – the “We, following the holy Fathers” – does not mean simply the continuation, the update, or even the reinterpretation of this tradition, but rather – following the precedent set by the leaps made by primitive Christianity and the Fathers – the transcendence of patristic thought when and where it is needed. The “Return to the Fathers” was conceived during the twentieth century as a “paradigm shift” for Orthodox theology. The question is whether we are now envisaging – or if we should envisage – a new “paradigm shift” for Orthodox theology today.²

What has been said above implies a series of changes and reconsiderations toward the future of Orthodox theological education. We mention below just some of them, without claiming any exhaustive character or exclusivity:

- The curriculum and the programmes of theological education in Orthodox state faculties and ecclesiastical academies have to be reconsidered and reoriented. While patristic and liturgical studies will continue to occupy a privileged place, special attention needs to be paid to biblical theology and biblical studies, as well as to modern and contemporary theological and philosophical trends – especially those of the West. In addition, the study of the Fathers has to be more historical, more hermeneutical, more contextual, while systematic theology seen from this perspective needs to be something more than a simple class of Dogmatics.

- Theological reflection on and dialogue with contemporary issues in society needs to be increased and reinforced. The time has come for liberation, as well as political and gender theologies, among other things, to find their proper place within the Orthodox theological curricula. Research on anthropological and bio-ethical topics should gain a renewed interest in the Orthodox context, while the theological approach to modernity and post-modernity has to be an urgent priority for Orthodox schools and academies.
- The departments for teaching ecumenical theological education and promoting dialogue with other Christian denominations should be more supported. The new reality created by the religious otherness and diversity of our multicultural societies inevitably poses the challenge of pluralism and leads to the necessity of a theology of religions.
- In other words, the Orthodox Church and its theology have to respond to the challenges and demands of the twenty-first century and abandon the “safe” shelter where they used to live for decades, even after the famous and celebrated “Return to the Fathers”.

3. Women in Orthodox Theological Education

(a) Gender issues and Orthodox theological education

Theological education, in an ecumenical perspective, has been defined as the task to motivate, equip, and enable the people of God – individuals and communities – to develop their gifts and offer their lives in meaningful service. It has been affirmed as “theological” in the sense that it involves people in a certain commitment and ministry, a commitment to the study of God in the sense of God’s revelation in the life of Jesus Christ and God’s continuous working through the Holy Spirit. “...*Speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped... promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love*” (Eph. 4:14-16).

Two significant questions are often raised regarding the purpose and the meaning of theological education nowadays: (1) who is and ought to be doing theology today; and (2) what is and ought to be the perspective for doing theology today. The historical, social and cultural situation of the past fifty years has forced theology to undergo several large-scale changes or *paradigm shifts*. In other words, the ways in which theology understands its tasks, presuppositions, sources and methods have shifted; moreover, the ways in which it arrives at metaphysical, logical and existential judgments about truth have changed in many contexts as well. For the Orthodox, theological education is a *continuous struggle*, in the words of Dimitru

Staniloe, to “make theology what it is, penetrating beyond dogmatic definitions to the reality itself by our direct and living contact with Christ as a person and with the Holy Trinity as a communion of persons”; that is a theology which “has always been pastoral, missionary and prophetic” (Alexander Schmemmann).

Among the various perspectives and trends of theology and theological education, the one that comes from women theologians and feminists sounds quite interesting, especially in the following areas: 1. theological education should be seen in an ecumenical and pluralist perspective. Pluralism is meant in terms of tradition, context, ethnic background, gender, etc.; 2. theological education cannot be a clergy-based education. It is offered to facilitate theological production and make the latter as relevant as possible, relevant to the community’s faith and relevant to the community’s traditions and to the situation in which the community is living; 3. the epistemological foundations of theology should be questioned. Rather than learning historical facts, this involves learning to analyze and reconstruct history; rather than accepting biblical and traditional testimonies without suspicion, re-examining the Scripture and the written Tradition and discovering their andocentric elements; 4. the theory-practice relationship should be reinforced. According to Ofelia Ortega: “The experience of the ‘excluded’ teaches us that we need to work for a permanent integration between theology and life. This involves true integration between theory and praxis and between discourse and pastoral ministry.”³

A feminist understanding of theology and education reminds us that the theological methods and processes are full of *stereotypes* that are standardized mental images, based on prejudiced attitudes or lack of critical judgment. An example of such beliefs would be stereotypes of women as weak, passive, irrational, and men as strong, active and rational. Stereotypes such as these are used to support claims – in theology and in the Church as well – that women are inferior to men and thus legitimate relations of male domination and female subordination.

In the Orthodox theological context, gender issues and questions related to the subordination of women is a relatively recent field of research. The debate most often takes place outside the Orthodox context; that is, Orthodox women in ecumenical relationships rather than within the Orthodox communities. The WCC Decade, the consultations and the Bossey seminars were catalysts for a few progressive-minded Orthodox women across the various jurisdictions. But still, feminist theology and feminist history are not, as yet, active and recognized academic fields for Orthodox men and women scholars. While some feminist theological research has been undertaken by a few women scholars, for example in the USA, France and Greece, the main focus is biblical exegesis but their work is seldom available in English, with the exception of occasional papers in international journals. Scholars such as Eva Katafygiotou-Topping, Sister

Nonna Harrison, Kyriaki Karridoyannes-FitzGerald, Dee Jaque-Velissarios, Teva Regule (USA), Elisabeth Behr-Sigel (France), Evanthia Adamtziloglou, Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, Denia Athanasopoulou Kypriou (Greece), Leonie Liveris (Australia), etc., write with an understanding and in some cases awareness of feminist perspectives.

There is a kind of ‘resistance’ to ‘women’s questions’ and the feminist movement in Orthodoxy, both of which are perceived as the province of secular feminism that is destructive of tradition and family. It is well known that in some quarters of Orthodoxy, the term “modernism” is commonly understood as an attempt to promote dogmatic heresy in the Church. In this framework, women theologians who are seeking contemporary expressions of the ancient faith in their own lives are readily labelled as “feminists” and therefore, automatically also modernists, in the most destructive sense of these words. Such ideas are widespread not only among the clergy but among academicians as well. It is important to take, also, into consideration that women in many Orthodox contexts were not allowed to go to the seminaries or theological faculties until recently.

In eastern Europe and the Middle East where Orthodoxy constitutes the traditional form of Christianity and in the Diaspora where, during the twentieth century, Orthodox communities were formed and inculcated in the West, Orthodox women continue to take an active role in the life of the Church. Their role in the transmission of faith in the heart of the family, as mothers and educators, has always been essential. But today it largely extends beyond this familial framework. Women either alone or in equal partnership with male catechists work in religious education. They sing in the choir, a role so important in Orthodox worship, and sometimes even direct it. They are members (at least in the church which originated with the Russian emigration) of the parish and the diocesan councils, like the diocesan assembly that elects the bishop. In some traditionally Orthodox countries – Greece for example – classes on religion are obligatory. Orthodox pupils are taught the main principles of their Orthodox faith from the third grade of elementary school till the last grade of high school (ten years). The same curriculum is followed by both public and private schools. Most of the teachers of religion in Greece are women. Many of them are over-qualified, holding a Master or a PhD in theology or pedagogy. But the directors and the advisors of theology in the secondary educational system (positions that are better paid and which earn a higher respect) are mainly men, and women are few, less than 25 per cent.

Similar is the situation at the universities. In a revealing article, written by Dr Dimitra Koukoura in 2001, a realistic description of the contradictory situation is given (seven years later, the situation has been improved but not sufficiently changed). Female students are the majority in the theological faculties. Statistics show that they are better and more consistent students. They continue their studies for a Masters or a PhD degree. Although they are well qualified, few of them succeed in ultimately finding a job on the

staff of a theological faculty. Women lecturers or professors are less than thirty per cent of the staff, most of them teach pedagogy, history, arts, foreign or ancient languages, and only a few teach systematic theology, patristics, biblical hermeneutics, i.e. the core lessons of theology. Additionally, women are very slowly promoted. They remain for many years at the low levels of the hierarchical structure and, as a result, away from the decision-making bodies. The situation is similar in other Orthodox contexts, sometimes even in the West.

Another challenging characteristic of the Orthodox faculties and seminaries is the structure, the philosophy and the content of the curricula. Most of the curricula give the impression that theology means “the erudite transmission of a set of information about God and his work in the world, backed by arguments from the Holy Scriptures and the Church Tradition. All too often the height of theological knowledge was the memorization of texts instead of meeting with the living personal God”.⁴ They seldom include the modern trends, methods, approaches of theology and an ecumenical perspective. The reason for such an absence is connected with the fact that theological education in many Orthodox contexts is still under the umbrella or the influence of some conservative clerical environments. Since the theological faculties prepare “church” leaders and teachers of religion, they cannot sometimes avoid this influence.

But, if the Orthodox refuse to dialogue with the present, then they “lock” theology into a specific era. The Church and its theology cannot be locked into a specific era, because they demonstrate in every way the immutable truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This means that the Church and its theology are *dynamic* and *alive*, not static and lifeless. Theology can and should respond to the issues of any time and place courageously, and this means change. Are the Orthodox eternally bound to the tyranny of the argument that, because it has never been so done before, it must never be considered? The Cappadocians did not fear to utilize the language of Hellenism to transmit the faith in a Hellenistic world. How is that the Orthodox today so often fear to tread in their footsteps? It is important to stress here that in each Orthodox context, two trends can be distinguished: the one that defends “the traditional faith” and associates with a nationalistic understanding of Orthodoxy, and the one which is open, ready to connect with society at large, with members of the other Christian traditions and faiths.

It is important for Orthodox theological faculties and seminaries to incorporate in their curricula lessons regarding the role of women in the Church and society and the related questions raised in the ecumenical framework. It is important also that these courses be taught by female professors and include male and female students in order not to end up as a course exclusively for a few female students.

(b) *How can Orthodox women contribute to ecumenical theological education?*

Orthodox women theologians can contribute in order “to make theology an essential belief and a creative function in the lives of all, to make the ecclesia a genuine deposit as well as an expression of love, sacrifice and an unselfish struggle for society” (A Schmemman). They need to find *their own model* of doing theology, and in doing so they can begin with one of the key mottos of feminist exegesis, coined by Judy Chicago: “Our heritage is our power.” The “female face” of Orthodox tradition is largely unknown and is yet to be explored in both Orthodox and ecumenical contexts.

The process of realizing that, despite the positive and optimistic ecclesiological vision of the Orthodox Church about man and woman (*anthropos*), which goes beyond gender discrimination or other social divisions – and can be described as “a democracy of heavens” – this vision has been somewhat distorted in practice, and is something that has already been stressed by many Orthodox theologians, men and women. As Lev Gillet, a great contemporary spiritual writer, points out:

“The Orthodox church is somehow so strange... a church of contrasts, at one and the same time so traditional and so free, so ritualistic... and so lively. A church where the pearl of great price of the gospel is lovingly preserved, at times covered in dust.”

The position of Orthodox women provides a particularly striking illustration of the contrasts highlighted by Lev Gillet. The deep contradictions include the liberating message of the gospel which exists alongside outmoded taboos; they include both the spiritual and the personal theological doctrine of humanity which exist alongside stereotypes of gender inherited from patriarchal societies. The universally present icon of Mary, Mother of Jesus, radiates a tender and deep femininity, but the altar is barred to women. The women who brought the spices to the tomb on the first Easter morning were the first to announce that Jesus was risen, and are honoured in the Orthodox churches as “apostles to the apostles”. But the reading of the gospel in public worship is still limited to male ministers...

Eva Kafatygiotou-Topping suggests that it is now time “to re-examine the androcentric prejudices in Orthodox tradition that have determined the attitudes and praxis of the Church even in these times” and she adds: “It is time for Orthodox women to speak openly, to claim our history through research, writing and publication, to claim our equal rights in the Church. Unlike Kassiane, there is no imperial crown at risk; rather we stand to gain full participation and responsibility in the Church and her mission.”

And Leonie Liveris points out: “In order for Orthodox women to challenge the teaching of the Church that recognizes the *charisms* of women but not their intellectual and spiritual equality with men, there is a need for using the ‘feminist hermeneutics of suspicion’ on canon law and scriptural interpretation, as well as critical analysis of the practices of hierarchy and patriarchy.”

Numerous questions, related to the role of women in the Church and society, remain unanswered within the Ecumenical Movement and they will not be easily addressed or answered. Women theologians are invited to express their visions, theological insights and hope for the Church as a community of justice and solidarity. Women are in search of a dialogue and a synthesis between what is called the eastern and western *sophia*. For the Orthodox, even more important than listening to the words spoken in the West is the willingness to take into account the experience of western women theologians, their joys and more particularly their sufferings and their open questions. This dynamic encounter will enrich the ecumenical process and will offer new perspectives for a creative and honest theological dialogue. However, the category of ‘gender’ alone is not sufficient in order to make evident the relationships of domination in which women are entangled. Theological dialogue should examine additional parameters which will be directed then at the praxis of overcoming the social, political and religious injustices.

* This joint contribution to the study process on Mission and Theological Education first appeared in D Werner, D Esterline, N Kang and J Raja (eds), *Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity: Theological Perspectives-Regional Surveys-Ecumenical Trends* (Oxford: Regnum Studies in Global Christianity, 2010), pp. 610ff. Part A was written by Dr Petros Vassiliadis; Part B by Dr Pantelis Kalaitzidis, Director of the Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Volos, Greece, and member of the (Eastern) Orthodox Church of Greece; and Part C by Dr Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi, a visiting professor at the Open University of Patras, Greece, who holds a PhD in New Testament, and is also a member of the (Eastern) Orthodox Church of Greece.

1. Parts of Dr Kalaitzidis’ paper were drawn from his recent article, “From the ‘Return to the Fathers’ to the Need for a Modern Orthodox Theology”, published in *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 54 (2010), 5-36.

2. The above questions, and numerous related issues, among them the desired synthesis between classical or patristic theology and contextual theologies, catholicity and contextuality, were discussed and debated at the international conference on: “Neo-patristic Synthesis or Post-patristic Theology: Can Orthodox Theology be Contextual?” which took place June 3-6, 2010 in Volos, Greece. This conference was organized by the Volos Academy for Theological Studies in collaboration with the Chair of Orthodox Theology at the Centre of Religious Studies (CRS) of the University of Münster (Germany), the Orthodox Christian Studies Program of Fordham University (USA), and the Romanian Institute for Inter-Orthodox, Inter-Confessional and Inter-Religious Studies (INTER, Romania). For more information see: <http://www.acadimia.gr/> and an English version at: <http://www.acadimia.gr/index.php?lang=en>

3. “Theological Education” in *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies*, Letty M Russell and J Shannon Clarkson (eds) (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1996), 282-83.

4. Pr Dan Sandu, “Romanian Orthodoxy at the Crossroads: Past, Present in the Higher Theological Education”, www.dansandu.ro/biblioteca, 7.



YOUTH ENVISIONING ECUMENICAL MISSION: SHIFTING ECUMENICAL MISSION PARADIGMS FOR WITNESSING CHRIST TODAY

Vineeth Koshy

Today many 'movements' have become 'monuments'; however, the 1910 World Missionary Conference, which was a starting point of the modern Ecumenical Movement, was responsible for remarkable progress quantitatively and qualitatively, extensively and intensively. Ecumenism and mission activities have now moved away from the mere fringes of proselytizing and baptizing to greater and noble areas of work and study, thanks to the engagement of many creative thinkers, enthusiastic ecumenists and committed missionaries. Ecumenism and mission receive an overwhelming barrage of responses. Initially and even now a large majority of the population is negative, sceptical and pessimistic about the ecumenical and missionary enterprise. Analyzing some of these unfavourable responses, I get the impression that many of these misunderstandings are due to insufficient knowledge of the nature of mission, its background, its function, its relevance and future prospects, or else we are too impatient. A well-informed, thoughtful and dispassionate study of the ecumenical and missionary movements will lead us to a balanced and positive assessment regarding the contributions of these movements. Therefore the centenary celebration of the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh, 1910, becomes a unique occasion to celebrate ecumenical unity, map the mission mandate and understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the churches and ecumenical movements in the contemporary world.

Youth is a state of life and mind when there is quality of thinking, a preponderance of courage and an appetite for adventure. However, one of the alarming features of today's youth participation and leadership in the Church is that the younger generation is in the 'exit phase' and there may be various reasons for justifying this exit. We are forgetting that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are distributed equally and widely in the Church. Therefore it is quite essential that the spiritual experience and expertise of every member must be recognized and drawn into the common spirituality of the local congregations. Thus the concerns of the Church must be broad-based, involving the youth, women, and children.

In interpreting the theme and mandate of the Edinburgh Centenary, the youth may ask, 'What does it mean to witness (to) Christ today?' Though

the Church exists for mission, the basic question is: What type and kind of mission are we looking forward to? I may say that in this twenty-first century, youth envision some major shifts of mission paradigms and the ecumenical mission must take its future direction looking from four different perspectives: creative, contextual, communitarian and compassionate.

Creative Mission

Creativity is a vital dimension of human existence. The true basis of our creativity is the belief that we are made in the image of God. Thereby God has shared God's creativity with us. Creativity is not some rare esoteric gift enjoyed by a few people such as poets, musicians, actors, sculptors, artisans, and so on. Rather it has been gifted to all, something that comes with being alive, sensitive, caring, questioning, and open to the Spirit of God, willing to learn from the past, analyse the present and explore the future. To be creative is to be willing to grow and to encourage growth in others. The Church and the Ecumenical Movement are challenged to the sacred task of unfolding the possibilities of mission in creative ways, and not merely being satisfied with 'doing the minimum'. In the normal order of things, if only the conventional way is attempted, it may bring short-term results but it may not bring desired outcomes. What youth and society today really need is a combination of both the ways, i.e. to be conventional and creative, whereby the problem is not merely solved but eliminated completely.

The youth's call to the Church, in order to be more effective and meaningful, is to go beyond boundaries, beyond conventional approaches and to be open to the infinite potential stemming from God who is the source of all creativity and who himself is creative. This has been proved by the great thinkers and leaders of all ages, who responded creatively and did not just react prosaically to the prevailing situation. Today's youth thus envisions such a church where they can dare to dream creatively and where these creative dreams are transformed into action. In these times, the degree of change in society is accelerating; every new generation is radically different in culture from the earlier generation. This generation gap is growing larger, and surprisingly such differences are more than cosmetic or superficial changes in 'forms' of expression, such as clothing, music styles and mannerisms.

The task is to be creative without compromising the non-negotiable basic foundations of scripture and traditions. The changes required of a church to contain, integrate and communicate to their youth effectively amount to adjusting their sights to their mission field of neighbours. The spiritual needs of youth cannot be met fully by our ordinary approach. What is needed is a new approach, an unusual way of responding to the situation, a creative style of encountering problems and challenges. The

gigantic problems of the youth of our Church demand an unusual and imaginative response. That can be brought forward only by critical, constructive and creative thinking and working.

Contextual Mission

Classical science claimed that everything in nature is immutable and unchangeable. However, modern science has now proven – through the theories of relativity, evolution, the uncertainty principle, and so on – that nothing in the universe is immutable, and that matter is changing constantly. However, the mentalities and attitude of the Church and society down through the ages has remained constant. In this context, the young people dream of a church fully catering to the needs of the Church in the new and evolving context of a ‘common global culture’. The truth is that, regardless of whether the youth live in village or city, they are all being influenced by the three great unifiers of global culture: movies, music, and especially the social networks through the Internet.¹ Recently someone asked me: “What is the reason for the strong influence of the media and the Internet on this present generation?” And I replied: “They don’t influence them; rather they own them.” Today it seems to many that the Church is the last one to catch up and own these changes; therefore, the Church’s mission needs to be tuned and adapted in accordance to the rising cultural revolutions.

The rate of change brought about by the spreading global youth culture, with all its modern distinctiveness, renders traditional structures of religious expression into obstructions in conveying their original meanings to the young people. The mandate of the contextualization of the gospel requires that no unnecessary stumbling block be put in the way of young people in understanding Christian mission. For an effective mission, the Church must understand the soul and spirit of the today’s youth. Today there is lot of discussion and debate going on about the matter of indigenization and inculturation of the liturgy for a greater participation of young people. Unless Christ is truly incarnated, all these efforts would be fruitless and meaningless. Inculturation must be going beyond adapting to the contemporary cultures, traditions and attractive strategies to draw young people. Therefore the challenge is to complement and mutually enrich the diverse cultures but at the same time remember that there is One People of God adoring and worshipping him. Thus it means bringing the mission, life and teachings of Christ into contemporary cultural situations without adulterating the culture, values and principles of Christianity.²

Culture is not a ready-made or finished product; every culture is in a process of becoming by continuous encounter with the present realities and the cultures of other people. The meeting of two cultures and the process of give and take between them may be called ‘inter-culturation’. The process of inculturation is also a process of ‘inter-culturation’.³ The gospel or the

Christian faith does not exist first in abstract form and then become inculturated in every culture or context. On the contrary, the original gospel and the original Church were embodied in a socio-cultural form. Every apostle/missionary/believer has received the faith in a particular historical context and socio-cultural form, and as a missionary s/he carries this inculturated faith to other peoples. Therefore it is the recipients or the people who have to respond to the gospel and receive and translate the faith into their own contextual, historical and socio-cultural form.

Communitarian Mission

We can never deny that human beings are 'rational' and 'relational' at one and the same time. In fact, it is by being relational that we grow and come to be truly rational. We know that 'to-be-human' is 'to-be-with'. More precisely, we are related at all levels of existence, personal, social, universal and transcendental. If we turn to the biblical economy of creation and redemption, it is clear that the Bible supports a relational anthropology. In the creation, God did not create human beings merely as individuals but as 'male and female' in his own image and likeness. Also it must be noted that Eve was not created from man's feet to be his slave nor from his head to be his master, but from the middle showing clearly that they are partners and created in equality. This clearly showed that women have equal rights and equal opportunity to serve God and humanity.⁴ It means that God created us to be in relationship, and God intended 'being-human' to be essentially 'being-with-others'.

Furthermore, God's redemption of humankind was not individualistic. Only the understanding of humans as relational, interrelated and interdependent can help us to respond to some of the serious challenges facing humankind today. Alienation 'is the cry of men who feel themselves to be the victims of blind economic forces, social stigmas, political structures' and 'the frustration of ordinary people excluded from the processes of decision-making which are beyond their control'.⁵ The challenges are precisely the structures of exclusion and oppression on the one hand, and racism, gender discrimination, etc. on the other. Yet we hear of stories of building up counter-structures promoting justice, praxis of inclusion, cohesion, fraternity, equality, and liberation.⁶

Modern youth are now surrounded by technology which makes them alienated and isolated from the rest of the community. Because of the social changes of the past two decades, today's youth spend more time alone than any other generation; thus they miss a coherent sense of community feeling. In the disguise of the freedom of expression and information, youth are having a secret life or are lost in cyber-highways seeking friends in social networking sites like Facebook, Orkut, and Twitter. Social networking aims to build online or virtual communities of people who share common interests or activities, or who are interested in exploring the

interests and activities of others, or to reinforce established friendships and form bonds with new friends. Social networking has encouraged new ways to communicate, share information and make friends.⁷ Today if the youth are lost or alienated, it is only because the Church refuses to enter into their lives. The responsibility is on the Church and community to know what their youth are doing and not the other way around, blaming them for their lack of participation.

Towards the end of Jesus' high priestly prayer, we hear Jesus calling his disciples his friends (John 15:13-15). The model of relationship between Jesus and his followers has been shifted and now is characterized as 'friends'. The term 'friend' has deep and wide implications and meaning. As Christ himself shows, a friend knows everything, is equal and intimate. In daily human relations too, we can find that friendly relations are deeper and more lasting than blood relations. In our ordinary life, we also find many people following closely the teachings of Christ in their lives. However, the common misconception is that the evangelized and baptized are the only true Christian disciples. Raymond Panikkar writes about *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*.⁸ In today's context, our mission demands that we identify also the 'unknown friends of Christ' in our surroundings, since we ourselves know that in our workplace and neighbourhood there are many living unknown friends of Christ, even though they do not know even one iota about Christianity.

It is common to hear about teenage circles, whether they be scholarly, religious, or other groups. The Christian circle is the group where the faithful live and celebrate, where they are supposed to transform the lives within the set of ideals and values of Christ. However, there is a tendency to make the circle exclusively Christian or church-centred, isolated and disengaged from the rest of humanity. The modern mission and the call of Christ today is to enlarge our inner circle and make it a cosmic circle, beckoning not only the human race but also the whole creation to become participants and members of this circle. The term 'mysticism' means union; 'spiritual mysticism' means union with God or the ultimate reality. In the Eucharist, we are united with Christ, the Body broken and shared for the life of the world, which speaks not only about a spiritual mysticism but also about a social mysticism. So Christ calls all partakers of the Eucharist to share our food with the poor and hungry, and this sharing also has a Eucharistic dimension. In the Orthodox tradition, the bread and wine are the fruits of the earth and the same are offered to God by humans and turn into the Body and Blood of Christ. This invites us to 'production for sharing' and 'sharing of resources'. This is contrary to consumerism, hoarding of goods and the profit motive which are characteristic of capitalist culture.⁹

As we approach in awe the Eucharistic Altar, we have One Paten of Body and One Chalice of Blood. The entire church sings in one voice. This is certainly a call to oneness and community living. As a source of unity,

the Eucharist is able to bring us together more closely, to reconcile broken relationships and heal the many divisions in our lives. The Eucharist is the crucial symbol of sharing and social meaning; it speaks about the social wholeness and our table fellowship with social outcasts.¹⁰ One of the primary objectives of the Millennium Development Goals is the eradication of poverty. However, at global and local levels things could have changed if the resources were simply shared and distributed. In the corporate world the idea of production for sharing would be resisted; however, the Eucharistic meaning of production is essentially for sharing among communities. The Eucharist that we celebrate tells us the sacrifice of Christ is for all and that it compels all who believe in him to become the 'bread that is broken' for others.¹¹

Compassionate Mission

Compassion is a prominent biblical word and a spiritual virtue which can best be understood in relation to God only, because the magnanimity and fulness of compassion was revealed in God alone. It is a derivative from a Latin word meaning 'to bear', 'to suffer', and so suffering with the sufferer. Therefore compassion does not mean merely emotional sympathy and pitying, but one who shows compassion, lives compassion, accepting the responsibility to heal, bring hope and minister justice.¹² Hugo Rahner is of the view that the main cause of the persecution of the early Church was not religious but social and political, because Christians preached a God who came not to conquer but to serve and give justice to the oppressed. The core and essence of the Christ's teaching was administering justice, showing compassion and life-giving mission for the humanity. So Christ became a threat to the Jews and Romans who were both proponents of colonialism. In the present context too, the youth must challenge the Church to rediscover the lost and forgotten legacy of compassion and the equality of the early Christian community.

The traditional model of mission had the mandate of service and martyrdom; however, in today's context, persecution and suffering has disappeared from mission perspectives. Today many countries have become battlefields of missionary agencies and donors, which are now causing strife among churches with their intervention of heavy monetary support.¹³ Suffering and persecution is seen as something alien to Christianity; mission has become now more luxurious and comfortable. The challenge of modern mission is therefore to rediscover the diminishing ethos of sacrifice and life-giving mission.¹⁴ All the teachings, life, work, signs, parables, miracles of Christ demonstrated and taught sacrifice, and importantly Christ as a life-giver. However, the ultimate paradox is that life-giving is through the Cross which he taught through the parable of the grain of wheat: unless it falls into the ground to die, it cannot rise again to new life (John 12:24).

Charity derives from the Greek word *charis* or grace, meaning imparting a gift that one possesses and shares with one who does not. However, the tendency of Christian mission is now confined to charity works only, and to serve this purpose we have now started innumerable charitable institutions and organizations. The point of the argument here is not that charity is not good; rather the argument is that mission is confined only to charity; it needs to journey beyond and transcend the walls of simple charity. True missionaries need to be promoters and agents of justice, peace and reconciliation with a prophetic and active role in societal life. Mission also demands greater involvement in political life too. In the life of Christ also, we could see that on various occasions he offered charity to the needy. At other times he questioned the unjust structures and powers that oppress the poor, and never did he become part of these oppressive systems or structures.¹⁵

The mission is not to reach and change the world ideologically and dogmatically alone; rather what is needed is the extension of love, care and compassion. The problem of the marginalized and oppressed cannot be solved only through relief such as reservations and quota systems, although they are also required to some extent as a positive step to overcome the past violence and discrimination against them. We also need compassion, justice and harmony that are extended to broader communities crossing the narrow boundaries, including the animal and plant kingdom.¹⁶ We are inevitably committed to work for God's justice in the face of oppression, for God's truth in the face of lies and deceits, for service in the face of the abuse of power, for love in the face of selfishness, for co-operation in the face of destructive antagonism, and for reconciliation in the face of division and hostility.¹⁷ The world needs the touch of love, compassion and justice that could be concretely spelt out, in the light of the experience of interreligious relations, inter-faith approaches, peace, justice, understanding, collaboration, forgiveness, compassion in times of calamities and tragedies. As before, so too now, human beings need humanity, heart over mind.

Youth envision ecumenical mission to be liberating individuals from the social conditioning that prevents them from living as free persons. It must enable them to develop inner freedom, so that they are not pressured by the conditions and expectations of society, but enabled to decide freely on crucial issues that affect choice of life, family and human love. In the words of Simon Oxley, Christian mission is no longer limited to the history of attempts to reunite churches or the growth of ecumenical organizations or individuals. It should aim to affirm life and relations (community), inspire rebuilding and reconstruction of community, inclusive of the differences and diversities, and importantly reach out to the future of Church and society by embracing God's entire creation.¹⁸ It must conceptualize a theology and culture from the perspective of young people, challenge and transform the structures that limit youth participation and leadership. Mission is to see life as a call and a gift that leads the individual into the

sacred space and makes them aware of their inalienable human rights and their giftedness. It assists them in developing these to reach high levels of competence for life and living, by providing many opportunities to discover and develop their talents and turn them into strengths so that they can grow in self-esteem and confidence. Edinburgh 2010 is not an ultimate answer on any of the present ecclesial, missiological or ecumenical issues and concerns; rather it is a humble attempt to reflect and pool together the perspectives and resources of youth, women, and subaltern voices, provide guidance, stimulus, and reflection, and encourage common action by the churches and ecumenical movements to think and act creatively about God's mission.

¹ Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler, *Connected: The Amazing Power of Social Networks and How They Shape Our Lives* (London: Harper Press, 2009), 10-17.

² MM Thomas, 'Towards an Indian Understanding of Jesus Christ', in Mathai Zachariah (ed), *The Indian Church Identity and Fulfilment* (Chennai: CLS, ISPCK, LPH, 1971), 17-19.

³ Raimundo Panikkar, 'Indian Christian Theology of Religious Pluralism from the Perspective of Interculturation', in K Pathil, *Religious Pluralism: An Indian Christian Perspective* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 1991), 252-99.

⁴ Gretchen Gaebelin Hull, *Equal to Serve: Women and Men in the Church and Home* (Grand Rapids, MI: Revell, 1987), 65.

⁵ Inaugural address of James Reid to the students at his installation as Rector of Glasgow University, 1972. Available at www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_167194_en.pdf

⁶ Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianity and Social Crisis* (London: Macmillan, 1907), 11-14.

⁷ Vineeth Koshy, 'Friendship: Online and Offline', *National Council of Churches in India Review*, 128:1 (January-February 2009), 41-42.

⁸ Raymond (Raimundo) Panikkar, *The Unknown Christ of Hinduism*, 1st edn (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964).

⁹ Sebastian Painadath, 'Church as the Continuation of the Table-Fellowship of Jesus', in Rosario Rocha and Kuruvilla Pandikkattu (eds), *Dreams and Visions: New Horizons for an Indian Church* (Pune: Jnanadeepa Vidyapeeth, 2002), 79-81.

¹⁰ Sebastian Kappen, *Jesus and Society* (New Delhi: ISPCK, 2002), 84-86.

¹¹ Mathew Jayanth, 'Body Spirituality: Incarnation as an Invitation to an Embodied Spirituality', *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies*, 7/2 (January-June 2004), 124-26.

¹² Ezamo Murry, 'Compassion and Care for the HIV/AIDS Infected and the Affected', in A Wati Longchar (ed), *Health, Healing and Wholeness: Asian Theological Perspectives on HIV/AIDS* (Assam: ETE-WCC/CCA, 2005), 73-74.

¹³ Keynote address delivered by Dr Mathews George Chunakara, Director of International Affairs, World Council of Churches, during the National Ecumenical Youth Assembly of Commission on Youth of National Council of Churches in India, held in Kolkata, January 6, 2010.

¹⁴ Hans Ucko, *Common Roots, New Horizons* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994), 80-81.

¹⁵ Edward Norman, *Christianity and the World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 20-24.

¹⁶ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 56-64.

¹⁷ John Gladwin, *God's People in God's World: Biblical Motives for Social Involvement* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 125.

¹⁸ Simon Oxley, *Creative Ecumenical Education* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2002), 11.



INCARNATION AS A MODE OF ORTHODOX MISSION: INTERCULTURAL ORTHODOX MISSION – IMPOSING CULTURE AND INCULTURATION

Kosmas (John) Ngige Njoroge

1. Introduction

“In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God and the word was God... and the word became flesh and lived among us and we have seen his glory, the glory of the father’s only son full of grace and truth (John 1:1, 14).

The issue of inculturation in modern Orthodox missiology is an important one. It is a reality that the Orthodox faith is spreading beyond traditional Orthodox cultures, namely; Hellenic, Syriac and Slavic. The fact that the Orthodox faith is rapidly growing in Africa, and spreading through Alaska, Asia and Latin America, raises very crucial questions. Such questions, which I think also concern us gathered here, are: how will Orthodoxy be embodied in these “new” cultural contexts? And what are the criteria for an authentic method to be applied in the process of inculturation?¹

While addressing the issue of inculturation, this presentation will be within the framework of the theology of mission, personal experiences and examples from the Orthodox Church in Kenya. The Orthodox Church in Kenya is one of the most vibrant Orthodox mission fields, and has received missionaries from Greece, Cyprus, America and Finland. The history of this Church gives us the richest experiences needed for the development of an Orthodox theology of mission. Such experiential dimensions are on how it began, with the arrival of the western European missionaries, the call for the Africanization of the gospel, and the embrace of the Orthodox faith.

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2. Inculturation

Basically, inculturation is not used in missiological circles as a term but more as a concept. It is a concept that denotes the procedural patterns in which the character of contemporary Christian faith manifests itself in a given cultural context, in a given time and place.² This procedural manifestation of Christianity means the planting of the gospel, the seeds of the Christian faith, in the soil of a ‘new’ cultural context. Therefore, inculturation is a missiological process that through the guidance of the Holy Spirit allows the gospel, faith in Jesus Christ, to develop roots and mature at its own pace.³ Inculturation allows transformation of a culture

and the people involved “anew”, i.e. a new creation. It is anew because it gets transformed through the powers and energies of the Holy Spirit. The condition of such transformation is the willingness of the local community to give up those cultural elements that are incompatible with the gospel. The process here is that of giving and taking. In other words, it is an unending dialogical process that balances culture in the anthropological sense of the term and the divine presence of the Holy Spirit, who sustains the whole of creation.

The inculturation process starts when a community starts functioning as an indigenous or local church. To be local means the Church has taken roots in a given place with all its cultural, natural, social, and any other characteristic that constitutes the life, values and thoughts of the people involved. This is practically illustrated in the Eucharist, where people as the body of Christ offer to God all that is “his own”, “*Your own of your own we offer to you.*”⁴

3. Intercultural Mission

It is fascinating that today we can speak of an active intercultural mission in the Orthodox Church. Intercultural mission can be defined as the encounter of two or more unfamiliar cultures with one another in the field of mission. This is not a new discovery in Christian mission because right from the time of the Holy Apostle and St. Paul in particular, biblical Christianity has met with other cultures like Greco-Roman, Syriac and Slavic, Coptic and Ethiopian. Throughout the history of the church, biblical Christianity has undergone a series of cultural surgeries and also been enriched by these cultures. Intercultural mission came again to the surface in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when Christianity left Europe and started spreading to other continents.

4. Orthodox Intercultural Mission

The coming of Christian mission churches to East Africa can be said to be a seed-bed where the Orthodox faith came into contact with African cultures. One would simply ask how? The Orthodox churches in Kenya and Uganda started through the initiatives of the local people without preaching from any missionary from traditionally Orthodox lands.⁵ This came about when a group of people led by Fr Sparta of Uganda and George Arthur Gathuna of Kenya disagreed with the way the Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries were doing mission. Out of cultural imperialism and mutual collaboration between the Christian churches and the colonial authorities (especially on the issues of land, forced labour and racial discrimination), these groups formed their own African Independent Churches (AICs).

Although the AICs sprung out from the mission churches as a “Protest Movement” over the years, they developed a type of worship, church

organization and community life rooted in both biblical Christianity and African religiosity. The AICs were committed to getting a “new” meaning through a new way of reading and interpreting the gospel and reflecting its truth into the African needs, life-view and lifestyle. During missionary and colonial times, and having read the newly translated Bible; the members of these AICs compared themselves with the Israelites during their slavery in Egypt, where they were oppressed, denied worth and human dignity. Africans undergoing the siege of colonial rule and slavery, the struggle for freedom, the sufferings of hard forced labour and the pain of being alienated from their ancestral lands and in turn cultivating them for the settlers, looked up to God as did the Israelites and lamented: “Remember, Lord, what has happened to us; look and see our disgrace. Our heritage has passed to strangers, our homes to foreigners...” (Lam. 5:1-2). The event of Exodus gave the Africans hope of being liberated and restored, but as a new people of God in their own Africanized church. This didn’t mean that they had to be detached from their own cultural heritage, identity and values.

The main aim was to go beyond mission control, cultural imperialism and paternalism.⁶ It cannot go unmentioned that when Christianity came to Kenya, the missionaries followed the same concept of enlightenment whereby western Christianity was enlightened, and thus considered it to be their turn to enlighten other cultures. It was in this manner that Christian missionaries were not spared from the webs of colonial powers. This happened because the mission churches had been invited into the colony to enhance the so-called “civilizing mission”⁷ of the British colonial government. For example, in Kenya the Scottish Church (today the Presbyterian Church of East Africa) was a private mission for the colony and its aims were religious, educational, medical and industrial.⁸ This made the mission churches mutually collaborate with the colonial policies that were meant to enhance the position of the colonial government. Gradually, and especially through education and evangelization of the gospel, the mission churches became the bridge between the natives and the colonial authorities. Having interacted with the natives, the missionary got to know the social composition of the African tribes, their languages and customs, and therefore there were no other agents on which the government could rely to persuade the unwilling natives to submit to the *Pax Britannica*.⁹

What was to be experienced thereafter was a conflict of cultures and identities as Christianity was trying to get into the African cultural realities. Apparently, there was no mechanism within the evangelising methodologies to facilitate dialogue between the gospel and the culture. What was done instead was to impose western culture and lifestyle as the criteria for becoming Christian. This was because western culture and lifestyle were “enlightened” and so it was its turn to enlighten the so-called Dark Continent. The mission churches looked at the “new” churches as the ones in need of civilization. St. Paul’s vision, “Come over to Macedonia

and help us" (Acts 16:9), was used to justify westerners coming to the aid of others who were living in darkness and deep despair. This was also connected to John 10:10, "*I came so that they may have life, and have it abundantly,*" while good things were modern education, hospitals and agriculture.¹⁰ This was crowned by strictly following the Great Commission... "*Go therefore, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them...*" (Matt. 28:19). Prof. Petros Vassiliadis observed that this Great Commission was used to justify understanding mission as fulfilling an obligation, i.e. doing mission as an 'order' rather than as a 'calling'.¹¹

As we mentioned above, the Orthodox Church in Kenya started categorically as AICs. Due to her connection with fighting British colonial rule, church buildings were burned and church gatherings were denied. During the Kenyan emergency, 1952-58, members and priests were persecuted. The majority of them were detained, churches and schools were torched by the colonial government for having been involved in fighting for freedom, inhabiting the Mau Mau and supporting the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA).¹² In agreement with DE Wentink, the members of this church involved in struggles for an independent Kenya paid with their lives for the independence of the country.¹³

After Kenya received her independence in 1963, local Orthodox communities that had hibernated reappeared. Vigorously and with the spirit of freedom, the reopening of the Orthodox Church was very important for its followers. They understood it as a reconciling and healing front for former freedom fighters and detainees, in the barbed-wire villages and camps. These men and women were totally traumatized in every aspect of their lives. The injustices of colonial rule were too heavy to bear, but majority of the natives were to bear it nonetheless. First, they disagreed with the entire colonial system, and more profoundly they supported the Mau Mau movement. Secondly, in principle, they could not reveal the mystery of oathing, so they were detained, interrogated and assaulted in order to reveal the mystery of Mau Mau oathing.¹⁴ All this amounted to one traumatic life full of fear and humiliation, destruction and even death. Therefore, the reopening of the Orthodox Church provided for many both physical and spiritual healing and reconciliation. Healing, reconciling and rehabilitating the entire Kikuyu nation had become a basic need. Kikuyu men, women and children alike were looking to their church for healing of body and soul. New life in Jesus Christ assured these men and women a complete healing through their continuous participation in the sacraments offered by the Orthodox Church to its members.¹⁵ They were waiting for the sacramental life of the church to embody itself within the African realities, lifestyle and worldview.

The Orthodox Church in Kenya, the church that was calling for an African church of Africans and by Africans¹⁶ came under the direct rule of the Greek Patriarchate of Alexandria. Although the Africans were looking for an African church, this kind of conviction did not mean being racially superior to others but simply that African Christianity, like any other Christianity elsewhere, had the same spiritual gifts, promises and benefit (Eph. 1:11,14). Therefore, the Africans opened up and willingly came under the spiritual guidance of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria. This was a call for a mutual relationship between the two, of freedom of sharing the same faith and destiny.¹⁷

This direct contact with the Alexandrian Patriarchate brought an opportunity for African Orthodoxy to meet with the larger Orthodox world. On the other hand, however, the African church was responsible for a tremendous revival of the missionary dimension of the entire Orthodox Church.¹⁸ This started when Fr Sparta Mukasa visited Egypt in 1946 and Greece in 1959, respectively. His visit had a very strong impact on the Greek Church and from there missionary organizations such as the Apostolic Diakonia of the Church of Greece (formerly «Πορευθέντες»), the Orthodox Missionary Fraternity of Thessaloniki (formerly known as: Οι Φίλοι της Ουγκάντα Βορείου Ελλάδος, translated as Friends of Uganda Northern Greece) were formed. In response to Sparta's call, the churches of Greece, Cyprus and Finland, and individual persons, were praying, sending material and personnel resources to the churches in Africa. Fr Theodore Nankyamas, who extended his connections to America in 1965 and later to Finland, influenced many parishes and even more so the youth groups, which pledged themselves to prayer and financial help. It is through his appeal that the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) in the USA was formed. Many theological students have received scholarships to study theology in these countries, and their participation in parish life has brought either a direct or indirect influence on the mission consciousness of local parishioners.

Many missionaries, bishops, clergymen, lay men and women have made it to Africa. Some, such as the former Archbishop Makarios of Cyprus, the late Fr Kosmos, Apostle of Congo, the late Fr Chrysostomos Papasarantopoulos, the late Mama Stavrista Zaxariou, and currently Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and all Albania, have left a legacy. Archbishop Makarios' legacy was through his efforts to baptise as many Kenyans as possible and also to give Africa clergymen an education.¹⁹ After a three-day official visit to Kenya in 1970, he told a local Cypriot media outlet that:

“... What especially moved me is the fact that in the Eastern region of Africa there are thousands of Africans who follow the Orthodox faith... During my three-day stay in Kenya, I conducted mass baptisms of some 5,000 natives in two towns (Waithaka and Nyeri). It can be said that there has been no similar event since the Christianization of the Slavs...”²⁰

Archbishop Anastasios is always remembered for his efforts to Africanize the faith through letting the sacramental life of the Church take root in local communities. He is forever remembered for opening the seminary and organizing catechetical classes for Sunday school teachers. It was in his time that catechism took its roots and the ordination of local priests rose drastically. He also brought the spirit of reconciliation over the divisions that existed between Bishop Gathuna and Archbishop Frumentious.²¹ It is worth mentioning some of the many works of Fr Chrysostomos Papasarantopoulos and Mama Stavrista Zachariou.²² These two people were the best examples of many individual Greeks who sacrificed themselves to work with the Africans unceasingly in terms of building churches and supporting the local priests, and finally leaving their bones buried in the mission field. The coming of these missionaries to Kenya is a *martryria* and should be deeply respected. Just as God made a calling to Abraham and kept his promises, so does he (God) to the missionaries when they accept the calling: “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land that I will show you... and all people on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen. 12:1-4).

Through the efforts of most of the missionaries, the church in Africa in general has so far received theological training and ordinations of local priests, the translation of liturgical books, and the building of churches, some schools and hospitals. While this has brought this church into the wider Orthodox family, several missiological challenges have to be seriously addressed. One of the issues that need to be addressed is what we are discussing at this conference, *inculturation*. What is obvious is that, when missionaries pack their things to leave for missionary work, they bring with them their cultural identity. If they are not culturally sensitive, they start to view the practice of others as strange and different from their own. If carried away by their role as teachers of others, they fail to respect the host culture, so that the process of inculturation slows down or even dies. It dies because it becomes a one-sided movement whereas it should be a two-way traffic, meaning that a missionary is also a student of local customs and beliefs.

This is a very important dynamic movement that facilitates intimacy between the faith known to the missionary and the religious practices of the community. This gives the missionary a chance to identify those cultural elements which are compatible with Orthodoxy.²³ It is here that the tendency of imposing the missionary’s culture on the community are likely to be avoided. Following some personal observations in Kenya, this has not been the case. There has been an effort to impose the sense of “Greek-centred” cultural identity that seriously limits the process of inculturation. The two best examples are:

(1) During the time of Fr Chrysostomos Papasarantopoulos, a Greek missionary from Thessaloniki, who wanted to see an African Greek church. Once, with the support of some local priests, he energetically tried to

change the church name from “African Orthodox Church of Kenya” to read “African Greek Orthodox Church”. Once he wrote to King Paul of Greece saying:

“The location for the historic church was chosen to be the cathedral for the indigenous Greek Orthodox Christians of the heroic Kikuyu tribe... they are enthusiastic admirers of the Greek Nation and their heroic achievements... the original plan is that it can remain an eternal monument proclaiming Greek Orthodox Christianity, Mother Greece and the fatherly tradition of the piety and religiosity of the Greek kings.”²⁴

(2) This nationalistic approach²⁵ to mission continued during the times of Archbishop Frumentious who stood strongly on his conviction to absorb Gathuna’s church and his power. Frumentious’ convictions of power, hierarchy and domination illustrated how the Patriarchate of Alexandria was unprepared to let the inculturation of Orthodoxy take place in Kenya. The power of domination here is not political and economical exploitation but rather the spiritual and ecclesiastical influence of a dominant powerful minority over the less powerful majority of native Christians.

5. Conclusion

We can conclude by saying that the acceptance, growth and spread of Orthodoxy in East Africa means meeting new theological challenges in regard to encountering the customs of these communities. This marks another ‘golden age’ where theology is to dialogue with the African religious particularities in order to find the right trends of incarnating them within Orthodox spirituality. This, however, is the call of the Orthodox Church’s theologians – to critically find new theological hermeneutical approaches in which these new communities and their different cultural practices can be embodied within the gospel of Christ.

It has to be understood that faith does not exist in the air, neither in a vacuum nor in a given space at a given period of time. Instead, faith holds and functions within the cultural systems of a community. This also applies intact in Africa where religion is an essential element of culture and the culture the form of religion. Religion for many African people permeates into all aspects of their lives, so it is not easy or possible to isolate it.²⁶ Religion does respond to the mystery of life, not only through words and ideas but also through symbols, sound and colour.²⁷ If we understand culture in this perspective, then I agree with Metropolitan Alexandros of Nigeria, who believes that it is time to really create an African church. This does not mean going away from the dogmatic teaching of the Church, from the truth and the gospel. However, this means moving away from the foreign borrowed ways of thinking and expressing the Orthodox faith, truth and the gospel in Africa.²⁸

Some Orthodox missionaries in Africa believe that this kind of thinking is risky and dangerous. However, we cannot stand as an obstacle to the

work of the Holy Spirit who blows where he likes, transforming people, cultures and creation anew; bringing them into the body of Christ. Every culture in this world is God's creation. Whenever a new culture and a new people are transformed, it is a new Pentecost; we have therefore to let these new people of God express the joy of this Pentecost in their own ways, in their own worship. For us Orthodox, so we believe, the Church is first of all a worshipping community; worship coming first, doctrine and discipline second.²⁹ How then do we expect the Africans to get into the depths of Orthodox worship if all its structures and textures have been brought from the cult of Byzantine culture? In other words, how do we expect Africans to express their joy at Christ's resurrection without dancing and clapping? Would they ever get this joy nourished through chanting the eight tomes of Byzantine hymnology? All the church arts and iconography, music and liturgical vestments are foreign. Liturgical services and prayers, symbols, gestures and movements are not yet imbued with what is African. How then can we Africans speak of the inculturation of Orthodoxy today?

Does it mean our mission is to impose on others our own religious conviction by telling them to do it as we do? For God to save the world or else to restore man to his own image and likeness, his only begotten son was to be incarnated... "*the word became flesh...*" (John 1:1-14). Therefore, it's Christ's incarnation that marks the beginning of a new approach to mission today. Christ's incarnation, "assuming" human nature, is the most remarkable event which demonstrates that God become man, and that his humanity possesses all the characteristics proper to human nature. This implies that incarnation is a cosmic event and continues to have an effect not on the second person of the Trinity but on humanity and its surroundings. St. Maximus the Confessor (seventh century) affirms that "God's Word, being God Himself, i.e. the Son of God, desires the mystery of His incarnation to be activated continuously and everywhere".³⁰ It is through the process of incarnation that man as the master of the cosmos is called by the creator to draw all creation to God.³¹

Through the transformative energies of the Holy Spirit, the incarnation process brings the meaning of the gospel message uniquely to every local context. These energies give balance between the universal meaning of the message and the contextualized interpretation and understanding of the gospel. This is why every Orthodox church is a local church, and at the same time possesses a universal character in her catholicity. In other words, a local church in the Orthodox tradition is basically identified with the Eucharistic community of a given place.³² This is why, according to Archbishop Anastasios, and later Fr Bria, the "*liturgy after the liturgy*" starts with Eucharistic worship.³³ At the same time, a local community is in unity with other local churches which observe the same teachings, dogmas, sacraments and canon law, irrespective of their geographical settings.

Without this incarnation process, Orthodoxy in Africa will always be foreign, it will remain temporal, and something to which natives are not

accustomed. What the incarnation process must then do is transmit the message of the gospel and liturgical worship through the African linguistic frameworks and thoughts, symbolism and colour, rhythms, dances and lyrics. Throughout this process, some traditional religious familiarities would be easily traced to help in bringing the Orthodox ethos into the way of life of the African people. Abbess Marina, a Finnish missionary to Kenya, once observed:

“For the Kikuyu, it was very easy to accept Orthodox Christianity because in some respects it is very close to his own traditional religion. For Example, when an Orthodox priest lifts up the Holy Gifts in the Holy Eucharist, the African who belongs to the Kikuyu tribe remembers at once the way his forefathers, the tribe’s priest, offered the lamb to their own god.”³⁴

This quest does not make Orthodoxy disadvantaged but rather challenges us to carefully study the new phenomenon, where new people of different cultures are becoming Orthodox Christians.

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1. Ioan Saucă, *Orthodoxy and Cultures: Inter-Orthodox consultation on Gospel and Culture* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), 3
 2. David J Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 447.
 3. Saucă, *Orthodoxy and Cultures*, 38.
 4. See the prayer before the consecration of the Holy Gifts (bread and wine) in the liturgy of St. John Chrysostom.
 5. Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin Books, 1997), 189.
 6. FW Welbourn, *East African Christian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), 206.
 7. For Britain, their mission was not to exploit, but as a superior race with respectable Christian values and economic knowledge, they had an obligation, or else a duty, to redeem the Africans and bring light to the Dark Continent. In any case, the natives were to pay a good price for this moral obligation, through their lands and labour, as a way of contributing to the world market with the money earned to be used to pay back 6.5 million pounds in British taxpayers’ money used in constructing the Kenya-Uganda Railway.
 8. R Macpherson, *The Presbyterian Church in Kenya* (Nairobi: Presbyterian Church of East Africa, 1970), 21.
 9. C Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of the Britain’s Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 2005), 1-30.
 10. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 350.
 11. Petros Vassiliadis, *Unity and Witness: Orthodox Christian Witness and Inter-Faith Dialogue: A Handbook on Mission* (Thessaloniki: Epikentro Publications, 2007), 62 (in Greek).
 12. Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) was a political party that opposed the missionaries’ drive to abolish Kikuyu customs, championed Kikuyu cultural patriotism, and continually presented Kikuyu’s grievances on the issues pertaining to land, labour and oppression by the settlers. Almost all members of the Orthodox Church were party supporters.

13. DE Wentink, "The Orthodox Church in East Africa", *TER* 20 (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1968), 37.
14. Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 249.
15. Especially through the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist for the remission of sins, Confession and Holy Unction for the healing of body and soul.
16. See the original constitution of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya as it was originally drafted in 1965. More in my doctoral dissertation, *Christian Witness and Orthodox Spirituality in Africa: The Dynamic of the Orthodox Spirituality as a Mission "Paradigm" of Orthodox Witness in Kenya*, submitted in the Theological Department of the University of Thessaloniki (2011, in Greek).
17. FK Githieya, *The Freedom of Spirit: African Indigenous Churches in Kenya*, 1997, 151-77.
18. Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 190.
19. The Orthodox Theological Seminary in Nairobi was donated by Archbishop Makarios to offer theological training to local priests.
20. A Tillyrides (now Metropolitan Makarios of Kenya), *Makarios Legacy in Kenya*. Available at: http://www.orthodoxresearchinstitute.org/articles/church_history/makarios_tillyrides_makarios_legacy.htm
21. Athanasios N Papatthanasiou, *Missionary Experience and Academic Quest: The Research Situation in Greece*, European Traditions in the Study of Religion in Africa, F Ludwig and A Adogame (eds) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004), 306.
22. Mama Stavrista Zachariou was a Greek American from New York who did missionary work in Kenya from 1971 till she died in 2000. See related articles Οι Φίλοι της Ουγκάντα Βορείου Ελλάδος (which later changed its name to *Orthodox Mission Abroad*), 42, January-March 1974.
23. Emmanuel Clapsis, *Orthodoxy in Conversation: Orthodox Ecumenical Engagements* (Geneva: 2000), 151.
24. See the letter written by Fr Chrysostomos Papsarantopoulos to His Majesty the King of Greece, April 26, 1969.
25. JJ Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (New York: 1986), 61-73.
26. John S Mbiti, *The Concepts of God* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 1.
27. Jean Halperin and Hans Ucko, *Worlds of Memory and Wisdom: Encounter of Jews and African Christians* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), 5.
28. See Metropolitan Alexandros of Nigeria, *Church and Culture*. Available at: <http://www.acadimia.gr/images/stories/2009/documents/mht%20nighrias%20eishghsh.doc> (in Greek), presented at an international conference, May 7-10, 2009 held by the Volos Academy.
29. G Florovsky, *The Elements of Liturgy in The Orthodox Catholic Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1959), 24.
30. St. Maximus the Confessor, *Περί διαφορών αποριών*, PG 91 1084C-D.
31. John Meyendorff, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: 1974), 151.
32. In many Orthodox handbooks, especially John D Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985).
33. Cf Archbishop Anastasios' recent Handbook on Orthodox Mission: *Mission in Christ's Way: An Orthodox Understanding of Mission* (Boston/Geneva: HC/WCC 2010), especially pp. 94ff.

34. See the article by Abbess Marina (Igumenia) of the Lintula Convent: *Mission and Diakonia: Tools of Witness: An Experience from Kenya*, presented at the International Conference on the Social Witness and Service of the Orthodox Churches, April 30-May 5, 2004 in New Valamo, Finland.



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LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

Archbishop Anastasios (Yannoulatos) of Tirana, Dures and All Albania is the Primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in Albania. He is Emeritus Professor of the Athens Theological School and Honorary member of the Academy of Athens. He is one of the Presidents of WCC, and served for many years as Moderator of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of WCC.

“Orthodox Mission-Past, Present, Future” was first published in Georges. Lemopoulos (ed.), *Your will be done: Orthodoxy in Mission*, WCC Publications Geneva/ Tertios Katerini Greece, 1989, pp. 63-92.

George Florovsky, an (Eastern) Orthodox Russian priest in Diaspora, has been a pioneer in ecumenical dialogue, serving for many years as a delegate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate at the earlier stages of the WCC. “The Church: Her Nature and Task” first appeared in Volume 1 of *The Universal Church in God’s Design*, SCM Press, 1948.

The late Prof. **Ion Bria** was a Romanian (Eastern) Orthodox priest, who served for many years with the WCC.

The “Liturgy after the liturgy” first appeared in *International Review of Mission*, 67 (1978), pp. 86-90.

Prof. **Emmanuel Clapsis** is a priest of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. He teaches Dogmatic Theology at Holy Cross, Boston, USA, and has served for many years with the WCC.

“The Eucharist as Missionary Event in a Suffering World” was first published in Georges. Lemopoulos (ed.), *Your will be done: Orthodoxy in Mission*, WCC Publications Geneva/ Tertios Katerini Greece, 1989, pp. 101ff.

Petros Vassiliadis is Professor of New Testament and Inter-Faith Dialogue at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, former CWME Commissioner and Honorary President of WOCATI.

“The Missionary Implications of St. Paul’s Eucharistic Inclusiveness” first appeared in Nicolae Mosoiu (ed.), *The Relevance of Reverend Professor Ion Bria’s Work for Contemporary Society and for the Life of the Church*. New Directions in the Research of Church Doctrine, Mission, and Unity, Sibiu, 2010.

Nikos Nissiotis (1925-1986) was Professor in the Theological School of the University of Athens, and a member of the Central Committee of the

WCC, and for many years Director of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey, Switzerland. The text was his keynote address at the Third Assembly of the WCC in New Delhi in 1961, published in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XIV, January 1962, No. 2, 192-202.

Metropolitan of Pergamon Prof. **John Zizioulas**, a member of the Academy of Athens, is an Eastern Orthodox bishop of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, who served for many years in various capacities with the WCC. He is currently the co-chairman of the Catholic-Orthodox theological dialogue.

“The Self-Understanding of the Orthodox and their Participation in the Ecumenical Movement,” was first published in Georges. Lemopoulos (ed.), *The Ecumenical Movement, the Churches, and the World Council of Churches: An Orthodox Contribution to the Reflection Process on "The Common Understanding and Vision of the WCC*, Geneva: WCC-SYNDESMOS, 1995.

The late Fr **John Meyendorff** (1926-1992), of the Orthodox Church in America, was Professor and Dean at the St. Vlair Orthodox Theological Seminary, Crestwood, New York, USA. He was also a member of the Central Committee of the WCC. This was his Presidential address to the main theme of the Faith and Order Commission meeting held in Louvain, Belgium. The author develops the following points: man and the unity of the Church; man and the unity of mankind; eschatology. The text was first published in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXIV, January 1972, No. 1, 30-46.

Fr **KM George** is Principal of an (Oriental) Orthodox Seminary of the Malankara Syrian Orthodox Church, and a member of the Central Committee of the WCC.

“Mission for Unity or Unity for Mission,” first appeared in Georges Lemopoulos (ed.), *Your will be done: Orthodoxy in Mission*, WCC Publications Geneva/ Tertios Katerini Greece 1989, pp. 158ff.

Georges Khodr (b. 1924) is Metropolitan of Mount Lebanon, a diocese of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch, Beirut, Lebanon. The text is his address to the Central Committee meeting in Addis Ababa in 1971. The author examines the dialogue between Christians and people of other religions. It was published in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. XXIII, April 1971, No. 2, 118-128, translated from the French.

Bartholomew I His All Holiness, Bartholomew I, Archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome, and Ecumenical Patriarch (his secular Dimítrios Archontónis), is the head of the Orthodox Church, the primus inter pares among the autocephali churches of Eastern Orthodoxy. He

pursued postgraduate studies at the Pontifical Oriental Institute in Rome, the Ecumenical Institute of Bossey in Switzerland and the Ludwig Maximilians University of Munich in Germany. His doctoral research was on the Canon Law, and he is also fluent in classical Greek and Latin, Greek, Turkish, Italian, German, French and English.

“The Wonder of Creation and Ecology” first appeared in his book, *Encountering the Mystery. Understanding Orthodox Christianity Today*, Doubleday, New York 2008, σελ. 89-119.

Aram I (Keshisian) is the Catholicos of the (Oriental) Orthodox Armenian Catholicate of Cilicia, and served for many years as the Moderator of the Central Committee of the WCC.

“An Ecumenical Ethic for a Responsible Society in a Sustainable Creation”, was taken from his book *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, Oxford, Regnum-Lynx, 1992.

Dr **Athanasios N Papathanasiou** is an Orthodox lay theologian who holds a doctorate in missiology and degrees in theology and law. He teaches at the Hellenic Open University as well as at a secondary school, and lives in Athens, Greece. Since 1998 he has been Editor-in-Chief of the Greek theological quarterly *Synaxis*.

“Tradition as Impulse for Renewal and Witness: Introducing Orthodox Missiology in the IRM” was first published in *International Review of Mission* 100 (2011), pp. 203-215.

Bishop **Geevarghese Mor Coorilos** is Moderator of CWME, WCC. He is a member of the (Oriental) Malankara Syriac Orthodox Church, India.

Metropolitan of Targoviste **Nifon Mihaița** is a Romanian (Eastern) Orthodox member of the Executive and Central Committee of the WCC, and Dean of the theological faculty of his city.

Dr **Antonios Kireopoulos** is a member of the (Eastern) Orthodox Church. He is Associate General Secretary of Faith and Order, and of Interfaith Relations, at the National Council of Churches, USA.

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Anastasia Vassiliadou, MTh, is a theologian, working as a teacher of religious education in a public school. She is a member of the (Eastern) Orthodox Church of Greece and a member of CWME, WCC.

Dr **Niki Papageorgiou** is Associate Professor of the Sociology of Religion at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

Dr **Nikos Dimitriadis** is Greek Orthodox scholar specializing in the Inter-Faith Dialogue, currently teaching at the Graduate School Anatolia of Thessaloniki.

Fr. **Dr. Anastasios Elekia Kihali** is an African Ugandan theologian, currently serving in the (Eastern) Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, who received his doctorate in missiology from the University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

Dr **Pantelis Kalaitzidis** is the Director of the Volos Academy for Theological Studies, Volos, Greece, and member of the (Eastern) Orthodox Church of Greece

Dr **Eleni Kasselouri-Hatzivassiliadi**, is a visiting professor at the Open University of Patras, Greece, and is a member of the (Eastern) Orthodox Church of Greece.

Fr **Vineeth Koshy** belongs to the (Oriental) Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church and is the Executive Secretary-Commission on Youth, National Council of Churches in India.

Fr Dr **Kosmas (John) Ngige Njoroge** is a Kenyan theologian, currently serving in the (Eastern) Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, who received his doctorate in missiology from the University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

In Part II Bishop Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, Nifon Mihaita, Antonios Kireopoulos, Anastasia Vassiliadou, all have their entries in the proceeding of Edinburgh 2010 (REGNUM).

“Theological Foundation for Mission: An Orthodox Perspective”, “Mission among Other Faiths: An Orthodox Perspective”, “Mission and Power“, “Theological Education in the Orthodox World”, and Vineeth Koshy’s, contribution to the Transversal “Youth and Mission”, are all in the respective REGNUM volumes. Only Kosmas (John) N. Njoroge’s article is published for the first time.

REGNUM EDINBURGH CENTENARY SERIES

David A. Kerr, Kenneth R. Ross (Eds)

Mission Then and Now

2009 / 978-1-870345-73-6 / 343pp (paperback)

2009 / 978-1-870345-76-7 / 343pp (hardback)

No one can hope to fully understand the modern Christian missionary movement without engaging substantially with the World Missionary Conference, held at Edinburgh in 1910. This book is the first to systematically examine the eight Commissions which reported to Edinburgh 1910 and gave the conference much of its substance and enduring value. It will deepen and extend the reflection being stimulated by the upcoming centenary and will kindle the missionary imagination for 2010 and beyond.

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Witnessing to Christ Today

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This volume, the second in the Edinburgh 2010 series, includes reports of the nine main study groups working on different themes for the celebration of the centenary of the World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910. Their collaborative work brings together perspectives that are as inclusive as possible of contemporary world Christianity and helps readers to grasp what it means in different contexts to be 'witnessing to Christ today'.

Claudia Währisch-Oblau, Fidon Mwombeki (Eds)

Mission Continues

Global Impulses for the 21st Century

2010 / 978-1-870345-82-8 / 271pp (hardback)

In May 2009, 35 theologians from Asia, Africa and Europe met in Wuppertal, Germany, for a consultation on mission theology organized by the United Evangelical Mission: Communion of 35 Churches in Three Continents. The aim was to participate in the 100th anniversary of the Edinburgh conference through a study process and reflect on the challenges for mission in the 21st century. This book brings together these papers written by experienced practitioners from around the world.

Brian Woolnough and Wonsuk Ma (Eds)

Holistic Mission

God's Plan for God's People

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Holistic mission, or integral mission, implies God is concerned with the whole person, the whole community, body, mind and spirit. This book discusses the meaning of the holistic gospel, how it has developed, and implications for the church. It takes a global, eclectic approach, with 19 writers, all of whom have much experience in, and commitment to, holistic mission. It addresses critically and honestly one of the most exciting, and challenging, issues facing the church today. To be part of God's plan for God's people, the church must take holistic mission to the world.

Kirsteen Kim and Andrew Anderson (Eds)

Mission Today and Tomorrow

2010 / 978-1-870345-91-0 / 450pp (hardback)

There are moments in our lives when we come to realise that we are participating in the triune God's mission. If we believe the church to be as sign and symbol of the reign of God in the world, then we are called to witness to Christ today by sharing in God's mission of

love through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. We can all participate in God's transforming and reconciling mission of love to the whole creation.

Tormod Engelsen, Erling Lundebjerg and Dagfinn Solheim (Eds)

The Church Going Global

Mission and Globalisation

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The New Testament church is... universal and local at the same time. The universal, one and holy apostolic church appears in local manifestations. Missiologically speaking... the church can take courage as she faces the increasing impact of globalisation on local communities today. Being universal and concrete, the church is geared for the simultaneous challenges of the global and local.

Marina Ngurusangzeli Behera (Ed)

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Christian Mission among Other Faiths

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The essays of this book reflect not only the acceptance and celebration of pluralism within India but also by extension an acceptance as well as a need for unity among Indian Christians of different denominations. The essays were presented and studied at a preparatory consultation on Study Theme II: Christian Mission Among Other Faiths at the United Theological College, India July 2009.

Lalsangkima Pachuau and Knud Jørgensen (Eds)

Witnessing to Christ in a Pluralistic Age

Christian Mission among Other Faiths

2011 / 978-1-870345-95-8 / 277pp (hardback)

In a world where plurality of faiths is increasingly becoming a norm of life, insights on the theology of religious plurality are needed to strengthen our understanding of our own faith and the faith of others. Even though religious diversity is not new, we are seeing an upsurge in interest on the theologies of religion among all Christian confessional traditions. It can be claimed that no other issue in Christian mission is more important and more difficult than the theologies of religions.

Beth Snodderly and A Scott Moreau (Eds)

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This important volume demonstrates that 100 years after the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh, Evangelism has become truly global. Twenty-first-century Evangelism continues to focus on frontier mission, but significantly, and in the spirit of Edinburgh 1910, it also has re-engaged social action.

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This volume takes on meaning because its authors honestly struggle with and debate how we should relate to postmodernities. Should our response be accommodation, relativizing or counter-culture? How do we strike a balance between listening and understanding, and at the same time exploring how postmodernities influence the interpretation and application of the Bible as the normative story of God's mission in the world?

Cathy Ross (Ed)

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2012 / 978-1-908355-00-3 / 163pp (hardback)

It is clear from the essays collected here that the experience of the 2010 World Mission Conference in Edinburgh was both affirming and frustrating for those taking part - affirming because of its recognition of how the centre of gravity has moved in global Christianity; frustrating because of the relative slowness of so many global Christian bodies to catch up with this and to embody it in the way they do business and in the way they represent themselves. These reflections will - or should - provide plenty of food for thought in the various councils of the Communion in the coming years.

Beate Fagerli, Knud Jørgensen, Rolv Olsen, Kari Storstein Haug and
Knut Tveitereid (Eds)

A Learning Missional Church

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Cross-cultural mission has always been a primary learning experience for the church. It pulls us out of a mono-cultural understanding and helps us discover a legitimate theological pluralism which opens up for new perspectives in the Gospel. Translating the Gospel into new languages and cultures is a human and divine means of making us learn new 'incarnations' of the Good News.

Emma Wild-Wood & Peniel Rajkumar (Eds)

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This volume provides an important resource for those wishing to gain an overview of significant issues in contemporary missiology whilst understanding how they are applied in particular contexts.

Wonsuk Ma & Kenneth R Ross (Eds)

Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship

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This book argues for the primacy of spirituality in the practice of mission. Since God is the primary agent of mission and God works through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is through openness to the Spirit that mission finds its true character and has its authentic impact.

Stephen B Bevans (Ed)

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A Century of Catholic Mission surveys the complex and rich history and theology of Roman Catholic Mission in the one hundred years since the 1910 Edinburgh World Mission Conference. Essays written by an international team of Catholic mission scholars focus on Catholic Mission in every region of the world, summarize church teaching on mission before and after the watershed event of the Second Vatican Council, and reflect on a wide variety of theological issues.

Robert Schreiter & Knud Jørgensen (Eds)

Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation

2013 / 978-1-908355-26-3 / 382pp (hardback)

There is hope – even if it is “Hope in a Fragile World”, as the concluding chapter of Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation puts it. At the very heart of the gospel of Jesus Christ is a message of hope and reconciliation. Nothing could be more relevant and more necessary in a broken world than this Christian message of hope and reconciliation. ... I would like to congratulate the editors of Mission as Ministry of Reconciliation, for they listened carefully and planned with farsightedness. ... This rich book offers a valuable elucidation of the importance and the understanding of mission as ministry of reconciliation.

REGNUM STUDIES IN GLOBAL CHRISTIANITY

David Emmanuel Singh (Ed)

Jesus and the Cross

Reflections of Christians from Islamic Contexts

2008 / 978-1-870345-65-1 / 226pp

The Cross reminds us that the sins of the world are not borne through the exercise of power but through Jesus Christ's submission to the will of the Father. The papers in this volume are organised in three parts: scriptural, contextual and theological. The central question being addressed is: how do Christians living in contexts, where Islam is a majority or minority religion, experience, express or think of the Cross?

Sung-wook Hong

Naming God in Korea

The Case of Protestant Christianity

2008 / 978-1-870345-66-8 / 170pp (hardback)

Since Christianity was introduced to Korea more than a century ago, one of the most controversial issues has been the Korean term for the Christian ‘God’. This issue is not merely about naming the Christian God in Korean language, but it relates to the question of theological contextualization - the relationship between the gospel and culture - and the question of Korean Christian identity. This book demonstrates the nature of the gospel in relation to cultures, i.e., the universality of the gospel expressed in all human cultures.

Hubert van Beek (Ed)

Revisioning Christian Unity

The Global Christian Forum

2009 / 978-1-870345-74-3 / 288pp (hardback)

This book contains the records of the Global Christian Forum gathering held in Limuru near Nairobi, Kenya, on 6 – 9 November 2007 as well as the papers presented at that historic event. Also included are a summary of the Global Christian Forum process from its inception until the 2007 gathering and the reports of the evaluation of the process that was carried out in 2008.

Young-hoon Lee

The Holy Spirit Movement in Korea

Its Historical and Theological Development

2009 / 978-1-870345-67-5 / 174pp (hardback)

This book traces the historical and theological development of the Holy Spirit Movement in Korea through six successive periods (from 1900 to the present time). These periods are characterized by repentance and revival (1900-20), persecution and suffering under Japanese

occupation (1920-40), confusion and division (1940-60), explosive revival in which the Pentecostal movement played a major role in the rapid growth of Korean churches (1960-80), the movement reaching out to all denominations (1980-2000), and the new context demanding the Holy Spirit movement to open new horizons in its mission engagement (2000-).

Paul Hang-Sik Cho
Eschatology and Ecology

Experiences of the Korean Church

2010 / 978-1-870345-75-0 / 260pp (hardback)

This book raises the question of why Korean people, and Korean Protestant Christians in particular, pay so little attention to ecological issues. The author argues that there is an important connection (or elective affinity) between this lack of attention and the other-worldly eschatology that is so dominant within Korean Protestant Christianity.

Dietrich Werner, David Esterline, Namsoon Kang, Joshva Raja (Eds)

The Handbook of Theological Education in World Christianity

Theological Perspectives, Ecumenical Trends, Regional Surveys

2010 / 978-1-870345-80-0 / 759pp

This major reference work is the first ever comprehensive study of Theological Education in Christianity of its kind. With contributions from over 90 international scholars and church leaders, it aims to be easily accessible across denominational, cultural, educational, and geographic boundaries. The Handbook will aid international dialogue and networking among theological educators, institutions, and agencies.

David Emmanuel Singh & Bernard C Farr (Eds)

Christianity and Education

Shaping of Christian Context in Thinking

2010 / 978-1-870345-81-1 / 374pp

Christianity and Education is a collection of papers published in *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies* over a period of 15 years. The articles represent a spectrum of Christian thinking addressing issues of institutional development for theological education, theological studies in the context of global mission, contextually aware/informed education, and academies which deliver such education, methodologies and personal reflections.

J. Andrew Kirk

Civilisations in Conflict?

Islam, the West and Christian Faith

2011 / 978-1-870345-87-3 / 205pp

Samuel Huntington's thesis, which argues that there appear to be aspects of Islam that could be on a collision course with the politics and values of Western societies, has provoked much controversy. The purpose of this study is to offer a particular response to Huntington's thesis by making a comparison between the origins of Islam and Christianity.

David Emmanuel Singh (Ed)

Jesus and the Incarnation

Reflections of Christians from Islamic Contexts

2011 / 978-1-870345-90-3 / 245pp

In the dialogues of Christians with Muslims nothing is more fundamental than the Cross, the Incarnation and the Resurrection of Jesus. Building on the *Jesus and the Cross*, this book contains voices of Christians living in various 'Islamic contexts' and reflecting on the Incarnation of Jesus. The aim and hope of these reflections is that the papers weaved around

the notion of 'the Word' will not only promote dialogue among Christians on the roles of the Person and the Book but, also, create a positive environment for their conversations with Muslim neighbours.

Ivan M Satyavrata
God Has Not left Himself Without Witness
2011 / 978-1-870345-79-8 / 264pp

Since its earliest inception the Christian Church has had to address the question of what common ground exists between Christian faiths and other religions. This issue is not merely of academic interest but one with critical existential and socio-political consequences. This study presents a case for the revitalization of the fulfillment tradition based on a recovery and assessment of the fulfillment approaches of Indian Christian converts in the pre-independence period.

Bal Krishna Sharma
From this World to the Next
Christian Identity and Funerary Rites in Nepal
2013 / 978-1-908355-08-9 / 238pp

This book explores and analyses funerary rite struggles in a nation where Christianity is a comparatively recent phenomenon, and many families have multi-faith, who go through traumatic experiences at the death of their family members. The author has used an applied theological approach to explore and analyse the findings in order to address the issue of funerary rites with which the Nepalese church is struggling.

J Kwabena Asamoah-Gyada
Contemporary Pentecostal Christianity
Interpretations from an African Context
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Pentecostalism is the fastest growing stream of Christianity in the world. The real evidence for the significance of Pentecostalism lies in the actual churches they have built and the numbers they attract. This work interprets key theological and missiological themes in African Pentecostalism by using material from the live experiences of the movement itself.

Isabel Apawo Phiri & Dietrich Werner (Eds)
Handbook of Theological Education in Africa
2013 / 978-1-908355-19-5 / 1110pp (hardback)

The *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa* is a wake-up call for African churches to give proper prominence to theological education institutions and their programmes which serve them. It is unique, comprehensive and ambitious in its aim and scope.

Hope Antone, Wati Longchar, Hyunju Bae, Huang Po Ho, Dietrich Werner (Eds)
Asian Handbook for Theological Education and Ecumenism
2013 / 978-1-908355-30-0 / 675pp (hardback)

This impressive and comprehensive book focuses on key resources for teaching Christian unity and common witness in Asian contexts. It is a collection of articles that reflects the ongoing 'double wrestle' with the texts of biblical tradition as well as with contemporary contexts. It signals an investment towards the future of the ecumenical movement in Asia.

David Emmanuel Singh and Bernard C Farr (Eds)

The Bible and Christian Ethics

2013 / 978-1-908355-20-1 / 217pp

This book contains papers from the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies' quarterly journal, Transformation, on the topic of Christian Ethics. Here, Mission Studies is understood in its widest sense to also encompass Christian Ethics. At the very hearts of it lies the Family as the basic unit of society. All the papers together seek to contribute to understanding how Christian thought is shaped in contexts each of which poses its own challenge to Christian living in family and in broader society.

Martin Allaby

Inequality, Corruption and the Church

Challenges & Opportunities in the Global Church

2013 / 978-1-908355-16-4 / 228pp

Why are economic inequalities greatest in the southern countries where most people are Christians? This book teases out the influences that have created this situation, and concludes that Christians could help reduce economic inequalities by opposing corruption. Interviews in the Philippines, Kenya, Zambia and Peru reveal opportunities and challenges for Christians as they face up to corruption.

Paul Alexander and Al Tizon (Eds)

Following Jesus

Journeys in Radical Discipleship – Essays in Honor of Ronald J Sider

2013 / 978-1-908355-27-0 / 228pp

Ronald J. Sider and the organization that he founded, *Evangelicals for Social Action*, are most respected for their pioneering work in the area of evangelical social concern. However, Sider's great contribution to social justice is but a part of a larger vision – namely, biblical discipleship. His works, which span more than four decades, have guided the faithful to be authentic gospel-bearers in ecclesial, cultural and political arenas. This book honors Ron Sider, by bringing together a group of scholar-activists, old and young, to reflect upon the gospel and its radical implications for the 21st century.

REGNUM STUDIES IN MISSION

Kwame Bediako

Theology and Identity

The Impact of Culture upon Christian Thought in the Second Century and in Modern Africa

1992 / 978-1870345-10-1 / 507pp

The author examines the question of Christian identity in the context of the Graeco-Roman culture of the early Roman Empire. He then addresses the modern African predicament of quests for identity and integration.

Christopher Sugden

Seeking the Asian Face of Jesus

The Practice and Theology of Christian Social Witness

in Indonesia and India 1974–1996

1997 / 1-870345-26-6 / 496pp

This study focuses on contemporary holistic mission with the poor in India and Indonesia combined with the call to transformation of all life in Christ with micro-credit enterprise

schemes. 'The literature on contextual theology now has a new standard to rise to' – Lamin Sanneh (Yale University, USA).

Hwa Yung

Mangoes or Bananas?

The Quest for an Authentic Asian Christian Theology

1997 / 1-870345-25-5 / 274pp

Asian Christian thought remains largely captive to Greek dualism and Enlightenment rationalism because of the overwhelming dominance of Western culture. Authentic contextual Christian theologies will emerge within Asian Christianity with a dual recovery of confidence in culture and the gospel.

Keith E. Eitel

Paradigm Wars

The Southern Baptist International Mission Board Faces the Third Millennium

1999 / 1-870345-12-6 / 140pp

The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention is the largest denominational mission agency in North America. This volume chronicles the historic and contemporary forces that led to the IMB's recent extensive reorganization, providing the most comprehensive case study to date of a historic mission agency restructuring to continue its mission purpose into the twenty-first century more effectively.

Samuel Jayakumar

Dalit Consciousness and Christian Conversion

Historical Resources for a Contemporary Debate

1999 / 81-7214-497-0 / 434pp

(Published jointly with ISPCK)

The main focus of this historical study is social change and transformation among the Dalit Christian communities in India. Historiography tests the evidence in the light of the conclusions of the modern Dalit liberation theologians.

Vinay Samuel and Christopher Sugden (Eds)

Mission as Transformation

A Theology of the Whole Gospel

1999 / 978-18703455-13-2 / 522pp

This book brings together in one volume twenty five years of biblical reflection on mission practice with the poor from around the world. This volume helps anyone understand how evangelicals, struggling to unite evangelism and social action, found their way in the last twenty five years to the biblical view of mission in which God calls all human beings to love God and their neighbour; never creating a separation between the two.

Christopher Sugden

Gospel, Culture and Transformation

2000 / 1-870345-32-3 / 152pp

A Reprint, with a New Introduction,

of Part Two of Seeking the Asian Face of Jesus

Gospel, Culture and Transformation explores the practice of mission especially in relation to transforming cultures and communities. - 'Transformation is to enable God's vision of society to be actualised in all relationships: social, economic and spiritual, so that God's will

may be reflected in human society and his love experienced by all communities, especially the poor.’

Bernhard Ott

Beyond Fragmentation: Integrating Mission and Theological Education

A Critical Assessment of some Recent Developments

in Evangelical Theological Education

2001 / 1-870345-14-9 / 382pp

Beyond Fragmentation is an enquiry into the development of Mission Studies in evangelical theological education in Germany and German-speaking Switzerland between 1960 and 1995. The author undertakes a detailed examination of the paradigm shifts which have taken place in recent years in both the theology of mission and the understanding of theological education.

Gideon Githiga

The Church as the Bulwark against Authoritarianism

Development of Church and State Relations in Kenya, with Particular Reference to the Years after Political Independence 1963-1992

2002 / 1-870345-38-x / 218pp

‘All who care for love, peace and unity in Kenyan society will want to read this careful history by Bishop Githiga of how Kenyan Christians, drawing on the Bible, have sought to share the love of God, bring his peace and build up the unity of the nation, often in the face of great difficulties and opposition.’ Canon Dr Chris Sugden, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies.

Myung Sung-Hoon, Hong Young-Gi (Eds)

Charis and Charisma

David Yonggi Cho and the Growth of Yoido Full Gospel Church

2003 / 978-1870345-45-3 / 218pp

This book discusses the factors responsible for the growth of the world’s largest church. It expounds the role of the Holy Spirit, the leadership, prayer, preaching, cell groups and creativity in promoting church growth. It focuses on God’s grace (charis) and inspiring leadership (charisma) as the two essential factors and the book’s purpose is to present a model for church growth worldwide.

Samuel Jayakumar

Mission Reader

Historical Models for Wholistic Mission in the Indian Context

2003 / 1-870345-42-8 / 250pp

(Published jointly with ISPCK)

This book is written from an evangelical point of view revalidating and reaffirming the Christian commitment to wholistic mission. The roots of the ‘wholistic mission’ combining ‘evangelism and social concerns’ are to be located in the history and tradition of Christian evangelism in the past; and the civilizing purpose of evangelism is compatible with modernity as an instrument in nation building.

Bob Robinson

Christians Meeting Hindus

An Analysis and Theological Critique of the Hindu-Christian Encounter in India

2004 / 987-1870345-39-2 / 392pp

This book focuses on the Hindu-Christian encounter, especially the intentional meeting called dialogue, mainly during the last four decades of the twentieth century, and specifically in India itself.

Gene Early

Leadership Expectations

How Executive Expectations are Created and Used in a Non-Profit Setting

2005 / 1-870345-30-9 / 276pp

The author creates an Expectation Enactment Analysis to study the role of the Chancellor of the University of the Nations-Kona, Hawaii. This study is grounded in the field of managerial work, jobs, and behaviour and draws on symbolic interactionism, role theory, role identity theory and enactment theory. The result is a conceptual framework for developing an understanding of managerial roles.

Tharcisse Gatwa

The Churches and Ethnic Ideology in the Rwandan Crises 1900-1994

2005 / 978-1870345-24-8 / 300pp

(Reprinted 2011)

Since the early years of the twentieth century Christianity has become a new factor in Rwandan society. This book investigates the role Christian churches played in the formulation and development of the racial ideology that culminated in the 1994 genocide.

Julie Ma

Mission Possible

Biblical Strategies for Reaching the Lost

2005 / 978-1870345-37-8 / 142pp

This is a missiology book for the church which liberates missiology from the specialists for the benefit of every believer. It also serves as a textbook that is simple and friendly, and yet solid in biblical interpretation. This book links the biblical teaching to the actual and contemporary missiological settings with examples, making the Bible come alive to the reader.

I. Mark Beaumont

Christology in Dialogue with Muslims

*A Critical Analysis of Christian Presentations of Christ for Muslims
from the Ninth and Twentieth Centuries*

2005 / 978-1870345-46-0 / 227pp

This book analyses Christian presentations of Christ for Muslims in the most creative periods of Christian-Muslim dialogue, the first half of the ninth century and the second half of the twentieth century. In these two periods, Christians made serious attempts to present their faith in Christ in terms that take into account Muslim perceptions of him, with a view to bridging the gap between Muslim and Christian convictions.

Thomas Czövek,
Three Seasons of Charismatic Leadership
*A Literary-Critical and Theological Interpretation of the Narrative of
Saul, David and Solomon*
2006 / 978-1870345-48-4 / 272pp

This book investigates the charismatic leadership of Saul, David and Solomon. It suggests that charismatic leaders emerge in crisis situations in order to resolve the crisis by the charisma granted by God. Czövek argues that Saul proved himself as a charismatic leader as long as he acted resolutely and independently from his mentor Samuel. In the author's eyes, Saul's failure to establish himself as a charismatic leader is caused by his inability to step out from Samuel's shadow.

Richard Burgess
Nigeria's Christian Revolution
The Civil War Revival and Its Pentecostal Progeny (1967-2006)
2008 / 978-1-870345-63-7 / 347pp

This book describes the revival that occurred among the Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria and the new Pentecostal churches it generated, and documents the changes that have occurred as the movement has responded to global flows and local demands. As such, it explores the nature of revivalist and Pentecostal experience, but does so against the backdrop of local socio-political and economic developments, such as decolonisation and civil war, as well as broader processes, such as modernisation and globalisation.

David Emmanuel Singh & Bernard C Farr (Eds)
Christianity and Cultures
Shaping Christian Thinking in Context
2008 / 978-1-870345-69-9 / 271pp

This volume marks an important milestone, the 25th anniversary of the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (OCMS). The papers here have been exclusively sourced from Transformation, a quarterly journal of OCMS, and seek to provide a tripartite view of Christianity's engagement with cultures by focusing on the question: how is Christian thinking being formed or reformed through its interaction with the varied contexts it encounters? The subject matters include different strands of theological-missiological thinking, socio-political engagements and forms of family relationships in interaction with the host cultures.

Tormod Engelsen, Ernst Harbakk, Rolv Olsen, Thor Strandenæs (Eds)
Mission to the World
*Communicating the Gospel in the 21st Century:
Essays in Honour of Knud Jørgensen*
2008 / 978-1-870345-64-4 / 472pp (hardback)

Knud Jørgensen is Director of Areopagos and Associate Professor of Missiology at MF Norwegian School of Theology. This book reflects on the main areas of Jørgensen's commitment to mission. At the same time it focuses on the main frontier of mission, the world, the content of mission, the Gospel, the fact that the Gospel has to be communicated, and the context of contemporary mission in the 21st century.

Al Tizon

Transformation after Lausanne

Radical Evangelical Mission in Global-Local Perspective

2008 / 978-1-870345-68-2 / 281pp

After Lausanne '74, a worldwide network of radical evangelical mission theologians and practitioners use the notion of "Mission as Transformation" to integrate evangelism and social concern together, thus lifting theological voices from the Two Thirds World to places of prominence. This book documents the definitive gatherings, theological tensions, and social forces within and without evangelicalism that led up to Mission as Transformation. And it does so through a global-local grid that points the way toward greater holistic mission in the 21st century.

Bambang Budijanto

Values and Participation

Development in Rural Indonesia

2009 / 978-1-870345-70-4 / 237pp

Socio-religious values and socio-economic development are inter-dependant, inter-related and are constantly changing in the context of macro political structures, economic policy, religious organizations and globalization, and micro influences such as local affinities, identity, politics, leadership and beliefs. The book argues that the comprehensive approach in understanding the socio-religious values of each of the three local Lopait communities in Central Java is essential to accurately describing their respective identity.

Alan R. Johnson

Leadership in a Slum

A Bangkok Case Study

2009 / 978-1-870345-71-2 / 238pp

This book looks at leadership in the social context of a slum in Bangkok from a different perspective than traditional studies which measure well educated Thais on leadership scales derived in the West. Using both systematic data collection and participant observation, it develops a culturally preferred model as well as a set of models based in Thai concepts that reflect on-the-ground realities. It concludes by looking at the implications of the anthropological approach for those who are involved in leadership training in Thai settings and beyond.

Titre Ande

Leadership and Authority

Bula Matari and Life - Community Ecclesiology in Congo

2010 / 978-1-870345-72-9 / 189pp

Christian theology in Africa can make significant development if a critical understanding of the socio-political context in contemporary Africa is taken seriously, particularly as Africa's post-colonial Christian leadership based its understanding and use of authority on the Bula Matari model. This has caused many problems and Titre proposes a Life-Community ecclesiology for liberating authority, here leadership is a function, not a status, and 'apostolic succession' belongs to all people of God.

Frank Kwesi Adams

Odwira and the Gospel

A Study of the Asante Odwira Festival and its Significance for Christianity in Ghana

2010 / 978-1-870345-59-0 / 232pp

The study of the Odwira festival is the key to the understanding of Asante religious and political life in Ghana. The book explores the nature of the Odwira festival longitudinally -

in pre-colonial, colonial and post-independence Ghana - and examines the Odwira ideology and its implications for understanding the Asante self-identity. Also discussed is how some elements of faith portrayed in the Odwira festival can provide a framework for Christianity to engage with Asante culture at a greater depth.

Bruce Carlton

Strategy Coordinator

Changing the Course of Southern Baptist Missions

2010 / 978-1-870345-78-1 / 273pp

This is an outstanding, one-of-a-kind work addressing the influence of the non-residential missionary/strategy coordinator's role in Southern Baptist missions. This scholarly text examines the twentieth century global missiological currents that influenced the leadership of the International Mission Board, resulting in a new paradigm to assist in taking the gospel to the nations.

Julie Ma & Wonsuk Ma

Mission in the Spirit:

Towards a Pentecostal/Charismatic Missiology

2010 / 978-1-870345-84-2 / 312pp

The book explores the unique contribution of Pentecostal/Charismatic mission from the beginning of the twentieth century. The first part considers the theological basis of Pentecostal/Charismatic mission thinking and practice. Special attention is paid to the Old Testament, which has been regularly overlooked by the modern Pentecostal/Charismatic movements. The second part discusses major mission topics with contributions and challenges unique to Pentecostal/Charismatic mission. The book concludes with a reflection on the future of this powerful missionary movement. As the authors served as Korean missionaries in Asia, often their missionary experiences in Asia are reflected in their discussions.

Allan Anderson, Edmond Tang (Eds)

Asian and Pentecostal

The Charismatic Face of Christianity in Asia

2011 / 978-1870345-94-1 / 500pp

(Revised Edition)

This book provides a thematic discussion and pioneering case studies on the history and development of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in the countries of South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia.

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S. Hun Kim & Wonsuk Ma (Eds)

Korean Diaspora and Christian Mission

2011 / 978-1-870345-89-7 / 301pp (hardback)

As a 'divine conspiracy' for *Missio Dei*, the global phenomenon of people on the move has shown itself to be invaluable. In 2004 two significant documents concerning Diaspora were introduced, one by the Filipino International Network and the other by the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization. These have created awareness of the importance of people on the move for Christian mission. Since then, Korean Diaspora has conducted similar research among Korean missions, resulting in this book

Jin Huat Tan

Planting an Indigenous Church

The Case of the Borneo Evangelical Mission

2011 / 978-1-870345-99-6 / 343pp

Dr Jin Huat Tan has written a pioneering study of the origins and development of Malaysia's most significant indigenous church. This is an amazing story of revival, renewal and transformation of the entire region chronicling the powerful effect of it evident to date! What can we learn from this extensive and careful study of the Borneo Revival, so the global Christianity will become ever more dynamic?

Bill Prevette

Child, Church and Compassion

Towards Child Theology in Romania

2012 / 978-1-908355-03-4 / 382pp

Bill Prevett comments that "children are like 'canaries in a mine shaft'; they provide a focal point for discovery and encounter of perilous aspects of our world that are often ignored." True, but miners also carried a lamp to see into the subterranean darkness. This book is such a lamp. It lights up the subterranean world of children and youth in danger of exploitation, and as it does so travels deep into their lives and also into the activities of those who seek to help them.

Samuel Cyuma

Picking up the Pieces

The Church and Conflict Resolution in South Africa and Rwanda

2012 / 978-1-908355-02-7 / 373pp

In the last ten years of the 20th century, the world was twice confronted with unbelievable news from Africa. First, there was the end of Apartheid in South Africa, without bloodshed, due to responsible political and Church leaders. The second was the mass killings in Rwanda, which soon escalated into real genocide. Political and Church leaders had been unable to prevent this crime against humanity. In this book, the question is raised: can we compare the situation in South Africa with that in Rwanda? Can Rwandan leaders draw lessons from the peace process in South Africa?

Peter Rowan

Proclaiming the Peacemaker

The Malaysian Church as an Agent of Reconciliation in a Multicultural Society

2012 / 978-1-908355-05-8 / 268pp

With a history of racial violence and in recent years, low-level ethnic tensions, the themes of peaceful coexistence and social harmony are recurring ones in the discourse of Malaysian society. In such a context, this book looks at the role of the church as a reconciling agent, arguing that a reconciling presence within a divided society necessitates an ethos of peacemaking.

Edward Ontita

Resources and Opportunity

The Architecture of Livelihoods in Rural Kenya

2012 / 978-1-908355-04-1 / 328pp

Poor people in most rural areas of developing countries often improvise resources in unique ways to enable them make a living. Resources and Opportunity takes the view that resources are dynamic and fluid, arguing that villagers co-produce them through redefinition and renaming in everyday practice and use them in diverse ways. The book focuses on ordinary

social activities to bring out people's creativity in locating, redesigning and embracing livelihood opportunities in processes.

Kathryn Kraft

Searching for Heaven in the Real World

A Sociological Discussion of Conversion in the Arab World

2012 / 978-1-908355-15-7 / 142pp

Kathryn Kraft explores the breadth of psychological and social issues faced by Arab Muslims after making a decision to adopt a faith in Christ or Christianity, investigating some of the most surprising and significant challenges new believers face.

Wessley Lukose

Contextual Missiology of the Spirit

Pentecostalism in Rajasthan, India

2013 / 978-1-908355-09-6 / 256pp

This book explores the identity, context and features of Pentecostalism in Rajasthan, India as well as the internal and external issues facing Pentecostals. It aims to suggest 'a contextual missiology of the Spirit,' as a new model of contextual missiology from a Pentecostal perspective. It is presented as a glocal, ecumenical, transformational, and public missiology.

Paul M Miller

Evangelical Mission in Co-operation with Catholics

A Study of Evangelical Tensions

2013 / 978-1-908355-17-1 / 291pp

This book brings the first thorough examination of the discussions going on within Evangelicalism about the viability of a good conscience dialogue with Roman Catholics. Those who are interested in evangelical world missions and Roman Catholic views of world missions will find this informative.

REGNUM RESOURCES FOR MISSION

Knud Jørgensen

Equipping for Service

Christian Leadership in Church and Society

2012 / 978-1-908355-06-5 / 150pp

This book is written out of decades of experience of leading churches and missions in Ethiopia, Geneva, Norway and Hong Kong. Combining the teaching of Scripture with the insights of contemporary management philosophy, Jørgensen writes in a way which is practical and applicable to anyone in Christian service. "The intention has been to challenge towards a leadership relevant for work in church and mission, and in public and civil society, with special attention to leadership in Church and organisation."

Mary Miller

What does Love have to do with Leadership?

2013 / 978-1-908355-10-2 / 100pp

Leadership is a performing art, not a science. It is the art of influencing others, not just to accomplish something together, but to want to accomplish great things together. Mary Miller captures the art of servant leadership in her powerful book. She understands that servant leaders challenge existing processes without manipulating or overpowering people.

Mary Miller (Ed)
Faces of Holistic Mission
Stories of the OCMS Family
2013 / 978-1-908355-32-4 / 104pp

There is a popular worship song that begins with the refrain, 'look what the Lord has done, look what the Lord has done'. This book does exactly that; it seeks to show what the Lord has done. Fifteen authors from five different continents identify what the Lord has indeed been doing, and continues to do, in their lives. These are their stories.

David Cranston and Ruth Padilla DeBorst (Eds)
Mission as Transformation
Learning from Catalysts
2013 / 978-1-908355-34-8 / 77pp

This book is the product of the first Stott-Bediako Forum, held in 2012 with the title *Portraits of Catalysts*. Its aim was to learn from the stories of Christian leaders whose lives and work have served as catalysts for transformation as each, in his or her particular way, facilitated the intersection between the Good News of Jesus Christ and the context in which they lived, in particular amongst people who are suffering.

Brian Woolnough (Ed)
Good News from Africa
Community Transformation Through the Church
2013 / 978-1-908355-33-1 / 123pp

This book discusses how sustainable, holistic, community development can be, and is being, achieved through the work of the local church. Leading African development practitioners describe different aspects of development through their own experience.

Makonon Getu (Ed)
Transforming Microfinance
A Christian Approach
2013 / 978-1-908355-31-7 / 264pp

"This book highlights the important role that Christian-based organisations bring to the delivery of financial services for the poor. It is timely, significant and important and deserves a wide circulation".

Lord Carey of Clifton, former Archbishop of Canterbury

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1994 / 1870345177 / 352pp

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David Singh
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