The Missionary Activity of the Orthodox Church

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I. Historical review

Concerning the views and achievements of Orthodox Church in the missionary field there is a considerable amount of ignorance and misunderstanding. That is why astonishing statements like the following appear from time to time: "From A.D.328, when Constantine removed the Capital from Rome to Byzantium (now Constantinople) the history of the Church, like that of the Empire, was divided into Eastern and Western. The Eastern Church became engrossed in Theological controversies, to the sad loss of its spiritual life and hence also of it's missionary vision. It fell into a deep sleep, from which it was not aroused for many centuries."[1] Because this ignorance is unfortunately wide spread, I think it necessary to devote the first part of this study to the brief account of missionary work of the Eastern Church.

The voice that comes down to us from this period, in particular from the first ten centuries, is significant in many ways, since it points out the characteristics and the spirit of the missionary activity of the United Church

1. Byzantine Missionary Work

The ever broadening knowledge of Byzantium emphasizes, that it is an error to picture the Byzantine Church as somehow frozen in its dogmas and indifferent to external activity. Now studies stress the overflourishing vitality of the Orthodox Church, which, even in its troubles did not cease to bring the Gospel to the pagan nations within the environs of the Byzantine Empire. As the French historian Simon Vaihle wrote, one could make an interesting study on the subject of Byzantine missionary effort, "that would show to our contempories that there is nothing new under the sun and that the far distant regions into which the western missionaries penetrated had already once upon a time received the Gospel initially from Greek priests."[2]

We can distinguish two periods during which the missionary activity of the Byzantine Church appears to have been intensified. First from the 4th to the 6th centuries, with its climax during the reign of Justinian, and second from the 9th to the 11th.

a) In the first period the missionary interest was orientated in al directions, towards the pagan peoples dwelling within the boundaries of the Byzantine empire, as well as towards the neighbouring barbaric nations. Within the empire the missionary zeal of St. John Chrysostom is adequately known,[3] but many other clerics and monks made notable contributions to the Christian missionary endeavour of the Eastern Church, e.g. St. Hilarion (290-391 AD) in Palestine, St. Hariton and St. Sylvanus,[4] and the Monophyzite Bishop, John of Ephesus, who succeeded in attracting about 80.000 gentiles of Asia Minor to Christian faith.[5] By this success he won for himself the name "Hammer of the gentiles".

At the same time the Eastern Church showed great interest in the diffusion of the Christian faith among the uncivilized nations surrounding the Byzantine Empire. For example, along the northern borders of the empire, among the Goths[6], the Iberians (Georgians)[7], the Christianisation of the Armenians was completed by Gregory Photistes at the beginning of the 4th century, with the help of Greek priests. Also in Persia the missionary work was intensified. In the 5th century the Church of Persia comprised 5 Metropoles, 30 Bishoprics, and had remarkable Christian literature in the local idiom, and also flourishing monasticism. Many Persian missionaries worked with enthusiasm for the diffusion of the Gospel during the 5th century. Renowned among them was Pythion, who worked with great success in Media and the Tiger Valley. He attracted to Christ many a follower of Zoroaster, and even some of the highest officers. He built several churches and sealed his achievement with his own blood by suffering martyrdom in the year 446.

Christianity was also early disseminated in Central Asia. Various Byzantine merchants contributed to this penetration along the trade routes joining Byzantium with Persia and the Far East. From the beginning of the 4th century, we have testimonies that there existed some Christians in the aria of Bactria (N. Afghanistan and S. Russian Turkestan). In 478, the Persian Emperor Kawas, found some Christians among the Huns of Bactria and among the Turks who were living on the banks of the river Oxos[9].

In spreading the Gospel in Central Asia, the Nostorians in particular displayed outstanding missionary activity. They went as far China itself, as early as the 7th century, and later they reached the shores of the Yellow Sea[10]. On the eve of the Muslim invasions (7th century), the Church of Persia accounted for 80 Bishoprics which extended from the mountains of Armenia down to South India. As Cosmas Indicopleustes (6th century), a Byzantine Geographer, who later became a monk in Mt. Sinai, informs us; "Among the Bactrians as well as among the Huns and Persians and among the rest of the Indians and Persarmenians and Medians and Elamitans and among the entire land of Persia there were innumerable churches, great numbers of Christians, many martyrs, monks and hermits.[11]"

Even in Ceylon, the large island south of India, the Byzantine traveller found many Christians. On this island where so many merchants used to come from Syria, Persia and Ethiopia, to exchange their merchandise with that brought there by Chinese and Indian traders, the Gospel was apparently preached early. Cosmas also mentions that there were Christian communities along the shores of India in Malabar and various other authors speak of the spreading of Christian faith along the gulf of Bengal as well as of the privileges granted to Christian minority groups by the indigenous Indian rulers[12]. These Christian centres are, of course, connected with the missionary activity of the Persian Christians. They indicate, however, how far the missionary work of the Eastern Churches had advanced already during the first Byzantine period.

Considerable missionary effort was also exerted in the Christianisation of the Arabs who lived south of the empire. The monks of Syria played an important role, as well as those of Palestine and Mesopotamia, for example, St. Euthymius († 473 A.D.) and St. Sabbas († 532 A.D.). There were also several nomad monks and even some

bishops whose main preoccupation was the spiritual guidance of the Arabs[13]. Nestorians and Monophysites displayed great activity for the Christianisation of the Arabs. The antagonism between the Orthodox and the Monophysites unfortunately hindered the further dissemination of the Christian faith among the Arabic population. Once more the discord among Christians became the great obstacle to the diffusion and stability of Christianity.

In Africa missionary endeavours continued along the boundaries of the Byzantine Empire during these centuries. After the Christianisation of the Ethiopians, in which Frumentius and Aodesius played an important role, systematic missionary efforts were made during the reign of Justinian among the pagan tribes of Nubia, among the Blemmyes, Nabates, Abodeus and Macorites.[14]

The ruins of 60 churches which are still seen in the Sudan from the Egyptian border down to Khartoum, and the recent (1963) discovery of a beautiful Byzantine Church in the area of Pharras (near Assuan), give evidence of the great influence of the Byzantines there[15]. Despite the invasion of the Moslems in the year 641-642 A.D., the Church of Nubia survived for many centuries. According to information supplied by the Patriarch Eutychius (933-940 A.D.) as well as by a chronographer of the 14th century, the church of Nubia had Greek as its official service language. The Christian faith was preserved in parts of Nubia until the 18th century.

Besides Nubia, Justinian concerned himself with disseminating Christianity among the Maurusians or Maures of the area formerly occupied by the state of the Vandals, whom he had liquidated. According to some sources, during his reign several tribes of Berbers were converted to Christianity; of these at least two were living in the area of Libya close to the old Roman cities which the Emperor had rebuilt. After the death of Justinian the Christianisation of the indigenous peoples continued. When, at the beginning of the 8th century, the Moslems invaded North Africa a great portion of the population in the northern parts of Tunisia and the north-eastern parts of Algeria were Christian. During the period of the Byzantine domination there were many Christian Communities along the entire northern coast of Africa up to the Straits of Gibraltar[16].

Besides influencing the areas referred to above, Christianity had penetrated further a field. Cosmas Indicopleustes informs us that in one of his travels between the years 520-525 A.D. he found numerous Christian communities in the island of Socotra, opposite the eastern, most promontory of Africa. A good part of the population of the island was made up of Greek settlers from Egypt and spoke Greek[17].

I have emphasised this first period, because as a rule it remains unknown. In contrast to what has at times been believed through an ignorance of some historical sources, the missionary impetus of the Eastern Christians was from the beginning vigorous, and carried out, not only by inspired bishops and monks, but also by many Christian merchants, by captives, and by men, women and youth in a variety of daring missionary endeavours[18].

b) The achievements of this period were largely destroyed by the great ethnological changes and redistribution which took place during the centuries following this missionary fervour, and especially by the spreading of the Islam in the

East and South. On the contrary, the results of the missionary endeavours of the 9h and 10th century A.D. were of tremendous importance for Christianity, the future of Europe and the civilization of the whole world. "If the Russians had placed their preferences with the religion of their neighbours (the Moslems, who lived close to them) instead of Christianity, European history would have been entirely different."[19]

The facts are quite known and it is not necessary to give details in the short present study. This period begins with the activity of the famous Byzantine missionaries Cyril and Methodius (9th century) whose contribution in Christian mission is incalculable. In their footsteps many Byzantine missionaries worked among the Moravians (end of 9th century), Serbians, Bohemians, Bulgarians, Hungarians, Hazarians, Alani and Russians[20].

Representatives of all social classes, clergy and laity, participated in this far-ranging and laborious mission of propagating the Kingdom of God to the ends of the earth - patriarchs (e.g. the famous Photius and his disciple Nicolaus Mysticos), bishops, priors, priests, ordinary monks, (among them Gysille and Methodius during the 9th century, whose contributions to Christian mission is incalculable), emperors, both famous (as Vasilius Macedon) and commonplace (as Michael III), diplomats, high-ranking administrative employees, Princesses (as Eirene Karakousini, who still lives in the tradition of the Serbian people, and Anna the wife of St. Vladimir), merchants and sailors, common travellers, immigrants and prisoners of war (as the 40.000 Greeks of Andrianoupolis, whom the Bulgar king, Croumos brought to Bulgaria, and they, in turn, brought there the first seeds of the Christian faith). All these people worked in different missionary fields in periods of prosperity and peace as well as in periods of political and military upheaval.

As Christian Byzantium preached the glad tidings of the gospel to the mass of uncivilized tribes which had flooded Eastern Europe, it gave them at the same time a new way of life – spiritual, social and political. It helped them by every means to find and develop their abilities, their potentials, their soul. As Charles Diehl pointed out: "Along with religion it also brought in the conception of the state, the forms of governments a new law which henceforth would regulate their public relations, education and the Cyrillic alphabet, in which their literature was written and their language was codified. Greek priests held services in the new churches built in the style of their Byzantine models and decorated by Byzantine artists with excellent mosaics. After the translation of the Gospels the pre-eminent works of Byzantine literature were also translated into Slavic, and thus the foundations were laid for a new national literature for each country […] Thus all these barbarian tribes became truly civilized nations […] and Byzantium became for all of Eastern Europe the *great educator* and the *great initiator*.[21]"

The flexibility and understanding with which the Greek missionaries adapted Byzantium service-books and the Byzantine tradition to fit the individual needs of various peoples gave to these books a certain ecumenical character, since they became the connecting links between one Orthodox nation and another. At the same time the evolution of the vernacular and of the individual character of each nation, for which the Byzantine missionaries worked with such great respect, preserved the personality of the peoples who underwent this development.

Opposing any concept of administrative totalitarianism or any monolithic concept of the Church, the Byzantine missionaries considered the unitive factor of the ever-expanding church to be the common doxology, polyphonic in nature but one in the spirit of the living God: "Because the Bread is one, we who are many, are one body." (I Corinth. 10:17). The noble and persistent heroism with which thousands of Byzantine missionaries - some renowned, others obscure - strove for the dissemination of Christianity during the long life of the Empire, compels the historian to admit what Diehl has pointed out in reference to the Christianisation of the Slaws: "The work of the missionaries was one of the glories of Byzantium.[22]"

2. The missionary work of the Orthodox Russian Church.

The Byzantine missionaries transmitted to their new proselytes this vision and this sense of responsibility for the spreading of the Gospel 'to the ends of the earth'. The Russians carried on the missionary tradition of the Byzantines. They spread Christianity to the whole of European Russia, to the various peoples of Kazan, Astrachan, and Siberia; and beyond the boundaries of the vast Russian State to Alaska, China, Corea and Japan[23]. In the following paragraphs we give a synopsis of this activity, in order to complete the sketch of Orthodox mission.

"The first Russian missionaries were the *colonist-monks*. These have left their mark upon the entire history of the Russian Church. […] In search of religious exercises they went into the forests, and they settled near rivers and lakes. […] Settling down amongst the numerous wild Finish tribes with which all the northern part of European Russian was at that time peopled, they enlightened the surrounding heathens with which whom they came in contact with the light of Christ's teaching, baptized them, induced them to settle down near their own habitations, taught them to make clearings in the forest, to cultivate the earth, to build dwellings and canoes, to make nets, catch fish, etc. In short they turned the wild nomad tribes into settlers." Later many Orthodox monasteries, founded in different parts of the land, formed a network that covered the vast country, and became centres of enlightenment for the native tribes.

We find the second type of missionary in the person of St. Stephen of Perm (1340-1396). A monk of outstanding education he left the monastery of Rostov and settled among pagan tribes in order to bring the message of the Gospel to them. He composed a Zirane alphabet and translated many biblical and liturgical books from the Greek originals that he knew so thoroughly. He travelled continuously preaching the Word of God, and using education and worship for the spreading of Christianity. He built an imposing church on a central site and decorated it with artistic icons. Its beauty became a magnet, not only for the baptized, but even for the pagans. But above all, he endeavoured to train native clergy. His example became later the brightest ideal for Russian missionaries.

In order to appreciate the great accomplishments of the Russian missionaries, it is enough to take a careful look at the map of the vast U.S.S.R. of today. A large number of tribes, mostly nomadic, of different ethnological origin, were scattered all over this endless country. Their languages were not only of great variety, but also unrecorded and thus immensely difficult to study. At the same time they had to confront the fanatic propaganda of Islam and Lamaism. The natives of Siberia were

subdivided into three main groups in which different religions prevailed. Among the Finns, it was Shamanism (the best ancient and general form of religion); among Mongolians, Lamaism and along Tartars, Islam. Christianity did not exist in Siberia before the arrival of the Russians.

It was not only clergy and monks who worked for the dissemination of Christianity. *Laymen* also contributed in many ways. Examples can be found in the Russian captives, who were the first to bring the message of Christianity to the Tartars, in St. Tryphon, who in the 15th century left Novgorod as a layman to bring the Gospel to the Lapps, as well as in Cyril Shelehof, who showed particular interest in the Christianisation of the natives of Alaska. Outstanding in the development of the Russian mission was the contribution of the famous Russian linguist and theologian N.T. Ilminsky. He introduced new translation methods for the native languages, he organized Tartar schools on a new basis, and contributed more then anyone else to the expansion of Christianity among the traditionally Moslem Tartar population.

During the 19th century, the Kazan Translation Committee published works in the following native languages from the area of the Wolga, Siberia, Caucasus and beyond: Tartar, Tchuvash, Teheremis, Votiak, Mordva, Kirgis, Bashkir, Calmuck, Perm, Altai, Buriat, Tungus, Gold, Yakut, Ostiak, Sanoyede, Tchukotsk, Arabic, Persian, Avar and Aderbeidjan. The number of these publications and translations issued by the Committee is enormous, and in the year 1899 it attained the figure of 1.599.385[25].

A great factor in the development of the Russian Mission was the Orthodox Missionary Society, which was founded in 1870 in Moscow. This Society was constantly stimulating an interest in missionary work. It collected funds throughout all Russia to finance missionaries, to built churches, schools and hospitals and to publish books. It did not, however, concern itself with the administrative arrangements of the several missions, which were responsible to their local diocesan Bishop[26].

We should not fail to mention in this brief résumé the names of some eminent Russian missionaries, such as Gurig (16th century) who carried Christianity to the very fortress of Islam in Russia the ancient province of Tartar-Khan: of Macarius Gloubarev (1792-1847), who concentrated his efforts on the impenetrable massif of the Altrai mountains, whose summits reach an altitude of 10.000 feet and which were inhabited by various warrior tribes, completely differing in origin and language; of Innocent Veniaminov (1797-1879), who worked initially as a married clergyman among the Aleoutians and Indians in Alaska, and then, after his wife's death, as Bishop of Kamchatka, preaching the Gospel to the peoples of the frozen Siberian East and to the tribes of Alaska. He died as Metropolitan of Moscow, after establishing the 'Orthodox Missionary Society' that was mentioned above[27].

Considerable efforts were made also in China, starting in the 18th century. This work was mainly literary production. Bishop Innocent Figurovski, in the beginning of the 20th century succeeded in promoting a vast development of the Orthodox Church in China. However, the number of the Orthodox converts in this country has been small relative to its large population[28].

The Orthodox mission extended into Korea, and also into Japan, where, according to K.S. Latourette, it has been "very unique"[29]. Nicholas Kassatkin (1836-1912) has gone in 1861 to Japan. He succeeded in mastering the Japanese language and in adjusting himself to the customs and character of the people. He did his best "to create a local Church, orthodox in its faith, Japanese in its spirit"[30]. He translated the Bible and the liturgical books into Japanese; he appointed a special committee for the further translation of the Orthodox Theological works; he organized the administration of the Church in such a way as to provide a unity of activities together with the participation of the whole church. The growth of the Orthodox Japanese church was remarkable. In 1880 the Orthodox in Japan numbered 6.099. By 1891 they were 20.048, and had 219 churches and chapels[31]. Upon his death, in 1912, the Orthodox Japanese Church included 33.000 communicants, divided into 266 parishes, 35 Japanese priests, 22 deacons, 116 Sunday school teachers, 82 seminarians, 8 cathedrals, 276 smaller churches and175 missionary centres. It must be pointed out that "there were never more than four foreign missionaries in the Orthodox Japanese Mission"[32].

Kassatkins adjustment and acceptance of the Japanese people was so profound that during the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-1905, he not only remained with his flock but he also encouraged the Orthodox Japanese to fulfil their duty to their country. Kassatkin, living in complete obedience to the evangelical command, was able to demonstrate that the Orthodox Church serves the nations, but remains above them. His life and work present a pattern for the Orthodox Mission of today the dawn of renewed missionary activity in the Orthodox Church.

The first step of this missionary revival has been to found an Inter-Orthodox Missionary Centre "*Porefthendes – Go Ye*", in Athens, which in collaboration with the Organization of Orthodox Youth Movements "Syndesmos" has as its objective:

a) the revival of the missionary ideal within the Orthodox Church,
b) the study of the theoretical and practical problems of the Mission from an Orthodox point of view, and
c) the preparation of the first missionary teams.

The centre publishes a quarterly under the name of "Porefthendes". Its philosophy and its aims are examined in the reports of Porefthendes.

II. Mission as a basic of Orthodoxy

The preceding short historical review has shown that the awareness of Church call to mission was always alive in the Orthodox Church. External reasons (The Turkish occupation of the Balkans and Greece which lasted for centuries, the Communist seizure of power in our time, the migration to countries which were predominantly of other religious beliefs) have forced the Orthodox to withdraw temporarily into extent, closed groups. This policy so understandable and perhaps necessary became habitual with the years and often took the form of isolationism. Now, however, it has become the conviction of a good many people that, even in the sphere of spirituality, the best defence is direct attack and that indifference or stagnation in regard to the ecumenical mission is equivalent to a denial of Orthodoxy itself. The reasons are very evident:

1. Ecumenical and apostolicity are essential elements of Orthodox Ecclesiology

a) "I believe in One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church" we repeat unceasingly in almost every single service of worship. This is the assurance, which the bishops, before their consecration, must give publicly. How then, is it possible for the faithful and particularly for the clergyman to think, to judge or to decide in terms of "his own" province alone, "his own" needs only? The whole perspective of the ONE Church and its total needs is what should always be before our eyes, what should become the main characteristic of our yearnings and actions at all times. Selfish absorption in "our own" needs and indifference toward these of others denotes that our belief in ONE church is reduced to a mere verbal formula. Whenever we say "our Church", if we sincerely want to live as Orthodox, we are called to think in terms of the church that extends "from end to end of the universe", as we say in the offering of the holy Eucharist (Liturgy of St. Basil the Great). There are not various Orthodox Churches, such as the Church *of* Greece, the Church *of* Russia, the Church *of* Rumania, *of* Japan, *of* Uganda and so on, but ONE Orthodox Church, the Church "which is *in* Greece, *in* Russia, *in* Rumania, *in* Uganda (cf. "the church of God which is at (in) Corinth", 1 Cor. 1:2 and 2 Cor. 1:1), the church, which must spread everywhere. Orthodoxy is not a confederation of churches, but "the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church", to which the Lord entrusted the continuation of his redemptive work, the salvation of the whole world in its true dimensions. The Church is *Apostolic* not simply because of the apostolic succession, but and more importantly because it preserves the apostolic fire and zeal to preach the gospel "to every creature" (Mark. 16:15), because it nurtures its members so that they may become "witnesses [of Christ] in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

b) The realization that the Church is the "body of Christ, the fullness of him who fills all in all" (Ephes. 1:23) and that the plan of God is to "unite all things in him, things in heaven, and thing on earth" (Ephes. 1:10) (áíáêåöáëáéþóáïèå = to recapitulate, gather together), compels the believer to free himself from provincialism and narrow-mindedness so that he may live in longing and prayer for the gathering-together-in-one of all things in Christ, a deep longing which cannot not remain simply on the surface, as sentimentality and anticipation, but is expressed as active participation in a living calling, in the continuous growth of the "mystical body of Christ" into its final dimensions.

Thus the Universal, ecumenical Mission from the Orthodox viewpoint is no less than an immediate result of a fundamental article of the Creed and of the basic understanding of the Church. If Orthodoxy does not embrace this definition of the ecumenicity of the Church - let us not hesitate it - it simply denies itself.

2. Orthodoxy - Resurrection - Mission

It is hard to understand genuine Orthodoxy apart from a vigorous pursuit of the ecumenical mission, for it is impossible to conceive Orthodoxy which does not focus on the Resurrection of the Lord. Resurrection and the ecumenical mission are intimately related. The command of the mission is directly related to the triumph of the Lord through his Resurrection. The fact that he was given "all authority in heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:18) has to be proclaimed "to the whole creation" Mark. 16:15). Before the Resurrection, before the consummation of salvation, the disciples

were not allowed to pass the boundaries of Israel. "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans" (Matt. 28:19), Jesus advised them. However, after His resurrection, they are no longer permitted to confine their preaching within these limits. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19, Acts 10:1-48 and 15:8).

The Resurrection of the Lord is the starting point for the expansion of the mission from Israel to the whole world. Those who continue to move solely within the boundaries of Israel - even within the new Israel of grace - seem to insist that they live in the days before… the Resurrection: The orientating of the mystery of redemption toward the salvation of the "whole world" is beautifully expressed in the following hymn of the resurrection:

"Come, O come all the nations
learn of the power of the awful mystery
that Christ our Saviour "the Word in the beginning"
was crucified for us and willingly buried;
resurrected from the dead to save the universe,
O, let us worship him."

Likewise the verse that rouses the congregation in the Vesper service of Saturday before Easter, "Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth; for Thou shall take all heathen to Thine inheritance."

The Resurrection constitutes the backbone of Orthodox worship and, in this framework, Orthodox hymnology - that of the period of Pentecost as well as that of the Sunday Vespers and Matins - proclaims it as the very centre of the salvation of all mankind and describes the missionary obligation which results from this unique historical fact. The gospel lessons which refer to the commission, "go ye therefore" are recited very frequently, during the most prominent holy days (Matt. 28:16-20; Mark. 16: 9-20; Luke 24:36-53; John 20:19-31 and Acts 1:1-8).

Therefore, one wonders, how is it possible to think, to sing, live so intensely the Resurrection and yet remain reluctant in face of the call to ecumenical mission, which is so closely interwoven with it. How can the Orthodox preach the doctrine of the Resurrection if the conscience of the believer's duty to proclaim the triumph of Christ, the redemption of human nature "unto all nations", is absent?

3. Orthodox spirituality: "To be in Christ" - and Mission

Saint Paul, after meeting the risen Christ, first of all withdrew several years in the Arabian wilderness, but after this preparation, he found it impossible to stay in one place in order to meditate and praise him. His acquaintance with the living Lord was so agitating, that it constantly moved him into new adventures, new areas of action. "Necessity is laid upon me; woe to me, if I do not preach the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16), he wrote to the Christians of Corinth. His passion for the mission to the Gentiles cannot be attributed to any simple extroversion tendency to escape the hardships of Israel, nor to an illusion that the missionary work there had been completed. Simply, he "knew" through revelation "the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:2-3), which was "that now the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Eph. 3:6), and, consequently, he meant it, when he said: "I am under obligation both to the Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise

and the foolish" (Romans 1:14). He felt that he had to share with others the precious gift which he had received, namely, the personal experience of the risen Lord, "The life in Jesus Christ". This all embracing life in Christ, which he proverbially expressed as, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20), brings to a focus the spirituality of St. Paul and should also be the focus as well as the criterion of the spirituality of Orthodoxy, in accordance with the age long Orthodox tradition.

The command of the Lord "Abide in me, and I in you […] if you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love" (John 15:4 and 10), remains the main objective of the Orthodox spiritual life. Hence, "to abide in Christ" means that we try to think, feel and desire as Christ did. Likewise, it means that we have "the mind of Christ" (Phil. 1:8), and that our whole existence is roofed in the depth of His love.

Let us, therefore, recollect for a moment the vision of our Lord. Could His horizon be confined to our town, to our nation, to our so-called "Christian world"? Did he not "make from one man every nation of men" (Acts 17:26)? Does he not want "all men to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4)? Does he not care for the millions of men who live as "strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12)? We surely force the Apostle to repeat once more: "Some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame" (1 Cor. 15:34). All this denotes very clearly that one may not confront with a cold and indifferent heart the drama of mankind estranged from God if one wants indeed to "abide in Christ".

Finally, our concept of mission in the perspective of "ecumene" cannot be less than tuning our hearts of Jesus in order that we may truly "abide in him". The true motive of the mission is to be found here. It is not the restlessness of a cosmopolitan mind which seeks adventures outside its fatherland or its own culture. The conscientious *believer must constantly have in mind the evangelisation of the ecumene; he cannot do otherwise*. He cannot think contrary to the mind of the Lord. He cannot love in another manner than the Lord. He cannot speculate about justice in terms other than those in the gospel. He believes that there is no treasure at the disposal of every single man that is more precious then the truth, which was revealed by the Word of God. Therefore he feels that the people who suffer most in our times are those who have been deprived of the Word, not because they themselves refuse to listen, but for the simple reason that those who have known it for centuries refuse to hand it on to them. He further feels that his "honour" and his "love" cannot be genuine, if he does not try something concrete - the best that he can, in this direction. His interest in the mission is taken so to heart that he cannot possibly do otherwise.

The problem is not moral one as much, as it is an existential one. It is not just a matter of "duty", but rather something more internal, more "mystical". It springs from the word of the Lord: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15), "He who has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is who loves me; and he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him" (John 14:21). The man who is loving and being loved obeys the whole gospel, for he wants to live in Christ.

III. Some basic suggestions for today:

There are many points that should become the object of careful study in the Orthodox missionary effort, which is now beginning. Within the confines of this brief lecture we intend to stress some general and, in our estimation, fundamental features that must characterize this missionary revival.

1. Expression of repentance and concern for the whole Church.

a) The opinion is often expressed that since we have so many problems at home, missionary work is a "matter of luxury". On the contrary, we believe that it is a *matter of repentance* and it concerns every Orthodox community as well as every single believer. The opening and broadening of our horizon is not less crucial tour own development that it is to the benefit of the people who receive the mission. It is a matter of repentance - a change in mind and action in accordance with a fundamental command of the Lord and in accordance with the true Orthodox tradition. We never were able to rid ourselves of internal problems, and we never shall be. When the Apostles went out "to the gentiles" (that is to our ancestors), the problems of the church in Pastine were far from being solved. St. Athanasius the Great, St. John Chrysostom and Photius had to content with great problems within the Church, but where not thereby prevented from taking great personal interest in the Christianisation of foreign countries. The most serious internal problem is whether we are ready to "observe all that the Lord has commanded us" (Matth. 28:20), or whether we shall produce our own version of the Gospel adding and removing commandments according to our own conception of our contemporary needs.

It is certain that in every country there is today a wide field for missionary activity. But God is calling us all not simply for those who need us but for those who need us most. As servants of the one Lord of this world, we must constantly be searching to discover in what place and in what concrete way we may be able to serve him.

b) *The problem is not merely to create a few missionary groups. The question is how the whole Church can be mobilized by this worldwide missionary vision.*

The participation of every communicant must be sought with the same insistence and emphasis as his participation in worship. It must be sought as a consequence of the "Credo" which he continuously professes. All can help; all have the responsibility as living members of the Church to help, this must be the motto. The particular form of assistance is a matter of organization.

It is urgent to assign a special day or week of mission in the year, in all the Orthodox Churches, during which the missionary conscience of the Orthodox people will be stimulated through preaching, prayers and fund raising efforts. Special emphasis should be put on prayer and on financial contributions that result from sacrifice.

c) *In this missionary effort the collaboration of all Orthodox churches should be sought*. It is impossible to offer Orthodoxy separately in a world which is becoming a neighbourhood. The subject presents, of course, many complexities. However, this

should urge us to a more systematic and persistent facing of the problem rather than to its neglect. Inter-Orthodox collaboration is already a hopeful reality.

2. Incorporation, not only adaptation.

a) Much criticism, some of it justified, has arisen in the past of the tendency of many missions to establish spiritual colonies or annexes to their own Church rather than to create new, live churches, rooted in the soul and life of the people. The Orthodox tradition on this point has been, fortunately, very clear: *Sincere respect for the identity of the individuals and of the peoples, and sanctification of their characteristics in order that they may become truly themselves*. This is what happened with the Christianisation of Ethiopia, Armenia, or the Slavic world, this is what the later Orthodox missionaries practised in large nations (e.g. Nicolas Kassatkin in Japan) or small primitive tribes (like Innocent Veniaminov with the Aleoutians of Alaska). These tactics were not the emanation of human wisdom. It was theological consistency, an extension of the fact that He who was sent by the Father "dwelt among us" (John. 1:14), and became one with his people. *The "incarnation" of the "Logos" of God into the language and customs of a country*, is the first task of every Orthodox missionary.

For the Orthodox, the great event of the Pentecost (Acts 2:6-11), during which "each one heard them speaking in his own language" about the "mighty works of God", remains the basis for missionary tactics.

The translation of the Bible and of the Divine liturgy into the language of each people was the uninterrupted tradition of the Eastern Church. The Russian missionaries, as we have already seen, followed the path of the Byzantines by translating the language of one liturgy into the languages of even the smallest tribes of Siberia, the Kamchates peninsula and Alaska. When, for a period of time, this method f work was neglected, the effort came to stagnation.

The example of Ilminski is very illuminating. He placed at the disposition of the mission the service and fruits of scientifically based linguistics and ethnology to aid the discovery of more expedient methods for the approach of primitive tribes and for the translation of the New Testament into their own language. This shows how much attention must be given by the Orthodox mission, especially among primitive tribes, to the field of descriptive linguistics which has made such astonishing progress in our times. The contribution, of Greek linguistics and missionaries, who have a thorough knowledge of the language of the original, could be of special importance, in the translation of the New Testament. According to recent investigations there are about 1500 tongues and dialects in which there is still no extant translation of the New Testament.

b) This is the first step. The end of the road of an Orthodox mission must however be: *The growth of an indigenous church*, which will sanctify and make proper use of all pure elements in the popular traditions, and will help the people in developing its own personality. From this point of view it is a missionary duty to understand the civilization of other Christian peoples. This, however, should by no means aim at a passive imitation or absorption, but should rather be a first movement, an inspiration for a future authentic expression of its own soul. The example of the

Thessalonian brothers Cyril and Methodius, as well as the whole course of development of the Russian Church which started with the assimilation of the Byzantine spiritual heritage, but proceeded along its own path of self-expression, is a guide of great importance.

In principle we should have an attitude of great respect for the past of every people. The Apostle Paul in Acts 14:16-17, while realizing that "in past generations He allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways", proceeds to complete his thought by saying that "yet He did not leave himself without witness, for He did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons satisfying your hearts with food and gladness". It is therefore a command, not only a pedagogical one but also a theological one (Acts 17), to study how God bore witness concerning Himself to any particular people. Perhaps the combination of "He did not leave himself without witness" and "food and gladness" could help us gain more insight and understand the meaning of some of the festivities of these people which have been for so many centuries connected with its life and recreation.

3. Worship and Autonomy.

a) The Orthodox worship, wrote prof. Seeberg of the University of Berlin, is the only one that can be easily understood and embraced by the oriental man. The mystic atmosphere of our worship appeals in a very profound manner to the whole of man, to every man. When suitable translated and adapted to the mystery of redemption. Liturgical life played an essential role in the Christianisation of Russia - witness the amazement of the Russian delegates before the splendour of the Byzantine Liturgy in St. Sophia and later the spiritual radiation of the monasteries throughout the vast empire.

b) *The administrative autonomy* of the local Orthodox Churches is also of great importance, in our times when the nationalistic feelings of the people of Africa and Asia are at high tide. The unity of the Orthodox Church is not based on a superficial uniformity of language or civilization or upon dependence upon an administrative centre, but on a unity of faith and of sacramental live. It is very interesting from the missionary viewpoint that in the first centuries of the United Church, about 40 different liturgies and about 70 liturgical languages are in use. The problem is not how to avoid the different voices, but how this variety of voices will compose a harmonious doxology to God. In the same way as every believer has his own personality which is sanctified but not absorbed, likewise every nation has its own peculiar personality which must be developed autonomously on the basis, of course, of the precious tradition of the "One Church". In God's garden there is place - and there must be - for all kinds of flowers.

The development of an indigenous church according to the Orthodox tradition presents us with many problems. These problems continually force us to examine and distinguish the eternal, which is part of the tradition of the "One, Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church", from the temporal, which is part of the traditions of a local Church and a particular people, and which therefore does not constitute a rule for all other peoples.

4. The basic characteristics of the Orthodox missionary

In addition to the general missionary approach it is also necessary for us to look at the type of spirituality that will characterise the Orthodox missionary.

a) As the work of the missionary is to continue the early ministry of our Lord, he should accept the way of life of his own Master. His life be characterized by cenosis, a "self-emptying" (Phil. 2:1) and diaconia, "service" (St.Mark 10:45). He should follow the footsteps of the first One sent by God, "Who came not to be served but to serve, and not to give His life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45), "Who though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). As He "Dwelt among His people" and manifested His glory (St.John 1:14). So also the missionary is called to live among the people and manifest the glory of God and the mystery of Incarnation.

b) In order to be at all times a living witness of the presence of our Lord, the missionary must be in continuous personal relationship with him. He must not only think or talk about Him but *"live in Christ"* (Gal. 2:20). This means a deep relationship with Christ of the whole man, not merely of his intellect. It is the transformed life of the entire being in Christ that is the true characteristic of the missionary.

Our Lord defined the missionary work of his disciples as a direct continuation of His work. "As thou didst send me into the world, so I have send them into the world" (St.John 17:18), He said in his High-priestly prayer; and after His Resurrection He repeated the same truth to His disciples, saying: "As the father has sent me, even so I send you" (St.John 20:21). Within the framework of this "as ….. even so" we must search for not only the contents, but also the means and method of the missionary work. In the Gospel of St. John the fellowship and unity between Father and Son is emphasized. Every work and work of our Lord is dependant upon and connected with his Father. "I do nothing on my own authority, but speak thus as the Father taught me. And he who sent me, is with me; He has not left me alone, for I always do what is pleasing to Him" (St.John 8:28-29). His *message* is nothing more than what he "had heard" and "had seen". "He who sent me is true, and I declare to the world that I have heard from him" (St.John 8:26)". I speak of what I have seen with my Father" (St.John 8:38) "I proceed and came forth from God" (St.John:42 cf. 12:49, 10:25, 5:36). His *will* is the same as the will of His Father. "I seek not my own will but the will of him, who sent me" (St.John 5:30 cf. 6:38). His *works* are works of the Father. *Everything that he does, affirms that he was sent by the Father*" (St.John 5:36). *The Apostles participated in this relationship of the Father and Son:* "He who receives any one whom I send receives me, and He who receives me receives Him, who sent me" (St.John 13:20 cf. 17:23).

The crucial problem for every missionary is how he should maintain such close and living relationship in the mystical life of the Holy Trinity.

c) Two things will help basically this living relationship. First: the sanctification of the missionary in the truth of the Gospel "Sanctify them *in* the truth; Thy word is truth" (St.John 17:17 cf. 15:7, 8:31). Second: the conscious participation in the

sacraments, especially the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. “He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father has *sent me*, and I live by the Father, so he who eats me, shall live by me” (St.John 6:56-57 cf. 6:53, 15:4-5)

It is clear that there is a direct relationship between “eating and drinking” and “sending”, that is between the participation in the sacramental life of the Church and missionary expansion.

In conclusion: Hence according to the affirmation of the Lord, “As the Father has sent me, so I also send you” (St.John 20:21), *the mission of the Church is the continuation of His earthly ministry and participation in the living presence of our Lord in the world.* It is a participation in the life of our Lord “who gave us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Cor. 5:88).

Since the missionary is an “emissary” an “apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God” (Ephes. 1:1), he will be talking in vain about mission, if he does not try to be in constant “communion” with Christ. What matters is not what he himself is going to say and do, *but what the Lord will say and do through him*.

So it is our duty to make the best use of all the opportunities and available facilities of the modern world for the extension of the Kingdom of God, but we should do this without falling in the temptation of superficial activism. Our supreme concern must be not *what we should BE, but how we should BE a living witness to the presence of the Lord in the world*.

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