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KISSING THE CRUCIFIX - Practical Steps toward Effective Ecumenical Dialogue and Cooperation in Romania

Paul Botica

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A Romanian Baptist missionary went to a town near Bucharest to start a new Baptist church as he had successfully done in other neighboring villages. As usual, he invited people on the streets to come to a public hall that he had rented, and see a movie about Jesus Christ. After several hours of inviting people and offering religious pamphlets, he was called to the town council for a meeting with the mayor. To his surprise, waiting for him in the room were several persons including the mayor, the Orthodox priest, and other town council members.

The council asked him what was the purpose of his visit in their town. The missionary explained that he planned to show villagers a movie about Jesus Christ and then invite them to accept Him as their personal Savior. In this way, he continued, the villagers will become better moral and social people. His explanation pleased the local authorities who asked no more questions. The Orthodox priest however, came close to the missionary, showed him a crucifix and said: "If you are a true Christian kiss the crucifix." Visibly angered the missionary replied: "Father, you are not a priest but a pope," after which he left the room triumphantly, not realizing that he had probably missed a unique occasion of evangelizing a political body and an Orthodox priest. To his surprise no one in the town attended his meeting.

In reflecting upon this case, I realize the essential need among the Romanian churches of acquiring basic knowledge about the historical and cultural background in which each church developed. Such a mutual knowledge will help them overcome the contemporary stereotypes that each has formed about the other and which often lead to tense encounters. It will help the Baptists and other Evangelicals discover spiritual value and meaning in kissing the crucifix, and it will help the Orthodox see no danger in the mission of the other churches.

In this paper, I plan to describe several practical steps which will help the local Romanian Evangelical leaders and missionaries to know better the Eastern Orthodox Church. Although I write this paper more for the Evangelical side, the Orthodox priests who are interested in ecumenical dialogue and cooperation may also find it helpful. The first part of this paper will analyze several preliminary considerations which are essential for an effective ecumenical dialogue between Evangelical and Orthodox churches in Romania. The second part will survey briefly the historical development of the Eastern Orthodox Church, and the way in which this historical development still affects the present mentality and worldview of this Church. The third part of this paper will present a model of ecumenical dialogue and cooperation and real illustrations which express the praxis of this model.

1. Preliminary Considerations Necessary for an Effective Ecumenical Dialogue

First, most Evangelical scholars, leaders, and missionaries interested in ecumenical dialogue with the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) have a tendency of criticizing her for her life and activity in the past, in particular during communism. The main argument here is that ROC submitted to and collaborated with the atheistic communist government. As a general rule, blaming the ROC for the past context is neither proper nor beneficial for initiating dialogue and cooperation. The situation of the Orthodox Church is too complex for anyone to claim to have made an adequate description. Next, tendencies of cooperation with and submission to the communist power could be seen in both Protestant churches and the more established ones, as one could see martyrs and prophetic voices in both camps. In reality, God used the evil political situation of the past context for the unity of the Romanian churches. This affirmation is made not to excuse the crimes and atrocities of the communist power, but to help churches look at the final result in terms of ecumenical activity.

Thus, the communist prisons were places where real ecumenical cooperation took place during that time between members of all Christian churches and even other religions. The imprisoned believers were all brothers in faith, suffering for the same cause. Those who came out after the fall of communism are today the most open Christians toward dialogue and cooperation. Also, those who died during that period represent powerful examples of unity in faith and brotherly love.

Second, Romanian Christians interested in ecumenical dialogue should avoid any tendencies toward ethnocentric political favoritism. In other words, churches should remain neutral in regard to political or ethnic propaganda. The major role of the Church in society is to be the spiritual shepherd of all people, and to have a prophetic voice against any social and political injustice. When churches affiliate with or favor publicly certain political powers and ethnic minorities, the possibility for ecumenical cooperation is diminished. At this point, one may illustrate with the case of pastor Laszlo Tokes and the Hungarian Reformed Church from Transylvania, yet often both Evangelical and Orthodox churches are culpable of the same mistake. What kissing the Crucifix should mean for all Romanian churches, more than fulfilling the ritualistic act, is to understand the transcendental nature of the Church which goes beyond political and regional boundaries. The Church as instituted by Jesus Christ represents the place where all people should find salvation, renewal, restoration, and hope. Political favoritism and ethnocentrism must be avoided therefore.

Third, macroecumenical activity is important, yet microecumenical activity is essential. By macroecumenical activity I mean undertakings at high national and international levels. To illustrate, one may see that from time to time, due to unexpected circumstances, the Holy Synod of the ROC under the leadership of patriarch Teoctist instructs the regional and local leaders to cooperate with all legally recognized churches from Romania. Such enterprises are important for maintaining a spirit of peace and collaboration, yet I strongly believe that all Christian leaders from Romania should not wait for such advice, or any positive developments at the hierarchical level in order to

initiate local ecumenical dialogue and cooperation. A local priest should express his view on ecumenism on a regular basis. If the priest is open to dialogue and cooperation, he should remind his parishioners constantly about his position and admonish them to follow his example. Otherwise, sudden viewpoint changes may surprise the parishioners who might react critically.

Such a case occurred in Braila county (South-East Romania) where two Baptist missionaries tried to start a new church in a small village. Upon their first visit, they distributed New Testaments to villagers. When the local priest found out, he ordered the locals to tear the New Testaments to pieces or burn them, an act which most of the locals did. He also admonished the villagers to avoid any contact with the missionaries. A few days later the priest was invited to participate at an Orthodox national training session held in Bucharest. The participants were encouraged by the Orthodox patriarch to collaborate with and befriend all recognized Christian churches.

While returning home, the priest met the Baptist missionaries again, who were accompanied this time by two American missionaries. The priest invited all of them to his home and told them the good news. When the villagers found out that the priest invited the missionaries into his home, they reacted critically, accusing the priest of becoming a heretic himself. Had the Orthodox priest maintained a clear position from the beginning, such a reaction would probably not have taken place.

The Baptist missionaries also share a part of the guilt. Most of the time when they try to initiate a new work in a village, they go first to persons that seem easily reachable. Thus, they first approach the lower classes such as the poor, children, and elderly, who are generally more open. This strategy is not always proper however, especially in the context of the rural setting where positive relationships with the higher classes such as the teacher, doctor, sheriff and priest are essential for implementing anything new in the local community. Evangelical missionaries should also learn the art of diplomacy if they wish to accomplish a relevant ministry.

Next, a word should also be addressed in regard to the international ecumenical activity initiated by the World Council of Churches (WCC). The acceptance of the Orthodox churches from Eastern Europe as full members of WCC in 1961 has created positive results in regard to ecumenical dialogue and activity over the last decades. According to Romanian Orthodox theologian Ion Bria, former Deputy Director and Secretary for Orthodox Studies within WCC, there is now a new ecumenical bibliography which is an indispensable point of reference for any further studies on Orthodoxy and ecumenism. A holistic picture of Orthodoxy is thus available, one which communicates what the Orthodox churches are not only as a historical model of the undivided church, but also an empirical reality of witness and endurance.

There are scholarly voices, however, which assert that the situation within WCC is not as successful as it appears to be. According to Gerd Stricker, head of research at the Glaube in der Zweiten Welt Institute, near Zurich, dogmatical and worldview differences have

been ignored in ecumenical committees of WCC over the past 50 years in order to point to outward successes. As he explains,

A great feeling of togetherness with bland grass-roots songs, involvement in projects as far away as possible (the Third World), euphoric embraces and violet scarves - this is how the ecumenical movement has appeared for long periods. Now that we are faced with great ecumenical problems this strategy of self-delusion will no longer hold up.

In light of this real situation, Gerd Stricker challenges the ecumenical institutions in Geneva to rethink and change the priorities of their work, and the church leaders in East and West to stop creating further illusions. He encourages them to bring ecumenism down to earth and discuss the real issues which too often irritate each side, yet which, if ignored for the sake of outward success, will create greater problems (such as threatened withdrawal by the Orthodox Church) than positive results. His solution is what he calls the ecumenical model of reconciled diversity. The basis of such a model would be reconciliation which results from profound mutual knowledge, respect, and forgiveness. This model will lead to less status-seeking and intense effort for unity, and above all fewer Orthodox fears of contact with Western churches. It challenges each church to honesty towards one another, self-critical, realistic analysis of the situation, realistic vision, as well as rejection of illusions.

In the context of my country Romania, the situation at Geneva has little to do with the situation of the Romanian churches. It is necessary to mention at this point that first, most of the Romanian Evangelical churches are not yet WCC members so they do not participate in its programs. Second, the Romanian Orthodox Church is a member of WCC since 1961 yet she refuses to discuss ecumenical issues with the local Evangelical churches under the excuse that those are discussed under WCC auspices. For example, if the Romanian Baptist Union invites the Orthodox Patriarchate to discuss ecumenical matters, the latter argues that these would be discussed with the higher international Baptist structures such as the American Southern Baptist Convention, and only at WCC meetings. Third, the large quantity of reports, consensus papers and resolutions resulting from WCC interconfessional dialogue, in particular in the Protestant- Orthodox field have usually remained quite unknown to both local Orthodox and Evangelical churches in Romania.

In light of this, although I believe that the macroecumenical activity of WCC is important, in the context of my country ecumenical activity should be initiated at the local level rather than waiting for developments and resolutions coming from the hierarchical national and international levels. Developing ecumenical activity and cooperation from the periphery to the center, rather than from the center to the periphery will be much more beneficial since at the local level differences in world-view are diminished. ~ acknowledge the fact that this is not going to be an easy process, yet I believe that all Orthodox priests and Evangelical leaders guided by the Spirit of the crucified and risen Christ will always be able to dialogue and cooperate together. Beside divine guidance and personal willingness for respect and cooperation, mutual knowledge about each one's church is also necessary. The next part of this paper will help the

Evangelicals acquire a basic knowledge about the historical development of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

2. A Brief Survey of the Historical Development of the Eastern Orthodox Church

The Eastern Orthodox Church (EOC) claims to be the orthodox or the true continuation of the Early Church or the Church founded by the apostles. Despite the significance of the old imperial capital Rome, the apostolic churches or those founded by the apostles, which later had patriarchates, councils, centers of learning and monasteries, were situated in the East. After emperor Constantine transferred the imperial capital to Constantinople, the Hellenistic paradigm of the early churches was handed down by this Empire of the East for around another thousand years until Constantinople fell in 1453. This early paradigm of the Church is characterized by three major features: Roman state, Greek culture, and Christian faith.

The life, culture and the whole development of Byzantium are based on these three elements. As historian and theologian Hans Kung explains, just as the concrete form of the Catholic Church of the West down to the present day remains determined by medieval Rome, so the concrete form of the Eastern Orthodox Church has been shaped to the present day by Byzantium. Thus in the Eastern Orthodox Church:

- Liturgy continues to have a Byzantine shape
- Theology has a Byzantine form
- Iconography appears to have a Byzantine norm
- Piety continues to have a Byzantine inspiration
- Law and Constitution have a Byzantine basis.

In terms of the official formation of its doctrine, the Orthodox Church regards the period of the ecumenical councils as a normative period. It was then that the dogmatic and canonical norms of the Orthodox faith were laid down, as we know them today, rather than in later ages as was the case with Western Christianity. The Eastern Orthodox Church recognizes seven ecumenical councils.

1. The First Council of Nicea (325) which condemned the issue of Arianism.
2. The First Council of Constantinople (381) which finally settled the Arian controversy.
3. The Council of Ephesus (431) which condemned Nestorianism.
4. The Council of Chalcedon (451) which condemned Monophysites and settled the concept about the nature of Christ.

5. The Second Council of Constantinople (553) in which emperor Justinian was anxious to win back the Monophysites.

6. The Third Council of Constantinople (680) which condemned a bastard form of Monophysitism known as Monothelism - one will of Christ.

7. The Second Council of Nicea (787) which defined the Hans Kung, Christianity - Essence, orthodox doctrine concerning the icons which depicted Christ or the saints.

As a result, all Eastern Orthodox major doctrinal definitions are based on the two themes of Trinity and Incarnation. The decision for icons was seen as an ultimate consequence of the doctrine of incarnation. Also, tradition formed during that time has been for Orthodoxy the criterion of truth. That is why not so much the Bible but the faith of the seven ecumenical councils and consensus of the early fathers represent the major sources of the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

Another important factor which helps us understand the historical background of Orthodoxy is the practice of theocracy or political theology. As Hans Kung explains, a "symphony" or harmony of empire and imperial church was the demand of the time. The Christian emperors saw themselves as representatives of God's sole rule over the whole earth. Justinian I (527-565) regarded himself as the earthly governor for the heavenly "pantocrator" and proudly called himself "cosmocrator." What developed in the East thus, was not a church state, as was to develop in the West, but a state church. What counted for the Christian emperors was not just the New Testament-"One God, one faith, one baptism," but also "one empire, one law, one church" of Constantine and Justinian. This characteristic of the Hellenistic-Byzantine paradigm can be seen constantly from Byzantium to Moscow, where the Russian czar was even to have absolute power.

By now one can realize the nature and role of the Eastern Orthodox mission. Since all citizens are to embrace Christianity by royal decree, it is the role of the Church to embrace them and invite them to fellowship. The liturgy is therefore, the living backbone for Eastern Orthodoxy. It is a liturgy at the center of which stands not the bloodless repetition of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross as in the Latin Middle Ages, but the messianic banquet of the exalted Lord with His community. It is a liturgy which has as its basic tenor, not repentance and forgiveness for sins, but Easter joy and Jubilation at the presence of the Lord. The Eastern Orthodox Church today is still a highly liturgical church and theologically she attaches great importance to koinonia, fellowship and worship or liturgy.

A fourth important factor in the historical development of the Eastern Orthodox Church was the Ottoman conquest of the Eastern Roman Empire including Constantinople in 1453. According to historian Justo Gonzales, at first the Turks granted a measure of freedom to the Christian Church. Mohammed II invited the bishops to elect a new patriarch because the last one had fled to Rome. In Constantinople, half of the churches were turned into mosques, yet Christians were free to use the other half for worship. In time, the Turkish policy became increasingly restrictive and as a result, Eastern

Christians suffered severe persecutions. According to historian Kurt Aland, only 21 of the patriarchs who have held their office in accord with canonical regulations died in office; 106 of them were deposed and 6 were murdered.

During the Muslim occupation, the Eastern Church was for the Slavonic people the last bastion of the recollection of their own identity and independence. In this context, the Church had the function of constituting and legitimizing the nation. In the case of my country Romania, for example, Orthodox Christianity emerged during the 10th century. The best historical memories are of the Romanian Christian landlords fighting for their national and religious freedom. When the country was dominated by the Turks, the Orthodox churches were the only places where Romanian identity was kept intact. Thus, in the consciousness of the Romanians the saving of the national identity is strongly related to upholding the Orthodox faith. Any religion other than Orthodoxy was considered alien to the soul of the Romanian people.

A fifth factor related to the historical factor of Eastern Orthodoxy was the Christianization of Russia. Around 864, Photius, the patriarch of Constantinople, sent a bishop to Kiev. He was exterminated by Oleg, the ruler of Russia at that time. There was, however, continuous Christian infiltration from Byzantine Bulgaria to Russia. The result was the formation of a Church in Russia by 945. Then, Olga, the princess of Russia, became Christian and later when her grandson Vladimir married the sister of the Byzantine emperor, Orthodoxy became the state religion. According to Timothy Ware, Czar Vladimir placed the same emphasis upon social implications of Christianity as John the Almsgiver had done. Thus, nowhere else in medieval Europe were such highly organized services like in 10th century Kiev.

After the Mongol period, Sergius of Radonezh (1314-1392), the greatest national saint, came and was implicated in the recovery of the land. He was called the "builder of Russia" because under his influence there was the golden age in Russian spirituality. This was very important because later when the Turks conquered Constantinople, the Russian Church remained the only church that could assure leadership in Eastern Christendom. The Russians believed that Moscow was the successor of Constantinople because of the marriage between Ivan The Great and Sophia, niece of the last Byzantine emperor.

During the reign of Peter the Great, the Russian Orthodox Church was directly confronted with the political and secular Enlightenment initiated by the young czar (1672-1725). Peter was firmly resolved to bring an internal Europeanization of Russia. His reforms originated a deliberate secularization and rationalization of the Russian state. His major goals were the formation of a standing army, a modern fleet and a new capital at St. Petersburg. He also reorganized the civil administration and the Church. In this context, the state was no longer the protector of the Church but became an absolute authority which was responsible for everything. Thus as time went on, the Orthodox Church was seen by the people not just as a prisoner, but along with the nobility, the army, and the police, a guarantor and supporter of the czar's regime.

Lastly, the Orthodox Church in the communist lands suffered persecution and restriction as all the other Christian denominations. The fall of communism, however, has created tremendous opportunities for all churches in Eastern Europe and Russia. At this time, the Eastern Orthodox churches in the former communist countries believe that the historical symphony paradigm as experienced from Byzantium to Moscow can be again attainable now that the communist governments are gone. In fact, Eastern Orthodoxy believes that this union must be achieved now. Therefore, any foreign mission is regarded as an intrusion. On the other hand, the younger churches such as the Evangelical ones do not always respond back in love, and thus, sometimes they accuse Orthodoxy of being a dead church and a religion without good news. Dialogue and cooperation is more essential now than ever because people are viewing the Church as the only true source of peace, renewal, salvation, and hope.

The good news is that dialogue and cooperation are possible. As an Evangelical Christian I believe that Evangelicals should be willing to change first and be open to understand and learn more about Orthodoxy in order to initiate a constructive dialogue. Yet, before concluding this part of the paper by mentioning the necessary historical findings that an Evangelical should keep in mind when engaging in dialogue with an Orthodox, I would like to describe in short two of the most major missionary accomplishments of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

One of the greatest accomplishments of the EOC was the mission among the Slavs. During the middle of the 9th century, the Byzantine Church freed from the long encounter with the iconoclasts, focused more on the mission to the pagan Slavs, namely Moravians, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Russians. As Timothy Ware describes, Photius the patriarch of Constantinople, initiated the first missionary work among these Slavs on a larger scale. He appointed for this mission two Greek brothers from Thessalonica named Cyril and Methodius. Cyril, also called Constantine, was the ablest pupil of Photius and spoke many languages including Hebrew, Arabic, and the Samaritan dialect. Both Cyril and Methodius spoke the Slavonic language. After they translated the Bible in Slavonic, they went to Moravia. Here they preached and held services in the language of the people.

As Timothy Ware remarks "from the start the Slav Christians enjoyed a privilege such as none of the people of Western Europe; they heard the Gospel and the services of the church in their own language." The brothers' ministry in Moravia failed however, and after Methodius died in 885, the Germans expelled their followers from the country. Many of them went to Bulgaria and here they replaced Greek with Slavonic. The Bulgarian Church grew rapidly and around 926, an independent Bulgarian Patriarchate was created. It was recognized by Constantinople a year later, and thus the Bulgarian Church was the first national church of the Slavs.

Serbia was another place for the Byzantine mission. Here too, the Slavonic service books were introduced and the church began to grow. Under Saint Sava (1176-1235), the Serbian Church gained a partial independence. In 1346 a Serbian Patriarchate originated and Constantinople recognized it in 1375.

In regard to the mission of the Eastern Orthodox Church in Russia, Stephen Neill mentions that the connection between Church and state has been so close that it is almost impossible to separate the work into its constituent elements. Even though this is true, one may still remark that the EOC was exposed to missionary work in terms that the Catholic and Protestant churches will understand more easily, namely that of communicating the Gospel to different non-Christian people with the purpose of helping them become disciples of Christ. Historian Stephen Neill mentions seven missionary ventures in different regions of what would become the Russian empire. The most notable Eastern Orthodox missionaries of this Russian period were:

- Stephan Carp, bishop of Perm who continued the excellent tradition of the missions of the Eastern Church - the use of local language, the maintenance of local customs and manners of his Syrian flock, and the avoidance of doubtful methods of winning converts;
- Filofey Leschinsky who did mission in West Siberia;
- Nicodim Lenkeevich a monk who led the work among the Kalmucks;
- Luke Konashevich, metropolitan of Kazan who originated a notable success on the Middle Volga;
- Cyril Vasilyevich Suchanov who devoted his whole life to word and deed evangelism among the Tungus people of Daria;
- Ioasaf Chotunshevsky who followed the work of archimandrite Martirian to the region of Kamchatka;
- Ioasaf Balotov who was the head of the mission to the Aleutian islands near America.

One may conclude that in regard to this missionary period, even though the expansion of both state and church was often characterized by statecraft, coercion, and bribery, one may see real heroic zeal, apostolic simplicity, and willingness to suffer and die. In the context of an Evangelical-Orthodox encounter and dialogue, these two missionary ventures to the Slavonic people and to the people living in the Russian land, would constitute a proper starting point in regard to the nature and role of the Church's missionary call.

As I mentioned before, I would like to conclude this point by explaining that it is necessary for the Evangelical churches to know how these historical aspects still affect the present mentality and world view of the EOC, in particular in the context of my country Romania. By knowing these historical factors, Evangelicals will understand more easily the reasoning and mentality of the EOC which in turn affect her attitudes and actions, and they will be able to learn and adopt from this Church what is positive and beneficial, and correct her in a spirit of love wherever she is wrong.

First, there is the historical factor of the Eastern Orthodox origin from the Early Hellenistic Church and the official formation during the seven ecumenical councils. Thus, Evangelicals should not ignore the fact that this Church is the earliest continuation of the apostolic churches and that her theology and dogma is entirely based upon the doctrinal formulations of these councils and the Church fathers. At the same time, Evangelicals can help the Orthodox understand that even though tradition offers identity, continuity, and security, if it does not change or renew in order to become relevant for each generation, it will die. The Orthodox Church today needs to renew and adapt her tradition in a relevant way in particular for the younger generations which are easily affected by Western secular ideologies. According to Ion Bria,

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 session 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.

Bria also mentions that,

Another contradiction results from the enclosure of the altar by the iconostasis. This tempts the priest to read the main prayer including the epiclesis, inaudibly, depriving the faithful of a central part of the liturgy and running counter to the essence of the service itself, which is meant to be read and chanted aloud by priests and people singing, crying, shouting the triumphant hymn, 'Holy, holy, holy' Ἁγία Ἁγία Ἁγία...

Second, there is the historical factor of the state-Church "symphony model." As a result, the Eastern Orthodox Church has as a main goal the promulgation of a constructive dialogue with the state. Then, the political leaders as well as the governmental employees display a greater openness toward this Church and her clerics in the matter of advisement. This fact helps the Orthodox Church to have a greater influence on government and parliament. The EOC should not use her status however, in restricting and minimizing the status and activity of the younger churches. She must also understand that the mission of the Church depends entirely on God and not on the government even though the latter declares itself Christian. Ion Bria also challenges the Orthodox Church in this regard:

In order to survive the communist period, the Orthodox accepted an equivocal symphony with the state, a fragile agreement which acknowledged the existence of the Church as a religious institution but rejected its calling as a movement for mission. After many decades of bearing this cross, the churches have not yet found the courage to declare their strict separation from the state. Paradoxically, some Orthodox voices have even after the revolution expressed nostalgia for the old symphony and suggested that such an arrangement might be restored with the new regimes.

Third, there is the historical factor of the Ottoman dominance. For several centuries Orthodoxy constituted the religion of a people enslaved by Turks, who were Muslim. Thus, in the conscience of the Romanians the saving of the national identity is strongly

related to upholding the Orthodox faith. In this context, Orthodoxy stressed the idea that whoever was not an Orthodox Christian was not a good and true Romanian, and any other religion other than Orthodoxy was considered alien to the soul of the Romanian people. The Evangelicals should recognize the vital role of this Church in maintaining the national identity in time of foreign dominion, yet they should also make the Orthodox aware of the danger of nationalism. This close link between nation and religion has served often enough to inflame ethnic rivalries in former Yugoslavia, Ireland, and other countries.

Fourth, is the historical factor of missionary activity among the Slavonic and Russian people. This factor would constitute one of the most efficient starting points in a dialogue on the nature of mission. The Evangelicals should not disregard the importance of liturgy as an instrument of evangelism in the Eastern Orthodox Church. Yet, reminding Orthodoxy of the missionary zeal and sacrifice of those former Orthodox missionaries among the Slavs and Russians might help her reconsider methods of mission and evangelism with which we Evangelicals feel more comfortable. In reflecting upon the historical missionary legacy of the EOC, Ion Bria asks:

who among us is faithful to the missionary legacy bequeathed to us by Sts. Cyril and Methodius? Which hierarchy today is sending missionaries to new frontiers? Who among us has the courage and the missionary spirit to 'go forth beyond his/her own borders'? Who, within Orthodoxy today, is fulfilling the great commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Matt. 28:19)?

Fifth, the historical factor of communist dictatorship and domination This factor represents a powerful motive and source for unity. During this period multitudes of Orthodox priests as well as Evangelical leaders suffered together in the communist prisons. They were all brothers in Christ and in suffering, and they never used their denominational membership to ignore or disregard one another. If suffering and persecution at the communist hand united them, so must the present freedom. They can all acknowledge and rejoice in the fact that the Kingdom of God is larger than a single Christian denomination, and realize that by working and cooperating together they would properly fulfill the divine call of being the spiritual shepherds of the people. In the last part of this paper I will examine a model of ecumenical work that would be relevant in the context of Romania. I will also explain how this model can be applied in a practical way.

3. A Model of Ecumenical Dialogue and Cooperation between the Romanian Churches

Some scholars including the Catholic professor Stephen Bevans call this model the synthetic model, yet it might be spoken of as the dialogical model, the conversation model, or even the analogical model. Thus, this model is not only an attempt to put things together in a kind of compromise, but to develop in a creative dialectic, something that is acceptable to all standpoints. As Stephen Bevans explains, the synthetic model is kind of a middle-of-the-road model. It is both/and, which means that it keeps the integrity of the

traditional message, while acknowledging the value of considering culture and social change seriously. This model emphasizes both uniqueness and complementarity since according to it one's identity emerges in a dialogue that includes both. This implies for example, that every culture can borrow from every other culture and still remain unique. Each culture has something to give to the other and each has something from which it needs to be exercised.

Thus, this model encourages both the Evangelicals and Orthodox to dialogue one with another in order to learn one from another, and encourages both camps to be in constant dialogue with the local culture in terms of making Christianity indigenous and relevant for the present context. In the context of the Romanian churches, this model would be much easier implemented due to the fact that they share in common two major facts which form the basis of this model: theology and culture.

For some it may seem strange to affirm that Evangelicalism and Orthodoxy have a common theology, yet the recent work of theologian Thomas Oden has proven successfully that the world's evangelical Protestants share with the Orthodox the basic biblical foundations of our faith as formulated by the great ecumenical Church councils of the first millennium. The difference is not in the doctrinal content, but mostly in the ways and symbols used to express the biblical content. As professor and evangelist Robert Tuttle explains, when a person says "I am a Christian," he or she confesses not only the essentials of faith, but also to some nonessentials. In other words, that person does not refer only to the core of the Gospel (essential), but to a great deal of denominational baggage (nonessential!). This is not to imply that core is good and baggage is bad, because both are good. Yet, as Dr. Tuttle continues, it is only when we know what is essential (the core) and what relates to our specific peculiarities (the baggage) that we are more likely to be consistent with the core and more flexible with the baggage.

The model of ecumenical cooperation proposed here will help both the Evangelicals and Orthodox to be consistent with the core which is the same for both. In this way, they will be more flexible with the baggage or each one's ways and symbols used to communicate the content of the core. Flexibility with the core does not mean compromise or selling out to one's ways, or a syncretism of ideas that really do not enhance one another. It means a creative dialogue through which both sides are enriched.

Next, we will see how this model can be applied in Romania in a practical way. The synthetic model challenges both sides to learn one from another, indigenize the Gospel, and fulfill ministries relevant for the present context. In order to learn one from another, Evangelical missionaries and pastors need to attend orthodox worship services. They should observe the liturgical phases and their meaning. They should befriend the Orthodox priests and ask for explanations if they do not understand any liturgical aspect.

They should also invite their Orthodox colleagues to preach in their churches and also explain Orthodox spirituality to the Evangelical congregations. How do the Orthodox believers pray? What is the function of an icon and how can it convey spiritual meaning?

What does it mean to make the sign of the cross? What does church, tradition, the Scripture, and other such terms mean for the Orthodox? By asking an Orthodox priest such questions, an Evangelical minister might discover enriching answers for his own church and ministry. Nonetheless, all of this should be initiated from a spirit of love and friendship and not one of superiority and criticism.

The Orthodox should also try to understand the Evangelical ways of conveying spiritual meaning and adopt what might seem appropriate for the Orthodox churches. Thus, Evangelicals might discover that there is no danger in kissing the crucifix and Orthodox discover that the Evangelicals are not heretics.

Concerning indigenization of the Gospel, first the Evangelicals need to realize that most of their theological framework, aesthetics, worship music, and hymnody are imported from Western cultures with very little effort for cultural adaptation. As Danut Manastireanu, lecturer at the Emmanuel Baptist Institute from Oradea-Romania, mentions, instead of being able to communicate the Gospel to Romanians in the appropriate cultural garments, Romanian Evangelicals risk becoming a more and more isolated subculture in their own society. They need therefore to discover and employ locally relevant cultural forms which will help the locals understand much easier the message of the Gospel. For example, in preaching they might use the style of topical exposition in which the speaker addresses a theme like stress, loneliness, marriage relationships, the search for meaning or purpose, or dealing with crises or things that are out of control. Another model relevant for the Romanian context is that in which the communicator helps people identify with a person or situation described in a biblical passage, and thus see the relevance of the message for them. Cultural forms range from music and communication style to reasoning, ways of understanding reality, leadership, and aesthetics.

The Orthodox priests also need to make the liturgy of their church more relevant for the present time and generations. The Orthodox Church is far more in touch with the Romanian culture than the Evangelical Church is. Yet, as Ion Bria explains,

A collection of prayers should be developed, keeping in mind the special needs of contemporary society. The role of worship within the whole range of human culture and in all varieties of human creativity must be rediscovered: church music, iconography, liturgical art, hymnography - taking care, of course, to avoid false inculturation and contextualization.

Beyond this, new forms of worship should be developed for mobile populations, travelers, children, and young people in industry, foreigners, refugees, non-Christians in the vicinity of our congregations-all of whom have no permanent roots. New forms of community outside existing parishes should be established in view of the different needs of these types of people. To make parish worship more comprehensible and inviting to young people, for example, special services or catechetical explanation could precede the liturgy.

Finally, in regard to relevant ministries for the present context, both churches need to engage in ministries of affirmation and helping people discover their dignity and self-worth. In this time of social transition, most people feel marginalized and hopeless. Helping them to build self-esteem and dignity represents a crucial ministry, since the only true hope is that of the Kingdom of God offered through the Church as the new Family of God given for people searching for their true identity.

At present, it seems that common participation of both the Orthodox and Evangelical churches, as well as other churches, in the social renewal and reconstruction of the Romanian society, represents the best ministry and opportunity that brings these churches together. I myself witnessed many instances in which leaders and members of different churches work together in prisons, hospitals, orphanages or in helping the poor, homeless, and street children. Such common enterprises also represent proper opportunities for the Romanian churches to know better one another and initiate a relevant dialogue. Due to the serious political and economical crisis experienced presently by Romania, the Romanian churches should understand more and more that they will be able to fulfill their social responsibility only if they work together.

On a larger scale, the partnership between the Evangelical agency, World Vision, and the Romanian Orthodox Church provides one of the best examples of true cooperation. Thus, World Vision and ROC formed a strong partnership in order to provide care for neglected children in Romanian orphanages. At a recent workshop on "Transformational Development and Christian Witness" led by director of mission and evangelism for World Vision International, Saphir Athyal, at a beautiful resort of ROC, one topic of special interest was World Vision's relationship with ROC. Chris Shore, World Vision's national director remarked, "Romania is now beginning a spiritual recovery and World Vision's work supports the church in reestablishing its social and prophetic role. The harvest of God includes not only the spiritual multiplication but also the full work of building the Kingdom of God. Metropolitan Daniel, head of the Moldova and Bucovina region of the ROC, also spoke to the group:

He expressed appreciation for the social, economic, and humanitarian services of World Vision to people in our broken world, providing a model for all Christians to follow in fulfilling their responsibilities in society. He added, 'Spirituality and our good deeds belong to each other. We should seek the will of God in everything we do, and in everything we should see a dimension that is spiritual.'

These represent in short, three aspects in which the model of ecumenical dialogue and cooperation proposed here can be applied practically in Romania. It is necessary to mention at this point that in some instances the model is already at work. There are in Romania, Orthodox priests preaching in Evangelical churches and cooperating with the Evangelical Christians, as well as an increasing number of Evangelical theologians and church leaders who have become aware of the necessity of exploring, understanding, and learning from the Romanian Orthodox tradition. As already described, more cooperation can be seen in common social projects.

There are also serious plans to be achieved in the near future, yet at this time they are only plans. For example, between 27-30 April 1998, a seminar entitled "The Ecumenical Movement in the Twentieth Century: The Role of Theology in Ecumenical Thought and Life in Romania", was held in the city of Iasi in the north-eastern part of Romania. This seminar, held on the occasion of the Jubilee Anniversary of the WCC, began a process of critically evaluating the dynamics operating today within ecumenical relations, while at the same time exploring the implications for the future.

Participants included representatives of the WCC, the Conference of European Churches, AIDRom, ROC, the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, Hierarchs, professors from Romanian theological seminaries, as well as students from the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Iasi. The participants proposed that all local churches should commit themselves to an ecumenical educational project for the believers. This project would be concretized on the following essential levels:

- The establishment of chairs of ecumenism at all schools of theology, be they college or university, where they do not currently exist, as well as the teaching of all other disciplines in an ecumenical spirit, free of all prejudices that tend to accumulate over time;
- The teaching of religious classes in the public schools, be they gymnasium or licentiate, in an ecumenical spirit, placing the accent on common cultural and spiritual values;
- The creation of an ecumenical atmosphere, including at the parish level, through the organization of gatherings at various commemorative occasions, and especially during the week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

In regard to plans for future ecumenical dialogue and cooperation in Romania, the participants proposed that an Ecumenical Council of Churches of Romania be founded with the participation of the Romanian Catholic Church as a full member. This council will try to accomplish the following objectives:

- the revival of inter-confessional theological conferences, which would be held at regular intervals (one or two times a year);
- the working out of a Romanian ecumenical theology, keeping in mind the problematics of international theology and the specific locale of the churches;
- the compilation of an ecumenical memorial of the martyrs and confessors of the faith during the communist period)
- the preparation of delegates for international ecumenical events; the discussion and deliberation beforehand of these themes at ecumenical gatherings at the national level in Romania;

- the taking on of a mediating and reconciling role between churches in Romania when conflictual situations might arise;
- the effort to celebrate Pascha (Easter) on a common date;
- the expansion of the Week of Prayer for the Christian Unity to the parish level;
- pastoral guidelines for cases of mixed marriages, or various religious occasions in the family or society;
- the organization of ecumenical youth camps;
- the exchange of professors and students;
- inter-parish events, choirs, art exhibitions, etc.;
- the discussion of problems of common interest between the churches (the restoration of properties, mutual recognition, etc.).

This represents a remarkable positive beginning which risks being undermined if the plans will not become a reality, and if all Romanian churches will not sacrificially contribute to this process. It is praiseworthy, however, that dialogue has been initiated in this way and at this level too.

Are we still very far from a true ecumenical dialogue? Are we going to see mutual learning, help and cooperation between our churches as we enter a new millennium? It is probably too soon to offer final answers to such questions. There are however small beginnings, sincere motivations, and proper actions coming from all churches which point to the fact that ecumenical dialogue is growing and becoming a visible characteristic of an increasing number of Romanian churches. Those churches can "kiss the crucifix" because for them this means coming together at the foot of the cross and paying the supreme tribute to Jesus Christ:

For He is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us. He has abolished the law with its commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new humanity in place of the two, thus making peace, and might reconcile both groups to God in one body through the cross, thus putting to death that hostility through it. (Eph. 2:14-16)

T.A Pavlova, ed., *Dolgii Put' Rossiiskogo Patsifizma: Ideal mezhdunarodnogo i vnutrennego mira v religiozno-filosofskoi i obshchestvenno-politicheskoi mysli Rossii* [The Long Way of Russian Pacifism: Ideal of International and Inner Peace in Russian Religio-Philosophical Socio-Political Thought]. Moscow: Institute of World History, Russian Academy of Science, 1997. 350 pp. + Summary [abstracts in English].

As the title suggests, this is an overview of pacifist traditions in Russia from the earliest days until the present. An international team of authors, consisting of scholars from Russia, Canada, and the United States, under the editorial direction of T.A. Pavlova, prepared this book in order to illustrate the relationship of theory and practice as part of the new tradition of "Peace Studies." Individual essays are organized in six sections. The first section, "Sources," begins with an examination of the *Russian Chronicles* of the 11th and 12th centuries, followed by an examination of some of the expressions of peace ideas in the Russian Orthodox tradition. The next section discusses the "evolution of peace ideas" in the 17th-19th centuries, with special attention given to the ideas of Leo Tolstoy, the "apostle of non-violence." Sections three and four deal respectively with the issue of conscientious objection in the Russian Empire, and with the international dimension of Russian peacemaking at the turn of the century [19th/20th C]. The last two sections deal in turn with conscientious objectors again (this time in the context of the First World War and Civil War through the early years of the Soviet state), and "independent peace ideas and groups during the 'Cold War'."

The book is very helpful in drawing together in one place many strands of the history of these peace traditions into a comprehensive discussion. Although the disparate nature of the contributions sometimes gives the appearance of skipping from topic to topic, as a whole the book displays a progression and development of these ideas over the course of Russian history. For example, Y. N. Shchapov sets the stage for the entire survey by examining how the search for alternatives to war as a means of conflict resolution was already depicted in the *Russian Chronicles*, and the work closes with a discussion by R. Ilukhina and T. Pavlova on "the role of independent peace and pacifist ideas in the ending of the 'Cold War'." Continuity is also evident in the progression of the discussion of the religious dimension from N. Malakhova's treatment of "peace ideas in Russian hagiography," and A. Yagodovsky's examination of the way in which the Orthodox liturgy expresses these ideas, to the several chapters throughout the book dealing with the religious bases for conscientious objection to military service. As the title indicates, however, this study deals with the social and political as well as the religious dimensions of pacifism. The discussion of the *Chronicles* looks at the way in which the medieval princes grappled with the issues of war and peace, followed by two related essays, "Meditations on peace in Russian folklore and social thought," by L. Pushkaryov, and "Peace ideas in the Russian social thought of the XIX century," by E. Rudnitskaya. Later essays in the book then deal especially with the way in which the political ideas and actions of dissident groups contributed to the end of the Cold War and to the overall demise of the Soviet system.

Although the title of the book suggests that it is exclusively about *Russian* pacifism, a more accurate expression might be to say "pacifism in Russia," inasmuch as the book also discusses the [German] Mennonite experience in Russia, and the activities of British and American Quakers there as well. In another way, though, the title is faithful to the intent, since there is also a discussion of the continuity of the Doukhor sect's pacifist beliefs from its origins in the 18th century through their emigration to Canada at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century.

All in all the book is very useful, and provides a fascinating survey of a history which has not been given much attention. It provides many new insights and is thought-provoking. Each of the essays is well documented, so that the work is valuable for scholars as well as for the more general reader. It is quite accessible, and the way the essays are presented means that it can be read either in a continuous fashion, or in small "bites," an essay at a time. I recommend it highly as a welcome addition to our knowledge of this tradition.

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