

ORTHODOX MISSIONS

What, Where, When, and Why

Note: This paper was originally presented in the context of an Orthodox parish retreat in 1999. It is written from an Eastern Orthodox perspective and has been revised to include recent developments. I would also like to mention that, considering the diversity within the Orthodox Family, this should be considered as “an” Orthodox perspective on missions rather than “the” Orthodox perspective.

For many, the fact that the Orthodox Church is or ever has been involved in mission work is not known. I remember, while serving as a missionary in Albania, meeting another missionary and getting into a pleasant discussion. When he found out that I was an Orthodox missionary, in a sincere burst of excitement he replied, “I didn’t know the Orthodox Church did missionary work!” That is not too surprising, since many missionaries who came to work in Albania had little if any knowledge of Orthodoxy. But the response to Orthodox missions that has surprised me the most is one that came from the Orthodox themselves. I first encountered it while I was a student at seminary, though I have also heard it numerous times since. Being involved in the campus missions committee put me into various situations where I would discuss missions with people in the parishes. In some of these discussions I was emphatically told that mission work is not a traditional Orthodox practice. Rather, missionary work is something that the Protestants did! In order to provide a background on Orthodox missions, and maybe to dispel some of these myths, in this paper I will look at Orthodox missions (which do exist!) from three perspectives – their history, methodology and motivation.

Part 1: Where and When Do the Orthodox do Mission Work?

To be fair, I have to admit that it is easy to see where both the opinions mentioned above have come from. While Orthodoxy has made a powerful missionary effort through much of its history, it was not too long ago that an Orthodox scholar was able to correctly write: “Strictly speaking, the Orthodox Church has no longer any organized mission. But a reawakening of the missionary conscience is beginning to be seen in the Church of Greece, the only traditional Orthodox Church of any numerical importance on this side of the Iron Curtain.” (Struve, Nikita 1962 “Orthodox Missions: Past and Present” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 6(1):40-41).

A Temporary Period of Decline

If we read between the lines this comment, written by Nikita Struve in 1962, gives us some inkling about what happened and what began to happen as well!

The Orthodox Church was active in missions throughout its history, but two factors greatly thwarted its efforts in recent centuries. Firstly, was the Turkish occupation of the Balkans and Greece lasting four centuries. Following this was the Communist seizure of power in many other Orthodox countries. Between these two events, the ability of the Orthodox Church to do missionary work was repressed at a time when the Churches of the West were free to expand. These events “...forced the Orthodox to withdraw temporarily into themselves in order to preserve their faith and to form, to a certain

extent, closed groups.” (Yannoulatos, Anastasios 1964 “Orthodoxy and Mission” St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly 8(3):139).

But that time came to an end. Following the 1958 Fourth General Assembly of “Syndesmos” in Thessaloniki, Greece, the “Porefthentos” movement began and brought forth a revival in Orthodoxy of the ideal of external mission, referred to earlier by Struve. In addition, the severe Communist Rule that repressed Orthodoxy in so many other countries of the world has collapsed, and we can expect to see this same reawakening of missions in these countries as well.

To fill in the gaps before and after this repressed period of Orthodox history, let us briefly look at **when** and **where** the Orthodox have been and now are active in the area of missions.

The Early Church

To do so, one must begin with the Early Church. A unique aspect of the Orthodox Church is that it is united both physically and doctrinally with the ancient Church. Therefore, to go back to the first epic of Orthodox missionary work, we would have to begin in the pages of the New Testament. In this era, we could follow the missionary journeys of St. Paul and the other apostles as they carried the Gospel in times of persecution to the known world. But let us leave this well known period of Church history and jump ahead to the next era in Orthodox Mission history - the Byzantine Era.

The Byzantine Era

The 4th century, under Constantine the Great, was a turning point in the history of the Church. This period of new freedom under the Byzantine Empire lasted from the 4th to the 11th century. During this time, Orthodox Byzantium spread its faith to the heathen within the empire, to the pagan tribes pouring in, and to those in the neighboring countries as well. Such was the zeal for missions of this epic that bishops like St. John Chrysostom would tell his people: “I do not believe in the salvation of anyone who does not try to save others.” (Bria, Ion 1986 Go Forth In Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission. Geneva WCC: p. 29)

Missionary figures that stand out in this period are St. Hilarion (+ 371), St. John Chrysostom (+ 407), St. Euthymios (+ 473), St. Sabbas (+ 532) and Sts. Cyril and Methodios (+885). In this time the Christian faith was spread to peoples such as the Goths, the Huns, the Iberians, Ethiopians and the Nubian tribes to the south. And especially noteworthy is the conversion of the Slavs by Cyril and Methodios. The missiological principles they followed (and which we will discuss later) provided a foundation on which the best mission theory today is built. (Yannoulatos, Anastasios 1989 “Orthodox Mission – Past, Present, Future.” In Your Will be Done: Orthodoxy in Mission. George Lemopoulos ed. Geneva: WCC, p. 65).

Russian Missions

As I stated earlier, the period of Byzantine missionary work spanned the 4th to the 11th centuries. But with the fall of Byzantium, and the occupation of these Christian regions

by the Ottoman Turks, the task of carrying forward the missionary torch was taken up by the Russians. In this period, the Orthodox Church of Russia was the only one to preserve its freedom of action, until 1917. And with this freedom, she continued a vibrant tradition in proclaiming the Gospel.

The missionaries of this period are too numerous to list. Many are buried in the pages of history and their names will never be known. But there were also numerous heroic figures that carried the Gospel to new regions and tribes facing all sorts of dangers and hardships and whose lives and work are remembered and stand as an example to this day.

In the first centuries of Russian missions, a great impulse led to the evangelization of the Slavic tribes to the north. St. Stephan of Perm (+ 1396) carried the Gospel to the northern forests to the Zyrians, composing an alphabet and translating the gospel and services into the native idiom. In 1555, Bishop Guriï received a commission to preach the gospel in Kazan where thousands of Muslims converted to Orthodoxy and later a powerful missionary school was to be built. St. Tryphon (+ 1583), a layman, set off to the far north to preach the gospel to the Lapps. He converted hundreds and then waited patiently for a priest to come and baptize them.

The 17th and 18th centuries were not as favorable a time, due to policies and secularization by the rulers. But, in spite of this, we see Bishop Filotei of Tobolsk (+ 1727) travelling into Siberia and converting nearly 40,000 natives within a few years. In 1714, the first Orthodox mission began in Peking. While the government did not support it, and missionaries who baptized too many people were often recalled, there were still a considerable number of persons who served in this field.

From the 19th century until the Russian Revolution (1917), the Church in Russia emerged from the reforms of Peter the Great and reached its greatest missionary vitality. Macarius Glukharev (+ 1847) chose the harsh mission-field of the impenetrable Altai Mountains of Siberia. As other missionaries had done elsewhere, he compiled a lexicon and translated the services. He also built a hospital and three schools among the hundreds that were baptized. St. Innocent (John Veniaminov) traveled with his whole family to the Aleutians arriving to find not even a roof to shelter his children. He traveled thousands of miles by sledge, canoe, and boat throughout the Aleutians and Alaska, making many scientific, linguistic and geographical contributions, in addition to the work of spreading the Gospel. Finally, from this period, is Nicholas Kasatkin (+ 1912) who carried the Gospel to Japan at a time when it was originally a forbidden religion. After converting 3 Japanese men, he immediately set to work with them on the translation of scriptures and liturgical books. Early in his mission he also established a seminary, trained lay catechists to spread the faith, and following Orthodox tradition he strove to create a local Church that was Orthodox in its faith and Japanese in its spirit. By the completion of his work, the Orthodox Church in Japan numbered 33,000 faithful, 57 clergy, 106 catechists and 82 seminarians – all Japanese.

In addition to the missionary work outlined above there were other important contributions made by the Russians. An Orthodox Missionary Society was founded in

Moscow in 1870, by St. Innocent of Alaska, and supported a great number of missionaries. In Kazan, where mission work first began among the Moslems, an academy grew to become a center of missionary studies, translating and publishing books in many languages for the mission fields. (Struve, 1962 pp. 31-40; Anastasios 1989, pp. 67-68).

In summary, this missionary work of both the Russian and Byzantine era is by no means exhaustive. I have only provided some of the highlights of this time. Yet this should be enough to reveal that the Orthodox Church throughout the many centuries of its history had a powerful and vibrant history of missionary work.

Modern Period

But what about today? We have said that there was a period of decline. Has the Orthodox Church emerged from this phase?

It was personally enlightening to read the excerpt from Struve that I quoted earlier saying that “the Orthodox Church has no longer any organized mission,” but which also emphasized that there was a reawakening taking place in Greece at that time. This was written back in 1962. If one sorts through the various documents written after that, the growth of this revival becomes clear. The call to the Church to return to its task appears over and over again in conferences and articles with words such as: “Mission is an inner necessity (i) for the faithful and (ii) for the Church. If they refuse it, they do not merely omit a duty, they deny themselves.” (Yannoulatos, Anastasios 1968 The Purpose and Motive of Mission: From an Orthodox Theological Point of View, 3rd ed. Athens: Typo-Techniki-Offset. 1st ed. In International Review of Mission. Geneva, 54(1965), p. 32).

In looking back, one can see that this call to return to missions bore fruit. The Orthodox, after decades of repression, once more began witnessing to Christ to the “ends of the earth.” The numbers in comparison to other Churches are not spectacular. Yet, a survey of current Orthodox mission activity reveals that the Church is on the road again.

Upon returning from 10 years in the mission field myself, and taking over responsibilities directing the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) in 1998, I began to research concrete figures for regions where the Orthodox are active in mission work today. There was, and still is, no direct source where up-to-date information on all the mission fields is published. In addition, the statistics change by the month, especially in the more vibrant and growing fields. Nevertheless, to show that there is activity, I will briefly outline some of the main regions of mission activity today.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople

The Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople covers a number of missionary regions. The largest is the Metropolitanate of Hong Kong and Southeast Asia, established in November 1996. Metropolitan Nikitas, from Tarpon Springs, Florida, was enthroned to this See in 1997. The jurisdiction covers a large territory and mission efforts include Indonesia, India, the Philippines, Hong Kong, and Singapore. The Metropolitan writes that there are also possibilities waiting to begin in China (Beijing), Taiwan, and Thailand (Bangkok) [The Censer; Jan. 99 Vol. 3, Issue 1 Ed. V. Rev. George Vladimirou]. Also

under the Ecumenical Patriarchate is the mission work of Korea. The regions from Mexico to South America hold some mission efforts similar to those of ministering to ethnic communities of the Diaspora and more recently are also beginning outreach to Latin American nationals. Efforts in these areas are led both by Constantinople and other jurisdictions, as is seen in the situation of the United States as well.

The Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa

The Patriarchate of Alexandria is responsible for the mission efforts in Africa. The Orthodox churches of Africa are growing daily. There are missionary efforts in Benin, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. As a further sign of this growth, we should note that just last year two new dioceses were created in Mozambique and Zaire. In nearly all of these churches there are indigenous clergy; some have seminaries and many have schools and clinics as well.

The Autocephalous Church of Albania

A new situation in Orthodox missions arose in this decade. With the collapse of the Communist Regimes in countries that were predominantly Orthodox, the Church found itself with the task of rebuilding its foundations from the ground up. This is especially true in the Church of Albania, where religion was constitutionally illegal and the infrastructure of the Church had been totally destroyed. In this situation, the work is similar to that of external missions in that the only way the Church could be resurrected was through outside assistance, reaching across cultural and geographical boundaries. At the head of the effort in Albania is Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos, the Orthodox Church's foremost missionary and missiologist of today. Archbishop Anastasios was elected to lead this Church and has done an outstanding job in applying the best of Orthodox mission strategy over the past eight years. It is one of the only countries where Orthodox witness to a Muslim majority is free and many are turning to the Faith.

Mission Centers

Another development in Orthodox mission work of the past decades has been the revival of the idea of mission centers to support external mission. We see the first of these (Porefthentos) in Greece beginning in the 1960's. Since this time other movements also began in Greece. In the US, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center had its beginnings with the Volunteer Standing Committee for Foreign Missions of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in 1967. It was organized on a permanent basis in 1985 and then in 1994 it came under the auspices of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), representing all the canonical Eastern Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States. A third movement came into existence in Finland in 1981 (Mission Office of the Finnish Orthodox Church "Ortodoksinen Lahertysry"), Russia has revived its office of missions and there are probably others that have been created recently that I am not yet aware of.

Summary

If we look back through the history of Orthodoxy until today, we can see that the Orthodox Church was involved in mission work from its very beginning – from the

Apostolic and Early Church period, through Byzantium and the Russian eras and now in the present day. Though there was time of inactivity, due to external political persecution, when freedom was restored the Orthodox Church again applied itself to the Great Commission to go to all nations.

Part 2: What are the Principles of Orthodox Mission Work?

Having established the existence and outlined the historical activity of Orthodox Missions, we can now move on to the questions: What does the Orthodox Church do in its mission work? What are the principles that have guided it? Can a common thread be found in the many efforts throughout the centuries? And if so, how does this compare to contemporary mission strategies of today?

During my initial years of missionary work in Africa, I first pondered these questions. As I read books, spoke with different missionaries and discussed what our Church was doing, I began to realize that there were mission strategies drawn from centuries of experience. It was also at this time that my family realized our calling to missions was for more than the two years we had originally committed to. With this background, we returned to the United States for a year to study and to learn from others, so that we could apply ourselves more effectively.

While attending Fuller School of World Missions, I was given a wonderful opportunity to sift through different strategies of missions. These strategies are in a constant state of development. And yet, as I compared what was taught there to my own Tradition, I saw that the best of many of these theories in mission work could be found throughout the ages within Orthodoxy. In addition, some of the common mistakes of missionary history were absent. I would like to briefly outline for you just a few of the more popular contemporary mission theories and then contrast these to an Orthodox perspective.

The Three-Self Church

The first one is called the Three-Self Strategy. It represents the realization in mission consciousness that missionary work should ultimately lead to the development of an indigenous Church. According to this theory, an indigenous Church is described as one that is self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating. Henry Venn and Rufus Anderson developed this emphasis to correct the negative results of 19th century mission work that had resulted in paternalism by the missionaries and the establishment of churches that were totally dependent on the foreign missionary bodies (Planning Strategies for World Evangelization: by Edward R. Dayton & David A. Fraser p. 244). As one missionary put it: a scaffolding was being built around the Churches but remained as a permanent fixture, rather than as an aid towards creating a self-standing structure. In Africa, as countries sought independence from colonial rule, those in the churches sought independence as well. With this, the Three-Self model became a slogan among Protestant missionaries starting in the 20's and 30's. An emphasis was placed on the indigenization of the local Church to incorporate and fully function within the local, indigenous culture to be authentic.

Contextualization

As the Three-Self model was applied, though, certain weaknesses surfaced. It was found to be too simplistic to say that a Church is mature when it contained the three-selves and functioned within the local culture. To improve the Three-Self model a focus on contextualization arose. This focus goes beyond saying that a Church must be indigenously administrated. Contextualization has a more dynamic understanding of culture and the inter-relatedness of the world today. It acknowledges that all cultures have good and evil elements within them and thus no one culture is an ideal in itself. Cultures are transformed through their contact with the Gospel. This process holds true for the culture receiving the missionaries as well as for the culture of those carrying the Gospel message. (Planning Strategies for World Evangelization: by Edward R. Dayton & David A. Fraser p. 244) This model accepts the Three-Self presuppositions but also points out that in certain situations a Church could be indigenous without one of these aspects. It also reveals that a Church could contain the Three-Self dimensions but still be a totally foreign entity in its culture even though it is run by the indigenous people. Thus the contextualization model is one that looks to deeper issues to determine that a Church is firmly rooted in the culture and life of a people and has become contextualized in addition to being indigenous.

Translation of the Bible and use of Local Language

Some other related emphases of Protestant mission strategy involve the issues of bible translation and the use of the local languages. A people must be able to read and worship in the “language of their heart.” The bible must be made available to form a mature Church. These are commonly accepted principles today that are found across the spectrum of almost all Protestant missionary efforts.

An Orthodox Perspective in Relation to these Models

It is interesting to note that most of these models are formulated in response to weaknesses in historical missionary efforts (similar to the process that caused Orthodoxy to develop its theology in the Ecumenical Councils). Too many missionary efforts denied or repressed the culture of the people being reached. Others neglected to translate the bible, or use the local language or music in worship. How then does the Orthodox Church relate to these principals in its missionary work and what has its practice been throughout the ages?

To explore this, let’s look again to the words of Archbishop Anastasios of Tirana and All Albania. In a paper entitled “Orthodox Mission: Past, Present, Future,” Archbishop Anastasios outlines the key emphasis in the Byzantine and Russian Orthodox missions.

The Byzantine missions, he states, were based on clear-cut essential principles.

At the forefront was a desire to create an authentic local eucharistic community. Thus precedence was given to translating the Holy Scriptures, [and] liturgical texts...as well as to the building of beautiful churches which would proclaim – with the eloquent silence of beauty – that god had come to live amongst humanity....[There was also an] interest in the social and cultural dimensions of

life....At the same time, the development of the vernacular and of a national temperament...helped preserve the personality of the converted peoples. Far from indulging in an administrative centralization...the Byzantine missionaries saw the unity of the extended church in its joint thanksgiving, with many voices but in one spirit... (Yannoulatos 1989, pp. 66-67).

He goes on to outline the Russian missions.

The Russian missionaries were inspired by the principles of Byzantine Orthodoxy and developed them with originality...the creation of an alphabet for unwritten languages; the translation of biblical and liturgical texts into new tongues, the celebration of the liturgy in local dialects,...the preparation of a native clergy as quickly as possible; the joint participation of clergy and laity, with an emphasis on the mobilization of the faithful; care for the educational, agricultural, and artistic or technical development of the tribes and peoples drawn to Orthodoxy (Yannoulatos 1989, p. 68).

Finally he sums up these many principles of Orthodox mission strategy stating that: "Certain fundamental principles, only now being put into use by western missions, were always the undoubted base of the Orthodox missionary efforts" (Yannoulatos 1989, p. 68). This is the key that I had alluded to earlier. So many of the current missiological principles that are just now being developed can actually be found in practice throughout centuries of Orthodox missions!

Looking within the above quotations of Archbishop Anastasios, we can find the presence of the mission theories I outlined earlier. There is the idea of the three-self Church and that of contextualization. The forming of Churches with a level of autonomy and leadership and a respect for culture that both values yet helps to transform it is present. There is the emphasis on using the local language and translating scripture. And finally a holistic approach is seen that extends to all parts of society and to the daily struggles and situation of the people.

Time and space do not permit me to further expound on specific historical examples, but these principles are readily visible if one looks to work of the historical missionaries mentioned in the first part of this paper. From Saints Cyril and Methodios to St. Nicholas of Japan and St. Innocent of Alaska there are outstanding examples of these principles in practice.

But what is most exciting, though, is that the strategies highlighted from Orthodoxy's past are also practiced in the present. Having served under Archbishop Anastasios for 10 years within the mission field, I personally witnessed the same spirit, direction and integrity in the mission work he has lead in East Africa and now in Albania. Each of these traditional Orthodox emphases has been present: translation, worship in the local language of the people, indigenous leadership, participation of laity, incorporation of cultural elements into the life of the Church, building of churches that witness to the

glory of God, and an emphasis on the whole person by addressing the needs of society both through education and charitable institutions.

These are the threads of Orthodox mission practice that are woven throughout its history. These are the ideals that the Orthodox strive for when carrying the Gospel to new lands and peoples. While they are not always present in each and every Orthodox mission movement today, they are an undeniable part of Orthodox history stretching from the first centuries until today.

Part 3: Why Do the Orthodox Do Mission Work?

In this final part of my presentation, I would like to address one other question: Why do the Orthodox do mission work? I will never forget my first flight to Africa. Newly married and ordained, I had become a missionary overnight. One moment I was a priest in California. It only took a split second, though, for my foot to step through the threshold of the 747 that was to carry us to Kenya. With that magic step our family became missionaries. This was similar, in some ways, to becoming a new parent. I remember returning home from the hospital with our first child and realizing in a semi-state of shock that no one had ever explained to us what we were supposed to do. Our entrance into the mission field happened in a similar way. In just an instant, without any specific training, we were “missionaries.”

Now, as our family was flying over the Atlantic, a stewardess saw my collar and asked where I was going. I proudly explained that our family was travelling to East Africa to be missionaries. “Oh,” she replied. “I don’t believe in that. We should not interfere in people’s lives. We should just leave them alone to continue on their own happy way.”

Wow, how do you answer a statement like that? Where do you begin? In fact, this challenge is one that came up time and again and gradually forced me to think, analyze and study what is the basis for doing missionary work? Why don’t we just leave the world alone? Why do we try to spread our Faith to people who have their own beliefs?

The answer to these questions came through a process. There were personal events in my life that I could identify as instrumental in my understanding and desire to do mission work. But I had to go deeper than my own inner calling. This quest then led to a progression that went deeper and deeper into an understanding of the motives for mission.

To help us explore the Orthodox perspective on the motive, or the “why” of missions, I will take you through this personal search that led to what I believe is the ultimate and absolute motive for mission work.

The Motive of Equity and Need

The earliest motivations that I was aware of could best be summarized as ones of equity and need. I remember a college professor from a poor region of South America who described his reaction when he first came to the United States. He was amazed, and at the same time indignant, when he walked through the grocery stores and found rows upon

rows of cooked and canned meat...for dogs! His reaction opened my eyes to see that the situation in other countries of the world is totally different from our own.

While in seminary, I began to learn of this inequity as it relates to the Church. I heard of the situation of many Eskimo villages in Alaska that saw a priest only once a year. I was told of how an entire village would come in procession to greet the priest at his yearly visit, during which they would celebrate the liturgy and perform all the marriages and baptisms for the entire year. Was this fair, I thought, when nearly all of our parishes in the United States have a priest every Sunday, and throughout the week as well? Certainly not! If we have love for the world, I reasoned, we could not hear of such situations and do nothing. It was especially with these motivations that I left for Africa. But was this enough of a reason? As time went by questions arose. I realized there must be more involved in doing mission work than responding to the inequity in the world.

Mission as God's Desire and Command

The next progression in this quest to understand the "why" of missions came especially from the writings of two Protestant authors, to whom I am indebted: Donald McGavran and Ralph Winter. These men present the motive for missions as a response to the will and command of God for the salvation of all people.

Bible passages take on a new life through their eyes as they draw out the missiological orientations. For example in John 3:16 ("For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.") we often focus on the love of God. But seen from a missions perspective, this passage reveals that missions is a part of the very reason for which Jesus Christ was sent, i.e. to save the entire world. McGavran analyzes many passages from this point of view. The climax, though, comes in the illustration of Jesus' last words before His ascension: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit..." In this passage, the authors note that God did not ask His followers to do mission work, He commanded them. In addition, the priority and importance of this command is stressed by the fact that this was Jesus' last and final departing message to His followers.

Based on such passages, McGavran and Winter present us with a motive for missions on the premise that God commands this so that people can be saved.

Church growth [missions] is basically a theological stance. God requires it. It looks to the Bible for direction as to what God wants done. It holds that belief in Jesus Christ...is necessary for salvation (McGavran, Donald A. 1990 Understanding Church Growth. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans. 1st ed. Eerdmans 1970, p. 32).

God desires that people be saved, and he therefore commands those of his household to go and 'make disciples of all nations' (McGavran 1990:32).

I was, and still am, moved by this approach. It opens up the world of missions to a new perspective in seeing how central the call to mission and salvation is within the Bible and the entire life and ministry of our Lord. But then something happened. I came across another author who added a new and even deeper dimension.

Mission as Fulfillment of God's Kingdom

Mission, from this author's perspective, is not centered on the command of God; rather, it is based on the fulfillment of the destiny of the human race and the establishment of God's kingdom.

Preach the gospel to all creation (Mk 16:15). Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel (1Cor 9:16). Today many people do not agree with this necessity or urgency. But more seriously, even for those of us who do, our reasons for so believing are often shaky....Is it an arbitrary command? Is it that the salvation of the whole world depends on missionaries reaching all people, evangelizing everyone? Do we really believe that? Will people be lost if they are not reached? Do we believe in a God who loves Christians more than pagans, or who plans to save only those who know of, and believe in, His Christ?...

There is something so objectionable and unbiblical in these answers that we must reject them all. Where are we then...at mere obedience to a mysterious command of Christ?...What if Christ's power over creation were not the authorization for mission, but its reason and goal?...

The goal of evangelization, and the basis for its urgency, is to put all things under the dominion of Christ. The fulfillment of the human race...is what is at stake. Personal salvation is a secondary question. God intends to bring the earth and the human race to the fulfillment of the kingdom, planned from the beginning of creation.... The nations and cultures of the world,...are called to be lifted up and fulfilled and transformed in Jesus Christ (Donovan, Vincent J. 1990 Christianity Rediscovered. Maryknoll: Orbis Books. 1st ed. Fides/Claretian 1978, pp. 191-193).

This theology seemed so unusual that I was tempted to discard it at first. But it also raised many questions. Could there actually be a deeper motive for mission beyond that of God's desire and command to save all people?

As the quest continued, and I began my studies at Fuller School of World Mission, I learned more of what is called "Kingdom" theology. The establishment of God's Kingdom does not negate God's desire for individual salvation, or His command. Rather, it is an overlying perspective by which the revelation of the Bible can be viewed.

In this perspective, the establishment of God's Kingdom, of whom saved individuals are a part, is traced from Creation to Abraham and the blessing of all peoples, through Moses, Jonah, the Kings, Prophets and Psalms to the coming of Jesus and finally the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation. In all these persons and events, the establishment of

God's Kingdom is seen to be the central theme tying the Old and New Testaments together into a continuous process which then becomes a deeper foundation of missions.

Missions as the Glory of God

But, again, the search did not end there. This theory helped me to make the final jump to an Orthodox perspective presented by Archbishop Anastasios in a paper called "The Purpose and Motive of Mission." As in the Kingdom theology, he presents a foundation for mission through revealing a central theme in biblical history. In this case, the glory of God and the redemption of all creation. Anastasios also begins with Creation, now as an expression of God's glory, and then moves to the rejection of that glory and the subsequent entrance of death. Jesus' life, from this perspective, is then seen as a manifestation of the glory of God to regenerate all things. In Christ, human nature is redeemed and the universal order restored. And finally, humankind becomes a participant in proclaiming this redemption until the Parousia, when the glory of God is fully revealed (Yannoulatos 1968:10-11).

So once more, the foundation, reason and motive of mission is seen as something deeper than a command or personal salvation. It has to do with the direction God establishes for all creation and the revelation and the participation in His glory.

The Motive of Inner Necessity

But Anastasios does not stop there. He takes another step deeper into developing an Orthodox understanding of the motive of missions, and to what I believe is the ultimate step...the motive of inner necessity.

The question of the motive of mission can be studied from several angles: love of God and men, obedience to the Great Command of the Lord (Matt. 28:19), desire for the salvation of souls, longing for God's glory. All these surely, are serious motives;...However, we think that the real motive of mission, for both the individual and the Church, is something deeper. It is not simply obedience, duty or altruism. It is an inner necessity. "Necessity is laid upon me," said St. Paul, "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" (1Cor. 9:16). All other motives are aspects of this need, derivative motives. Mission is an inner necessity (i) for the faithful and (ii) for the Church. If they refuse it, they do not merely omit a duty, they deny themselves (Yannoulatos 1968:32).

In this quotation, Archbishop Anastasios lists the very motives by which I had progressively come to understand a foundation for missions, and which I have presented in this paper. First, he notes the motive of "love of God and men" (seen in my desire for equity and concern for others). Second is the motivation for mission as "obedience to the Great Command" and the "desire for the salvation of souls" (which was presented through the position of McGavran and Winter as that of God's Command and Desire). Thirdly, he offers the last understanding, that of "longing for God's glory" which is also similar to Kingdom theology.

But after all this, he goes on to add one more point of which he says all others are a derivative, and that is the motive of inner necessity. Let us look finally at this last perspective as the ultimate motive for mission.

Necessity through Being Created in God's Image

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...’” (Gen. 1:26).

Vladimir Lossky, when reflecting on creation in God's image and likeness, notes that in the Fathers of the Orthodox Church it is difficult to find a clear definition of what it is in the human being that corresponds to the divine image. But, he continues, the theological method of the Eastern Orthodox defines “...the true nature of man by starting from the idea of God in whose image man has been created” (Lossky, Vladimir 1976 The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church. New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press. Pp.114-115). While we do not know the fullness of what in humankind's nature corresponds to God's image, we do know there is a correspondence.

With this in mind, we can note God's consistent action throughout all of history in the revelation of His glory, the recapitulation and drawing of all things to Himself and the establishment of His Kingdom. In addition we can see that God has shared this mission with humanity, from Abraham to Jesus' disciples.

It is my belief, in following through with Archbishop Anastasios' statement, that when we say mission is an inner necessity, this is based at the deepest level of our own nature as it corresponds to our being created in the image and likeness of God. It is not a task that is being imposed upon us; it is not a task that is only motivated from our obedience, respect or even love of God; rather it is the actualization of our inherent nature to participate in the fulfillment, destiny, and direction of humanity and all creation as it is drawn back to God and towards the coming of His Kingdom. It is, at its deepest level, the result of our being created like God – in His image and likeness.

Conclusion

Like in peeling an onion, we have progressed through various levels and foundations for a motive of missions. Each layer is an authentic part of the onion. And yet, we found that under each layer was another, until we came to the core. As in opening a colorful hand-carved Russian Babushka doll, we marvel at the beauty of each one, only to find that there is another inside. And I do believe, though, that we have come at last to the final one.

In this paper, we have flown through centuries as we called up a long-standing and sometimes forgotten tradition of Orthodox missionary work. Time has not given the chance to explore in depth the loving characters, the powerful visions, the solid strategies and intense sacrifices that so many Orthodox missionaries have made, but in this broad overview of Orthodox mission history, strategy and motives, I hope that we have at least tasted, if ever so slightly, the rich flavor of a vibrant history that continues in the present and which is at the very heart of our being. As Orthodox, we have been, and must be, involved in missionary work. We have a firm historical tradition and developed

principles for this. Most importantly, we have an understanding that bringing God's love, compassion and message to the world; that drawing people to Him and establishing worshipping communities among all nations and in all cultures is not merely an imposed command or a religious principle – it is a part of our own nature as we are created in the image and likeness of God.