

**Rev. Associate Professor PhD Cristian Sonea, *Missionary paradigms. From Edinburgh to the Council of Crete*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2016, 248 pp.**

The paper, which appeared at the prestigious publishing house of the *Cluj University Press* in 2016, represents a step of awareness and deepening of the missionary responsibility in the context of the publication of the documents of the Pan-Orthodox Council of Crete (2016). The author of this study of contemporary missiology, PhD Associate Professor Priest Cristian Sonea, uses this opportunity to make an actual assessment of the missionary paradigms. Associate Professor at the Department of Missiology and Ecumenism of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Babeş Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, and with an accredited expertise in the fields of Missiology and Ecumenism, The Science of Confessions, Theology and Culture, Father Cristian Sonea forms a paradigmatic volume of the 20<sup>th</sup> century missiology. With an acknowledged authority in the field, the author structures the size and importance of missiology in the Christian theology in general and in the Orthodox one in particular during the two important events: The World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh (Scotland, 1910) and The Pan-Orthodox Council (Crete, 2016).

At first glance, the question arises as to why this interval and why these two events. Through the paper, it is understood that between the meeting of the 1,200 representatives of the majority of Christian Protestant and missionary denominations, especially from North America and Northern Europe (without the participation of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic missionary organizations who were uninvited) and the Pan-Orthodox Council of Crete, the Christian missionary paradigm metamorphoses. The two encounters, apparently antagonistic from a confessional point of view, represent a period of reversal of the mission of the Church in the world, an aspect surprised by the author's method. An analysis of the contemporary missionary paradigms cannot be done without the theological and histori-

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cal context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This paper follows another theological approach of the author, namely the *Ministry and responsibility. A Theological Vision on the Mission of the Laity*, Cluj University Press, 2015, (368 pp.) also constituting the premises of some specialized papers necessary in the Romanian theology, referring here to: *Theology of inter-Christian dialogue. An Introduction*, Cluj University Press, 2017, (372 pp.) and *World after Babel*, Renaissance, Cluj-Napoca, 2017, (198 pp.).

The paper is structured in 6 chapters in 238 pages, starting from the historical, social and theological context of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, regarding the mission *in the new face of the Christian world*. It is appreciated that the author does not address the missiology specialist strictly, using a whole chapter (*Biblical foundation of the Christian mission*) with three subchapters essential to the understanding of the theological mission term, namely: *The Missionary Dimension of the Old Testament Revelation*; *Missionary theology in the writings of the evangelical saints* and *Highlights of missionary theology in the epistles of Saint Apostle Paul*. Moreover, from the wish of a lucid perspective of the mission, the author offers the instruments of a theological language as a way of working for the Christian mission. For example, in 3.1.2. *Love as a reason for the Christian mission* and 3.1.3 *Love as the goal of the mission* is made a pertinent and accessible analysis of the terms *agape* and *philia*, concluding that *love as "agape", loaded with the force of the saving sacrifice, becomes by love as "philia" the transfigurative power present in all the saints of God* (pp. 85-86). Thus, *the fulfilment of the commandment of love contributes to the realization of the ultimate goal of the Christian mission* (p. 86). Concerning the limits of the language and the wording of the church, as an expression of the human reason transfigured by the Holy Spirit, intelligently using the theology of Father Dumitru Stăniloaie and Father Ioan Ica Jr., the author gives expression to the formula of "*Dynamic Tradition*", concluding that in the Orthodox theology there can be no prohibition of new formal formulas, when the circumstances impose it, but without abandoning and disregarding the old ones as if they had lost authority. This way, the new formulas are an organic extension of the old ones, thus being in perfect harmony with them. So, the author demonstrates that theology cannot be determined by the context because it goes beyond contextual conditions. Starting from the evaluation of an experienced or lived theology, stated by Father Dumitru Stăniloaie, the author demonstrates that the holiness of life is the basic requirement

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of the Christian mission, which is why the mission cannot be effective if it pursues the widening of Church authority as a group interest, but when it has the purpose of Jesus Christ, the Crucified. Updating this premise, it is found that *the world in which we live reflects our inner life in some way, as our inner life encompasses the world in which we live* (p. 114).

Reviewing the historiographical milestones of the Orthodox mission with missionary paradigms from the post-apostolic period to the renowned missionary Innocent Veniaminov of the Russian Space (1797-1879), prepare the reader for the current historical context of the Orthodox mission. The well-documented diagnoses of the current Orthodox mission, with concrete references to the missionary activity of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, provide the reader with a more complex view of the missionary act and the idea that an effective methodological approach to the mission is needed for the times we live.

A central point of the paper is chapter 5, which brings to the reader's attention the missionary paradigm of the Orthodox Church. Starting from the central idea that the Orthodox missionary paradigm is based on the mission of Christ, continuing with the theology previously quoted by the theologian missiologist (Rev. Prof. Ion Brisa, Archbishop Anastasios Androussa, James J. Stamoolis, David Bosch, Alexander Schmemmann) and summarizing in a pertinent treaty, the author sets the understanding of the mission *as the transmission of life into the communion that exists in God* (p. 148). According to him, the mission does not strictly imply the propagation or transmission of intellectual, doctrinal and moral beliefs, but the sending of the Spirit, which makes the sharing of God's life accessible. Thus, the ecclesiastical character of the mission shows that the Church is the purpose of the mission, more than its instrument or means, since the Church is a missionary entity. In this theological context, we understand the central place of Liturgy in the mission, which makes the Orthodox mission *centripetal rather than centrifugal, rather organic than organized* (p.152). Manifested by *Liturgy*, in *unity* and founded on *the love of God*, the Orthodox mission acquires its deepest meaning, according to *John 3:16*. That is why the philanthropy of the Orthodox Churches can never be separated from the liturgical practice and experience.

After introducing the reader into the context of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, bringing up to date the necessity of paternalism in theology in general, through the characteristic of neo-Patriotic theology of the last century,

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the author provokes the concept of *missio Dei* (a concept influenced by the missionary theologian Karl Barth within the International Missionary Conference in Willingen in 1952) as a contemporary missionary paradigm. This concept, unanimously accepted by the Christian Churches, marks the end of the era of missions and the debut of the era of the mission, in which the mission is our participation and integration into the work of God in the world. In the Orthodox understanding of this concept, the mission always moves from within the Christian life to the outside, and by this it is meant the concept of *attraction*, not of *conversion*. Under this concept, the term *missio Dei* is born as a “*liturgy after the Liturgy*” and form of confession of the Kingdom of God by the Eucharistic community. The author presents succinctly and integrated the concept of *missio Dei* at the theologian Petros Vassiliadis as *the basis of a relational theology*, at Saint Nicolae Cabasila, *as the work of Christ Himself*, and at the theologian Cosmin Lăuran as a mission just before the sending of the Son to the world (*missio Israelis*).

Presenting the context of the emergence of the new missionary statement at the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea in 2013, of the content, as well as of the Orthodox positions over its content, determines the author to analyze some provocative premises, of which we mention: *the capacity of the missionary depends not only on the theological competence and the pedagogical qualities, but also on personal sanctity... That is why the mission was full, profound and lasting when it was undertaken by saints and martyrs, who forgot themselves and assumed the Cross of Christ, confessing it to martyrdom* (pp. 201-201). According to the Buran document, which speaks of a *mission starting from the edges*, we can see that it was unanimously accepted the abandonment of imperialist missionary at the expense of the “Cornelius” model, that is, the *conversion* before the conversion in their vision, more in line with the contemporary context. This missionary model receives expression in the southern world, where Christians will have to discover how God manifested his presence and work in their own world even before the actual missionary work. Starting from the ecumenical document on the mission, the notion of the *Church in motion*, in the author’s view, is close to the Orthodox missionary meaning, meaning that the mission belongs to the very being of the Church, this being not a convert society, *but the reality of God’s oikonomy to gather in Christ all nations* (Ephesians 1, 10).

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The Orthodox Assessment of the missionary statement in 2013 is presented in terms of the four points (*Transformational Spirituality, Ecological Crisis, Mission in a Secular World and the Ecumenical Mission*), and ends with final assessments. According to the latter, at some levels the document is useful to the Eastern Churches, the text containing terms specific to the Orthodox missionary theology, but the way they are used and expressed is not always true to their original content (p. 223).

The last part of the paper, *the Mission of the Church as a "Christian testimony" after the Council of Crete* makes a missionary analysis of the adopted documents, the author naming this Council as *The Council of the mission of the Church*, based on the following arguments: *the adopted documents regard the life of the Church today and not dogmatic problems; the content of the Encyclical speaks about the mission of the Church in the world, the family as an icon of Christ's love for the Church, about education in Christ, about the work of the Church in the face of contemporary challenges, about the attitude of the Church towards globalization, extreme violence and migration and about the dialogue of the Church with the world and other Christian communities as a form of testimony through dialogue; adopted a document on the mission of the Church in the contemporary world* (p.225). As compared to every missionary perspective of the Cretan council in 2016, the present paper presents a careful analysis, emphasizing the character of testimony *in and for* the world. Increased attention is given to the character of the Christian *testimony* in the dialogue, the author asserting that an ecumenical dialogue is required in order to have a common witness. Thus, until the peak of the confession of the same apostolic belief, a common testimony of the love of God can be given to the world (p. 237).

The paper *Missionary paradigms. From Edinburgh to the Council of Crete*, of PhD Associate Professor Priest Cristian Sonea, of The Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj-Napoca is a successful approach to the presentation of new missiological perspectives in the contemporary missionary context. The systematic elaboration of the paper gives the reader the opportunity to easily navigate without being a specialist in the field. The clear and cursive language can keep anyone connected to the mysteries of this theology field, regardless of confessional affiliation. However, for a theologian, the paper is provocative and keeps the interest in reading and information dynamic, and is also a confession within the Orthodox

Cristian Sonea, *Missionary paradigms. From Edinburgh to the Council of Crete* Church. Considering the notoriety of the Pan-Orthodox Council of Crete, but also the professionalism by which the author introduces synodal issues from a missionary perspective, it gives the impression that the subject is not sufficiently dealt with in the corpus of the whole paper. Following the involvement of the PhD Associate Professor Cristian Sonea in the treatment of the Cretan synodal documents, perhaps an interdisciplinary canonical-missionary approach would complement the approach taken by the present work.

In view of the above, we are convinced that this volume is a major contribution to the Orthodox theology in general and to the Romanian one in particular. We congratulate on this occasion the author who once again demonstrates the prestige of the Orthodox theology of Cluj, joining unequivocally in the panoply of renowned missiologists as a parable of the paradigm of the paternalism of Orthodox theological education.

**Hierom. PhD Casian Rușeț**