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**„Isidor Todoran” Orthodox Theology Doctoral School**

**„MISSIONARY - PASTORAL RESEARCH  
AND STRATEGY WITHIN THE  
CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN  
ORTHODOX CHURCH”**

**Ph.D. Thesis**

**SUMMARY**

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<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1<sup>ST</sup> PART.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>1 MISSIONARY - PASTORAL RESEARCH AND STRATEGY IN ROMANIAN ORTHODOX MISSIOLOGY..</b>	<b>17</b>
1.1 CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ONSET AND DEVELOPMENT OF PASTORAL THEOLOGY AND ROMANIAN MISSIOLOGY .....	17
1.1.1 Pastoral preoccupations in Romanian Orthodox Theology .....	17
1.1.2 Onset of Romanian Orthodox Missiology .....	24
1.1.3 Prof. Dr. Vasile Ispir's contribution to the onset and development of research in the field of Romanian Missiology.....	25
1.2 DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN ORTHODOX MISSIOLOGY DURING THE INTERBELLUM PERIOD (1919 - 1948)..	29
1.2.1 Guidelines for research and strategy concerning the Romanian Orthodox Missiology according to Prof. Vasile Ispir .....	29
1.2.2 Pastoral - sectological and catechetical – liturgical approaches in Romanian Interbellum Missiology.....	33
1.2.2.1 <i>Pastoral – sectological approach</i> .....	33
1.2.2.2 <i>Catechetical – liturgical approach</i> .....	37
1.3 DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ROMANIAN ORTHODOX MISSIOLOGY DURING THE COMMUNIST PERIOD (1949 - 1989) ...	40
1.3.1 Pastoral – sectological approach.....	41
1.3.1.1 <i>Attitude towards ecumenism</i> .....	43
1.3.1.2 <i>Contributions to the development of Romanian Orthodox Sectology</i> .....	44
1.3.1.3 <i>Methods of preventing and counteracting the sectarian phenomenon</i> <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> .....	47
1.3.1.4 <i>Missionary methods and means for reintegrating into Church the supporters of Orthodox centrifugal movements and the schismatics</i> <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> .....	52
1.3.2 Missionary – ecumenical approach.....	53
1.3.2.1 <i>Reverend Ion Bria's contribution to the Romanian Orthodox Missiology and the Orthodox Missionary Strategy</i> .....	53
1.4 RESEARCH AND MISSIONARY – PASTORAL STRATEGY IN CONTEMPORARY ROMANIAN ORTHODOX MISSIOLOGY (1990 - 2013) <b>Error!</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.</b>	<b>73</b>
1.4.1 Sectological – pastoral approach .....	73
1.4.2 Missionary – ecumenical approach.....	76
1.4.2.1 <i>Developments and articulations</i> .....	76
1.4.2.1.1 <i>Missionary dimension of Church reflected in ecumenical involvement</i> ....	92

1.4.2.2	<i>Reception of Rev. Ion Bria's missiological theology</i> <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>	95
1.4.2.3	<i>A new generation of missiologists</i> .....	97
1.4.2.3.1	Rev. Univ. Prof. Dr. Valer Bel.....	98
1.4.2.3.2	Rev. Univ. Prof. Dr. Gheorghe Petraru.....	105
1.4.2.3.3	Rev. Univ. Prof. Dr. Mihai Himcinschi.....	115
1.4.2.3.4	Other contemporary activists.....	119
1.5	CONCLUSIONS.....	119
<b>2</b>	<b>MISSIONARY AND PASTORAL STRATEGIES OF ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH BETWEEN 1989 - 2013</b> .....	<b>123</b>
2.1	GENERAL GUIDELINES.....	123
2.	MANAGEMENT OF MEMORY FROM COMMUNISM BY ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH. ....	129
2.2.1	Memory of collaboration and penitential discourse.....	129
2.2.2	Memory of accomodation and justificative discourse.....	130
2.2.3	Memory of sufferance and remembrance of persecutions.....	134
2.3	ATTITUDE TOWARDS STATE.....	136
2.4	ADMINISTRATIVE REORGANIZATION.....	159
2.5	CONSTRUCTION OF CHURCHES AND OTHER ECCLESIASTICAL ESTABLISHMENTS.....	168
2.6	FINANCING OF ECCLESIASTICAL ACTIVITIES.....	170
2.7	RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.....	173
2.7.1	Educational - religious activity in schools.....	173
2.7.2	Catechetical activity.....	196
2.8	PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITY.....	201
2.8.1	Philanthropic activity within medical institutions.....	211
2.8.2	Religious assistance within law enforcement institutions.....	213
2.8.3	Dilemmas of Church presence within law enforcement institutions.....	220
2.9	MEASURES AND PRACTICAL METHODS FOR PROMOTING MISSIONARY – PASTORAL ACTIVITY OF DEFENDING THE TRUE FAITH <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> ....	221
2.10	CHRISTIAN ORTHODOX ASSOCIATIONS AND FOUNDATIONS <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> .....	236
2.11	ORTHODOX MASS MEDIA.....	241
2.12	CANONIZATIONS.....	250
2.13	PILGRIMAGES TO MONASTERIES AND PROCESSIONS TO/WITH HOLY RELICS.....	255
2.14	JUBILEE AND FESTIVE MOMENTS.....	256

2.15	INTERORTHODOX RELATIONSHIPS .....	259
2.16	ECUMENICAL DIALOGUE .....	263
2.17	CONTEMPORARY WORLD ISSUES .....	272
2.18	CONCLUSIONS .....	278
<b>2<sup>ND</sup></b>	<b>PART .....</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL PARADIGM – CONDITION AND MEDIUM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH AND AUTHENTIC AND EFFECTIVE MISSIONARY STRATEGIES</b>	<b>ERROR!</b>
	<b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.....</b>	<b>284</b>
3.1	WHY „A THEOLOGICAL PARADIGM“? .....	284
3.2	MEANINGS OF THE WORD <i>PARADIGM</i> .....	286
3.2.1	Etymology.....	286
3.2.2	Linguistics.....	288
3.2.3	Science .....	289
3.2.4	Theology .....	301
3.3	CONCEPT OF „ <i>PARADIGM</i> “ ACCORDING TO DAVID J. BOSCH	<b>ERROR!</b>
	<b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.....</b>	<b>302</b>
3.3.1	Linguistic meanings .....	302
3.3.2	Theological meanings .....	302
3.3.3	Paradigm of Early Christianity and mission .....	307
3.3.3.1	„ <i>Errors in the Early Church</i> “ .....	310
3.3.4	Missionary paradigm of „the Eastern Church“ .....	312
3.3.4.1	„ <i>Hellenistic Christianity</i> “ .....	312
3.3.4.2	<i>Opening towards the ancient Greek and Roman culture</i> <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> .....	313
3.3.4.3	<i>Eschatology</i> .....	314
3.3.4.4	<i>Influence of gnosticism</i> .....	316
3.3.4.5	<i>Church within the Eastern Theology and its relationship with the Byzantine Empire</i> .....	316
3.3.4.6	<i>First paradigm change: onset of patristic missionary and Orthodox paradigm</i> .....	318
3.4	PARADIGM AND MISSION WITHIN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH	<b>ERROR!</b>
	<b>BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.....</b>	<b>319</b>
3.4.1	Concept of „paradigm“ from an Orthodox perspective	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> .....
		319
3.4.1.1	<i>Religion and paradigm</i> .....	320
3.4.1.2	<i>Revelation and paradigm</i> .....	325
3.4.1.2.1	Subject of Revelation .....	326
3.4.1.2.2	Knowledge of Revelation.....	330

3.4.1.3	<i>Canon versus Paradigm</i> .....	339
3.4.1.4	<i>Paradigm and Theology</i> .....	343
3.4.2	Paradigm and Orthodox mission.....	344
3.4.2.1	<i>Definition of mission</i> .....	344
3.4.2.2	<i>Relationship between Theology and mission</i> .....	345
3.4.2.3	<i>Church mission</i> .....	347
3.4.2.4	<i>Mission and conversion</i> .....	352
3.4.2.5	<i>Missionary paradigm</i> .....	354
3.4.3	Change of theological and missionary paradigm. Ecclesiological implications.....	356
3.4.3.1	<i>Change of Theology –foundation for change of missionary paradigm</i> .....	356
3.4.3.2	<i>Central role of Christian eschatology in the dynamics of mission</i> <b>Error!</b>	
	<b>Bookmark not defined</b> .....	360
3.4.3.2.1	<i>Apocalyptic versus Eschatology</i> .....	360
3.4.3.2.2	Eschatological foundation of the relationship between Church and State .....	362
3.4.3.2.3	Eschatological ecclesiology - meaning and dynamics of Orthodox mission .....	363
3.4.4	Orthodoxy and „ecumenical paradigm of mission” <b>Error! Bookmark not defined</b> .....	366
3.5	MISSIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE OF PARADIGM (TRADITION) FOR CONTEMPORARY MISSIONARY – PASTORAL RESEARCH AND STRATEGY OF THE ORTHODOX CHURCH .....	370
<b>4</b>	<b>RESEARCH DOMAINS AND PRIMARY MISSIONARY – PASTORAL STRATEGIES WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX CHURCH .....</b>	<b>373</b>
4.1	ROLE OF ACADEMIC THEOLOGY IN ELABORATING MISSIONARY – PASTORAL STRATEGIES WHICH ARE VIABLE FOR CHURCH <b>Error! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED</b> .....	373
4.2	ROLE OF PARISH IN ELABORATING MISSIONARY – PASTORAL STRATEGIES WHICH ARE VIABLE FOR CHURCH .....	379
4.3	PASTORATE AND URBAN MISSION .....	381
4.4	LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION .....	385
4.5	DIALOGUE BETWEEN SCIENCE AND RELIGION .....	390
4.5.1	Orthodox missionary – pastoral approaches in relation to Psychology <b>Error! Bookmark not defined</b> .....	391
4.5.1.1	<i>Openings from Psychology</i> .....	391
4.5.1.2	<i>Openings from Religion</i> .....	398
4.5.2	Domains of ecclesiastic activity where Psychology may have a contribution ..	403

4.6	MISSION AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUTH .....	406
4.7	CONCLUSIONS .....	408
<b>3<sup>RD</sup></b>	<b>PART .....</b>	<b>410</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>COORDINATES OF MISSIONARY – PASTORAL STRATEGY AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUTH.....</b>	<b>410</b>
5.1	THEORETICAL GUIDELINES.....	410
5.1.1	Children and youth – beneficiaries of Church mission.....	410
5.1.1.1	<i>Children’s place and role within Church .....</i>	<i>410</i>
5.1.2	Stages in the development of moral and spiritual capacity of children and youth . .....	415
5.1.2.1	<i>Psycho – pedagogical guidelines.....</i>	<i>415</i>
5.1.2.2	<i>Theological guidelines.....</i>	<i>422</i>
5.1.3	Missionary methods for cultivating Christian motivation of children and youth ... .....	428
5.1.3.1	<i>Motivation factors and mechanisms .....</i>	<i>431</i>
5.1.3.2	<i>Stages in the development of motivation of children and youth .....</i>	<i>432</i>
5.1.3.3	<i>Factors involved in raising Christian motivation</i> <b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b> 436	
5.1.3.3.1	Purpose.....	436
5.1.3.3.2	Confidence .....	442
5.1.3.3.3	Feelings .....	444
5.1.3.3.4	Interests .....	445
5.1.3.3.5	Needs.....	447
5.2	APPLICATION.....	448
5.2.1	Coordinates of missionary – pastoral strategy among the children and youth from Târgu Lăpuș .....	448
5.2.1	Missionary – pastoral activities among the children and youth from Târgu Lăpuș. .....	450
5.2.2	Results.....	476
5.3	CONCLUSIONS .....	483
	<b>FINAL CONCLUSIONS.....</b>	<b>485</b>
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>489</b>
	<b>STATEMENT CONCERNING THE ORIGINALITY OF THE PH.D. THESIS .....</b>	<b>517</b>
	<b>CURRICULUM VITAE.....</b>	<b>518</b>



## KEY WORDS:

mission, pastorate, missionary-pastoral research, missionary-pastoral strategy, missionary paradigm.

## INTRODUCTION

**The research domain** of this work includes the missionary-pastoral strategies of the contemporary Romanian Orthodox Church (from 1989 up to the present), their correlation with the missiological research and productions and the possibility of identifying new effective missionary-pastoral strategies within the current mundane context.

**The research argument** arises from the major religious, social, political and technological changes and from their direct repercussions on the human psychosomatic status. Since our Lord Jesus Christ himself teaches us that „Every scribe instructed concerning the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his treasure things **new and old**” (Matt. 13.52), we are called upon to bring our contribution to the constant preservation and cultivation of the reflexive Orthodox missiological research. Therefore, the context calls for an analysis and assessment of the Romanian Orthodox missiological research and of the missionary - pastoral strategies encountered within Church and especially for a contribution coming from researchers for identifying the paradigmatic frameworks that can ensure the elaboration and promotion of authentic, innovative and current-day missionary-pastoral strategies.

**The research topic** deals on the one hand with the Romanian Orthodox missiological research - related aspects (representatives, directions, missionary-pastoral solutions), and on the other hand with the missionary-pastoral strategy of the contemporary Romanian Orthodox Church (reflected upon the decrees of the Holy Synod, upon the annual activity reports, upon the press releases of the institutions belonging to Church, upon the special sermons of some bishops and upon the initiatives and preoccupations of certain ecclesiastical institutions and establishments, upon the attitudes of certain theologians, clergy or laymen, upon the manifestations of certain Orthodox associations, upon the relationship with the State and other denominations etc.) Therefore, our research topic has been stated in the form of „**Missionary – pastoral strategy and research within the contemporary Romanian Orthodox Church**”.

It was Rev. Univ. Prof. Dr. Valer Bel who chose the **research topic** when I expressed my intention to sit the exam for the admission to the doctoral programme, having been aware of my academic background (a graduate of Faculty of Theology and of Psychology and Educational Sciences of „Babeş - Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca), of my scholarly preoccupations, as well as of my missionary – pastoral experience gained from pastoring the “Ascension of Our Lord” Orthodox Parish since 2003. The proposed topic turned out to be both a challenge and an opportunity to fulfill my pastoral ministry as a *reflexive practitioner* rather than in a *repetitive and mechanically performed* manner, as well as a form to improve the missionary-pastoral ministry.

**The aim** of this work is *to highlight the main characteristics of the missionary pastoral approach within the contemporary Romanian Orthodox Church* (the missiological



research and missionary-pastoral strategies employed), *to identify new contemporary missiological research domains and to elaborate innovative methods to optimize them* (including through the capitalization of the methodological knowledge and opportunities offered by social sciences). In order to achieve my goal I have taken into account some objectives: 1) **To identify the attributes of the main missiological Romanian productions** and the way the most prominent Romanian missiologists have thought to carry out a missiological research and to propose viable solutions for the continuous updating of the missionary strategy of the Orthodox Church in general, and the Romanian in particular; 2) **To highlight and analyze the missionary – pastoral directions, level, quality and methods** reflected in the major initiatives (official, theological and practical) of the contemporary Romanian Orthodox Church; 3) **To go thoroughly into „the theory of the mission paradigm” from an Orthodox perspective** in order to emphasize the role of the Orthodox Paradigm (Tradition) in identifying the missiological research directions and in elaborating authentic and viable missionary – pastoral solutions; 4) **To identify the potential domains of the contemporary missionary – pastoral research and the viable, present-day and innovative strategies** for confessing the revealed Truth; 5) **To go thoroughly into the coordinates of the missionary – pastoral strategy among children and youth**, including through presenting an example of missionary – pastoral activity among this category.

**Methodology of this research includes:** 1) identifying and analyzing those missiological productions referring to the topic in question, emphasizing the various research directions within the Romanian Orthodox missiology and the missionary – pastoral strategies proposed by the most prominent Romanian missiologists, all the way from the onset of Missiology as a theological preoccupation and study discipline to the present day; 2) presenting the missionary – pastoral strategy of the Romanian Orthodox Church as reflected in the decrees, official documents, activity reports issued and presented by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church and in other documents relevant to us (namely analyzing the sources of the missionary – pastoral strategies of the contemporary Romanian Orthodox Church); 3) analyzing the word and concept of „paradigm” from the perspective of etymology, science, linguistics and especially Theology (by presenting „the paradigm theory” according to David Bosch, respectively, a potential Orthodox answer) using the exegetical, theological – speculative and historical method; 4) synthesizing certain opinions and appeals made by the most prominent contemporary missiologists and missionaries of the Romanian Orthodox Church and combining them with a series of personal reflections and experiences; 5) going thoroughly into the missionary – pastoral coordinates among children and youth from the perspective of the biblical (the exegetical – hermeneutical method) and patristical (the historical method) guidelines, of the most recent research in the field of psychology of development and education and from the perspective of my personal missionary – pastoral experience (ascetical - mystical method and practical method).

With regard to **the research topic within the specialized literature** we can say that the onset of Missiology as an Orthodox theological discipline goes in line with the desire to offer new solutions, new missionary – pastoral strategies for the Orthodox Church facing the challenges of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, the works of the most prominent Romanian Orthodox missiologists (that I have mentioned within this work) include either drafts or elaborated formula of the various aspects covered within this work. However, one has not

been able as yet to create a monography having as its study object the very missiological research (representatives, directions, characteristics etc.), their associated missionary – pastoral strategies, their relationship with the missionary – pastoral approach of the Church, the thorough study of „the paradigm theory”, the primary missionary – pastoral domains and particularly the psychopedagogical and theological guidelines of the mission among children and youth.

**The limitations of research** are due to: 1) a brief analysis of the missiological bibliography of the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, since I have manifested only a collateral interest in it; 2) the fact that I have covered and thoroughly gone only into the representative works of the most prominent Romanian Orthodox missiologists (starting from the premise that they are relevant to our topic, and would have been almost impossible to cover the great volume of works and articles published in such a short period of time such as the one reserved for this work); 3) the lack of the presentation and analysis of the missionary – pastoral research methods within the Orthodox Church (the method – a path to the theological knowledge, the exegetical – mystical method, the theological – speculative method, the ascetical – mystical method, the historical method, the practical method and the ecumenical method); 4) the possibility of identifying other research domains essential to our Church; 5) the possibility to go thoroughly into the coordinates of the missionary – pastoral strategy among children and youth also from other complementary perspectives, which might also include quantitative and qualitative analyses of some practical undertakings of this kind.

## **1. MISSIONARY - PASTORAL RESEARCH AND STRATEGY IN ROMANIAN ORTHODOX MISSIOLOGY**

This chapter was aimed at reviewing the way the most prominent Romanian missiologists have carried out missionary research and proposed viable solutions for a continuous updating of the missionary strategy of The Orthodox Church in general, and the Romanian in particular. The review in its turn may represent a starting point for both current and future generations of missiologists, as well as for those empowered to shepherd Christ's flock (bishops, priests and deacons).

For reasons that have to do with the missionary iconomy, I have divided this first chapter into four parts: the antebellum period (XIX<sup>th</sup> century - 1918), the interbellum period (1918 - 1948), the communist period (1948 - 1989) and post decembrist period (1990 - 2013). Each of these four periods has an identity of its own. The Church mission has never been carried out in vitro, much less during the last two centuries. The contextual situation of those 4 periods has thus fundamentally determined the missionaries accents and methods, therefore an analysis of the diachronic missionary strategy cannot leave this fact aside.

To start with, we have emphasized that within a Church eminently pastoral as the Romanian Orthodox Church is, it was natural that its missionary strategy be reduced until the beginning of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century to an approach strictly pastoral, with a promotion of more missionary – pastoral approaches starting with the interbellum period.

**The Romanian Orthodox Missiology** has evolved since its onset as academic study discipline under various names: *Missionary Guidelines*, *Sectology*, *Missiology*, *Mission and Ecumenism*. All these names have basically represented certain emphases that the discipline has promoted. The theologians involved in the missiological research have gone thoroughly into, emphasized and promoted certain aspects having taken into account the inter – religious, socio – cultural and politic context. The reactivation of the explicit and offensive missionary dimension of the Romanian Orthodox Church, at least with regard to the theological research, would occur at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, more precisely after the 1<sup>st</sup> World War, in the context of the national reunification from 1918, of the general, political, technical and socio – cultural development. The major shifts after 1918 have affected the traditional ecclesiastical life, having been focused exclusively on a pastoral approach. Regardless of the period during which the Church functions, it needs to take into account the mundane realities and to promote „ *a dialogue with culture, science and the current ideas, in a context either general or of personalized evangelization, adapted to each person, within the local ecclesiastical community*”.<sup>1</sup> Or, this is the very reason for the onset and development of Missiology: „*A systematic dialogue with an eminently practical opening engaging the Church’s teachings in a dialogue with the secular ideologies (philosophical, political, scientific) and offering the Church’s teaching about God to a world created, loved and saved by Him*”<sup>2</sup>.

The liberation from various foreign reigns – which the Romanians withstood only gathered around the church from their village – has also meant an unprecedented proliferation of the heterodox movements (especially coming from the sects) as a result of a slow, yet a steady disengagement of some Romanians in relation to the Orthodoxy and the Orthodox Church. The trips abroad (to the West, even to the USA) in search of better jobs and income sources, have also contributed to this phenomenon. Some of those who had left Romania would return not only with more money but also with new faiths (particularly in Ardeal): Baptism, Pentecostalism, Adventism etc.<sup>3</sup> It was thus lost on the one hand a feature which had defined the Romanian people (its attachment towards and identification with the Orthodoxy), while on the other hand were invalidated Nicolae Milescu-Spătarul and Dimitrie Cantemir’s assumptions which excluded any inclination of the Romanian people towards the sectarian phenomenon. **Sectarianism** perhaps represents the most important motivational factor in reactivating the explicit and offensive missionary dimension of the Romanian Orthodox Church and in the onset of Missiology as a theological discipline. It was not by accident that Sectology strongly developed in Ardeal, given the pluriconfessional context from here and as a challenge against it. The shepherds at the time wanted to guard the believers by creating a true sectological literature intended for the public. Bishop Grigore Comșa, through his intense activity he would carry out in Arad, between 1925 – 1935, stands

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<sup>1</sup>Rev. Gheorghe PETRARU, *Misiologie Ortodoxă. I. Revelația divină și misiunea Bisericii*, Panfilius Publishing House, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup>Rev. Gheorghe PETRARU, *Misiologie Ortodoxă*, p. 21.

<sup>3</sup>To see in this regard Prot. Dr. Petru DEHELEANU, *Manual de Sectologie*, Arhidiecezană Publishing House, Arad, 1948, p. 42-79.

as a real example in this regard. Subsequently, it would be Prof. Petru Deheleanu who set the directions and elaborated the most comprehensive *Sectology* at the time.<sup>4</sup>

The onset of Missiology as a Romanian Orthodox theological discipline is related to **Prof. Dr. Vasile Ispir**, a professor of Theology, an ecumenist and missionary (unordained). We can also legitimately call him the first Romanian missiologist as well as „*the father of the Romanian Missiology*”<sup>5</sup>. On 22 March 1922, the patriarch Miron Cristea founded within the frame of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest the first department of Missionary Guidelines and Sectology in whose charge was appointed Rev. Dr. Vasile Gh. Ispir (on 1 December 1922) as a result of the recommendations made by the Faculty’s academic council based on the titles he owned, as well as on his published studies and works. Shortly afterwards, in 1922, Prof. Dr. Vasile Ispir published in Bucharest his first missiological book entitled „*Îndrumarea misionară a Bisericii Ortodoxe*”. As a tireless worker in God’s field, he would establish the „Solidaritatea ” social – Christian circle, in whose frame he would also compile a magazine. Within its pages there would appear numerous of his studies, during the ten years of its issuance (1920 - 1930). To these there would be added some others: in volumes, in the Romanian Orthodox Theology magazines and in various newspapers of the time. As a professor, he succeeded in remarking himself through a high level of seriousness, patience and perseverance. His academic undertaking posed certain obstacles imminent in the context of any beginning: the lack of a textbook, of a syllabus, of a specialized bibliography, an inferior status among the other theological disciplines. However, he compensated all these through his devotion, talent, training and perseverance as a tenured professor. Therefore, the department of Missionary guidelines and Sectology would shortly acquire an important status among the other theological disciplines. It would continuously function until 1938, when it was included in the department of Practical Theology as a result of the law concerning the rationalization of the higher education. As a predecessor of the modern Romanian Orthodox ecumenists, Prof. Vasile Ispir adopted and promoted the technique of dialogue among denominations, trying to capitalize on their positive elements. He would thus represent our Church at several inter - Christian congresses and meetings during the interbellum period.

Parallel to this **missionary – ecumenical** vision, during the interbellum period there would develop a **pastoral – sectological** and a **catechetical – liturgical** approach. The most prominent representatives of the pastoral – sectological approach were bishop Grigore Leu and Rev. Petru Deheleanu. These two elaborated the best sectological works presenting the Christian sects from the perspective of their history, doctrine, organization and cult. The most prominent representatives of the catechetical – missionary approach were Rev. Grigorie Cristescu and Rev. Petre Vintilescu. Whereas the representatives of the former current considered that shepherds had to prepare believers for the battle against sectarianism through an intense biblical and sectological training, the latter held the opinion that a positive approach would be preferable, through which believers might be educated (from a catechetical and liturgical perspective) to capitalize on the Orthodox potential. Thus the sectarian or any other kinds of attacks would have been rejected, and the attitude-related

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<sup>4</sup> Rev. Prof. Ion BRIA, „Mărturia creștină în Biserica Ortodoxă. Aspecte, posibilități și perspective”, in *GB*, vol.XLI, 1982, no. 1-2, p. 96.

<sup>5</sup> Rev. Prof. Dr. Mircea PĂCURARIU, *Dicționarul Teologilor români*, Univers Enciclopedic Publishing House, 1996.

polarizations and interpersonal conflicts, the interconfessional and interethnic hatred would have been elegantly avoided.

During **the communist period** (1948 - 1989), as a result of the drastic limitation of the theological education, until 1975, Missiology as a discipline would be reduced to mere notions of „missionary guidelines” within the frame of the other theological disciplines. Afterwards it would become a discipline of its own under the name of „Missionary guidelines and Ecumenism” (1977 - 1990). Before Rev. Ion Bria and Dea. Petru I. David (1977) none of the professors had remarked themselves by bringing important contributions to the development and consolidation of Missiology. This is why during 1949 – 1989 there were only two authors that one could associate Missiology with: Rev. Ion Bria and Dea. Petru I. David. These two would adopt two slightly different discourses and paths: *pastoral – sectological* (Dea. Petru I. David) and *missionary – ecumenical* (Rev. Ion Bria). **Dea. Petru I. David** would develop the sectological approaches from the interbellum period through several works and studies he would publish thus offering a series of methods for preventing and counteracting the sectarian phenomenon and for reintegrating into Church the supporters of Orthodox centrifugal movements (Army of the Lord) and the schismatics (Stylists). **Rev. Ion Bria** may be considered the most prolific and prominent representative of the missionary – ecumenical approach. Through his numerous studies and articles published in the theological magazines in Romania and particularly abroad, Rev. Bria managed to offer the Orthodox Church a true “missionary programme”. The historical – political conditions and the very limited access to the theological literature published abroad would contribute to a weak level of his reception before 1989. Whereas for Dea. Petru I. David ecumenism may be accepted only as a way of living together on the part of the believers belonging to various confessions and religions, for Rev. Ion Bria ecumenism represents a form of dialogue within whose frame the participants are enriching one another.

During **the contemporary period** several Romanian Orthodox theologians have contributed to an unprecedented development of Missiology, having succeeded in articulating a **theological discipline and relevant specialized studies** not only for the academical environment and the missiological research, but also for the parochial community and the missionary – pastoral strategy of our Church. Among the most prominent contemporary missiologists, we mention Petru I. David, Ion Bria, Valer Bel, Gheorghe Petru and Mihai Himcinschi. The pastoral – sectological approach, in a decline after 1989, would generally maintain a triumphalist attitude towards the life and mission of the Orthodox Church. After the fall of the communist regime, **the missionary – ecumenical approach** would reach a certain level of maturation and would become **dominant**, having been promoted by the majority of the contemporary Romanian Orthodox missiologists. The topics approached would feature a great diversity and a thorough study, and sometimes they would display accents of „*critical self-examination*”.<sup>6</sup> This would lead to a realistic attitude, yet confident, towards the ecclesiastical life in general, and towards Missiology and mission in particular. The representatives of the missionary – ecumenical approach would try not to reduce Missiology to a mere collection of „practical measures” for promoting or defending the true faith, having proposed through several studies **a theological reflection of the mission**. This

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<sup>6</sup> Rev. Dr. Ion BRIA, *Destinul Ortodoxiei*, p. 5.

in its turn, may become an inspirational and motivational base for any missionary – pastoral undertaking, either general or local (the parish). The contemporary Romanian Orthodox Missiology has been constantly issuing warnings with regard to necessity of a **new missionary – pastoral current** which might take into consideration the secular or ecclesiastical challenges and which might represent a materialization of the fundamental elements systematically and thoroughly laid out by Missiology. The missionary – pastoral renewal must take place with regard to both the liturgical manifestations (through going beyond ritualisms, updating the cult – related language, time and space etc.), and the social involvement of the Church (through increasing its activities within the philanthropic, social and cultural fields etc.). Despite the fairly high number of missionary productions, there are several **aspects** yet to be **exploited** or **insufficiently analyzed**: an Orthodox answer to „the theory of the mission paradigms” launched by David Bosch, missiological and sectological topics which might be practical and be initiated from the base towards the top, from the missionary – pastoral needs „of a particular community”, the preventive approach of the sectarian studies, the objective and realist approach towards the centrifugal movements, the extent to which certain methods specific to the social sciences might be employed in the missiological research, the effectiveness of the contemporary Romanian Orthodox Church etc.

## **2. MISSIONARY AND PASTORAL STRATEGIES OF ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH BETWEEN 1989 - 2013**

**After 1989, the Romanian Orthodox Church has continued to update and stimulate its missionary – pastoral activity.** One may find outlined the essential elements for the post - decembrist pastoral – missionary strategies as early as the dawn of this period and they consist of: redefining the relationship with the State, promoting a penitential and reconciling attitude on the part of the clergy and believers, carrying out the administrative – ecclesiastical reorganization, (re)building churches, reactivating the catechetical education, revigorating the philanthropic mission within various State institutions, enhancing the cultural - missionary activities (including through the means of the Army of the Lord and certain associations), reorganizing the Theological education, renewing the interconfessional relationships, creating access to the public mass – media, regaining the immovable assets confiscated by the communist regime from the Church etc.

One may consider that the missionary – pastoral dynamics after 1989 has also initially been influenced by the way the representatives of the Church have managed **the memory from communism**. At the dawn of the political and religious freedom, *the memory of the collaboration with the state security apparatus* and *the penitential discourse* represented a dominant aspect. Shortly afterwards they would be replaced by *the memory of accomodation* and *the justifying discourse*, only to witness over the last years an increasingly

intense current with regard to the recovery of *the memory of sufferance* and *the recollection of the persecutions*.

**The relationship with the State** would constantly be redefined through a cumbersome process which would be reflected in our country's Constitution and certain laws. According to them, the State would turn from *an oppressor* (during communism) into a benevolent *partner*, while *the control* function would have a *supportive* role. Despite the fact that the Church has periodically declared its autonomy in relation to the State, to a large extent it is still *financially dependant* on it, since the State is granting subventions for the salaries of the clerical and non – clerical personnel, for building and restoring churches, for supporting certain philanthropic activities and the theological education etc. The Church has constantly requested that it be retroceded the assets which belonged to the religious cults and were confiscated by the State during the communist regime. It is perhaps due to this financial dependence and the lack of a theological reflection upon the compatibility between the vocational priestly ministry and „the secular dignities and occupations” that apart from some press releases or brief and sometimes contradictory synodal decrees, one may witness the contrast between the political neutrality of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the series of the successive decrees (1990, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012) of the Holy Synod, which alternate between an absolute non-involvement of the clergy in political battles (1996, 2004) and the permission to run for local council and county seats not being affiliated to any political party (2000, 2008, 2012), between supporting the involvement of the Orthodox laymen in politics (2000) and the assertion that there are no such laymen as of yet (2008). The opening and support of the Romanian Orthodox Church with regard to the accession of our country to the European Union have been carried out in the perspective of an Orthodox missionary – pastoral enhancement at the European level by attempting to offer „a soul for Europe”.

**The administrative reorganisation** (at all hierarchical levels) and the spectacular increase in the number of churches built after 1989 (over 2000 of them) has led to an improvement of the missionary – pastoral life of the Church to the extent that it has been doubled by having chosen and appointed shepherds with a special calling, vision and missionary zeal. The renewal and completion of the number of the Holy Synod members has led to a better way on the part of the local church to relate to the contemporary world problems, has met the needs of the Romanian Orthodox Christians in diaspora, of those working abroad and of those living in geographical areas that once belonged to Greater Romania, has contributed to the prevention and counteracting of the schismatic and sectarian phenomenon and even has facilitated the strengthening of the ethnic identity.

For the most part, **the financial resources of the Church** have been directed towards building and maintaining churches, the philanthropic activities, particularly those educational which most of the time have been carried out with external support (from the State or with European funds). Since for the most part there have been met the needs with regard to the ecclesiastical infrastructure, and the challenges coming from the contemporary society are being increasingly complex, one needs to pay a higher attention to the educational activities through directing much more consistent financial resources. A great financial challenge and pastoral as well, is represented by “the privatization tendency” within the Church, through which the production and capitalization of the cult-related objects is being carried out by

physical persons, often believers from the Church, despite the fact that the State has conferred the Church as institution the monopol in this regard. The mere act of making decisions at the level of the Holy Synod is not enough in order to settle the tacit or open conflicts within the Church, but one needs as in other cases to elaborate an argumentation which might emphasize to which extent this aspect represents a form of “stealing” from the financial resources of the Church or a way to promote the activity of Orthodox laymen.

The fall of the communist regime meant the chance to resume **the religious** and catechetical **education** for children and youth (through the reintroduction of the Religion classes in schools and the reactivation of the parochial catechesis) and the chance to reorganize and extend the network of the institutions for theological education (seminaries and faculties). The attacks which are constant and directed towards the presence of the Religion class within public schools, forces the Church to pay a constant attention to the legislative initiatives concerning this aspect and to make efforts to raise the quality of the religious education within public schools by promoting teachers that have a real calling and by elaborating an adequate curriculum and text books (which should not represent a mere summary of the academic theological text books or of the catechisms, but should meet the current pedagogical aspects). A major deficiency is also represented by the fact that after 23 years following the fall of the communism, the Church has not discovered yet the necessary financial and human resources to elaborate the text books, since the current ones exist as a result of the effort of certain private initiatives. The inflationist proliferation of the theological schools has led not only to the increase in the number of the graduates who cannot be offered positions within the Church, but also to a dramatic decrease in the quality of the educational process and to an increasingly weaker vocational cultivation. The Church needs to reflect on and particularly to take concrete measures not only for the remediation of these deficiencies but also for elaborating a clear position with regard to the missionary – pastoral strategy for the graduates from the educational institutions with a theological profile who end up not professing within the Church. Last but not least, one needs to carry out an assessment of the quality of the religious and theological education, using as a starting point its capacity to “church” its beneficiaries. The academic research, including a much more visible and realistic involvement of the missionary – pastoral research Institutes, can and has to have a major contribution in suggesting to the Church relevant reflection topics for the missionary – pastoral strategy, the annual meetings of Theology teachers which have increased over the last years, having proven this aspect.

The quantity of **the philanthropic activity** of the Church has greatly increased, the Church having thus succeeded in potentially becoming the most important partner of the State, the latter having considered it as “*a supplier of social services*”. The assessment and research of the social programmes impact is not only an internal necessity of the Church, but also a requirement in relation to the State acting as a financing and legislative body of certain social programmes carried out through the Church. The same thing is called for with regard to the activity of the priests activating within law enforcement institutions, since there are more and more voices criticizing them for a weak social and religious involvement, despite the considerable financial support they receive. With regard to the philanthropic activity there may be raised a series of questions: To what extent does the contemporary ecclesiastical philanthropy, organized and promoted based on the secular social work, contribute to the



Christianization of the world or lead to the secularization of the Church? Would it not have been more adequate that the Church should have prepared deans rather than social workers, having thus reactivated and enhanced the diaconal ministry in the field of philanthropy and also having maintained a stronger and more determinant connection between the sacramental and philanthropic life? Instead of Church having made considerable financial and human efforts to create philanthropic institutions, would it not have been better in the first place to have promoted the philanthropic theology and practice within families and communities through the good priests and Christians? To what extent are the Mutual Aid Funds within the Church still ways of mutual aid for the members of the sacerdotal “brotherhood” or internal lending and profit-making institutions? What kind of relationship could there exist between the Church and a professional quasi - mercenary Army? etc.

**The practical measures and methods for promoting the pastoral – missionary activity and for defending the true faith** have been particularly meant to strengthen the liturgical, catechetical – homiletical, canonical etc. discipline of the clergy. The routine accumulated over the decades within communism on the part of certain members of the clergy, particularly the post – decembrist secular challenges, have influenced not only the missionary – pastoral dynamics but rather the discipline and vision of the clergy. Despite it all, *The measures plan ...* represents a mere attempt to recover the missionary – pastoral dynamism. The major deficiency of the measures set is represented by the disciplinary dimension based on which it is built and the lack of an articulated strategy which might take into account both the most important challenges (internal and external) for the Orthodox Church and the diachronic missionary – pastoral approaches of the Church. In other words, *The measures plan ...* lacks its positive dimension, articulated around a holistic approach.

The enhancement of the missionary – pastoral activity has also been brought about with the help of **the Christian – Orthodox associations and foundations** which have been involved in philanthropic activities, in promoting the Christian values within the frame of certain categories of people (for ex. students), in medical – philanthropic activities, in educational activities etc. Most of them have functioned based on a collaboration between clergy and laymen, while a part of them have derived from and are being carried out as a result of the exclusive effort of the Christian – Orthodox laymen. The Holy Synod has appreciated the effort made by them, has granted the creation and functioning blessing for the most important of them, but it has also made efforts with regard to defining the frames within which they should function, there having been ascertained the fact that some of them, despite using the title of “Christian - Orthodox”, have no organic connection with the hierarchical structures of the Church, while others represent “a tendency for privatization within the Church”. It is left to the missionary – pastoral research to establish to which extent do the restrictions imposed by the Holy Synod with regard to the use of the title of “Christian - Orthodox” represent a form of inhibiting the activity of the Orthodox laymen or a form of disciplining and optimizing the activities of these associations. Last but not least, one needs to articulate a vision around this form of social manifestation, since it is known that the role of the associations and foundations belonging to the so – called “civil society” may be overwhelming. Despite the fact that the Army of the Lord functions within the Orthodox Church as an association, it exists as a result of a movement and acts like one, and one should not overlook this aspect. There is no unitary approach of the bishops with regard to the Army

of the Lord. They have officially manifested a positive attitude, yet they have failed to remark themselves through a steady initiative to identify and correct the deviations of the movement or of some of its leaders. Their positive attitude reflected in mere declarations, yet evasive with regard to their involvement in the integration of the movement within the authentic Orthodox spirit, continue to fuel the manifestations associated with the Army of the Lord. In the want of an unitary approach, of a sufficient supervision of the hierarchy to identify the deviations from the Orthodox spirit on the part of the members of the Army of the Lord – aspects noticed by more and more priests and laymen – the movement of “the Army of the Lord” is increasingly deviating from its initial purpose and from its normal path it should have within the frame of the Orthodox Church.

The development and modernization of **the Romanian Orthodox mass – media** has led to a broader visibility of the Orthodoxy and its values among its believers and the Romanian society in general. It would be extremely useful to know to what extent has the diversity of the Orthodox mass – media managed to “spread the truth” and to what extent has it turned into “a meaningless talk”, to what extent has it ministered the Church and to what extent has it ministered itself? This could be achieved using as a starting point the meaning of the mass – media presence in society. Also, is the tendency of centralizing mass – media, particularly the audio and TV (which have the biggest impact and audience) a form of optimizing them and enhancing the missionary – pastoral relevance, or is it a tendency to promote the Orthodox triumphalism or to turn into mere official media of the ecclesiastical authority they belong to?

Despite the numerous **canonizations** it has performed after 1989, the Romanian Orthodox Church still owes a lot with regard to the confessors and martyrs during Communism, lagging thus behind other Orthodox Churches which suffered during the communist regime (the Russian Orthodox Church, the Polish Orthodox Church etc.), even behind the Greek – Catholic and Roman – Catholic Churches. Making up for this “handicap” could have a strong effect upon the consolidation of the contemporary Christian conscience assaulted by the new secular challenges and ideas and would thus strengthen the missionary – pastoral strategy of the Church, within the spirit of the Orthodox Tradition. However, it is true that to a certain extent, the ecclesiastical hierarchy prudence with regard to the desire to canonize the martyrs during Communism it is also due to a historical deficit concerning the interbellum period, respectively, the ambiguous relationships between the members of the Church and the Legionary Movement. Certain members of the clergy and a considerable number of believers assimilated during that period an ideology according to which the national politics and the Orthodox theology were united in “a theology of the country”. This situation calls for a clear distinction between the martyrs of the political conviction and those of the Orthodox faith. The historical clarifications would thus be more effective in assessing and clarifying certain doubts and confusions.

**The pilgrimages to the holy places and the processions to / with the Holy Relics**, as well as the manifestations organized on the occasion of jubilee or festive moments, have substantially contributed to the strengthening of the Orthodox conscience, to the enhancement of the theological reflection upon certain theological aspects and of the personal devoutness of the believers. The fact that the secular press has minimized and sometimes emphasized only certain minor negative aspects in relation to these manifestations, has

helped the Church to better organize these events. A continuation of such activities can thus help the Church, particularly when they are supported by a theological argumentation.

**The inter-Orthodox relationships** have sometimes witnessed certain tensions. However, the Romanian Orthodox Church must continue to cultivate in relation to the other Orthodox sister Churches a climate based on understanding for preserving their unity and particularly for strengthening their joint Christian Orthodox testimony before the increasingly secularized world. There must be also continued **the interconfessional dialogue**, particularly with the Greek – Catholic Church at least in the way it has been carried out so far.

Last but not least, there must be enhanced the effort to promptly and theologically answer the contemporary world issues.

### **3. ORTHODOX THEOLOGICAL PARADIGM – CONDITION AND MEDIUM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH AND AUTHENTIC AND EFFECTIVE MISSIONARY STRATEGIES**

The third chapter of this work attempts to define the frames necessary to conceiving and developing a missiological research and certain authentic and effective missionary strategies using as a starting point the concept of „theological paradigm”. The reasons for initiating such an undertaking are numerous: 1) this work having a scientific research character, I have employed a theoretical category whose ubiquity within the contemporary scientific world is obvious: *a paradigm*<sup>7</sup> (the modern science cannot be imagined without the concept of paradigm, since it is the one guiding (implicitly or explicitly ) any modern scientific research undertaking); 2) „*The theory of mission paradigmes*” promoted by the missiologist David J. Bosch (a member of the Dutch Reformed Church) represents one of the latest challenges posed by Protestantism in relation to the Christian Missiology in general, and to the Orthodox Church in particular; 3) *The paradigm*, respectively, *the tradition* are concepts with similar functions since they form within manifestation frames and explicit models; 4) As for as I am concerned, *the theory of paradigms* means to the Reformed Theology a great step ahead in surpassing de facto the principle of *Sola Scriptura*; 5) using the term of „*paradigm*” does not represent a mere academic snobbism, but an implicit form of mission within the academic and interconfessional world, a way of providing an answer, of initiating a dialogue and to make a testimony, an implicit form of promoting the tradition of Church and the theological and missionary tradition of the Orthodox Church, since, „*Missiology is basically a dialogue between Church and culture, science and the contemporary ideas*”<sup>8</sup>; 6) the parallel use (etymological and conceptual) within the frame of the Orthodox Theology, particularly in the field of the Orthodox Missiology, gives us the right to carry out this detailed analysis for emphasizing the implications of the concept of

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<sup>7</sup> Thomas S. KUHN, *Structura revoluțiilor științifice*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> Rev. Conf. Univ. Dr. Gheorghe PETRARU, *Misiologie Ortodoxă. I. Revelația divină și misiunea Bisericii*, Panfilius Publishing House, 2002, p. 21.

„paradigm” for the Orthodox Theology and Missiology and for offering a potential Orthodox answer to its challenges.

The Orthodox answer I have outlined within this thesis has been preceded by the presentation of the etymological meanings of the concept of „paradigm”, of its use in linguistics, in science (in the case of Thomas S. Kuhn) and particularly in David Bosch’s theology. To science, a paradigm means „an entire constellation of *convictions, values, methods etc., shared by the members of a certain community*”<sup>9</sup>, respectively, **the most specific way in which a problem may be studied and solved**, namely those **common examples** comprising laws, theories, applications and instrumentation operationalized in a certain context. The Protestant Theology has assumed the concept of paradigm, having borrowed to a large extent its scientific meanings. According to David Bosch, the fundamental thesis of the concept of *missionary paradigm* is that the missionary practice has changed over the 2000 years of history of mission. Sometimes the transformation was so thorough, that the historians find it very difficult to identify similarities of various missionary models. In fact, the change is not over yet and in reality, it will never end. The proposed theory seems the more important as the present is the witness of such transformation, which is why the author does not limit himself to making a historical – descriptive analysis of the mission, but aims to propose the revitalization of the mission bases, capable of animating the Christian mission in its battle to convert the world. The contemporary Missiology mission is thus not to try a uniformization of the missionary perspectives, but to outline “**multiple versions of Missiology in a single universe of mission**”. They would represent the base of what Bosch calls “**the ecumenical paradigm of mission**”<sup>10</sup>. Th. Kuhn believes that Jesus Christ remains the same Jesus Christ, yet His Gospel is being constantly heard and interpreted differently, according to each historical period<sup>11</sup>, which is why **the divine essence** of Christian faith has witnessed distinct successive historical periods of *reception* and *understanding*. Bosch thus agrees with Hans Küng who identifies such 6 periods during which believers and theologians alike received in a particular way the essence of Revelation: 1) the *apocalyptic* paradigm of the Early Christianity; 2) the *Hellenistic* paradigm of the patristic period; 3) the paradigm of the medieval Roman *Catholicism*; 4) the *Protestant* paradigm of the Reformation; 5) the paradigm of the modern age of *Enlightment*; 6) the *ecumenical* paradigm (in the process).

The Orthodox answer to all challenges of this Protestant theory has been elaborated using as a starting point the relationship between religion and paradigm, revelation and paradigm (the subject of revelation, the knowledge of revelation), canon and paradigm and Theology and paradigm. According to the Orthodox teaching, mission cannot be separated from Theology and Church as the latter two are the source for the former one. Any change of paradigm includes thus major theological and ecclesiological changes. From the Orthodox Theology perspective, the differentiation between the Early and patristic Christianity, although historically justified, as a stage of the Christianity history, is not theologically justified. The entry of Christianity into the Greek – Roman world, did not mean „an

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas S. KUHN, „Post-Scriptum 1969”, in *Structura revoluțiilor științifice*, p. 242.

<sup>10</sup> David J. BOSCH, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, p. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Rev. Dr. Adrian CAREBIA, „Istoriografia paradigmelor ca interpretare a relației dintre Renaștere și Reformă”, p. 100.

*Hellenization of Christianity*”, but on the contrary „*a Christianization of Hellenism*”<sup>12</sup>. The Hellenistic culture did not change Theology, but provided it and the Church with its entire richness. **The theological reflection did not mean a change of the nature of Theology and of the perception of Revelation, but on the contrary, its thorough study based on the same method, yet having at disposal an instrument much stronger than the Judaic language and culture, namely the Hellenism.**

Without venturing ourselves into a total rejection of the concept of paradigm, we believe that the theory of paradigms includes a series of **positive challenges** for the Orthodox Theology: 1) it encourages the interconfessional dialogue simultaneously with an internal dialogue of each confession with its own tradition, memory and history; 2) such an approach places the Orthodox Church in a position where it needs to critically evaluate its own Tradition in relation to certain private theological or ecclesiastical traditions (particularly in relation to the radical confessionalism deriving from here) in the light of the Orthodoxy Canon<sup>13</sup>; 3) The Orthodox Church has the chance of remarking itself within the frame of the ecumenical and missiological dialogue, not as a unique holder of the Truth – which ultimately is God Himself – (in order to avoid the sin of the “chosen” people - Israel), but as a faithful witness and servant of the Unique Truth<sup>14</sup>; 4) continuing the neo – patristic ecclesiological reflection initiated at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century for articulating, in the spirit of truth, an integral Orthodox ecclesiology<sup>15</sup> as a foundation for mission and Church, as its subject<sup>16</sup>; 5) emphasizing the theological and liturgical aspects which truly represent a natural development, respectively, a deviation from the authentic Orthodox Tradition.

On the other hand, we hold the opinion that the theory of paradigms includes a series of **negative aspects** which are unacceptable from the perspective of the Orthodox Theology: 1) rejecting the feature as a central point and the ecclesial orientation of the mission act, which from an Orthodox point of view represents its starting point and finality (as “a building up of the Body of Christ”)<sup>17</sup>; 2) the lack of a clear determination of the meanings and bases of a theological or missionary “paradigm”; 3) deviating from the essential calling of the Church – extending God’s Kingdom on earth – and focusing on the building of a Christian society<sup>18</sup>; 4) identifying the bases of a theological and missionary paradigm (for example Theology) with secondary, conjunctural or instrumental aspects (for example the Greek language and culture); 5) reducing the content of the revelation to a historical thesaurus (the “historical” Jesus) outlined in a book (Sacred Scripture) and limiting its knowledge to a historical -

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<sup>12</sup> Rev. George FLOROVSKY, *Biserica, Scriptura, Tradiția – Trupul viu al lui Hristos*, Platytera Publishing House, Bucharest, 2005, p. 333.

<sup>13</sup> Ion BRIA, *Liturghia după Liturghie – Misiune apostolică și mărturie creștină azi*, Athena Publishing House, 1996, p. 193.

<sup>14</sup> Dea. Ioan I. ICĂ Jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei – Canonul apostolic al primelor secole*, p. 54 – 55.

<sup>15</sup> Dea. Ioan I. ICĂ Jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei – Canonul apostolic al primelor secole*, p. 53 – 57.

<sup>16</sup> *Your will be done – Orthodoxy in mission (The final Report)*, p. 47 - 48.

<sup>17</sup> See in this regard Valer BEL, *Misiunea Bisericii în lumea contemporană – Exigențe*, 2<sup>nd</sup> volume, p. 123 – 133; ANASTASIOS of Androussa, „Orthodox Mission”, in *Your will be done – Orthodoxy in mission*, p. 81, 89 and K.M. GEORGE, *Mission for Unity or Unity for Mission – An Ecclesiological /Ecumenical Perspective*, in \*\*\*, *Your will be done – Orthodoxy in mission*, p. 151 – 160.

<sup>18</sup> Rev. Prof. Ion BRIA, „Mărturia creștină în Biserica Ortodoxă. Aspecte, posibilități și perspective”, in GB, no. 1 – 3, 1982, p. 81.

critical approach; 6) artificially dividing the divine revelation into “pure” and “impure” and idealizing the former as a definite sign of a neo – docetism; 7) relativizing all Christian theologies, as well as the Commentaries on the divine iconomy (*Sacred Scripture* and the other *monuments of Tradition*) as being products of a “contaminated” revelation (impure revelation), means denying the uninterrupted continuity of the Church (“*the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*”) as a witness of a true testimony about and in Christ; 8) the confusion between *apocalyptic and eschatological*.

The Church has always been preoccupied with both the descriptive and normative aspect of faith. Therefore, in the want of a concept such as *paradigm*, the Church has exercised for the Christian faith through **Tradition** the *descriptive* role, while through **canon**, the *normative* one. However, both roles have been determined by **Theology**, as *a function of the Church*<sup>19</sup>. It was not by accident that in the case of the theological denials of any kind, coming from either the inside or outside, the Church has activated and emphasized through Theology the two normative and descriptive functions, by having appealed to the apostolic Tradition and to the canon of truth.

**Missiology**, as a theological discipline, within whose frame there has been shaped the concept of the theological and missionary paradigm, needs to warn and draw attention, through its research undertakings, to the fact that *the paradigm* is a continuation and fulfillment of the process of **epistemization of the canonical tradition** which means “*reducing the divine revelation and mystery of the Church to a mere theological ‘science’, Theology having turned from a noun and a reality of its own into a divine adjective determining autonomous human undertakings, merely ‘coloured’ or superposed from a religious point of view*”.

From an Orthodox perspective, one cannot talk about a change of “the missionary paradigm” unless as a consequence of **a theological change**, since Theology represents the core of any Christian paradigm, from an Orthodox point of view. One cannot thus talk about missionary paradigms outside the context of certain ecclesiological structures and related theologies<sup>20</sup>.

The ambitious project of the Protestant Missiology to lay the foundation for **an “ecumenical” paradigm of the mission**, is doomed to failure from the start as long as the common denominator representing its base will not be the Truth (ecclesologically and theologically confessed), but those particular elements specific to all Christian branches such as: preaching the Word of God, hope, righteousness, inculturation etc. From an Orthodox point of view, “*the reunification of Christians* [and implicitly the missionary reunification] *means the coming back of those having strayed from the true teaching to the Unique Church established by Christ, to the Kingdom of grace, either through conversion, in the logic of the canonical akribeia, or through iconomy, an ‘ecumenical typology’ currently*

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<sup>19</sup> Valer BEL, „Teologia ca știință și mărturisire în viziunea Părintelui profesor dr. Ioan Ică – Biserica Ortodoxă Română (BOR) în dialog cu Biserica Evanghelică din Germania (EKD)”, in vol. Rev. Univ. Prof. Dr. Valer BEL, Dr. Dacian But-CĂPUȘAN (coordinators), *Omagiu – Părintelui Prof. Univ. Dr. Ioan I. Ică*, p. 115

<sup>20</sup> Rev. Univ. Conf. Dr. Gheorghe PETRARU, „Paradigme misionare în istoria creștină și concepții și structuri eclesioleogice aferente”, p. 351.

*applicable given its practice in the relationships between the Church and the heterodox community in the case of its reintegration in the Church*<sup>21</sup>.

## **4. RESEARCH DOMAINS AND PRIMARY MISSIONARY – PASTORAL STRATEGIES WITHIN THE CONTEMPORARY ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**The research domains of the Romanian Orthodox Missiology** show a great diversity. Together with the most prominent Romanian Orthodox missiologists and theologians, we believe that some of these domains represent a **priority**: the role of *the academic Theology* in supporting and directing the missionary – pastoral activity of the Church, the role of *the parish* in elaborating a relevant missiological research topic and in implementing the viable missionary – pastoral strategies, *the urban mission, language and communication*, the dialogue between Theology and science and the mission among *children and youth*. To these one could add the relationship between Church and State (particularly the involvement of the clergy in politics and the participation of the Church in elaborating and promoting public policies) and the Orthodox movements with centrifugal tendencies (particularly the Army of the Lord).

**Missiology can and has to become the primary Theological discipline in „emphasizing” the academic theological function and the directions the latter should follow.** The relationship with the missionary – pastoral practice of the Church, with the real challenges from parishes and with the discourse of the secularized science and world has to be a function of Missiology, that one needs to constantly be aware of and assume. To the extent that **the parish is not a part of the missionary – pastoral research process** and of the process concerning the elaboration of the missionary – pastoral strategy, the theological research will turn into a purpose in itself and will become unable to meet the real needs of the Church, one finding it easy to envision the repercussions of such phenomenon.

The tendency of people world wide is to gather in large urban settlements. However, the urban life causes a series of radical and thorough changes in the life style, including the way one relates to the Church and faith. Therefore, the shepherds frequently need to employ old-fashioned missionary – pastoral methods and find themselves unable to face the challenges. Since this phenomenon is intensified and accelerated in the developed countries, including Romania, one needs to elaborate certain **relevant missionary – pastoral strategies for the urban communities.**

The new global age is focused on technology and virtual world. The virtual language, environment and technology changes radically the method and the meaning of communication. However beautiful the liturgical or theological language might be, one

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<sup>21</sup> Rev. Prof. Ion BRIA, *Tratat de Teologie Dogmatică și Ecumenică*, România creștină Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 253.

cannot remain stuck in the past, but **needs to renew the ecclesiastical language** and if necessary, even to elaborate a new one, the way some of the fathers of the Church did at the right time.

**The constructive dialogue with Science** may greatly strengthen the missionary – pastoral activity, may confirm and strengthen certain faith-related aspects, may contribute to developing and refining the missionary – pastoral strategies and last but not least may support the Church in renewing its anthropological conviction or at least the linguistic categories and the fundamental concepts. We believe that the dialogue with medicine and psychology remains a priority since these two fields partially share the same „object” of activity: man.

Last but not least, the serious moral and spiritual crisis affecting family and particularly the facility offered by the psychosomatic characteristics of **children and youth** forces one to place the latter **at the center of the missionary – pastoral preoccupation of the Church**.

## **5. COORDINATES OF MISSIONARY – PASTORAL STRATEGY AMONG CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

According to the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, children are an image of holiness, of purity and therefore the beneficiaries of the salvation He has brought. Salvation is not a „rational salvation”, which should require an intellectual maturation, but a gift from Jesus Christ in Holy Spirit. The moral conversion (purity, humiliation) that Jesus Christ requires of us is another way of being on the part of a child. It is not children that have to become like adults, but it is the adults that need to return to the innocence of children. Therefore, **children and childhood** are guidelines, models for all Christians and they **play a central role in the life of the Church**. As models, children need to receive a special attention from the Church, including all the gifts Jesus Christ is offering to His Church (the words of eternal life and the entire sacramental life).

The meaning and the consistency of the missionary – pastoral activity among children and youth are guided by the desire to make **children part of the liturgical, confessing and diaconal ministry**, as members with full rights among „*the people of God*”. (I Peter 2: 10). Therefore, the missionary – pastoral attention given to children and youth is not an option, but a priority, the more so as childhood and youth are periods characterized by a higher perceptiveness and ability to change.

In their effort of shaping children from a spiritual perspective, besides elements of the traditional Christian pedagogy, the shepherds and religion teachers have at their disposal a series of instruments and **knowledge deriving from the findings of the psychology of development and psychology of education**. These provide a series of refinings with regard to the understanding of the development stages (cognitive, emotional, moral etc.) and of the characteristics of various ages of children. Motivation plays a key role in initiating and supporting behaviours (including the Christian ones). The understanding of the motivational mechanisms, of the factors determining and supporting it, may be very useful in the



missionary – pastoral activity. Provided that one knows how to use this knowledge, doubled of course by the whole range of values and methods from the treasure of pedagogy and Christian spirituality, one will succeed in optimizing the catechetical effort in particular and the missionary – pastoral one in general.

**My personal missionary – pastoral experience** that I have accumulated over the 10 years as a priest in Târgu Lăpuș, has confirmed once more the fact that all these theoretical guidelines (theological and psychopedagogical) are viable and relevant. Besides a catechetical and missionary – pastoral strategy based on certain adequate theological and psychopedagogical guidelines, our undertaking is often a „lottery” and most of the time ends up in failure. On the other hand, an adequate and effective missionary – pastoral strategy is useless without shepherds with a special calling, willing to offer and also to dedicate themselves.