MISSIONARIES, MONKS AND MARTYRS:

MAKING DISCIPLES OF ALL NATIONS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The Eastern Orthodox church, with its 2000 year tradition, is a treasure in the modern Christian world. From its apostolic and patristic roots, through its 1000 year Byzantine civilization as the center of the Christianity, to its expansion into eastern Europe and Russia, this church of the first seven ecumenical councils represents an unsurpassed and unbroken heritage of theology, liturgy and spirituality.

Often overlooked, however, is the great missionary tradition of the Eastern body of Christendom. Missions, as a proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ to all creation, have always played an integral role in the very essence of the Orthodox church. Certainly, there have existed periods when the Orthodox have been less active in fulfilling the Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20). But often, these lapses can be attributed to adverse historical conditions rather than indifference. In fact, a host of missionary figures throughout the centuries have carried on the apostolic zeal of proclaiming the gospel to all peoples. This present study will review the lives and ministries of a select number of these missionaries in order to show how missions have always been a part of the very nature of the Orthodox church.

Present Ignorance of Orthodox Mission History

Within Catholic and Protestant circles, it is often assumed that the Orthodox church rarely engaged in missionary work. Western theologians, either because of parochialism or sheer ignorance, frequently overlooked the host of missionaries coming out of Orthodoxy. Their oversight has unfortunately been reinforced by numerous misconceptions concerning Orthodox history and the adverse historical circumstances that thwarted efforts to spread her message.

From the time of the apostolic age until the Great Schism between East and West in the 11th century, continuous missionary activity has occurred. One writer accurately observed that, "while Byzantine missions before the split between Rome and Constantinople show definite characteristics distinct from those conducted by the Western church, all mission work of that period is often labeled 'patristic'" (Stamoolis, 1986:19). Such a general label has stripped away from the Orthodox church part of her mission

heritage. The rich missionary activity of Byzantium included outreach to the Goths, Huns, Iberians, Cochis, Cucasus, Celts, Persians, and Armenians among others (Yannoulatos, 1989:65). It culminated with the conversion of the Slavic peoples by the exemplary missions of the brothers Cyril and Methodios. Only recently has the Western world become familiar with such a history, thanks to the modern scholarship of such people as Francis Dvornik (*Byzantine Missions to the Slavs*).

A second factor contributing to a general ignorance of Orthodox missions is an unfamiliarity with historical circumstances facing Orthodox lands over the past six centuries. After a millennium of Orthodox domination and expansion through the Byzantine Empire, the collapse of Constantinople in 1453 brought a period of darkness over the Orthodox church. With the rise of the Ottoman Empire, the activities of the Orthodox church were greatly restricted. Islamic law forbade any proclamation of the gospel to those outside the Christian faith, while conversion to Islam was greatly encouraged and sometimes forced upon the subjugated Christians. During these 400 plus years of oppression and decline, the suffering Orthodox church in Greece, the Middle East, and the Balkans was unable to participate in much missionary activity. Soon, their rich heritage of missions was almost forgotten.

As the 19th and 20th centuries brought independence to many of these Orthodox lands in the Balkans, the establishment of national, administratively autonomous Orthodox churches arose. Independence and freedom also brought the emergence of a secularized nationalism which negatively impacted the church's zeal for the Great Commission and obscured her authentic apostolic tradition.

While the Orthodox church throughout the Balkans produced little missionary activity during its dark ages, the apostolic torch was passed to a former missionary land - Russia. From the 14th century, the Orthodox church in Russia actively participated in significant missionary work throughout the lands north and east of Kiev. Many noteworthy examples of Russian missionaries shone forth from the 14th to 16th centuries. Missionary activity reached its apex in the 19th century, when a great renewal in spiritual life and apostolic zeal swept across Russia. Because most of these missions took place among the numerous ethnic groups within the vast boundaries of the former tzarist Russian Empire, the amazing achievements of so many missionaries drew little notice outside of Orthodox circles.

The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 abruptly disrupted all activity of the Russian church while enslaving Orthodoxy's largest and most active missionary church under the yoke of communism. The Russian church struggled to survive in the 20th century while the Orthodox church in the Balkans desperately tried to recover its authentic heritage after 400 plus years of oppressive Ottoman rule. These circumstances kept the Orthodox church inactive in external missions during the first half of the 20th century. Not until the 1950s and 1960s did the church begin to recover its lost missionary momentum.

While adverse historical conditions and isolationism kept Orthodoxy largely unknown in the West, different problems have hindered a proper missionary spirit among her own people even to the present. Many Orthodox believers seem uncertain about the place of missions within the church, and struggle with the question of whether the apostolic zeal of spreading the gospel "to all nations" is even a part of the Eastern tradition. After centuries of striving simply to survive, the Orthodox only now are responding to the new found freedom of the last 150 years and are beginning to rediscover the fullness of their rich heritage.

There is another reason some Orthodox believers struggle to witness for their faith. For these, the word 'missions' implies

> proselytizing, and therefore is viewed with great suspicion. Over the centuries in many Orthodox churches 'mission' has meant penetration by the non-Orthodox missionary agencies into the traditional Orthodox territory in order to convert Orthodox believers, who at different times in history and in different ways have been regarded as 'dissidents' or 'schismatics' (Bria, 1980:3).

This confusion of terminology has led some Orthodox to reject or abandon all forms of missions and to forget the historical roots of their mission imperative. An essential need within Orthodoxy today is a clear articulation of what missions truly are. In other words, a clear definition of missions as "the fundamental apostolic vocation of the church to proclaim the gospel to the world" (Bria 1980:3) needs to be restated.

A second objection that modern Orthodox often have toward external mission is the fear that the church at home is too weak to participate in work abroad. This element emphasizes a priority of ministry among the church's nominal members at the expense of foreign missions. However, proponents of foreign missions emphasize that participation in outreach beyond one's parochial boundaries not only fulfills the missionary imperative of Orthodoxy, but also provides great benefit and strength to the home church. As a modern Orthodox missionary remarked, "[The church] will not acquire the fervor, the broadness, the

genuineness that it should, if we continue to regard and live Christianity limited within the narrow boundaries of the community to which we belong, forgetting its universal destiny" (Yannoulatos 1962:1).

A third reason for Orthodoxy's own apathy towards missions remains the intense nationalism which emanated from the independence movements in Orthodox lands of the 19th and 20th centuries. While this mentality helped Orthodox peoples free their respective lands from oppressive rule, it now plays a role in distorting the authentic Orthodox message. Ethnocentrism causes the faithful to see the role of missions as a foreign element in the faith and unknowingly leads Orthodox to betray their own roots.

For these reasons, it becomes clear why a general ignorance and apathy towards Orthodox missions exists in both Western and Orthodox circles. Such perceived views of some, however, do not coincide with the reality of Orthodox theology and history.

Foundation for Orthodox Missions

For many people, the term "missions" has a host of definitions, ranging from the proselytism model mentioned above, to a watered down understanding of simply any and every Christian effort performed by the church. For the purposes of this study, the term "missions" implies

> witness to the living Trinitarian God, who calls all to salvation and binds human beings together in the church, who otherwise would not belong to it or who have lost their tie to it. This characteristic [reaching the non-believer - those unaware, indifferent or hostile to the faith] distinguishes it from mere pastoral care, which is directed towards those already incorporated in the church . . . Mission is "inward" or "internal," when it takes place within its geographical, linguistic and cultural bounds, and "outward" or "external" when it reaches beyond these bounds to others nations and lands. (Yannoulatos 1989:63).

The purpose of missions is the proclamation of the gospel to all people. Missions enables unreached people to freely enter into the church and willingly begin their journey of salvation in the life of the Holy Trinity. Compare this understanding with God's divine mission, which from the creation of the world through His incarnation, life, death, resurrection and second coming is the revelation of His glory, and the call for humanity to partake of this divine glory. In such a comparison, God's mission and the church's mission coincide. One Orthodox hierarch noted:

> Since the Christian mission is incorporated into God's mission, the final goal of our mission surely cannot be different from His. And this purpose, as the Bible (especially *Ephesians* and *Colossians*) makes clear, is the "recapitulation" (*anakephalaiosis*) of the

> universe in Christ and our participation in the divine glory, the eternal, final glory of God (Yannoulatos 1965:4).

Thus, "the Church's mission, the mission of every Christian, is to acknowledge, promote, and participate in the glory of God" (Stamoolis 1986:52). Although other motives exist, participation in the expansion of God's glory remains the primary goal for proclaiming the gospel to all creation.

Love of God and for God

God's love for all people everywhere acts as a cornerstone for the missionary enterprise of the church. A summary of God's action in history can be found in the fourth Gospel's famous passage, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him" (Jn 3:16,17). Here, the motivating factor of God's *love* for the salvation of *the world* stands out. Love motivated God to act in history and to touch humanity in a special way so that all people could return to paradise. Jesus's life and ministry epitomized love for all creation. In like manner, the church's continuation of God's ministry through her missionary activity finds one of its fundamental motivating factors in its imitation of God's love. By imitating God, the church is called to imitate the supreme missionary of history.

The *love for God* motivates the church in a different manner. Jesus said to his disciples, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (Jn 14:15). The last commandment Christ gave his disciples before He ascended into heaven was the Great Commission: "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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you" (Mt 28:19,20). Although one Orthodox missiologist notes that Jesus' directive often seems to be the "forgotten commandment," this same theologian promotes the unquestionable necessity between the church and this command.

> It is not a question of 'can we?' but of an imperative command, 'we must.' 'Go ye therefore and teach all nations.' 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' There is no 'consider if you can,' there is only a definite, clear cut command of Our Lord . . . Missionary activity is not simply something 'useful' or just 'nice' but something imperative, a foremost duty, if we really want to be [faithful] to our Orthodox Faith (Yannoulatos 1959:2,3).

Of course, such a proclaimed duty does not act as the primary motivator, rather the church's response comes more out of its sense of love for its Creator and Savior. The faithful do not respond because they have to, but because they have a strong desire springing from their love for God.

Inner Necessity

Along with the motivating factors of the love of God and for God, a connected theme is the "inner necessity" that dwells deep within every baptized Orthodox believer to proclaim the gospel. This need comes directly from one's union with God, and the consequences that result from such a union.

> 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' (I Cor 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.* The Christian who is incorporated into Christ and who really lives in Him *cannot* think, feel, will, act or see the world in a different way from Christ (Yannoulatos 1965:293).

In this union with Christ, the vision of Jesus becomes one with every believer, and thus God's universal Christianity becomes incompatible with a parochial view of just one's parish, city, country, or ethnic group. As Christ constantly sought to find the "lost sheep" and heal those in need, in like manner, every believer must feel a burning desire to help the "lost" of one's own day. Unquestionably, the most precious treasure in the world is the truth revealed by Jesus Christ. The people who have not received this "pearl of great price" are therefore those most deeply lost. Unfortunately, many people have been denied the truth, not because they have rejected Christ, but simply because they have never had an opportunity to hear about Him. For this reason, a compelling desire dwells deep within all the faithful to go out and share the gospel with the whole world. As the apostle Paul wrote,

> For, 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.' But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring the good news!' (Rom 10:13-15).

Such an imperative for the individual Christian applies even more so to the Orthodox church at large. The proclamation of the Orthodox as the "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church" makes sense only if there exists this "inner necessity" propelling the church into missionary activity. A church that claims to be the

body of Christ does not have the right to exclusively keep the gospel as its own treasure. It must imitate God in every manner, especially in its apostolic mission.

> Church without mission is a contradiction in terms. . . A static Church which lacks a vision and a constant endeavor to proclaim the Gospel to the oikoumene could hardly be recognized as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church to whom the Lord entrusted the continuation of His work (Yannoulatos 1965:296).

A faith or spirituality devoid of any universal concern is not authentically Orthodox:

> Let us not deceive ourselves. *Our spiritual life* [both the Church and every believer] *will not acquire the fervor, the broadness, the genuineness that it should, if we continue to regard and live Christianity limited within the narrow boundaries of the community to which we belong*, forgetting its universal destiny; even if this community is our town or our country (Yannoulatos 1962:10).

Thus, the "inner necessity" driving both the individual and church reveals that a church without missionary activity is a crippled entity. Without missionary zeal, such a gathering of people is no better than a club, or some other type of social group, but by no means can it claim to be the true body of Christ.

History of Orthodox Missions

A detailed study of Orthodox history vividly reveals that missions is not an adjunct to the faith, but an element of her very core. Support for this view comes from countless Orthodox Christians who participated in missionary activity. Although monastics often comprised the bulk of missionaries, the church never limited this apostolic task to them alone. "Bishops, priests, monks, emperors, princesses, diplomats, officers, soldiers, merchants, mariners, emigrants, travellers, captives, were all involved" (Yannoulatos 1989:66). For example, a brief chronology of several famous missionaries shows a variety of lay, monastic, and ordained servants: beginning with the apostles and continuing through such stalwart champions of Christ as Nina of Georgia (4th century), Gregory the Illuminator of Armenia (4th century), the early monastics of Egypt, Palestine and Syria (4th and 5th century), Frumentios of Ethiopia (4th century), Patrick of Ireland (5th century), Cyril and Methodios (9th century), Antony the Russian of Mt. Athos (11th century), Stephen of Perm (14th century), Sergius of Radonezh (14th), Kosmas Aitolos (18th century), Macarius Gloukharev (19th century), Herman and Innocent of Alaska (18th-19th centuries), and Nicholas of Japan (19th-20th century). This selection offers a glimpse of the inexhaustible list of missionary figures throughout the two millennium of Orthodox history.

From this host of examples, a common theme emerges from their lives and their ministries. First, each missionary incessantly strove to imitate Christ and radiate His presence to others. These faithful men and women characterized the self-emptying sacrifice and service to which Christ calls all his disciples, when he told them to "deny themselves, take up their cross daily and follow me" (Lk 9:23). These apostles realized that before they could preach the gospel, they had to proclaim the gospel with their lives. This attitude implies a holistic relationship with Jesus Christ - in intellect, body, and soul. "It is the transformed life of the entire being in Christ that is the true characteristic of the missionary" (Yannoulatos 1964:147).

Such an understanding of "being" before any doing or preaching helps explain one common type of missionary in the Orthodox tradition. There always have existed the "passive" missionaries, people who exemplified the words of St. Seraphim of Sarov when he said, "Acquire inner peace, and thousands around you will find their salvation." These missionaries acted as centripetal forces, drawing others to the faith by their life and example.

> Normally, passive mission means people remain in one place, trying through prayer and a simple, holy life-style to achieve advanced dimensions of discipleship and spirituality. The holy, Christ-centered, Spirit-filled life which results not only attracts the attention of many, but brings observers into an acceptance of the Christian Gospel which they credit for producing such holy people. This is a common phenomenon in Orthodoxy (Veronis 1983:54).

The monastic tradition provides the prototype for this kind of missions. From the earliest monks in the Egyptian, Palestinian, and Syrian deserts, to the more recent missionaries who first evangelized Alaska in the 18th century, the "passive" monastics have long been misunderstood by those of the non-Orthodox tradition as self-centered or self-serving individuals. The truth reveals that while these holy men and women sought their own salvation, they simultaneously had a concern for the world around them. Witness the works of such men as Euagrius (4th century), who often left the desert to proclaim the gospel to the pagans in Alexandria, or the ascetic monk Herman (19th century), who constantly defended the rights of the indigenous Alaskans against the cruel treatment by the Russian traders and colonists.

Perhaps the more familiar type of Orthodox missionary was the person involved in incessant activity and movement. The apostle Paul symbolized this model when he traveled extensively to different areas, proclaiming the gospel to the unreached. In like manner, Innocent Veniaminov, one of the greatest missionaries of any tradition, ministered for more than forty-five years in Alaska and Eastern Siberia. Each

year he traveled thousands of miles to numerous islands and villages throughout his vast dioceses, preaching the good news to all the people of this area. As with the "passive" missionaries, these "active" missionaries also felt the strong conviction of not only preaching the gospel, but first and foremost imitating Christ by living and "being" the gospel.

Methods of Orthodox Missions

Whether active or passive missions, the majority of Orthodox missionaries used a number of common features in their mission ministry. First of all, the primary goal of any mission was always the creation of an authentic local eucharistic community. In other words, the missionary strove to help the native people develop a church which they could truly call their own. Missionaries sought to achieve this goal by first translating into the vernacular language the Holy Scripture, liturgical texts and the writings of church fathers. The event of Pentecost, where "each one heard them speaking in their own native language" (Acts 2:6), set the model for all future missionaries. Unlike the Western body of the early church, the East never believed in solely using the three ancient languages of Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Indeed, within the first centuries of the undivided church, more than "70 liturgical languages were in use" (Yannoulatos 1964:146).

The use of indigenous languages in missionary activity led to the translations of the Scriptures and divine services from the early centuries. Within the first 400 years of the church, indigenous Scriptures were created for such mission areas as Armenia, Ireland and Ethiopia, among other places. The missionaries not only provided translations, but when the need arose, they even constructed a native script. Examples of this can be seen in the Cyrillic alphabet established by Cyril, Stephen of Perm's creation of the Zyrian transcript, or Innocent's formation of a written text for the Aleuts and Thlingits of Alaska.

The missionaries went beyond translation into the vernacular. They sought to incarnate the gospel by embodying God's truth in the very culture of the people. Probably more than anything else, this respect for and incorporation of the culture "has been the hallmark of the best of Orthodox mission work" (Stamoolis 1986:61). Basically, the missionaries tried to follow the example of Christ's incarnation.

> The Living Word became Incarnate; thus the written word must also become incarnate. Christ comes to humankind in a form it can perceive and understand; thus the word of Christ must also come in a form that can be perceived and understood. God, who speaks through his revealed and recorded word, must speak in a language the hearer can

> understand. Thus it is the role of the missionary to be an imitator of Christ. As Christ translated God's thoughts to humankind, the missionary in turn translates them into another language to fulfill the gospel commission (Stamoolis 1986:62).

Through both the language and the customs of the people, the missionary sought to create new, live churches rooted in the souls and lives of the people. These apostles showed a sincere respect to the individual and the peoples, so that their own characteristics would become truly sanctified. This work would finally result in an indigenous church which properly adopted elements from the local traditions, as well as endorsed the people's inner personality (Yannoulatos 1964:145).

In order to incarnate the gospel as effectively as possible, another noteworthy aspect of these missions was the incorporation of the indigenous people into the ministry, especially the holy orders. The method of incorporation varied, but a common plan by the missionaries was to take the most promising converts and ordain them in an expeditious fashion. The clergy, however, did not become the only form of indigenous leaders. From Innocent's ministry in Alaska, one sees the creation of a body of laymen and women who would conduct weekly worship services in the absence of a priest. These "readers," as they were called, not only helped the people participate in worship services without a priest, but also helped them take ownership of the church. A similar pattern could be seen in Nicholas Kasatkin's work in Japan, where he prepared Japanese lay leaders as evangelists. This emphasis on Japanese leadership, as clergy and lay leaders, provided the impetus for exceptional acceptance of the faith as their own.

A third characteristic of Orthodox missionaries was their desire to establish self-governing churches. The missionary sought to guide the indigenous church into becoming an independent church, one which would grow from a mother/daughter relationship with the sending body, to a sister/sister relationship. Establishment of such local churches eventually would lead to self-governing, autonomous, national Orthodox churches.

Selected Missionaries

In the following chapters, missionaries which represent a wide chronological range have been been selected. The example of these missionaries clearly supports the conclusion that the church was not only active during one era of its history, but that missionaries arose to follow Christ's Great Commission throughout the

centuries. For the Orthodox reader, the goal of the wide selection of missionaries is to better acquaint the faithful with their own evangelistic tradition. By thoroughly understanding their history, the Orthodox will come to realize the great privilege and responsibility they have in continuing the inspiring missionary tradition of their ancestors.

For the non-Orthodox reader, the purpose of the following selection is to show that Orthodoxy has an ancient tradition of missions from which the West can benefit. Not only have missions played an integral part in Orthodox tradition, but many of the characteristics and methods which Protestant missions have used since the Reformation (vernacular translations, indigenous leadership), had already been introduced centuries before in Orthodox missions.

CHAPTER 1

ST. PAUL: APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES (1ST CENTURY)

The expansion of Christianity from its Jewish beginnings into the vast Gentile world has its roots in a missionary par excellence, the apostle Paul. From a modern perspective, it is difficult to fully comprehend the impact a single missionary with a small band of followers had on the rapid spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. These apostles traveled countless miles, endured numerous hardships, and persevered continuous dangers. Despite these challenges, they succeeded in proclaiming the good news throughout the region of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece. After a short eight- to twelve- year ministry in these areas, St. Paul considered his work finished and could even say that there existed "no further places for me in these regions" (Rom 15:23).

St. Paul's successful missionary endeavor is even more astounding considering all the negative factors he and his companions encountered throughout their ministries. In a striking autobiographical description, the apostle summarized the struggles he persevered:

> [I endured] far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches (2 Cor 11:23-28).

Despite the adversity which St. Paul encountered, he nevertheless overcame each and every obstacle and established a luminous precedent for all future Christian missionaries.

In light of the fact that St. Paul influenced the growth and direction of the church more than any other person after Jesus Christ, the Orthodox church has always acknowledged the apostle as a pillar of the church and the stellar example of a missionary. St. Paul's life and ministry, including his conversion experience, his subsequent apostolic calling to the Gentile world, and his overall mission strategy offers a

solid foundation by which Orthodox missionaries of future centuries based their work. Thus, this study of St. Paul's life describes the framework in which Orthodox missionaries of future generations labored.

Historical Background

St. Paul was a Jew born in the Roman province of Tarsus, a city located in modern day Turkey. Growing up in a Roman city opened a diverse world to any devout Jew. First, the Greek cultural and religious mind-set permeated every aspect of life in this region. As a Jew in the diaspora, the Greek influence not only touched St. Paul's secular outlook, but even affected his understanding of Judaism. "The use of the Septuagint, for example, obviously influenced his vocabulary and thinking" (Gilliland 1983:22). Along with the Greek influence was the impact of the Roman spirit. St. Paul proudly claimed Roman citizenship with all its advantages even though the Jewish people hated Rome as their enemy and oppressor. He never hesitated to announce this citizenship, especially when he could use it as a means for propagating the gospel (Acts 23:27-28, 25:8-11).

First and foremost, though, St. Paul was a Jew. Raised in a pious Jewish home, he thoroughly learned all the traditions of his ancestors. As a child in Jerusalem, he studied under one of the great Jewish rabbis of his day. His education led him to become a strict Pharisee and religious leader devoted to upholding the Jewish law in every aspect of his life. Before his radical conversion experience, St. Paul considered himself above reproach in his behavior and belief. He faithfully followed the customs of his people as he grew in zeal and knowledge.

St. Paul enthusiastically preached the proper ways of Judaism as a teacher of the law, and took great offense at anything that threatened the purity of his religion. Thus, when he heard of the growing sect of Jews proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, he saw a direct threat to his faith. He led a campaign to cleanse the faith of this dangerous heresy, and even went so far as to approve the murder of Stephen, the first martyr of the church.

Such a background laid the foundation for a radical transformation in St. Paul. Although this change occurred in a sudden manner, it did not take place in a vacuum. "No conversion can take place apart from the conditioning influences that bear upon the personal life of the individual" (Gilliland

1983:77). St. Paul came to a point in time when a dramatic conversion opened his eyes to a new understanding of his faith and altered him from a persecutor to a proponent of Christianity.

Conversion and Calling

The major crisis of St. Paul's life came on the Damascus road as he traveled to persecute a sect of Jews following Jesus. Along the way St. Paul came face to face with the resurrected Jesus Christ, and from this encounter accepted a radically different view of Jesus of Nazareth. He did not consider this conversion experience a change from Judaism to Christianity, but understood his role as a faithful Jew in a new light. St. Paul's conversion was the beginning of a new perception of faith where his life was redirected, his loyalties were revised, and his values reappraised (Gilliland 1983:71).

A personal and intimate encounter with Jesus transformed St. Paul's whole concept of God. As he noted in his conversion account, "I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' Then he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting'" (Acts 22:7,8). This living and dynamic encounter with the crucified and risen Lord set St. Paul on a new understanding of his life-long journey towards God. He no longer saw the Jewish law as the means of pleasing God, but realized that God wanted his complete loyalty to focus on a particular person, Jesus Christ. This new commitment also required him to join the body of his believers, which was the church.

The encounter with Christ transformed St. Paul into a new creation. He profoundly realized that the same risen Jesus who met him on the road was now ready to work in and through him. "The risen Lord had seized him; he became a man possessed by the powerful Spirit of the living and risen Lord" (Grassi 1978:23). The tremendous love he felt from Jesus became a dominant and impelling force in his life.

Closely connected with St. Paul's whole conversion experience was his special call as an apostle. After meeting Christ face-to-face and experiencing the love of God that was extended even to a person who had persecuted the Lord, St. Paul felt that he had something important to share with others. He believed that this encounter with the risen Christ qualified him as an authentic apostle. St. Paul met the same Jesus which the chosen twelve disciples had lived with and learned from for three years. From this meeting, he

heard the clear call to become an instrument in sharing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ with all people. He noted in one of his conversion accounts that the Lord specifically said to him, "I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you" (Acts 26:16). In other words, his conversion experience was intertwined with his call as an apostle.

This relationship between conversion and call was evident in the first incident following St. Paul's transformation. After Ananias laid his hands on the blind Saul and the persecutor received his sight, he immediately "began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, 'He is the Son of God'" (Acts 9:20). St. Paul sensed a divine purpose in his conversion, and as time passed, he saw this purpose in his role as apostle to the Gentiles. He realized "as no one before him, the all-embracing reality of the Christian message, and he understood that the gospel itself, with its universal claim, demands that the mission should be to all human beings, including the 'Greeks and barbarians'" (Hahn 1965:100). This imperative of preaching is seen throughout St. Paul's writing (Gal 2:7, I Tim 1:11, I Thess 2:4, Rom 10:13-15), but can be summarized in his comment, "an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel" (I Cor 9:16).

A proper view of this relationship between St. Paul's conversion experience and his subsequent call to evangelism and missions helps one understand the apostle better. It also is a pattern often seen in future missionaries. First, there is a conversion experience which leads to a personal and dynamic encounter with Jesus Christ (although this experience may not always be as dramatic as St. Paul's). It is imperative that this deep relationship with Christ be forged. As a modern Orthodox missionary bishop stated, when confronted by a convert of the faith, "I also am a convert. Each and every day I am converted to a deeper understanding and relationship with my Lord and God" (Yannoulatos 1993). This understanding of conversion helps a missionary see the proper basis from which to lead others in their conversion experience. Conversion in this sense is not only a prerequisite for missionaries, but a step in the lives of all Christian believers as they grow in Christ and aspire to be his witnesses.

From the example of St. Paul's conversion experience and subsequent life, the importance of a continual renewing encounter in Christ becomes obvious. This period of intense spiritual life and preparation can be seen repeatedly in the lives of Orthodox missionaries.

Mission Strategy

St. Paul's ministry and missionary strategy set a model for future missionaries. He and his disciples traveled to countless pagan areas and established numerous Christian communities within a brief period of time. It seems paradoxical that St. Paul would say after only three different missionary journeys over an eight to twelve year period in the regions of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece that there existed no more places in the eastern part of the Roman empire for him to missionize. Indeed, he felt the need to go on to Spain in order to reach out to virgin lands which had never heard the gospel.

The Person of St. Paul

Certain features and methods played an integral factor in the success of St. Paul's work. First of all, St. Paul lived a life that radiated Christ. He wrote, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives within me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:19-20). This life "in Christ" meant that St. Paul, like any believer, uniquely experienced the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in his own life. Through baptism, a believer put on Christ and became a new creation. St. Paul penned, "We are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them . . . So if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new" (2 Cor 5:14-17).

This new life in Christ was the most radiant feature of St. Paul's life and ministry. St. Paul attracted listeners to the message he preached by living a Christ-centered life. A noteworthy example was the time when St. Paul and Silas were in prison in Philippi. Despite being beaten with rods and thrown into prison, the two apostles still found strength to pray and sing hymns at midnight in their cell. This witness,

which overflowed from their inner beings, impacted the other prisoners and even the jailor in such a way that the jailor asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

In countless other situations, St. Paul's presence brought to life the spirit of God. For example, St. Paul exhorted his followers in Philippi to "rejoice in the Lord always" even though he himself languished in a prison cell. He revealed the secret of his life when he disclosed, "I have learned to be content with whatever I have . . . [because] I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Phil 4:11,13). St. Paul's life was one intertwined with Christ to such a degree that people saw Christ in St. Paul.

Missionary Teams

A second aspect of St. Paul's work was his strong belief in teamwork. He never tried to accomplish goals by himself, but rather traveled with companions and disciples. His missionary teams acted as Christ-centered communities, offering an example of what a church should be. In this manner, new believers saw the unity and love that St. Paul and his companions shared, and imitated this behavior in their own church. An interesting observation was how the apostle often traveled with a mixture of Jewish and Greek disciples, and even worked with both women and slaves. This multi-ethnic composition of co-workers reflected the gospel message which St. Paul often preached, whereby in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor freeman.

By training a variety of men and women to act as co-workers and co-apostles, St. Paul not only enhanced his own ministry but solidified the spread of the gospel to other regions by cultivating future leaders. Just as St. Paul learned under Barnabas, he in turn became the teacher of other believers who became future leaders and missionaries in their own right.

Working with a variety of co-workers offered the added advantage of displaying the full range of gifts which the Holy Spirit gave various team members. St. Paul knew that a group of believers better represented the body of Christ than any single individual. This variety of gifts not only aided St. Paul in his ministry, but also modeled a key component he wanted to instill in all new churches. The proper expression of gifts in a Christian community encouraged the entire church to get involved in the proclamation of the gospel.

Church Planting in Strategic Locations

A third strategy St. Paul practiced was the idea of establishing churches in key locations throughout regions where the gospel had not been preached. He focused on central towns and cities, instead of attempting to preach in every small village personally. As the historian Roland Allen noted, "all the cities, or towns, in which he planted churches were centers of Roman administration, of Greek civilization, of Jewish influence, or of some commercial importance" (Allen 1962:13).

St. Paul believed that every newly established church would become itself an evangelistic center, reaching beyond its parochial limits. He hoped to create a community of believers who actively collaborated with the gospel message, not one which passively received it. The Holy Spirit filled each new convert with the same grace that St. Paul had received, and thus, he expected a similar missionary zeal and enthusiasm from each new believer.

With each budding ministry, the apostle sought to establish local leaders who would continue his work once he left a region. He realized that the gospel would only spread through a joint effort with the local community, and he gave responsibilities to the leaders and members of the church. Even though newly baptized members had only a minimal grasp of the faith, he trusted in the power of the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide these believers in their sharing and witnessing. He both allowed and expected this to happen.

The establishment of local leaders and workers included both men and women, Jews and Greeks, free people and slaves. Examples of active women included Lydia, the first convert in Philippi, who after hearing the message immediately proclaimed the gospel to her household, as well as others like Priscilla, Phoebe, Persis and Mary. St. Paul's letter to Philemon portrays a slave like Onesimus working for the gospel. All believers played an integral role in St. Paul's ministry.

From this perspective of establishing active mission-minded churches in central locations, we can understand why St. Paul felt his mission work completed after such a brief period of time. He wrote in his letter to the church of Rome, "From Jerusalem and as far around as Illyricum [modern day Albania] I have fully proclaimed the good news of Christ . . . But now, with no further place for me in these regions, I desire, as I have for many years, to come to you when I go to Spain" (Rom 15:19,20,23). While he did not believe that every person had heard the Christian message, he felt that he established enough vibrant, growing churches in key centers of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece to assure the continuing spread and growth of the gospel.

Short Stays in Different Areas

A fourth principle St. Paul practiced was the idea of staying in each center for only a short period of time. He established a church, ordained local leadership, and then quickly moved on to new frontiers. St. Paul usually did not stay beyond several months in one area, and never more than two or three years. For example, some scholars calculate that during his first missionary journey, the apostle stayed in Lystra for only six months (Allen 1962:84). In Macedonia, Paul spent no more than five months in establishing the church of Thessalonica. In other areas, he stayed no longer than a few weeks. The only two exceptions were Corinth and Ephesus where he stayed one and a half to two years.

St. Paul realized the temptation of staying in an area longer than necessary. He understood the need for new converts to have proper guidance in their journey towards acquiring a fuller knowledge of the faith. His calling as an apostle to unreached lands, however, kept him from dwelling too long in one place. After establishing the foundations of a worshiping, Eucharist-centered, and witnessing community he moved on. He believed in giving certain freedom to the young churches, teaching them to trust in the Holy Spirit to guide and direct them. Of course, the apostle did not completely abandon the new churches. He kept in constant contact with them through frequent visits by his co-workers, as well as through his letters. He also reminded them frequently that they were a part of the whole body of Christ, and encouraged them to keep contact with the other Christian churches. Finally, whenever an urgent need or opportunity arose, St. Paul himself would visit his neophyte churches, or send a faithful disciple, in order to encourage, strengthen, correct, and direct them.

Style of Preaching

Another strategy of St. Paul's mission was his unique method of preaching. According to the book of Acts, St. Paul boldly preached in the local synagogue of each city he entered. As a Jew, he felt the desire to first offer the message of salvation in Jesus Christ to his fellow Jews. When the Jews rejected this message, St. Paul turned to the non-Jewish proselytes and God-fearers who worshipped in the synagogues, and to the Gentile population at large.

The central message St. Paul used in his preaching was the idea of "being all things to all people." He wrote:

> For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings (I Cor 9:19-23).

In preaching the gospel to the Jews, he acted as a Jew. St. Paul didn't hesitate to mention his credentials: "a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless" (Phil 3:5,6). Among a Jewish crowd he used terminology which his audience understood. He pointed to the Hebrew Scriptures and showed how Jesus was the long awaited Messiah to which the law, prophets, and history pointed. He focused on the person of Jesus and tried to show what the consequences of Christ's life, death, and resurrection meant for the chosen people of God. Following this explanation, he called his listeners to repentance and acceptance of the gospel.

With a Gentile crowd, however, St. Paul presented his message in a different way. He adapted his frame of reference to one his audience grasped. He realized the importance of both understanding the cultural aspects of the people to whom he was addressing. This included an understanding of the religious background from which they came. St. Paul's preaching in Athens offers a vivid example. With the philosophical and idolatrous Athenians, he mentioned nothing about the Jewish background and fulfilled prophecies of the Messiah Jesus. Instead, he dealt with the Greeks at their level. He didn't condemn them for their gross idolatry, but instead chose to find good in their worship:

> Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious; for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To The Unknown God. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you (Acts 17:22,23).

From this opening, he talked about the Creator of all, God as the giver of life, God's concern that all people seek Him, repentance toward God, God as the Judge of all, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead. He dealt with topics they understood, and even quoted Greek philosophers and poets to support his apology of

the faith. In this way, St. Paul contextualized the gospel and minimized the chances of his Gentile audience rejecting his message simply because of a cultural or religious bias.

Of course, as much as St. Paul tried to be conciliatory and respectful to each audience, he also believed that he could never compromise the fullness of the truth. St. Paul never tried to hide the difficulties of the gospel. He wanted all potential believers to fully realize the narrow path to which Christ calls his followers, and the sacrifices required of any believers. In a situation like Athens, Paul did not brutally attack their idolatrous beliefs. "But, on the other hand, there was no weak condoning of the offence of idolatry, no eager anxiety to make the best of a false religion, no hazy suggestion that every religion, if only it is rightly understood, is a worship of the true God and a teaching which leads to Him" (Allen 1962:70).

St. Paul believed in boldly sharing the fullness of the gospel, and presenting a clear understanding of how each new believer must live. For those coming from sinful backgrounds, the apostle expected a complete break with the past. "There was no easy road to Christ's glory, no making the best of both worlds, no hope of salvation but in Christ, and no entrance into the church except with the certainty of suffering persecution" (Allen 1962:70).

St. Paul then expected a decision after each conciliatory presentation of the gospel. He realized that the potential existed for the people to reject his message and he allowed freedom for his hearers to choose this path. But he hoped that the Holy Spirit would move every listener to respond in a positive way.

Strategy of Prayer

St. Paul had a strong belief of prayer as a foundation for all his ministry and work. In every letter the Apostle wrote to his neophyte churches, he always reassured them of his regular prayers for them. For example, in his letter to the church at Philippi he wrote, "I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now" (Phil 1:3-5). One of his most beautiful prayers for his spiritual children came in his letter to the Ephesians, when he noted,

> I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and

> revelation as you come to know him, so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power" (Eph 1:16-19).

Through this reassurance, he not only placed his newborn converts into the hands of the Almighty God, but also modeled the practice of turning to God in prayer at all times and for all things.

Along with prayer for his churches, he also asked new believers to raise their voices in prayer on his behalf and for the spread of the gospel. St. Paul believed that he worked in vain if the Holy Spirit did not direct and guide his ministry. He desired constant prayer for protection, strength and guidance for himself and his co-workers. "Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly" (Eph 6:19,20). In his letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle exhorted, "Pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified everywhere, just as it is among you" (2 Thess 3:1). Prayer undergirded St. Paul's strategy and success.

Conclusion

Beginning with his conversion experience and the intimate relationship he developed with Christ, and continuing with his work as an apostle to the Gentiles and the strategies he used, St. Paul represents a dynamic picture of a faithful and fruitful missionary. The Eastern Orthodox Church faithfully followed his example as she labored to fulfill the Great Commission throughout the centuries.

CHAPTER 2

FIRST MONASTICS OF EGYPT, PALESTINE AND SYRIA (4TH CENTURY)

The apostle Paul and the disciples of Christ captured the early church's attention as missionaries who traveled from place to place to spread the gospel of Christ. As the early church developed, another type of missionary outreach became apparent. It emanated from monastics who, more often than not in the Eastern church, remained in one place and attracted disciples for Christ. They were like lights on top of a hill that gained people's attention. Those who came under the brilliance of this light were influenced by a powerful message that transformed their lives.

Unfortunately, many historians do not consider such monastics missionaries. For example, the 4th century monks who fled into the Egyptian, Palestinian and Syrian deserts are perceived as people who desired a life dedicated to solitude and seclusion in their quest for God. Their wish to flee from a church tempted by the compromising ideals of secular society came as a result of Constantine's declaration of toleration for all religions throughout the Roman empire. This one-sided view of the 4th century monastics has led some historians to see the desert fathers as self-centered individuals, people separated from the problems of the world and concerned only about their own salvation.

The reality of the first monks presents a very different picture. Contrary to a self-centered and indifferent ministry, these monks actively fulfilled their apostolic responsibility in two specific ways. First, they realized that the most effective means of proclaiming the gospel came through living Christ-centered lives. The importance of this type of mission was well understood by monks of later centuries. Francis of Asissi summarized this attitude when he said, "Preach the gospel all the time; if necessary, use words" and Seraphim of Sarov similarly wrote, "Acquire inner peace, and thousands around you will find their salvation." In fact, this practice of "passive" missions - struggling to attain holiness through the grace of God while acting as centripetal forces in leading people to God - was a common feature in 4th century monasticism, as well as throughout Orthodox missionary history.

> Normally, passive mission means people remain in one place, trying through prayer and a simple, holy life-style to achieve advanced dimensions of discipleship and spirituality.

> The holy, Christ-centered Spirit-filled life which results not only attracts the attention of many, but brings observers into an acceptance of the Christian Gospel which they credit for producing such holy people. This is a common phenomenon in Orthodoxy (Veronis 1983:54).

A fine example of such "passive" missions was Anthony the Great, the father of desert monasticism. His holy life attracted many people, Christian and pagan alike, into the desert to discover the riches of the Christian faith and the benefits of living committed lives to God.

A second aspect of missions was the more direct way of proclaiming the gospel and defending the faith through preaching and planned outreach. The early monastics had plenty of opportunities to evangelize. Despite the edict of religious tolerance by Constantine in 313, great numbers of pagans still existed in the Roman Empire. Christianity did not become the official religion of the empire until Emperor Theodosius declared it so in 380, nearly fifty years after Constantine's death. Nevertheless, idolatry and pagan worship continued to thrive throughout the 4th century, and even survived in some recesses of the empire up to the 6th century. The aristocracy and the rural masses especially clung to their pagan beliefs. In fact, more than half of the senators under Theodosius and many of the educated philosophers still worshipped idols up to the end of the 4th century (Yannoulatos 1969:210).

Clearly, the Roman Empire four centuries after Christ's death presented a situation with many opportunities for mission. Centuries would pass before the empire would claim to be fully missionized by the Christian gospel. During the pivotal period of the 4th century, it was the the monks and desert fathers who firmly planted and cultivated Christianity, making inroads in countless pockets of paganism.

Monks as Missionaries

The desert monks' primary concern in life was experiencing and proclaiming the kingdom of God. "Their unflagging determination to win a place in God's Kingdom and their incessant prayers for its coming were charged with spiritual energy, which is not visible at first sight and whose efficacy cannot be measured statistically, but its import in establishing Christianity within the Empire has been immense" (Yannoulatos 1969:211). Preaching the kingdom of God came through their saintly lives and powerful words. As the Church historian Eusebius wrote,

> Many of the disciples at that time spurred in their soul, through the Divine Word, to an ardent love for philosophy, fulfilled the call to salvation by first distributing their substance among the needy; then setting out on journeys abroad, doing the work of evangelists, vying for the honor of preaching to those who had not yet heard the word of faith at all, and laying into their hands the writ of the Divine Gospels" (Yannoulatos 1969:212).

Anthony the Great's life of extreme asceticism, enhanced by his apostolic zeal to attract disciples, made him a very effective missionary. As one biographer of Anthony states it, his life

> conveys the strong impression that, far from being removed from society after being led to his refuge in the "inner mountains" near the Red Sea, Anthony is significantly involved with people and their affairs. He is subject to a constant stream of visitors, each of whom seeks something from him . . . Although we are told that Anthony has distanced himself from populated areas, he is far from *incommunicado* - he seems more accessible than ever. Anthony the holy man is becoming himself the destination for pilgrims and for those in need of a healer and wonder-worker (Gregg 1980:9).

When the need arose, Anthony even journeyed into Alexandria, the cosmopolitan city of Egypt, to confront the pagan philosophers of his day. In 355, after debating with one group of pagans about the truth of their respective religions, he challenged them to accept the Christian faith: "Believe then yourselves too and you shall see that our convictions are not skill in words, but faith through love lived in Christ. If you also acquire it, you will no longer seek proof through words, but you will deem faith in Christ self-sufficient" (Yannoulatos 1969:213).

Anthony passed his missionary spirit onto his disciples by teaching them the proper relationship between the solitude of the desert and the responsibility of missions. Ammonas, a disciple of Anthony, summarized his master's teachings by stating, "Those sent by God do not wish to forsake quietude, knowing that they acquire divine power through it. Not to disobey the Creator, however, they come forth to edify men" (Yannoulatos 1969:224).

Macarius the Egyptian carried out this edict well when he was exiled to a pagan island on the Nile Delta. On this island, this church father preached among the native population and performed miracles in the name of Christ. In one encounter, Macarius healed the daughter of a pagan priest and won the confidence of the natives. Through this action he "brought into the faith of Christendom both the priest and all who dwelt in that island. The converts at once took the statues out of the temple, changed its shape into the form of a church, received baptism and . . . learned the truths of Christianity taught them" (Yannoulatos 1969:212).

Apollos the coenobite, a founder of one of the first monastic communities in Egypt, instilled an overtly missionary spirit into his fellow monks when he established his monastery in Hermoupolis, an area surrounded by ten pagan villages. He urged disciples to witness their faith to their neighbors, and as a result guided the majority of the region to conversion over a period of time. His monks dedicated themselves to thoroughly catechizing their converts before their baptism.

The apostolic zeal of Apollos sprang from several deeply rooted inner beliefs. First, Apollos stressed the importance of regarding each human being with dignity. God created all people in His image, Apollos taught, and therefore, everyone deserved proper respect and love. This love for all people led the monks to go forth among the pagans and share the abundant love of God. A second practice of the monks was their constant meditation on the Holy Scriptures. The words of the Bible left no room for apathy towards the evangelistic call of the faith. Combined with this grounding in the Bible was an intense liturgical and sacramental life. Apollos believed his monks should spiritually renew themselves daily by partaking of the Eucharist. Fortified by regular Holy Communion, the monks obtained strength and power to proclaim the gospel in hostile environments. A notable and appealing aspect of Apollos's monastic community was the overall attitude of joy he instilled in all his monks. He would say,

> One need not be downcast over salvation for we are to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven . . . And having been deemed worthy of such a hope, how could we not be glad always, when the Apostle [Paul] prompts us to rejoice every moment, to pray unceasingly, to give thanks for all blessings" (Yannoulatos 1969:217).

The monk Hilarion of Gaza was another abbot who inculcated a missionary spirit within his monastic community. This outstanding missionary of Palestine was influenced by his discipleship under Anthony the Great, along with his intense study of the Scripture. Understanding the mission directive of the faith, Hilarion established his first monastic community in Gaza as a missionary center. He mobilized the 2000 monks under his leadership into missionary bands which traveled throughout the pagan regions of Palestine preaching the gospel (Yannoulatos 1969:219).

The Syrian monk Alexander, organizer of the Vigilants, also established a missionary-minded monastery. In 380, Alexander left Constantinople and spent eleven years in the Syrian desert reading the Scriptures and living a life of prayer. During this intense life of solitude, he received a call to come out from the desert and share the good news of Christ with the unreached. Beginning as an itinerant preacher,

Alexander traveled in the regions of Mesopotamia proclaiming the gospel and gathering a band of followers around him. Eventually, he established a monastery on the Euphrates with more than 400 monks, and then founded another "traveling monastery" made up of 150 of his most able monks. He guided this missionary coenobium throughout Mesopotamia and the frontier regions of the empire, preaching the gospel and leading people to a saving knowledge of the truth (Yannoulatos 1969:222).

Another Syrian hermit, Abraamius, proved to be a great missionary. He left his place of solitude after numerous years of prayer in order to travel to Lebanon and to live in the midst of a large pagan population. With several disciples, he established a residence in the middle of town, where he remained for three years. His first project among the pagan people was to build a church and to celebrate daily services. He wished to show the power of worship to the one living god. The beauty of the services and the church attracted observers and in time led many to accept baptism and the gospel.

Conclusion

There are countless other stories of missionary monks that represent the apostolic mind of the 4th century. A conversation between the monk Ammian and the hermit Eusebius summarizes the general attitude of this period. Ammian, in his desire to convince a fellow monk of the evangelistic obligation placed on all monks, exhorted him as follows:

> 'Tell me, my excellent friend, whom did you think to please, when you entered this toilsome and austere life.' As he responded, 'God of course, the law-giver and instructor in good,' Ammian went on to say: 'Now, since it is Him you love, I shall show you a way by which you will both enhance your devotion and serve the One beloved to you. For, to center all one's diligence around oneself, would not escape the charge of selfishness, methinks. The divine law speaks of loving one's neighbor as oneself; and to draw many into sharing such treasure is the intrinsic feat of love. That is what God-inspired Paul called the fulfillment of the law . . . And that second Elijah, the great John, who embraced life in the desert, was sent by Him to the banks of the Jordan, enjoining upon him to preach and baptize there. Since therefore you too are a fervent worshipper of God who has created and saved you, fashion many others into fellow-worshippers. That is most pleasing to your common Lord (Yannoulatos 1969:224).

This brief sketch of a select few desert fathers reveals the evangelistic impact these men had on the apostolic ministry of 4th century Christianity. Their contribution is noteworthy. These monks proved potent factors in the expansion of Christianity throughout Egypt, Palestine and Syria. Their holy lives and bold words challenged the Christians to live more faithful lives and the pagans to discover and to convert to the truth of the gospel.

CHAPTER 3

CYRIL AND METHODIOS: EVANGELIZERS OF THE SLAVS

(9TH CENTURY)

The brothers Cyril and Methodios are the two most famous missionaries of the Byzantine era, and exemplary patrons of the Christian church in its entirety. As enlighteners and evangelizers of the Slavic nations, their contribution to the these people in particular, as well as to missions in general, cannot be understated. The legacy of Cyril and Methodios forever tied the Slavic culture to a common literary language and literature, and in broader missiological terms, professed "the equal rights of all peoples and the equal rights of their languages" (Kantor 1983:10). Small wonder that Kenneth Latourette, the noted Protestant historian, summarized their contribution to the Christian church by stating, "If we judge them by the extent of the movements which they set in motion, they deserve to be ranked among the greatest of the Christian missionaries" (Latourette, 1938:166).

Historical Background

Cyril, born in 826/827 as Constantine, and his older brother Methodios, born in 815, were the sons of a high ranking officer in Thessalonica. During the 9th century, their hometown was the second most important city of the Byzantine Empire, and served as a cultural center for both the Byzantine and Slavic peoples. Their cosmopolitan upbringing provided many opportunities for the brothers to become familiar with the neighboring Slavic language and culture, which would prove to be an invaluable asset for the future missionaries and their work.

As sons of an important Byzantine official, the two brothers were privy to the superior education and opportunities afforded the elite. Constantine studied at the imperial university in Constantinople, where, because of his astute mind, he became known as one of the outstanding "philosophers" of his day. Following his studies at the university, the Patriarch retained Constantine in the capital city by ordaining him a deacon and making him the "librarian" of the Patriarchate, an important position which required the

young deacon to represent the Patriarch at any function the archpastor could not attend. Constantine served in this capacity for several years until resigning to become a professor of philosophy at the imperial university.

Methodios, meanwhile, entered the political fray of the Byzantine Empire, and acted as a government official of a Slavic territory for fourteen years. He, too, would abandon his initial endeavor and retreat from the world by entering one of the central Byzantine monasteries of his day on Mt. Olympus in Asia Minor.

Christian Apologist vs. the Muslims and Jews

Because of Constantine's acclaim as a Christian philosopher, the emperor frequently used him as an apologist for the faith. Beginning in 851, Constantine was called upon to join a Christian coalition that was traveling to Baghdad to debate the best Islamic scholars of the day. Although few historical facts are known about this trip, Constantine's biographer noted that by the end of the debate, his opponents were so threatened by his arguments that they tried to "poison" him. The grace of God protected him, and Constantine, then twenty-four, escaped unharmed (Kantor 1983:41).

Following this excursion outside the empire, Constantine joined his brother in the monastery on Mount Olympus. According to his biographer, Constantine remained there, "praying incessantly to God and conversing only with the Scriptures. For he and his brother always, day and night, devoted themselves to this" (Kantor 1983:41). Constantine's solitude was interrupted several years later when, once again, the emperor called on him for a special mission. The emperor sent the brothers to preach to the Khazars, a pagan people who were seeking a higher truth by examining the tenets of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. For several days Constantine tutored the people on the main doctrines of the faith, including the Incarnation, the Trinity, redemption, the Holy Scriptures, and especially the person of Jesus. By the end of the discussions, the leader of the Khazars wrote to the emperor, "Lord, you have sent us a man who in word and deed has shown us that the Christian faith is holy. We are convinced it is the true faith, and, in the hope that we too shall attain it, we have commanded all to be baptized voluntarily" (Kantor 1983:63). Before Constantine and Methodios left the region, some two hundred of the Khazars were baptized.

Mission to the Slavs

These small missionary endeavors proved to be a precursor to the great events that would lead the brothers into the annals of history. The primary mission of their lives began in 862, when Prince Rastislav of the Moravians sent an envoy to Constantinople to establish a political alliance with the Byzantine Empire. Involved in a conflict with his Frankish neighbors, the prince wanted support in his struggle for autonomy. He also had a religious request. For more than fifty years Christian missionaries had actively worked in the greater Moravian area. These Frankish missionaries always insisted upon using Latin in their worship and teaching. This insistence on a foreign tongue frustrated the prince because he knew that the majority of the people spoke only Slavic and therefore received little inspiration and instruction from the services. This reliance on Latin may have been one of the reasons why Rastislav himself remained a pagan, and why the overall missionary outreach of the Christian church had limited success. Determined to change the situation, Rastislav sent the emperor of Constantinople the following request:

> Our people [have] renounced paganism and [observe] the Christian law, but we do not have a teacher to explain to us the true Christian faith in our own language in order that other nations even, seeing this, may imitate us. Send us therefore, Master, such a bishop and teacher, because from you emanates always, to all sides, the good law (Dvornik 1970:73).

The Byzantine emperor and Patriarch Photios reacted favorably to the petition and agreed that Constantine and Methodios should lead this mission because of their diversified cultural upbringing and their excellent education. The brothers accepted no small challenge. At the time, there was no written form of the Slavic language. Therefore, before their departure to Moravia, Constantine decided to construct an original written script for the Slavic people. A foundational tenet which not only influenced his philological work, but later motivated his missionary ministry, was the belief that all civilized nations should have their own alphabet. To raise the cultural status of the Slavs would require no less.

It was in 862 that Constantine created the first Slavic letters, which scholars today generally agree is the glagolithic alphabet. (Later in the century the disciples of Cyril and Methodios modified the glagolithic letters into the Cyrillic alphabet.) Constantine's new creation, different from any other alphabet

at that time, marked the work of a linguistic genius. As one historian noted, "Constantine must rank among the greatest philologists Europe has ever produced" (Obolensky 1963:5).

Once Constantine created the written form of the Slavic language, he proceeded to translate from the original Greek a selection of readings from the Gospels which would be used in the liturgical cycle of the Slavic church, along with the Psalms and the Apostolos (sections of the Book of Acts, the Pauline Epistles, and the Universal Epistles).

By the early spring of 863, the two brothers embarked on their journey to Moravia, ready to proclaim the gospel in the language of the people. As they arrived in Central Europe, they envisioned a threefold goal. Because some form of Christianity had already been established, their main initial objective was Christian instruction rather than conversion. Rastislav assisted the missionaries in this task by providing a number of disciples for training. The brothers instructed their students in the Slavic language, groomed them to become the native clergy and leaders of the developing church, and continued to translate liturgical services and books.

This was a bold undertaking for the Moravians. Until then, all the liturgical services had been celebrated in Latin. The missionaries who preceded the brothers believed that that the only worthy languages in which to praise God were the ancient tongues of Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The Byzantines did not share this viewpoint. In fact, missionaries from the East firmly believed in using the vernacular language of the people in their worship to God. Both Constantine and Methodios saw that all tongues were "equal in the sight of the Lord; and it [was] through the language that is man's most intimate possession, through his mother tongue, that God [could] come into closest contact with the human soul" (Obolensky 1986:103). Thus, within a very brief time of their arrival to Moravia, the missionaries had translated the whole ecclesiastical office, Vespers, Compline, Matins, the Hours, and the Divine Liturgy. Following this, the brothers then translated the *Euchologion* (a Prayer Book), and even the Mass of St. Peter, because they realized that the Moravians were more familiar with the western rite services due to the long-standing presence of Latin missionaries.

The place of the Holy Scriptures figured centrally in Constantine's and Methodios' ministry, and following the translation of liturgical services, the missionaries concentrated on finishing a translation of the

four Gospels. In the prologue to this work, Constantine defended his belief of Scriptural translations by writing a beautiful poem describing the joy of people who have their own vernacular script:

> As without light there can be no joy --
> For while the eye sees all of God's creation,
> Still what is seen without light lacks beauty --
> So it is with every soul lacking letters,
> And ignorant even of God's law ...
> The law that reveals God's paradise.
> For what ear, having heard
> The sound of thunder, is not gripped with the fear of God?
> Or how can nostrils which smell no flower
> Sense the divine miracle?
> And the mouth which tastes no sweetness
> Makes of man a stone.
> Even more, the soul lacking letters
> Grows dead in human beings (Obolensky 1986:114,115)

Rastislav and his people greatly appreciated the "innovations" of these missionaries. For the first time, they began to understand their faith in a way that touched their hearts and opened them to a deeper relationship to Christ. Alas, the political winds soon changed as new Frankish armies invaded Moravian lands. With their progression, new waves of Latin missionaries re-established their presence and restored the Latin Mass. These priests began criticizing the Byzantine brothers for their liturgical novelties, particularly their use of the vernacular language in the Divine Liturgy. They argued that the divine services could only be celebrated in one of the "three sacred ancient languages." Constantine refuted their arguments and called them Pilate's disciples, because they based their views on Pilate's use of the three languages on the cross of Christ.

Despite the difficulties presented by the presence of the Frankish missionaries, Constantine and Methodios continued their work in Moravia for three years and four months. During this time, they successfully accomplished their initial goals:

> Having laid the foundation for a Moravian Church with its own Slavic liturgy and religious literature, and having formed a new school of disciples, the brothers could plan the fulfillment of the second stage of their missionary operations, which was the ordination of their disciples to the priesthood and the establishment of a hierarchy (Dvornik 1970:128).

Visit to Rome

In 867, the Byzantine missionaries and several of their best disciples left for Constantinople with hopes of ordaining the indigenous leaders there. The group did not take the most direct route to their homeland because of political instabilities, but instead chose to journey via Venice. Along the way, Prince Kocel of Pannonia invited them to visit his people. The prince had heard about the Slavic liturgical and Scriptural translations, and wanted to learn more about the missionaries' work. Upon meeting them, Kocel was so impressed that he offered fifty of his most promising students for training. The missionaries did not accept the proposal at that time, but the contact with Kocel proved providential in their future work.

Following the layover in Pannonia, Constantine and Methodios arrived in Venice only to be snubbed by numerous bishops, priests, and monks who attacked the missionaries for their liturgical "innovations." The Venetian clergy argued in defense of the three ancient languages as the only worthy tongues in which to praise the name of God. They thought it a disgrace to use a barbaric tongue like Slavic to worship the Almighty Lord. In response, Constantine began a detailed defense against this "trilingual heresy" by noting the love of God for all peoples, and the absurdity of believing that God exhibited favor towards certain languages:

> Does not God's rain fall upon all equally? And does not the sun shine also upon all? And do we not all breathe air in the same way? Are you not ashamed to mention only three tongues, and to command all other nations and tribes to be blind and deaf? Tell me, do you render God powerless, that He is incapable of granting this? . . . We know of numerous peoples who possess writing and render glory unto God, each in its own language. Surely these are obvious: Armenians, Persians, Abkhazians, Iberians, Sogdians, Goths, Avars, Turks, Khazars, Arabs, Egyptians, and many others (Kantor 1983:71).

Constantine also presented numerous examples from Scripture in support of his position. Among these was the basic fact that the day of Pentecost established the right for all future generations to hear the gospel in their own language. On that day, the Holy Spirit sanctified all languages, and opened the way for every nation to use their mother tongue in their communion with the Creator of all.

As these debates raged, the Pope heard of Constantine's and Methodios' presence in Venice and summoned the brothers to the Papal city. He had received reports about the work of the Byzantine missionaries and the controversial principles which they practiced, and he wanted to hear in person the defense of their ministry. Thus, in late 867 or early 868, the two brothers, along with their disciples, arrived

in Rome. They received a warm welcome, partly due to the fact that they carried the relics of St. Clement with them.

Once their audience with the Pope began, the two brothers discussed their missionary work and beliefs with him. Pope Hadrian II intently listened to their adventures in Moravia, and saw no questionable methods in their ministry. In fact, he affirmed their accomplishments when he "received the Slavic books, blessed them and deposited them in the church of Holy Mary which is called Phatne and sang the liturgy over them. After that he ordered two bishops . . . to ordain the Slavic disciples" (Dvornik 1963:25). Then, the newly ordained clergy celebrated the Slavic Liturgy over the next four days in four different churches, emphasizing the Pope's approval of the vernacular in the divine services.

The ordination of the Slavic disciples, along with the ordination of Methodios to the priesthood, fulfilled a main goal of the missionaries. Though anxious to continue their journey to Constantinople, the brothers delayed their departure from Rome because of political infighting in the Byzantine capital. Around 868/869, much confusion reigned in Byzantium over the status of the Patriarch, with Photios and Ignatius both being alternately deposed and reinstated. Although the brothers were originally sent on their mission by Photios, they decided it wise to wait the outcome of this power struggle before journeying home. It was while residing in a Byzantine monastery in Rome that Constantine fell ill. The labors and trials of his missionary work had finally overtaken him, and he soon realized that he would not recover.

Desiring to die as a monk, he took the solemn monastic vows, and following the Byzantine tradition he chose the new name of Cyril. His biographer noted the joyous words of Cyril at his tonsuring, "Henceforth I am neither a servant of the Emperor nor of anyone else on earth, but only of God Almighty. I was not, and I came to be, and am forever. Amen" (Kantor 1983:77). Although Cyril knew his time on earth was limited, he still had a concern for the flock he had left behind in Moravia. Thus, he offered these last words to his brother:

> Behold, brother, the two of us have been yokemates, plowing the same furrow. Now my days are ending and I am falling on the field. Though you have great love for the mountain [his previous monastery at Mount Olympus], still leave not your teaching for the mountain's sake, for you can sooner be saved through it (Kantor 1983:113).

Cyril lived for another fifty days, before passing on to the Lord at age 42, on February 14, 869.

Methodios's Return to the Slavs

While Methodios grieved his brother's death and struggled with the decision of returning to his monastery or going back to Moravia, the Pope received a letter from Prince Kocel of Pannonia requesting the return of "Methodios our teacher." In response, the Pope not only acknowledged this request, but ordained Methodios Archbishop of Pannonia and Moravia, giving him the title "Archbishop of Sirmium and papal legate." Along with this position, the Pope gave Methodios a papal letter approving all the liturgical innovations to which the two brothers had dedicated their lives. Methodios and his disciples had spent a year in Rome, and finally had accomplished all their original goals.

Once back in Moravia and Pannonia, the people warmly received their new Archbishop. The same cannot be said of the Frankish bishops and priests who continued to resist the work of Methodios. One of their valid complaints revolved around the idea that Frankish missionaries had worked for the conversion of the Slavs for decades in Pannonia and Moravia. Now, they had to take a backseat to the fairly recent Byzantine missionaries and their so-called heretical innovations. Motives for their dissatisfaction also included the less noble reason that they would lose the Moravian and Pannonian benefices, which would now be directed toward the new archbishop.

This opposition proved to make Methodios' welcome to his new bishopric quite eventful. Although the people supported him, they did little to protest when a number of the Frankish clergy arrested the archbishop, "treated him tyrannically ... cast him into jail, allowed him to suffer cold and rain . . . while transporting him to Bavaria where he was to be judged" (Dvornik 1970:153). At the assembly of bishops in Regensburg in November 870, the synod ignored the papal orders and condemned Methodios as an intruder and introducer of heretical ideas. The assembly sent the archbishop to the distant Swabia, where they imprisoned him indefinitely in the monastery of Ellwangen. Only after the Pope discovered the fate of Methodios two and a half years later, did he promptly act and order the release and reinstatement of the archbishop to his official episcopal duties.

Once again, the faithful of Moravia and Pannonia enthusiastically welcomed their archpastor back while the local bishops continued to hinder Methodios' position and work. In 879, the new Pope, John VIII, disregarding the direction of the two previous popes, sent a letter to Methodios strongly

recommending the celebration of the liturgy in Latin or Greek, and the discontinuation of the Slavic liturgy. Such a letter struck at the foundation of the missionary's success in the Moravian province, and undermined the main instrument in helping the faithful attain a greater understanding of their faith and converting the rest of the pagan population to Christ. In response, Methodios chose to ignore the advice of the pope and continued using the vernacular tongue in his worship and education.

Unfortunately, the Frankish clergy discovered the papal letter, and stepped up their attacks against Methodios. His enemies also found new fuel in another area of "heresy" which the archbishop advocated. They accused Methodios of improperly omitting the *filioque* clause in the Nicene Creed. This theological issue, of whether the Holy Spirit proceeds simply from the Father, as stated in the original Nicene Creed, or proceeds from the Father *and the Son* (*filioque* in Latin) was an addition the Spanish church adapted towards the end of the 6th century. The Franks adopted this change and made it a firm part of their tradition. For Methodios, and the entire Byzantine church, the addition of the *filioque* to the Nicene Creed, without the authorization of an ecumenical council, was unacceptable.

The Frankish bishops accused Methodios of heresy and sent a letter to Pope John VIII, who then summoned the archbishop to Rome for an evaluation of the situation. Upon hearing the accusation, the Pope surprised the Franks and defended Methodios as professing the same creed as Rome. He also gave his approval of the Slavic liturgical innovations and even celebrated the Mass in the missionary language. His only comment to Methodios was that the Gospel reading at Mass should first be read in Latin, before reading it in Slavic.

Armed with this victory, Methodios returned to his flock and continued his ministry of outreach and education to the people of his land, despite abiding resistance by the Frankish clergy. The work of Methodios and his disciples flourished once again, as they even extended their missionary outreach beyond Moravia and into the Polish lands of Vistula. In fact, one of their more successful efforts included the conversion of the Czech Duke Borivej and his subjects.

Methodios's Visit to Constantinople

During the years of 880-81, Methodios received an invitation to return to Constantinople and present his work to the Emperor and the Patriarch. After almost twenty years, the famous Byzantine missionary came home. The response was overwhelming as interest in the Slavic liturgy and literature ran high. The Emperor was so impressed with Methodios' work that he decided to keep two of the missionary's disciples, a priest and a deacon, and charged them with developing a Slavic mission center which would train and educate other Slavic missionaries. The Byzantines used this mission center to help evangelize their Serbian and Bulgarian neighbors.

In 882, Methodios returned to Moravia and enjoyed a few years of peace. During this tranquil period, he focused his attention on completing the literary translations of the Holy Scriptures and some writings of the church fathers. His biographer wrote,

> Afterwards, when he had liberated himself from all tumult and placed all his confidence in God, after placing before himself two priests from among his disciples, able stenographers, he soon translated from the Greek into Slavonic all the books of the Holy Writ completely, with the exception of the Books of the Macabees, in eight months . . . before that, he had translated with the Philosopher [i.e. Cyril] only the Psalter, the Gospels, and the Apostolos with selected ecclesiastical formulars. Then he translated also the Nomocanon, that is the rule of the law, and the Books of the Fathers (Dvornik 1970:175).

In 885, Methodios' health began to decline, and his impending death became apparent. Before he died on April 6, he designated his faithful disciple, Gorazd, as a successor to his work. The wisdom of Methodios' choice was evident not only in the fact that Gorazd was one of his most devoted disciples, but also because he was a native Moravian of noble birth, who knew both Slavic and Latin. Methodios hoped that Gorazd's background would help him find a wide range of support among both the Moravian noblemen as well as the Frankish clergy.

Along with his successor Gorazd, Methodios left behind more than 200 Slavic presbyters whom he had trained (Kantor 1983:9). Unfortunately, the disciples of Methodios met immediate persecution following his death. The masses supported and defended the men but the Frankish hierarchs succeeded in dispersing Methodios' followers by imprisoning some, enslaving others, and exiling the rest. The legacy of Cyril and Methodios among the Slavs at that time seemed to be on the brink of ruin. As one historian

noted, "It must indeed, at the time, have seemed a tragic failure. The Slavonic liturgy and the new Slavo-Byzantine culture appeared to be on the verge of extinction" (Obolensky 1963:8).

The Cyrillo-Methodian roots did eventually disappear from Central Europe over the next two centuries. Their legacy, however, survived through the work of their disciples. Expelled from Moravia upon Methodios' death, the disciples dispersed among the southern Slavic lands, and transmitted the vernacular gospel and culture wherever they went. The Bulgarians, the Serbians, and eventually even the Russians became heirs of the Cyrillo-Methodian legacy.

Conclusion

The legacy of Cyril and Methodios continues to this day. Their strong belief in the use of the vernacular, their convictions that all people and languages are equal, and their zeal to proclaim the gospel, clearly made these brothers two of the greatest missionaries in the 2000 year history of the Christian church.

CHAPTER 4

STEPHEN OF PERM (1340-1396)

Stephen of Perm was one of the founding fathers of Russian missions and an important ecclesiastical figure during the Mongolian period of Russian history. He followed the example of Cyril and Methodios, the patron missionaries of all Slavic peoples, by immersing himself among the Zyrian people of Perm, incarnating the gospel for them through his life, translating the Orthodox faith into the indigenous language and culture of the people, and eventually establishing a national Zyrian church. As a contemporary of Sergius Radonezh, he emerged alongside this mystical patron of Russia as a bulwark of hope in the northern regions of Russia. By the time of his death in 1396, following eighteen years of ministry throughout the region of Perm, the Zyrian people of northwest Siberia recognized Stephen as their patron, protector, intercessor, apostle and saint.

Historical Background

Stephen was born around the year 1340 in the town of Veliki Ustyug, a region between the Northern Dvina and Pechora rivers in northwest Siberia. He lived in a small Muscovite settlement surrounded by the Zyrians of Perm, a pagan people with whom Stephen had frequent contact. As a youngster, Stephen learned the language and customs of the Zyrians and wondered why their beliefs differed from those of the Russians. He also questioned why so few of his countrymen ever tried sharing the Christian faith with their neighbors. His interactions with these pagan people kindled a missionary spirit early in his life.

As the son of a priest, Stephen was quite involved in church affairs. He was a smart boy who excelled in his studies and advanced in church responsibilities, first as a reader and then as a deacon. His interest in the faith and his thirst for knowledge led him to devote much of his time to prayer and in-depth study of the Holy Scriptures. He felt a strong call to commit his life to service in the church, and by 1365, he entered the monastery of St. Gregory of Nazianzus in the town of Rostov. Stephen chose this faraway monastery because of its outstanding library. The monastery offered a wonderful opportunity for an

inquisitive monk to further his knowledge through priceless books. In addition, the abbot of the monastery was a Greek bishop who possessed many unique Greek manuscripts.

Stephen took his monastic vows under this bishop, but clearly voiced his intentions of not wanting to stay in the monastery for the remainder of his life. He had a burning desire to return to Perm and proclaim the gospel among the Zyrians. He realized, though, that he had to learn more about his faith and spirituality before accepting such an ambitious challenge. Shortly after his arrival at the monastery, Stephen began learning Greek and became one of the few men in ancient Russia who could read and speak that language. With this knowledge, Stephen started studying the Holy Scriptures in its original text. He spent hours each day wrestling with parts of the text, trying to comprehend the passages and apply them to his life. His biographer, Epiphanius the Wise, noted that Stephen studied different passages until "he understood ultimately and truly" the meaning of every sentence. He then questioned the abbot, or other wise elders, night and day trying to properly understand and discover the truth of God's word (Fedotov 1975:232).

The Scriptures played an essential role in the development of Stephen's character and vision. Through his study he realized ever more clearly the universal love of God and the noble call to missions that is expressed throughout the Bible. The treasure that unfolded before his eyes was not the exclusive gift of the Russian people, but "the pearl of great price" which God wanted all nations to discover. This revelation made him think again of his home region and the pagan Zyrians who lived in spiritual darkness. Despite more than a decade of secluded monastic life at St. Gregory's monastery, Stephen did not allow his love for scholarly study and sacred knowledge to supercede his missionary zeal. He reminded himself that the past years were but a preparation for the task ahead. Thus, in 1378, Stephen was ordained a priest and received the blessing from the bishop of Moscow to go to the land of Perm and begin his mission there.

Mission to Perm

During his years at the monastery, Stephen studied many sacred Greek texts and became familiar with the writings of the church. He was particularly impressed with the lives of Cyril and Methodios and their method of missions among the Slavic peoples. Stephen embraced their traditional philosophy of Orthodox

missions and implemented many of their ideas in his preparation for ministry among the Zyrians. He saw, for example, the necessity of translating the liturgical services and parts of Scripture into the native tongue. To do this, he needed to create a Zyrian alphabet. A unique feature of this work was that Stephen did not use either Slavic or Greek letters, but rather created an alphabet from a local system of ancient Zyrian ruins. With these letters in tact, he proceeded with his translations (Fedotov 1975:234).

Stephen was firmly opposed to forcing the Zyrians to adopt the Russian culture in order to convert. He wanted the natives to feel unencumbered when listening to the gospel, which could only come about by using their native tongue. Not everyone shared this philosophy. Some church officials, to the contrary, wanted him to cooperate as an agent of the State and help make his audience open to the Slavic culture. These officials believed that Stephen should use the Slavic language in his preaching; or if he was to make translations, then he should at least use Slavic letters. These misguided men believed that Stephen erred in not using one of the four traditional languages: Greek, Hebrew, Latin, or Slavic. Despite such opposition, Stephen received the blessing from the bishop of Moscow and continued his work.

Stephen began his mission by briefly returning to his hometown of Ustyug around the year 1378, before journeying northeast across the Dvina river and into the Zyrian village of Kotlas. Once among the Zyrians, he began preaching the gospel in their native tongue and introducing them to a new way of life. Stephen settled among the people and showed them Christ through his life of humility and love. His behavior perplexed the Zyrians because their usual encounter with Russians had always been negative. Greedy traders and hunters were interested only in the Zyrians furs, while Stephen cared solely for the people . His humble demeanor touched the peace-loving natives.

His humility, however, did not obscure the boldness and eloquence of his preaching. Stephen chastised the Zyrians for their rampant idolatry and tried to show them the impotence of their gods by aggressively tearing down their idols and destroying wooden shrines. One day he burned the sacred birch tree of the Zyrians, and set fire to the furs placed on the altars. Another time he torched the main sanctuary of worship and then questioned the power of their dead gods. When a large crowd of Zyrians gathered with poles and axes in opposition to Stephen's actions, he used the opportunity to preach about the power of the

one true God. As the Zyrians were a peaceful people, they never carried through on their hostile threats to the missionaries.

His power struggles came to a head one day when Stephen confronted a leading pagan magician named Pam. Stephen and the magician had previously discussed their respective faiths, but to no fruitful end. After a particularly heated discussion, the magician said to Stephen, "You have insulted our gods . . . Those who do this in my court deserve the sentence of death, which you soon will experience at my hand. I shall not fail to work miracles for your destruction and let loose many gods to kill you." In response, Stephen challenged Pam to a divine trial of fire and water. He proposed that both men pass through a burning hut and then throw themselves into an opening in the ice of the Vichegda river. At first, Pam agreed, but at the time of testing he lost courage and retreated in defeat (Fedotov 1975:239).

The Zyrians accepted Stephen's victory as a sign from God that they should all be baptized, including Pam. When the magician refused, the crowd demanded his death. Stephen showed the power of God's mercy by rejecting this death sentence and exemplifying Christianity's call to love: "Christ sent me not to kill, but to teach; not to torture but to preach with meekness and admonish with kindness" (Fedotov 1975:240). He did, however, exile the magician from the Christians, so that his poisonous teachings would not corrupt young believers.

Beauty and Power of the Liturgy and Church

Stephen's method of preaching was not always so aggressive. His most successful means of converting the Zyrians came through the power of the Divine Liturgy and the majesty of various church structures. Throughout Orthodox history, the beauty of the divine services and church buildings have played an important role in the witness of the church. In the Divine Liturgy, for example, the Orthodox believe that worshippers transcend earth and join the angels and saints in the heavenly realm of God. Understanding and participating in such a glorious worship is one of the primary reasons why Orthodox missionaries have always tried to make the liturgy accessible to all people by using their indigenous language. Likewise, the service and church buildings are constructed in a manner that magnifies the splendor of God.

Stephen built the first church building in Ust-Vim, a main settlement of the Zyrians. The relatively modest chapel impressed the Zyrians. Stephen had adorned the church with beautiful icons and ornaments because he knew the power such a sight could have on the native population. He only had to recall the powerful influence that a beautiful church and liturgy had on the conversion of Prince Vladimir and the Russian people. Three and a half centuries earlier, Prince Vladimir selected Orthodox Christianity as the religion of his kingdom because of the inspiration his emissaries felt upon entering an Orthodox cathedral. Russian history relates how emissaries were sent to various countries throughout the world in order to discover the true religion. After being dissatisfied with the Moslem Bulgars, the German Christians, and the Roman church, the group journeyed to Constantinople and attended the Divine Liturgy in the church of Haghia Sophia. The men reported back to Prince Vladimir, "We knew not whether we were in heaven or on earth, for surely there is no such splendor or beauty anywhere upon earth. We cannot describe it to you: only this we know, that God dwells there among men, and that their service surpasses the worship of all other places. For we cannot forget that beauty" (Ware 1963:269).

Stephen hoped to imitate such glory on a smaller scale for his Zyrian flock. And indeed, many non-baptized Zyrians came to see the new church and inquire about its purpose. The missionary noted that pagans appeared, "'not yet for prayer, but desiring to see the beauty of the church,' adorned 'as a beautiful bride.' They left with the belief that 'Great is the God of the Christians'" (Stephens 1991:9). This means of attracting the Zyrians gave Stephen numerous opportunities to preach the gospel and bring more people to a saving knowledge of the truth.

Whenever Stephen did receive interested followers, he tried to prepare them for baptism through intensive catechism. He taught those who were able to first learn the alphabet he had invented, and then guided them in reading his translated works, including the Gospels, the Psaltar, parts of the Old Testament and various prayers. With time, many Zyrians responded to his preaching. Stephen realized that as the church grew, a bishop was needed for the neophyte body of believers. A resident hierarch could ordain some of the outstanding indigenous leaders, who in turn would help minister to the needs of the growing Christian community.

Stephen asked the Holy Synod to appoint a bishop to the region of Perm, and they agreed by consecrating Stephen the first bishop of Perm in 1383. As a hierarch, Stephen increased his ministry by ordaining his most faithful Zyrian disciples as priests, deacons, readers and chanters (Fedotov 1975:237). He also built churches, opened schools, and founded two monasteries. Overall, he helped transform Perm, and particularly the town of Ust-Vim, into a center for Christian culture.

As bishop, Stephen kept in regular contact with Moscow and Novgorod, the two main cities of Russia. He constantly sought financial and material aid for his flock, especially whenever a particular need overwhelmed the Zyrians. He also kept in close contact with the Holy Synod in Moscow, updating them on the progress of the mission. On one trip to Moscow in 1396, Stephen fell ill and did not recover. He died on April 26 and was buried in a monastery within the Kremlin. The Zyrians remembered his last words of exhortation to be: "live godly lives, read the Scriptures, and obey the Church" (Hatch 1980:24).

Conclusion

Stephen truly radiated the characteristics of traditional Orthodox missionaries. He lived a life of self-denial and humility, offering himself completely to the natives of Perm. His ministry revealed the familiar pattern of translating the Scriptures and divine services into the vernacular language, creating and organizing indigenous leadership, and establishing a national Zyrian church. A song the Zyrians wrote upon his death best summarize the impact Stephen had on the region of Perm:

> We have lost our patron and intercessor. He prayed to God for the salvation of our souls, and presented our complaints to the prince; he worked to obtain benefits for us and was concerned for our welfare; he was our zealous protector before the boyars [rulers] and the superiors; many a time did he deliver us from violence, heavy labour and the titun's [Russian officials] bribery, alleviating our taxes. Even the Novgorod river-pirates, those robbers, heeded his instructions and did not rob us (Hatch 1980:24).

CHAPTER 5

KOSMAS AITOLOS: MISSIONARY OF THE BALKANS (1714-1779)

The Orthodox church in the Balkans entered its darkest period during the 17th and 18th centuries. After more than 200 years under the Ottoman Empire, the pressure of Islamic persecution slowly but steadily chipped away at the religious life of the local inhabitants. The Orthodox faith was tested in a number of ways. Certainly, the economic and social advantages granted to Muslims led a large number of Christians to abandon their faith and embrace Islam during the 17th century. The poor, illiterate peasants in the areas of western Greece and Albania especially seemed vulnerable to the increased pressure of conversion to their subjugator's faith. Hostilities against the Orthodox intensified during the Russo-Turkish War of 1769-74, primarily because the Ottomans feared the common religious background of the Russians and the Greeks. Add to this a general ignorance of the Christian tenets, and it is understandable why so many Orthodox turned away from their religious heritage. So desperate was the situation that one scholar observed, "by the middle of the 18th century the Christian element of the Balkan peninsula faced the real possibility of extinction" (Vallianos 1980:172).

From this abyss one of the greatest missionary saints of modern Greece arose, Kosmas Aitolos. This humble priest-monk traveled throughout the Greek mainland and islands, and into Albania, Southern Serbia, and Constantinople preaching the gospel and striving to reawaken the basic principles of Orthodox Christianity among the common folk. Kosmas understood that there was but one way to stop the rising tide of Islamization in the Balkans: educating the people. Their textbook would be his life - the clearest demonstration of the power of the gospel. Thus, Kosmas abandoned his existence as an anchoritic monk on Mount Athos and spent the final twenty years of his life traversing the Balkans, renewing the Christian spirit among the faithful, and proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ to all in his reach.

Historical Background

Kosmas was born in the Greek province of Aitolia, in the village of Mega Dendron. His poor weaver parents baptized him with the name Konstas in 1714. For the first twenty years of his life, Konstas remained formally uneducated while he lived and worked with his parents. His illiteracy disturbed him because it hindered him from reading and understanding the Holy Scriptures. So strong was his desire to learn more about God and his faith, that he eventually left his home in 1734 to seek an education. Over the following ten years, he studied in several village schools and even became an assistant teacher in one of them. In 1743, Konstas' began studying at the Theological Academy on Mount Athos, and later entered the Philotheou Monastery, where he was tonsured a monk and given the new name of Kosmas. He was subsequently ordained to the diaconate and priesthood.

Call To Missions

While living the secluded life of a priest-monk, Kosmas diligently studied the Scriptures and the writings of the church fathers. He grew in wisdom and faith and began to sense an urgent call to preach the gospel to the masses of uneducated, illiterate people throughout the Balkans. Through his faith, he experienced the transforming love God has for every person, and realized the need to share this wonderful news with those living in spiritual darkness. As Kosmas delved deeper into the Scriptures, a new vision for his life developed. He noted,

> Studying the holy and sacred Gospel, I found in it many and different teachings which are all pearls, diamonds, treasures, riches, joy, gladness -- eternal life. Among the other things I also found this teaching in which Christ says to us: no Christian, man or woman, should be concerned only with himself, how he can be saved, but must be concerned also with his brethren so that they may not fall into sin. Hearing this sweetest teaching spoken by our Christ, my brethren, to concern ourselves with our fellows, that teaching gnawed at me inside my heart for many years, just as a worm eats away at wood. Considering my ignorance, what could I do? (Vaporis 1977:15).

His question would be answered shortly. Kosmas left the monastery and entered into the world to proclaim the message of Christ. Although he firmly believed the place of a monk was within the seclusion of his monastery, Kosmas could not resist his missionary call. "I said to myself, let Christ lose me, one sheep, and let him win the others" (Vaporis 1977:6). Following the example of the apostle Paul, who wished

himself cut off from Christ if it would lead to the salvation of his own people, Kosmas in like manner willingly sacrificed himself for the salvation of his brethren:

> You might accuse me, my brothers, of defiling the holy habit and mission of the monk by abandoning the blessed quietude of the monastery to rejoin the tumult of the world and confront its vices. You are right on that score. The salvation of the monk depends upon his total renunciation of worldly activity. And yet disregarding considerations of my personal spiritual welfare I decided to risk even my sure damnation to stand by your side. I looked out of my window and I perceived you wounded, bleeding, and crying for help. I saw you submerged by waves of ignorance, egoism, hatred for one another. And I decided that I should not tarry a moment longer out of consideration for my personal salvation. Yours matter to me above all else (Vallianos 1980:180).

Thus, in 1760 at the age of 46, Kosmas became an itinerant preacher throughout the Balkans. He received a blessing from Patriarch Sophronios II of Constantinople, and spent the following twenty years traveling on three 'apostolic' journeys throughout the villages of the Greek mainland and islands, Albania and southern Serbia. Traveling by foot, donkey, or ship, he would arrive at each village square and ask the people to make a large wooden cross in the center of the village. After planting the cross in the ground, he placed a bench in front of the cross, ascended the bench and preached extemporaneously on the love of God and the doctrines of the Orthodox faith. He believed Christ would bless the seeds of faith thus planted. Then, he traveled on to the next village, leaving the cross in its place as a perpetual reminder of his teachings to the believers.

His desire for all people to hear the gospel was so great that he never lingered in any one area too long. Despite pleas by the faithful to remain with them, he often responded by saying, "I wish, my fellow Christians, that we could be together always, so that I could tell various things. But what can I do since there are thousands of villages where they have never heard the word of God, and they are waiting for me" (Vaporis 1977:51). His concern for all people to hear the gospel compelled him onward:

> If, my brethren, it were possible for me to climb up into the sky, to be able to shout with a great voice, to preach to the entire world that only our Christ is the Son and Word of God, true God and the life of all, I would have done it. But because I can't do such a big thing, I do this small thing: I walk from place to place and teach my brethren as I can, not as a teacher but as a brother (Vaporis 1977:15).

Kosmas nourished his inner call by establishing an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. He not only acknowledged God as the almighty Creator of the universe, but also understood Him in a very personal way. He openly stated in his sermons that he had been personally called to preach the gospel by Jesus Christ Himself. His intimate love for God was so strong, that whenever he spoke about Christ, he referred

to Him with terms of endearment like "our sweetest Master" or "our sweetest Jesus Christ and God." This love for God was only surpassed by the love God showered upon him. As he said in one of his sermons,

> I'm a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ who was crucified. Not that I'm worthy to be a servant of Christ, but Christ condescended to have me because of his compassion. Therefore, my brethren, I believe, glorify, and worship our Christ . . . I beseech my Christ to find me worthy to spill my blood for his love as he spilled his for my love (Vaporis 1977:15).

Clearly, the love of God and for God overflowed from Kosmas's heart. He wanted the same for all who accepted this love from God and urged them to share it with others. He preached,

> The most gracious and merciful God has many and various names. He is called light, life, and resurrection. But God's chief name is, and he is called, love. If we wish to live well here also and go to paradise, and to call our God love and father, we should have two loves: love for our God and for our brethren. . . Just as a swallow needs two wings to fly in the air so do we need these two loves, because without them it is impossible for us to be saved" (Vaporis 1977:19).

The Teachings of Kosmas

Kosmas offered no profound new interpretations of the Scripture in his teachings. His charasmatic gift was translating the words of Christ in a contemporary form that people could understand. Like Jesus among the Palestinian crowds, Kosmas often used modern parables with which his listeners could relate. He made it a point to preach only in the vernacular Greek with a unique evangelistic simplicity, so that all who listened, both the literate and illiterate, could easily understand.

His teaching emphasized the way one culd experienced salvation. Kosmas knew that mere transmission of theological knowledge was meaningless if it did not transform the lives of the people. Thus, everything he did, from the opening of schools and speaking for social justice, to the performing of miracles, all sprang from this fundamental religious concern of conversion and sanctification. He preached that salvation came through faith, love, humility, almsgiving, forgiveness, justice, repentance, confession, fasting, prayer, receiving Holy Communion, and keeping the divine commandments. The greatest of these, though, were love and humility. As he said himself, "The Christian needs two wings in order to soar upward and attain Paradise: humility and love" (Cavarnos 1971:20).

Concerning prayer, he emphasized the power of the Jesus Prayer, which he adapted as, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Logos of the living God, through the Theotokos and all the Saints, have mercy upon me,

Your sinful and unworthy servant." While teaching the people to continually repeat this prayer in their hearts, Kosmas distributed countless prayer ropes in order to help in the discipline of this prayer.

Always Kosmas urged his audiences to remember the most basic of truths: "Orient yourselves decisively towards God. Keep your mind and aspirations turned to Him. Abide in the Orthodox Christian faith. Fulfill the Divine commandments. Pray to God as often as possible to have mercy upon you. Glorify and worship daily the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Cavarnos 1971:61).

Along with such preaching and teaching, Kosmas touched the hearts of his listeners by the holistic message of his life. He tried to identify completely with the general populace by living a life of poverty. He never accepted payment for his services, but used all money he received to help those in greater need. As he described,

> Through the grace of God I have neither a purse, nor a house, nor another cassock, and the bench that I have to stand on and teach is yours . . . If I were to travel about for money, I would be crazy and foolish. But what is my payment? It is for you to sit in groups of five or ten and discuss the divine teachings, to put them inside your heart so that they may bring you eternal life. The words I spoke to you, my brethren, are not my own, but those of the Holy Spirit from the Holy Scriptures (Vaporis 1977:33).

Kosmas strived to live his faith in every aspect of his life. In like manner, he sought to get his audience to understand and practice his teachings in their daily lives. Christianity was not a philosophy merely for the mind. Never was Kosmas satisfied for people to simply gain knowledge of their faith without putting it to work. He condemned the immoral lifestyle of many so-called Christians who were spiritually bankrupt. He reprimanded the faithful for the lying, cheating, fornication, and vengefulness that severed any chance of a peaceful co-existence. He served as an activist for the downtrodden, openly questioning the exploitation of the poor by the rich landowners. He challenged the village elders and wealthy merchants:

> Has God given us wealth? It is our duty to eat and drink so much as is sufficient, and to have enough clothes; the rest we should spend for the poor. God has not given us wealth in order that we might eat and drink to excess, and make costly clothes and build stately houses, while the poor die of starvation. Such, then, is our duty. Realize it. From today on act in this manner, and you shall be saved (Cavarnos 1971:85).

He believed that one's love for God and neighbor must take place in concrete ways. Kosmas described true Christian love as follows:

> I have a loaf of bread to eat; you do not have. Love tells me: Do not eat it alone, give some to your brethren and you eat the rest. I have clothes; love tells me: Give one garment to your brother and you wear the other one. I open my mouth to accuse you, to tell you lies, to deceive you; but at once I remember love and it deadens my mouth, and

> does not allow me to tell you lies. I stretch out my hands to take what belongs to you, your money, all your possessions. Love does not allow me to take them. Do you see, my brethren, what gifts love has? (Cavarnos 1971:84).

Kosmas also spoke out strongly on behalf of women's rights. He reminded his male listeners that women and men were created equal, and thus women should not be treated as inferior. He commanded husbands to love their wives and treat them with respect:

> My Christian, you must love your wife as your companion, and not consider her as your slave, for she is a creature of God, just as you are. God was crucified for her as much as for you. You call God Father, she calls Him Father, too. Both of you have the same Faith, the same Baptism, the same Book of the Gospels, the same Holy Communion, the same Paradise to enjoy. God does not regard her as inferior to you (Cavarnos 1971:89).

Overall, Kosmas insisted that the life of people would be transformed when they properly understood the powerful message of God. This transforming power even included the unconditional forgiveness of one's enemies. Kosmas said, "A man insults me, kills my father, my mother, my brother, and then gouges out my eye. As a Christian it is my duty to forgive him" (Cavarnos 1971:86). Such teachings had impressive results wherever he went. For example, after his visit to the island of Kephallenia in 1777, one observer noted:

> [He was] followed by thousands of inhabitants of every class and sex. The austerity of his character, the evangelical simplicity of his words and the power of his arguments brought about such a transformation of life that families that were enemies were seen living together as brothers, having exchanged the kiss of peace and asking of each other forgiveness. Men who had committed serious crimes were seen crying bitterly over their sins. Broken marriages of long standing were restored again. Prostitutes abandoned their shameful work and returned filled with repentance and prudence. Rich upper class young ladies gave away their valuable jewelry to the poor or to churches. . . In a few words, the appearance of the island was transformed" (Vaporis 1977:2).

The success of Kosmas's ministry was attributed to his unquestionable love and commitment to God, along with his strong foundation in the traditions of the church. He based all his preaching, and his whole life, on the teachings of the Bible and the church fathers. He emphasized how our faith was not founded by unlearned saints, but by "wise and educated saints who interpreted the Holy Scriptures accurately" and who were well versed in the religion and theology of their time. With this in mind, he reprimanded the contemporary clergy for failing to study the Bible. "How can our nation be preserved," he asked, "without harm in its religion and freedom when the sacred clergy is disastrously ignorant of the meaning of the Holy Scriptures which are the light and foundation of the faith?" (Vaporis 1977:8). He convinced the clergy to begin clearly teaching the Scriptures, and then challenged village leaders to establish schools so that the

children could learn to read the holy writings. Ignorance, he believed, was the main cause of evil because illiterate people were unable to read the writings of the church, and thus, to learn right from wrong.

Kosmas believed that the founding of schools was imperative for every village. "It is better, my brother, for you to have a Greek school in your village rather than fountains and rivers, for when your child becomes educated, then he is a human being" (Vaporis 1977:7). He saw education in a strictly religious light, where the riches of the church became accessible to every literate mind. Once a person's mind opened the treasure of education, Kosmas wanted it used for the glory of God, rather than personal gain. He warned, "It is the duty of those who become educated not to run to the houses and the courts of the powerful, and nullify their education in order to acquire wealth and high offices, but to teach especially the common people, who live in great ignorance and barbarism, and thus to gain a heavenly reward and unwithering glory" (Cavarnos 1971:30). He saw the primary purpose of school as a place where the students could,

> learn what God and the Holy Trinity are, what justice and virtue mean from the Christian perspective. Education is . . . a positive value and a powerful force only because it makes people good Orthodox Christians, and hence in this process churches and monasteries are founded (Vallianos 1980:175).

As a result, Kosmas helped found elementary schools in more than 200 villages, along with ten "Greek" or higher schools. Besides raising money for the establishment and maintenance of these schools, he also helped organize the teachers and overseers who would continue the schools once he left the area. Because of this legacy in education, Kosmas is often thought of today as one of the founding fathers of the modern Greek nation.

Conclusion

Despite Kosmas's popularity among the common folk, he alienated a number of people with his outspoken stance for social justice and his bold preaching for Jesus Christ. A variety of interests - Christian, Jewish, and Turkish - probably fashioned Kosmas's martyrdom (Vaporis 1977:11). On August 24, 1779, authorities seized Kosmas in the city of Berat, Albania. After falsely accusing him of various crimes, they took him to the neighboring village of Kalinkontasi and hanged him. Afterwards, his murderers cast his body into a nearby river from which his followers retrieved it days later.

His faithful followers quickly proclaimed the sanctity of Kosmas's life. Even devout non-Christians revered the man. The first church built in his memory, in fact, was constructed by Ali Pesha, the Muslim ruler of Albania. The Orthodox church made his sainthood official through a proclamation on April 20, 1961, almost 200 years after his death. Kosmas's memory lives on as the spiritual father and bold missionary who revived the Orthodox spirit among the masses of illiterate Christians in the Balkans during one of the darkest chapters of the church's history.

CHAPTER 6

HERMAN OF ALASKA (1756-1837) AND

MACARIUS GLOUKHAREV (1792-1847)

The Russian Orthodox church during the 17th and 18th centuries made little progress in the realm of missions. Inner turmoil in the religious and secular aspects of life plagued the church. The faithful struggled through the "Time of the Troubles" (1584-1613), the schism of the Old Believers (mid-17th century), and ultimately the subordination of the church under Peter the Great and Catherine II. This period saw the closing of numerous convents and monasteries, which always had been beacons of light for the faith, and consequently the missionary spirit of the church waned. Spiritual stagnation especially affected the native tribes along the outlying regions of the empire, where most had only a nominal understanding of their faith. This ignorance and apathy led to a resurgence of paganism.

The few who attempted to nourish evangelism were invariably repressed by the State, which discouraged and often prohibited missionary activity in the name of tolerance. An example of this occurred in the 18th century when the gospel was forbidden to be preached to the Kirgiz nomads. Other instances reveal how the government recalled missionaries who evangelized too assiduously, or provided little or no financial assistance to the church for her missionary efforts (Struve 1962:34).

This indifferent missionary attitude began to change toward the end of the 18th century when the Russian church experienced the beginning of a spiritual renaissance. A renewal of monasticism on Mount Athos, Greece, occurred, which directly benefited the Orthodox in Russia. Paissy Velitchkovsky, a Russian elder living on Mount Athos during this time, translated into Russian the *Philokalia*, a book about the spiritual practice of hesychasm. This work, combined with the spread of his disciples, greatly influenced 19th century Russia, including two missionaries - Herman of Alaska and Macarius Gloukharev.

To properly understand these two missionaries, one must know the basis of the hesychasm doctrine which directed their lives. As the theologian Nikita Struve explained it, hesychasm

> is one of the most authentic and most complete expressions of Christianity. The immediate aim of hesychasm is fellowship with Christ and the Holy Spirit, through

> silence and continual prayer (the prayer of Jesus), meditation on Scripture and the regular observance of the sacraments. Its final aim is the mystical penetration of the whole being by the Holy Spirit. It is a type of Christianity which is both personal and integral, as well as generous and demanding. It steers clear of the shoals which threaten the institutional Church - ritualism, legalism, authoritarianism and moralism - and yet maintains its rites, canons, hierarchy and commandments. While it is a contemplative movement, focusing on what it considers to be the unique necessity, hesychasm is in no way quietistic. In Russia, it has twice played a part in initiating church renewal, and was the chief force in the revival of missions (Struve 1965:309-310).

As the church rediscovered her rich heritage in the writings and theology of the church fathers, she also recovered her missionary spirit. Herman and Macarius Gloukharev represent two pioneers whose lives reflect this discovery of hesychasm and a return to the church's apostolic vocation.

Herman was one of ten monks who took part in the first overseas Russian mission to Alaska in 1794. He remained there for forty-three years, faithfully serving the Alaskan natives and proclaiming the gospel through the holiness of his life. After his death in 1837, the indigenous Christians revered him as a saint and honored him as the protecting father of their church in America.

Macarius Gloukharev, another hesychastic monk, entered the mission field in the Altai mountains of Siberia and served for forteen years, from 1829-1843. He was the first Russian missionary to formulate an Orthodox theology of missions (Struve 1965:36). He dreamed of instilling a missionary consciousness among all Russians and of establishing a missionary center for training future missionaries. Although these plans never materialized, he paved the way for other leaders, like Innocent Veniaminov and Nicholas Kasatkin, to fulfill his aspirations. Overall, Gloukharev acted as a prophet and pioneer, directing the church to reclaim her apostolic calling. He was the first Russian missionary to formulate an Orthodox theory of missions (Struve 1965:36).

Herman of Alaska

Herman was born into a family of merchants in the town of Serpukhov outside of Moscow in 1756 (or possibly 1760). Little is known of his early life, including his family and baptismal name. At sixteen, he entered the Troitsky-Sergiev Monastery outside of St. Petersburg and was tonsured with the name Herman. After living in this monastery for five or six years, he desired a more secluded monastery and eventually transferred to the Valaam Monastery, located on Valaam Island in Lake Ladoga along the Finnish border.

The new setting appealed to him because of its complete solitude eight months of the year when the island was ice-bound from the outside world. During his years there, he carefully cultivated his hesychastic spirit, growing in the grace of the Lord and receiving the respect and love from the other monks who considered him one of their holiest fathers.

Mission to Alaska

In 1792 the Holy Synod of Russia sought to establish its first overseas mission in the newly discovered lands of Alaska. The Metropolitan of Moscow requested that Valaam Monastery select a number of its brethren to fulfill this apostolic task. Herman was among the ten who volunteered. As a whole, the group came from a simple background, with little or no formal theological training. Only its leader, Archimandrite Joseph, graduated from a seminary. None of these men envisioned participating in an overseas mission at the time of their monastic vocation, but their obedience to the church and their desire to share the gospel led them to accept this challenge. Leaving Moscow on January 22, 1794, this missionary group of ten monks arrived in Kodiak, Alaska on September 24, 1794 (Oleksa 1987:47).

Their first year of work was hectic but fruitful as the missionaries established a home base and traveled throughout the villages studying the people and their culture while preaching the gospel through translators. In numerous villages, the indigenous Aleuts listened eagerly to the missionaries. In a letter written by the leader of the mission, Archimandrite Joseph, to the abbot of Valaam Monastery on May 19, 1795, he stated,

> I have, praise God, baptized more than 7,000 Americans, and celebrated more than 2,000 weddings. We have built a church and, if time allows, we shall build another, and two portable ones, but a fifth is needed . . . [the natives] love us and we them, they are a kind people, but poor. They take baptism so much to heart that they smash and burn all the magic charms given them by the shamans. . . There is such a press of people waiting to be baptized or married, or who have come to learn God's laws, and we do not want to grieve or hurt anyone by refusing them. In addition the Russians here have various needs of their own: they wish to talk to us and for us to hear confessions (Oleksa 1987:38).

Their success was abundantly evident within the first year of their mission. The fields were ready for harvest, as the missionaries zealously traveled from village to village. In a letter Herman wrote to the abbot in May 1795, he revealed a glimpse of the monks' apostolic enthusiasm, when he described a jestful competition between two of the missionaries,

> Father Makarii began by saying, 'I intend , if God wills it, when I am on the Aleutian Islands, to make my way to Aliaska whence I have been invited by the Aliaskans, and as this is near to where these Russians are supposed to lived I shall seek ways of finding out more about them.' But Father Iuvenalii, having heard the word Aliaska, in his eagerness to speak, broke in eagerly with, 'Aliaska really belongs to my area, so I would ask you not to interfere there. When this next vessel leaves for Iakutan I shall begin preaching from the south. Then I shall go north along the coast, cross Kenai Bay, and from the port there I shall, of course, cross to Aliaska.' When he heard this Father Makarii was very much saddened and, looking glum, said pleadingly: 'No, Father, do not press me; you know yourself that the Aleutian chain is linked to Aliaska, therefore it must obviously be in my area, and the whole shore to the north also. You may have the whole of southern America if you like; there's enough there for the rest of your life.' I [Herman], however, listening discreetly to such an argument, was overjoyed. Hieromonks Father Makarii and Father Iuvenalii are always so fervent, almost like madmen wanting to rush off in all directions (Oleksa 1987:40)

The mission continued to thrive for five years, despite obstacles put forth by Russian explorers and hunters. Indeed, it proceeded at such a successful rate that the Holy Synod requested Archimandrite Joseph to return to mainland Russia in order to be consecrated as a bishop. On his return to Alaska after his consecration in 1799, the ship and all its crew, including the first bishop of America and two other missionaries, were lost at sea. This loss, combined with the martyrdom of Father Iuvenalii three years earlier, dealt a severe blow to the momentum of the mission.

It was Herman who inherited the diminished mission, and served as the leader of the three remaining missionaries. Their work, though, was greatly hindered by the officers of the Russian American Trading Company which controlled all activity in Alaska. The harsh leader of this company, Alexander Baranov, mistreated the natives and despised the missionaries for defending the Aleuts. Baranov believed that the mission should be subservient to the company, and could not understand why the missionaries placed the natives' rights ahead of the company's interests. In Baranov's eyes, the Aleuts were simply tools to gather furs for Russian profit. The missionaries, on the other hand, treated these natives as children of God, each of whom had the opportunity for salvation just as any Russian Christian.

Following the death of Archimandrite Joseph, the mission lost key supporters in governmental circles back in Moscow. This loss of advocates paved the way for Baranov to openly oppress the missionaries. He closed church buildings, forbade the missionaries to hold services, and persecuted any natives who were seen with the missionaries (Afonsky 1977:36). The mission slowly disintegrated under such pressure until only Herman remained. He continued to persevere, but decided to move his residence to

Spruce Island, a tiny uninhabited island off Kodiak. He envisioned a life of seclusion and hesychasm, believing the best way to help the Alaskans was to live a life of prayer and holiness. Herman's desire to practice a form of "passive" missions received support when a representative of the Holy Synod wrote to him:

> I cherish the fond hope that you will not neglect, by dint of your experienced teaching, to instill into the hearts of both Russians and Americans the rules of a true knowledge of God, a love of their country, and friendly relations between both peoples. You are well aware that it is the first duty of a priest to set an example of Christian piety in his own life; and so I have no doubt that you will exercise your leadership to this end (Oleksa 1987:130).

His desire for a secluded life, however, did not lead him to forget the world. Herman felt a great responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the Aleuts. He supported and directed a school for orphans and continually taught those who came to his hut for instruction. The reputation of this holy man spread among the Aleuts. Many came to see him, especially on Sundays or other holy days, when he would pray the hours, read the Acts and the Gospel, sing hymns, and then preach to the people. He summarized part of his teachings in a letter he wrote years later to a Russian friend:

> My opinions are based on the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and they are aimed at those who are thirsting and searching for His eternal Kingdom in Heaven. Faith and love make a true Christian . . . A sin for a person loving God is nothing more than an arrow fired by an enemy during battle. The true Christian is a warrior, fighting his way through hosts of unseen foes to his place in Heaven. For, in the words of the Apostle, Our Kingdom is in Heaven, and about the warrior he says: our battle is not with flesh and blood, but with ideas and authorities . . . We, on our journey through life, must call on God for help, and we have to shed this filth and clothe ourselves in new desires and new love for the coming ages, and thereby come to know our nearness or distance from our Heavenly Father. But it is impossible to do this quickly (Oleksa 1987:45).

Defense of the Natives

Along with his teachings, Herman continued to defend the natives against the injustices of the hunters and traders. When Baranov left and the leadership of the Russian American Company finally changed hands, a new opportunity arose for the missionary to speak on behalf of the Aleuts. He wrote a letter to Simeon Yanovsky, the new company leader, before he even arrived in Alaska and asked for his help. In that letter, Herman wrote,

> I, the most humble servant of the local peoples and their nursemaid, stand before you with bloody tears and write my request: be a father and protector to us! We, of course, know no eloquence, but we say, with the halting tongue of children, wipe away the tears of our

> defenseless orphans, soothe the sorrows of aching hearts, let us know what joy is like! (Oleksa 1987:310).

Yanovsky had heard many rumors about Herman from previous company workers and was very skeptical of his letter. He later wrote,

> I must confess that I myself heard such slanderous tales about Father Herman that I had begun to write back to St. Petersburg about him, even before I had met him. It was reported to me that he was encouraging the Aleuts to rise in rebellion against the authorities there. But in the following year, 1819, I set off by boat to make a tour of inspection of all the colonies, and in November I arrived at the island of Kodiak. Father Herman immediately came to see me. He explained local conditions to me, how poor the Aleuts were, in what need they were, and how they were in various ways oppressed, and he asked me to protect them (Oleksa 1987:48).

Part of Yanovsky's skepticism of Herman revolved around his own doubts about Christianity in general. Despite Yanovsky's Christian roots, he admitted that he was a Christian in name only and did little to apply his faith in his life. He described himself as a free-thinker, a deist, a "person who failed to recognize the godliness and sanctity of [the Orthodox] religion" (Oleksa 1987:49). His encounter with Herman radically changed his life. As he described,

> Father Herman noticed [my anti-Christian demeanor] at once and wished to turn me away from it. But it was not easy! I had to be convinced: the sanctity of our religion had to be proved to me, and this took a great deal of time, knowledge and the ability to argue persuasively. To my great surprise the simple, uneducated monk Father Herman, inspired by God's Grace, spoke so skillfully, forcefully and convincingly, and offered such proof, that no learning or earthly wisdom could stand against it! In fact, Father Herman had a great natural intellect, much common sense; he was well read in the writings of the holy fathers; but the main thing was that he had God's Grace! . . . With such constant discourses and the old man's prayers the Lord brought me completely onto the true path, and I became a real Christian. For all this I am obliged to Father Herman; he is my true benefactor! (Oleksa 1987:49,50).

Herman had similar experiences with other Russians as well. He did not consider himself simply a missionary to the native Aleuts; he firmly believed he had a ministry among the Russian traders and officers who often acted as "baptized pagans." One story which exemplified this outreach to Russians occurred when Herman was aboard a frigate with twenty-five well educated and learned officers. Yanovsky described the scene in one of his letters:

> In such a company of educated men, together at table with them, sat a simple monk, a small man, wearing threadbare clothes, ill-educated. And he put to them questions which stumped them all, which they could not answer. Captain G. told me this himself: "We had no answers, we were like fools in front of him!" He put to them the question, "What do you love most and dearest of all? What would make you happy?"
>
> Many wishes were expressed in answer to this: one wanted riches, another fame, another a beautiful wife, another a splendid ship to sail on, and many other things. . .

> Then he said to them, "What could be better, higher, more worthy of love and more splendid than Our Lord Jesus Christ himself, who created the firmament, and adorned everything, gave life to everything, who keeps everything, feeds everything and loves everything - who is himself love, more splendid than all men! Should you not love God above all things, wish for Him and seek Him?"
>
> They all answered: "Of course we love God; how can one not love God!"
>
> At this he sighed, let fall a tear, and said: "I, poor sinner, have been trying to learn how to love God for more than forty years, and I cannot say even now that I love him properly." And he showed them how one should love God: "If we love someone, then we think of him always. We try to please him day and night, our heart and mind are full of the object of our love. So then, gentlemen, do you love God? Do you turn to Him often? Do you remember Him always, always pray and perform His will, his Holy Scriptures?"
>
> They had to admit that they did not.
>
> "For our good, for our happiness," he said, "let us make a vow: at least that from this day, this hour, this very minute, we should try to love God above all else and carry out His teachings." (Oleksa 1987:51,52).

Herman's life and words greatly impacted many Aleuts and to a lesser degree some Russians. The people saw his holiness, experienced his love, and followed his teachings. The native Americans especially considered him their teacher and defender, revering him as their 'Apa' (grandfather). The Russians, on the other hand, had mixed feelings toward him. Some, like Yanovsky, gratefully acknowledged that this humble monk saved his soul and led him back on the path towards paradise. Others who were too concerned with their profits and reckless lives reviled him and persecuted him.

During the years that Yanovsky governed the Russian American Company, Herman lived and worked in peace. In 1821, though, Yanovsky returned to Russia and renewed persecution arose against the missionary. Company officials, as well as corrupt clergy, believed rumors about Herman's prodigal existence and some secret fortune. One day they even invaded his hut and ransacked his cell in hopes of finding hidden treasures. Of course, nothing was found since Herman lived a simple, ascetic life.

Herman retired from active missionary work in 1823, staying permanently on Spruce Island until his death fourteen years later. He cultivated his life of prayer and sanctity there, boldly witnessing to the gospel through the peace of his soul. On December 13, 1837, Herman fell asleep in the Lord.

Conclusion

Herman best represents a model of "passive" missions in Orthodox history. He did not translate any material into the native language. He did not personally baptize thousands of converts. He did not develop any great mission theory. He wasn't even a priest. He turned down the honor of ordination at the start of

the Kodiak mission so that he would remain a humble monk. He did, however, live a holy life in a pagan land. He allowed the light of Christ to shine brightly through his words, deeds, and life, and thus, gave a concrete Christian example for all the people to see and imitate.

Macarius Gloukharev

A contemporary missionary and hesychast of Herman's was Macarius Gloukharev. Gloukharev was born in 1792 with the baptismal name of Michael in Viazma, in the province of Smolensk. Little is known of his early life except that he was the son of a village priest. In time, he followed the path of his father and entered the Smolensk Seminary, where he graduated with honors. Receiving a scholarship to St. Petersburg Theological Academy, he later studied under the renown Philaret Drozdov, who would become Metropolitan of Moscow and a leader in the spiritual renewal of 19th century Russia. Gloukharev stood out in his academic studies, especially as a philologist. Upon graduation in 1817, at the age of tweny-five, he became a professor of church history and the German language at the Ekaterinoslov seminary.

A distinguished future in academia, and perhaps the episcopacy, seemed the natural course for Gloukharev's life until a life-changing encounter with a group of monks at Ekaterinoslov. These monks, spiritual disciples of Paissy Velitchkovsky, introduced the young scholar to the world of hesychasm and radically changed the direction of his life. Up to this point, Gloukharev had been influenced by numerous Western spiritual writers of both the Roman Catholic and Protestant traditions. At one point, he had even defied church authorities by praying with Quakers and considered establishing a center for ecumenical worship in Moscow (Struve 1965:309). His encounter with the hesychastic monks, however, guided him into a deeper study of his own heritage and rekindled his appreciation for the faith of his birth.

In 1819, Gloukharev entered the monastic brotherhood at Ekaterinoslov, receiving the name Macarius. As a monk, he continued his academic pursuits, even becoming the rector of a seminary at Kostroma by the age of twenty-nine. Macarius's desire to have a more intimate relationship with Christ through his monastic calling, though, led him to resign from the seminary in 1821 and enter a monastery in Kiev. Macarius did not find the quiet he desired in this urban monastic community, and he withdrew into

the Glinsk desert, which at that time was the center of Russia hesychasm. For four years, he dwelt in solitude, praying, reading the Scriptures, and translating many of the ascetic church fathers of both the East and West. Macarius received his missionary calling in this spiritual setting,

Call to Missions

In 1828, the Holy Synod requested volunteers for missionary service in various frontiers of the Russian Empire. The number of Christians apostatizing, especially among the Russians living at the edge of the empire, alarmed the church. The backsliding of converts stemmed from the methods used by misguided churchmen in the 17th and 18th century, when a premium was placed on winning allegiance to the State rather than to Christ. Mass baptisms with minimal catechism, and little effort of indigenizing the faith, led to a superficial understanding of the church and her teachings. To rectify these problems, the Holy Synod sought to re-establish proper missionary practices.

Macarius responded to this appeal by accepting a request by the Metropolitan of Tobolsk for missionaries in the mountainous Altai region in Siberia, despite himself appearing ill-equipped for such a momentous task. One historian described Macarius as "small, frail, even sickly - in short, the typical intellectual ascetic" (Struve 1965:310). And the harsh region he chose seemed overwhelming for even the sturdiest man: "The snow-covered heights of the Altai range made heavy demands on the missionary; pathless ridges with an average height of 8,000 to 10,000 feet . . . valleys with dark lakes and marshy morasses, hot summers and exceedingly cold winters" (Neill 1964:371).

The irresistible desire to share the gospel, however, gave Macarius the strength he needed. He heard about the 40,000 warlike nomads and semi-nomads who inhabited this region, and lamented the fact that these people knew little if anything at all about Jesus Christ and the Orthodox faith. A strong inner calling helped him overcome both his physical limitations, and his lack of formal missionary training, for the sake of the Altai people. Macarius departed for the Altai mountains in 1829, along with two young students. From the beginning, the three shared everything as a symbol of their unity. Macarius wrote, "We desire to hold everything in common: money, food, clothing, books . . . that this may be for us a means of

achieving complete unanimity" (Struve 1965:311). The comradery he shared with his companions, unfortunately, was short-lived as one died and the other returned home shortly after his arrival.

Macarius began his ministry as all traditional Orthodox missionaries, by living among the indigenous people and studying their language and culture. He traveled to different nomad camps, staying for months at a time, preaching and teaching through a translator. The Altai nomads responded with indifference. Their apathy made Macarius question his mission, and if not for his strong inner longing for all people to receive the good news of salvation, he would have abandoned his efforts. He wrote,

> A faint-hearted missionary would have concluded that these people were not ready for Christianity. Who am I to judge a people's unreadiness to receive the universal faith in Jesus Christ, who shed His blood on the Cross and tasted death for all men and for their salvation? No people exist among whom God does not recognize His own; there are no depths of ignorance or darkness which the Lord cannot penetrate" (Struve 1965:311).

After re-evaluating his mission strategy, he concluded that the most powerful way of preaching the gospel was not verbally, but through example. Macarius began to follow the model of Jesus as a servant who humbled Himself for the sake of the world. He focused on the areas of medicine and hygiene, trying to improve the Altai people's standard of life and establish an atmosphere of dialogue. No gesture was beneath him. He even entered the homes of the local people and did menial chores as a symbolic act of imitating the humility of Christ. He believed that "to sweep the floor as a humble servant is to identify oneself with Christ, to bear witness to Him in a way which is more authentic than speeches" (Struve 1965:312).

Macarius's subservient approach gradually touched his listeners. A few people started accepting his words after seeing his example, and asked for baptism. Before baptism, however, Macarius firmly believed in a long period of catechism. He wanted to establish a strong foundation for each convert, so that new believers would not later fall away from the faith. He shied away from the common practice of hurrying converts through baptism, in the hopes of achieving great numbers. There even existed a custom at that time of receiving a decoration from the church for every hundred baptisms a missionary performed. Such incentives meant little to Macarius, as he focused on quality, not quantity. During his forteen years of missionary service in this region, he baptized only 675 adults (Struve 1962:36). With each believer he

emphasized that baptism was but the start, not the end, of their new Christian life. From that point onwards, baptized believers began their infinite journey from 'glory to glory' in God's heavenly kingdom.

To help guide them on their spiritual journey, Macarius established new villages with entirely Christian populations. He feared that a hostile pagan environment might endanger new converts both spiritually and even physically. He also felt a Christian village would shine forth the light of Christ, and attract those living in spiritual darkness in the surrounding regions. By the time of his retirement in 1843, he established five such Orthodox communities, with two churches, three schools, an orphanage and a hospital within the settlements (Bolskakoff 1943:59 and Struve 1965:313). Macarius also assisted his flock by translating the Gospels, the Acts and parts of the Epistles and Old Testament, along with many prayers and a catechism into the language of the people. Although he fell short of translating the entire Divine Liturgy into the native tongue, he consciously avoided using Slavonic whenever possible by explaining the Divine Liturgy in the common language.

Throughout his tenure as a missionary, Macarius worked with little assistance from other missionaries. His two most faithful disciples were women, Paraskeva Landishev and Sophis de Vilement, whom he placed in charge of the hospital and orphanage. In his latter years, the stepson of Landishev, a married priest, succeeded Macarius upon his retirement in 1843 (Thais 1974:5). Macarius left behind a harvest which his successors abundantly reaped. By the close of the 19th century, more than 25,000 of the 40,000 Altai natives converted, establishing themselves in "188 Christian villages, 67 churches with services entirely in the vernacular languages, and 48 schools with instruction in the vernacular" (Stamoolis 1986:31).

Missionary Vision

Macarius left the Altai mission in 1843 because of his desire to renew the missionary consciousness among all Russian people. During his years as a missionary, he published a book aimed specifically towards this goal, entitled *Thoughts on the Methods to be Followed for a Successful Dissemination of the Faith among Muhammadans, Jews, and Pagans in the Russian Empire*. In his retirement, he hoped to establish a society which would work towards recruiting and supporting missionaries.

Macarius began this advocacy of evangelism by becoming the abbot of the Holy Trinity Monastery at Bolkhov in central Russia. Here, he "became painfully aware that the Russian masses were only superficially Christian, and therefore inadequate for the great apostolic task that God had in store for them. Putting aside his other work, he devoted himself to mission at home and opened the monastery doors to all who wished for instruction" (Struve 1965:314). The Russian people desperately needed a deep spiritual renewal before any missionary activity would occur.

One way for the people to better understand their faith and come to an intimate relationship with Christ, Macarius realized, was through reading of the Holy Scriptures. Unfortunately, no modern Russian translation of the Bible existed. Seeing this indispensable need, Macarius began translating the Old Testament into vernacular Russian. "'The time has come,' he declared, 'to raise up a spiritual temple to divine wisdom, a temple so substantial, so faithful, so true, into which such magnificence and elegance are built, that it will become the veritable glory of Orthodoxy and an occasion for the rejoicing in the heavens'" (Struve 1965:313).

Macarius desired to devote all his time to this translation because he thought this would act as the chief instrument in reawakening the Russian people. He requested the Holy Synod to allow him to withdraw to the grotto of Saint Jerome in Bethlehem in order to complete this work. The Synod did not give its blessing for several years, at which time Macarius's health began to fail. He never reached Bethlehem, and on April 18, 1847 he passed away.

Conclusion

Macarius did not baptize thousands of converts, nor did he ever succeed in accomplishing a number of his goals, most notably the establishment of a mission society and the translation of the Bible in modern Russian. Nevertheless, he became a catalyst for missions by re-establishing a working theory of missiology which the church at large appreciated only after his death. As one historian summarized,

> He remains one of the most memorable incarnations of the Orthodox apostolic ideal. In the beginning he knew the desert, the call to silence and contemplation, the affirmation of the transcendence of Christianity; then, in work, in self-abasement worthy of the image of the God of Bethlehem he lived in poverty, sharing the needs of the most humble and bringing the wealth of Byzantine liturgy within the scope of elementary dialect. And finally, there came the return to a praying community, to the life once glimpsed in the desert, a life devoted to the worship and praise of God" (Struve 1965:314).

CHAPTER 7

INNOCENT VENIAMINOV: APOSTLE TO AMERICA (1797-1878)

Metropolitan Innocent, also known as Father John Veniaminov, is perhaps the greatest missionary of the Russian Orthodox church, and truly one of the ideal missionary examples within all Christian history. During the 19th century, Innocent's life and ministry left a lasting legacy on the growing missionary activity of the Russian Orthodox church. From the time of his departure to the Alaskan Islands in 1823, to the culmination of his priestly ministry as Metropolitan of Moscow (the highest clerical rank in the Russian church) in 1868, Innocent helped mold and influence the attitude of this church towards its apostolic ministry.

Historical Background

In the early 19th century, the Russian church underwent a spiritual renewal that touched every aspect of her life. Inspired by a number of "spiritual elders" (enlightened and holy monks), a number of the Russian faithful, and the church at large, began to rediscover the fullness of the Orthodox faith and ultimately felt the need to share it with others.

Initial steps at evangelism turned naturally to eastern Siberia and the lands beyond, where many Russian adventurers and traders had begun to explore. These men often traveled not only in the name of Imperial Russia, but also in the hopes of sharing the gospel with the indigenous peoples. What could once be accomplished on a piecemeal basis, however, soon proved difficult as colonies began to form in lands as far away as Alaska. It was soon clear that these men needed the support and aid from the clergy in Russia. The church sent missionary monks to the new land with a twofold mission: to act as general overseers of the Russians (who, at times, had a low standard of morality and often treated the natives inhumanely), as well as to enlighten the pagans. In 1794, ten monks arrived in Alaska to begin their ministry. Unfortunately, only a handful of them survived the rough new land, and over the next thirty years, few missionaries volunteered to take their place.

The idea of spreading the faith to such far off lands did not have widespread appeal for many of the faithful in Russia at this time. As one historian noted, "Service in Alaska was voluntary and it was hard for the church to enlist volunteers for the onerous assignment" (Smith 1980:12). Even when the Bishop of Irkutsk asked the clergy of his diocese to volunteer for a post in Alaska, all turned down the call. Tougher recruitment tactics seldom worked either. "The bishop then tried selection by lot, following the manner of the election of Matthias in the Book of Acts, but the deacon who was selected in this manner refused to go abroad, preferring military service in the lower ranks as a penalty for his insubordination" (Grigorieff 1977:19).

Call to Missions

This was the situation when John Veniaminov first considered the task upon his graduation from seminary. As a top student, Veniaminov was eligible to continue his studies at the Moscow Theological Academy. He chose instead to marry the daughter of a local cleric, be ordained a priest, and begin his ministry at the parish level. As a young husband and new cleric in a comfortable parish, Father John heard the request for missionaries and rejected the possibility as impractical. He would later write in a journal,

> No matter what stories [I heard} about America in general or about the Aleuts in particular, no matter how he [an old Russian adventurer] tried to persuade me to go to Unalaska, I remained deaf; none of his persuasion even touched me. Indeed, how could I - *why* should I (humanly speaking) - have travelled God-knows-where when I had one of the best parishes in the city, when I enjoyed the love of my parishioners and the good graces of the authorities, when I already owned my own home and had a larger income than the salary being offered to whomever was assigned to Unalaska? (Garrett 1979:34).

Despite his initial negative attitude, Father John remained open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. One day as he again listened to the old Russian adventurer's stories of how the native Aleuts longed to hear the Word of God, something suddenly changed within him. He would later write, "*Blessed be the Name of the Lord!* I began to burn with desire to go to such a people! Even today I recall vividly the tortures I endured while waiting impatiently to inform the bishop of my wish." (Garrett 1979:34). Far from taking credit for this radical change of heart, Father John gave all glory and honor to God.

> May my own example serve as a new proof of the truth that the "Lord guides a man safely in the way he should go," and that each of us servants of His Church is no more than an instrument in His hands. He saw fit to establish my field of ministry in America - and that despite my opposition (Garrett 1979:36).

Such openness to the Spirit launched a forty-five year missionary career which culminated in the founding of the Russian Orthodox Mission Society in 1870.

Ministry among the Aleuts

On May 7, 1823, Father John and his family (his wife, infant son, mother, and brother) left their homeland and began the 2200-mile trip across Siberia and the Pacific Ocean in order to reach their new home on the Aleutian Islands. One of Father John's first acts in this "remote corner of the earth" was to offer thanksgiving to God by celebrating the Divine Liturgy. This became a momentous occasion, as he enthusiastically noted in his diary how "for the first time since the birth of Christ - in fact, from the creation of the world" the Eucharist was celebrated in this new land (Garrett 1979:49). From the outset of his ministry, Father John envisioned three initial goals: first, to visit all the people of the surrounding islands; second, to establish a center where all the people could listen to the word of God; and third, to learn the indigenous language well enough to preach (Garrett 1979:51).

Over the next ten years, Father John and his family settled into their new home and faithfully served the Fox-Aleut tribes. True to Orthodox tradition, he mastered the native tongue, turned his attention to creating a writing system for the language, and then translated parts of the Holy Scriptures and divine services for the people. As Father John wrote in a letter to his bishop,

> During the three years I have been here, I have considered my most important duty to be teaching the Word of God to the flock entrusted to me - and this I have fulfilled to the best of my ability. However, inasmuch as the Aleuts live scattered . . . over large distances, I have also made translation my duty . . . I had no other object in translating this than that the Aleut who reads or listens . . . in his native tongue might understand and learn from it what he ought to believe and do for his salvation (Garrett 1979:74).

Father John also produced a 1200-word Aleut-Russian dictionary and grammar book on the Fox-Aleut language, as well as a small catechetical booklet entitled, *Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven*. In this booklet, Father John presented the basic tenets of the Orthodox Christian faith in a simple way. Among other things, he emphasized the importance of knowing and studying the Bible. He wrote,

> Study diligently the foundations upon which our Orthodox Christian faith is built, that is, the actual books of Holy Scripture. . . How many Christians (or better put: how many of those who have received baptism in the name of Jesus Christ) have perished and are even now perishing simply because they do not and did not wish to pay attention to the foundations of our Orthodox faith? Anyone who despises this duty will have no defense

> at the fearful Judgement . . . Believe unconditionally, without doubt or speculation, in all that the Scriptures teach. . . Finally, strive to possess and stir up within yourself the desire to do what the Holy Scriptures teach. If you presently lack such desire, fall down in fervent prayer before our Savior Jesus Christ and ask Him to grant you this (Oleksa 1987:90-91).

The booklet was so well written that the Holy Synod decided to publish it in Russian and Slavonic, ultimately watching it go through forty-seven printings. Clearly, this helped raise the spiritual commitment and missionary awareness of the faithful back home and established Father John's credibility as an inspiring theologian.

Father John's respect for the culture of the Aleuts was apparent in other ways as well. He conscientiously strove to retain the positive aspects of their culture and reject only that which was completely incompatible with Orthodoxy, By doing this, he helped the Aleuts take ownership of their new faith. For example, when a discrepancy arose between Orthodox tenets and the native practices of the people, Father John did not condemn outright their way of life. Instead, he guided the people through education, and allowed them to realize the incompatibility. By this method, the changes emanated from the natives, instead of from their teacher.

After ten years of ministry among the Aleuts, the mission transferred Father John to Sitka, one of the largest of the Vancouver islands. His success was apparent as "all the inhabitants of the vast territory of his parish became Christians" (Grigorieff 1977:22).

Ministry Among the Thlingits

With his move to Sitka in 1834, Father John began work anew among the warlike Thlingit Indians. Again, one of his primary goals was to learn the new language of the native people, create a writing system, and begin translating of the Bible and services as soon as possible. This practice characterized his life-long missionary goal. Even when he became a bishop with numerous missionaries under his care, he encouraged all of his workers to learn the language of their area as quickly as possible, translate at least one book of the Scripture into the native language, and then teach at least fifty of the Indians to read it (Grigorieff 1977:30).

While Father John made monumental progress with the indigenous peoples, he also realized his own limitations, and learned to rely on God's guidance and providence. Divine intervention can vividly be

seen in Father John's ministry among the Thlingit people. After spending several years among these fiercely independent people, Father John learned their language, along with their traditions, beliefs, and customs. He saw their deep spiritual need, and lamented that so many of them lived entirely under the influence of shamans and medicine women. Indeed, the Thlingit people seemed indifferent to any witness of the gospel. The crude and unchristian example often set by the Russian traders and explorers made the Thlingit tribe even more sure of their own spiritual independence. They saw no need or value in believing in a faith that was shared by the Russians.

As Father John wrote, "This and other conditions served to check the Thlingits from embracing Christianity . . . These obstacles would have continued indefinitely had not Providence sent upon them an unheard of sickness [smallpox]" (Oleksa 1987:350). As a smallpox epidemic ravaged and ultimately felled nearly half the tribe in just two months, the only remedy the natives sought was the shaman. Nothing the shaman did brought relief. The Thlingits noticed, however, that this disease did not harm any of the Russians. Finally, they allowed a doctor from the colonies to vaccinate any who were interested.

"Finally Indians came from other villages to be vaccinated," Fr. John noted. "One must not forget that but three months previous to this, no man and no earthly power could have compelled them to take vaccination" (Oleksa 1987:351). From such an historical circumstance, the door for the gospel edged open. Father John reported,

> After so memorable an event in the annals of the Thlingit history I offered my services to them for their spiritual welfare. For, after so striking and eloquent persuasion it was not so hard for me to convince them of the truth of the Gospel. At any rate I had many opportunities to talk to them. They received me, not as their enemy or as one who wished them harm, but as a man of superior knowledge. They received me with marked consideration and listened to me with patience and reverence, and in return told me of their traditions, customs and beliefs (Oleksa 1987:352).

Father John's timing was perfect. Several days before the epidemic broke out, he had planned on visiting the Thlingits to share his understanding of the gospel with them. How providential this was that circumstances prevented him from doing so. He reported:

> Had I commenced my work a few days prior to the appearance of smallpox, it is almost certain that the full blame for this would have fallen upon me, as a Shaman brought in by the Russians who wanted to destroy them. Moreso because before my time no Russian missionary had ever set foot at their door either for preaching or in idle curiosity (Oleksa 1987:352).

Thus, by God's hand, the Thlingits became more receptive to the message which Father John brought. Even though it still took years for the gospel to penetrate and transform the tribe, this occasion proved to be a turning point for him and other future missionaries.

Return to Russia

In 1839, after sixteen continuous years of ministry in North America, Father John finally felt compelled to return to Russia, and make a presentation on the progress and needs of his mission to the ecclesiastical authorities in Moscow. From the moment of his arrival in St. Petersburg, he was treated as a celebrity by those riveted to his tails of high adventure in the wilds. In the midst of this acclaim, the distressing news of his wife Catherine's death came from their hometown of Irkutsk. The next days were spent in turmoil as Father John agonized about his orphaned family and debated whether to return immediately to them. After much meditation and prayer, he decided to first finish his business with the ecclesiastical authorities. It was during this time that Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow used his influence with the royal family and received imperial patronage for Father John's children. This intercession opened the way for his children to enter boarding schools in St. Petersburg.

With the children's future settled, Metropolitan Philaret was able to persuade Father John to accept monastic tonsure, and ultimately paved the way for his elevation to the episcopacy. With this elevation, he received the name Innocent, and became bishop of the newly established diocese of Kamchatka, the Kuril and Aleutian Islands. By becoming the first missionary bishop of the eastern lands, Innocent began the second major phase of his life's ministry.

Missionary Bishop

Innocent returned to his new diocese in 1841 and fervently continued his work among the native peoples. One of his first goals as bishop was to make a fourteen month, round-trip journey throughout his entire diocese, encompassing more than 14,850 miles by ship, kayak, dog-sled, and foot. During one stretch of this trip, he recalled how he had traveled over 3300 miles by dog sled and reindeer. Such travel was extremely tiring and dangerous, particularly since the "dense, wolf-infested woods" provided constant

distractions for the dogs. Innocent described that if "in a moment of inattention the driver should relax the reins just as the lead dogs caught an alluring scent across their path, then the traveler could be overturned and dragged for miles helplessly crying 'Ko! Ko! Ko!' to convince the beasts to stop" (Garrett 1979:168). These trying travels reminded Innocent of his early years as a missionary, when he traversed hundreds of miles in the open sea with only a small one-man kayak. Back then, he spent more than fifteen hours motionless in a kayak in near freezing weather in order to reach his parishioners.

Innocent established a number of goals for himself and all the clergy from the beginning of his episcopal ministry. He emphasized the following priorities:

> 1) to confirm the piety of the flock, made up largely of newly-converted peoples not yet firm in the faith; 2) to bring back those gone astray or now straying from the path of faith (i.e. those who have returned to their former shamanism and those who have forgotten the fear of God to walk according to the will of their hearts); and 3) to spread the light of the Good News among those lost in the darkness of paganism (Garrett 1979:189).

To meet these goals, Innocent issued creative pastoral instructions to both the clergy and lay leaders. He increased the role of the laity by ordering "pious and informed" laymen to administer the sacrament of baptism in the absence of a priest. (Whenever a priest would visit such villages, they would then complete the baptismal prayers and chrismate the newly initiated.) Along with this role, Innocent sought to create a body of laymen and women called "readers," who would conduct weekly worship services in the absence of a priest. To the clergy, he emphasized their pedagogical and homiletical duty:

> Woe to him, who has been called and ordained to preach the Word of God and who is not doing it . . . We as pastors, as teachers, as heirs of the apostles, have to keep up with our calling, and that means we have to teach. Otherwise we are like pagan priests, just performers of mysteries and rituals (Grigorieff 1977:29-30).

He also emphasized the need to meet the people at their level and stressed the need to teach and preach with simplicity.

> In explaining religious teachings, one must speak deliberately, clearly, distinctly, and as succinctly as possible. Otherwise your sermon will have little effect . . . to explain that all the teachings of Jesus Christ tell us to repent, to believe in Him and to have unselfish, pure love for Him and for all people (Grigorieff 1977:30).

By the end of his first decade as bishop, Innocent reported back to the Holy Synod that over sixty churches and chapels had been built, with over 23,100 Christians in his diocese of Kamchatka, the Kurile and the Aleutian Islands. Along with this, his most exciting achievement was the establishment of a local seminary for the training of native priests (Grigorieff 1977:33,34).

Over the next seventeen years, Innocent continued to act as a missionary bishop within three other newly established dioceses in eastern Siberia. Although he slowly moved away from his initial work in Alaska, his love and concern for that land never waned. In fact, following the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, Innocent prophetically envisioned the future of the Orthodox mission in America:

> I see in this event one of the providential ways by which our Orthodoxy can penetrate into the United States, where it already has started to attract serious attention. If asked, I would recommend the following measures . . . A new bishop who knows the English language should be appointed to America. His staff should be manned by people who also know the English language . . . Ordain to the holy priesthood American citizens who had converted to Orthodoxy; the bishop and the clergy of all our parishes should be permitted to celebrate the Divine Liturgy and other church services in the English language. It is self-evident that the service books should be translated into the English language for this purpose (Gregorieff 1977:35)

Once again, Innocent exemplified constant concern and respect for the native peoples of different cultures. He sought to contextualize Orthodoxy into whatever new settings the faith found itself.

Orthodox Mission Society

In 1868, after twenty-seven years as a missionary bishop, and forty-five years within the missionary field, Innocent returned to Russia in order to be elevated as Metropolitan of Moscow, the highest ecclesiastical office within the Russian church. During those years as head of the church, Innocent achieved a life-long dream of founding the Russian Orthodox Mission Society. His plan and vision for this society was to help support and direct all the missionary endeavors of the church. He noted in the inaugural meeting of the society:

> In comparison with the number [of unchurched people] we have very few missions, and the ones which have already been established need funds in order to maintain and expand their activities. The holiness of this work and its great importance . . . are obvious, and our chief source of funds for this development must be the concern and zeal of all Orthodox Christians. The Missionary Society is open to all - rich and poor alike. The comfort of service this great work provides is given to anyone who wishes and is able to do so according to his abilities (Garrett 1979:306).

Along with raising funds, he saw a primary focus of the society to be prayer:

> First and foremost, *we must pray*. . . In the matter of conversion, prayer becomes the *means* itself - and a most effectual of means, for without prayer one cannot expect success even under the most perfect of circumstances. Thus, it is not our missionaries alone who must pray. No, we their brethren must further their work by our own prayers. And what ought we to pray for? First, that the Lord will send workers into His harvest; second, that He will open the hearts of those who listen to the Word of the Gospel; third, that He will increase our Society's numbers more and more; and finally, that He will strengthen and

> confirm in us the desire we all now feel to further this work to the attaining of our goal (Garrett 1979:309).

Over the next forty-five years, the Orthodox Mission Society greatly influenced the missionary work of the church until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. During its existence, hundreds of missionaries were sent and supported throughout the vast lands of Siberia and the eastern end of the Russian Empire, as well as Alaska, Japan, China, and Korea.

Conclusion

On March 31, 1878, Metropolitan Innocent died at the age of eighty-two. The church, by canonizing him "Apostle to America," proclaimed him to be truly one of the greatest missionary figures in church history. As one author noted,

> No other person in modern times has come close to matching the missionary feats of Saint Innocent. He has been called a "renaissance man" by some. He was a master carpenter, watchmaker, inventor, linguist, original translator, noted ethnographer, sociologist, teacher, and scholar. But for all these talents, were it not for his first calling, as missionary priest and bishop, none of these talents would have been fully utilized (Fester 1992:31).

Through the life of Innocent, the church once again found a stalwart champion of Orthodoxy who sought to lift up her faithful missionary tradition for all the world to see. His life and work followed and propelled forward the path of his Orthodox predecessors, and thus fulfilled one of the greatest responsibilities of the church - her missionary call.

CHAPTER 8

NICHOLAS KASTAKIN: APOSTLE TO JAPAN (1836-1912)

Nicholas Kasatkin was another famous Russian missionary and a model evangelizer of modern Japan. He entered Japan in 1861, just as the Japanese were emerging from a cacoon of national isolation that lasted more than 200 years. During its period of self-imposed isolation, Japan's zenophobic society outlawed all missionary activity and had minimal contact with any foreign nations. As a result, by the middle of the 19th century, Japan was considered one of the most unevangelized countries in the world. Little evidence remained of the work which some 300 Roman Catholic missionaries achieved during the 16th century, when Christianity claimed more than 300,000 Japanese believers. Xenophobia wiped out almost all traces of this heritage. The Japan that Kasatkin entered was still a land hostile to the message of Christ. By the time of his death in 1912, however, he would win the hearts of many Japanese, building the Orthodox church to more than 33,000 baptized believers.

Historical Background

Kasatkin was born August 1, 1836 in the Belsky District, Smolensk Province with the name Ivan Dmitriyevich Kasatkin. His father served as a deacon in the local church, and his mother, a faithful woman, died when he was only five years old. When Kasatkin reached the proper age, he followed the path of his father and entered Smolensk seminary in 1853. Upon graduating at the top of his class, he accepted a scholarship to the famous St. Petersburg Theological Academy and eventually graduated with honors in 1860. He showed promise in his academic work, so much so that the rector of the academy hoped Kasatkin would devote his life to scholarly research.

The direction of Kasatkin's life radically changed in 1860 when he learned of a request for a priest to serve the Russian consulate in Japan. He had previously read two memoirs of Russian explorers in Japan, and at an earlier stage in his life had considered missionary work. The petition for a consulate priest re-ignited his missionary calling. After praying about his decision, Kasatkin approached the rector of the

academy and told him of his desire to go to Japan. To his surprise, the rector discouraged his dream saying, "There is no need for a talented priest such as you in a consulate. You are an indispensable man in this Academy, therefore, you should give this desire to someone else and stay to do research in the Academy. Then you must teach young seminarians as a professor" (Ishido 1974:5).

Kasatkin understood the rector's concern about limiting his role to that of a consulate priest. His vision, however, encompassed much more. He responded to the rector,

> Your grace, I am grateful for your recommendation to me and also for your kindness. I think you are right if I will go to Japan only to live as a priest in the consulate, but my desire is not so. I have a strong resolution in my heart to preach Christianity and enlighten the foreign people. As I say, going to Japan is the best chance to accomplish my desire" (Ishido 1974:5).

His zeal and commitment prevailed over the hesitations of his superiors, and on June 22, 1860, Kasatkin took vows as a monk in preparation for his new mission. Bishop Nectariy offered this advice while tonsuring him with the new name Nicholas: "It is not in a monastery that you will spend your devotional life, but having left your Homeland you will have to serve our Lord in a far-off and pagan land. You must take the cross of a zealot, the staff of a pilgrim. You are called, not only to be a monk but to be an apostle as well" (Kondrashov 1972:71). A week later, on the feastday of Sts. Peter and Paul, Nicholas was ordained to the diaconate, and then to the priesthood on June 30, 1860.

Several days later, Nicholas left St. Petersburg and began his 6,000 mile journey across the Ural mountains and Siberian desert towards his new home in Japan. Traveling by horse and carriage, he did not arrive at the coastal region of Nikolaevsk until the end of September. By this time, winter weather made travel to Japan impenetrable, and Nicholas had to wait until the following Spring to continue his journey. The providence of God blessed this delay by allowing him to meet Bishop Innocent Veniaminov, the renowned missionary of Alaska. The venerable missionary took an interest in the young priest and encouraged him in his apostolic vision. He shared with Nicholas his vast missionary experience of nearly forty years in Alaska and the eastern region of the empire, and advised him of his upcoming challenge. The bishop emphasized that Nicholas's first priority must be to master the Japanese language and to begin translating the Bible, especially the Gospels and divine services as quickly as possible. He also warned the new missionary that he would face many struggles and disappointments, but exhorted him to persevere

during times of despair and loneliness. The strange customs and language of the people would one day become your own, he predicted.

Arrival in Japan

By springtime, Nicholas was anxious to depart to his new home. The winter had given him much time to think about his mission: "I often dreamed of my Japan. My imagination depicted her as a bride awaiting my arrival with a bouquet in her arms. As soon as the Gospel was proclaimed in her darkness all the world would be renewed" (Bartholomew 1987:10). Nicholas's arrival in Hakodate, Japan on June 2, 1861 did not quite meet his expectations. Later, he reminisced,

> Imagine my disappointment when, upon my arrival in Japan, I found it to be quite opposite to all that I had dreamt about it! I arrived and lo! my bride was prosaically asleep and not even thinking about me! The Japanese at the time looked upon foreigners as upon beasts and regarded Christianity as a villainous sect, to which only inveterate villains and sorcerers could belong (Kondrashov 1972:70).

The strange culture and customs of the Japanese, along with the difficulty of the language, initially overwhelmed the novice missionary. Along with his own internal struggles, he faced many outward obstacles which stymied his desire to proclaim the gospel. Although Japan had hesitantly opened its doors to the outside world, prohibitions against proclaiming Christianity remained in force. In fact, the Japanese government declared that anyone suspected of preaching the gospel would immediately be deported, and any Japanese who converted faced the possibility of death.

Xenophobia made it difficult for Nicholas to even find a willing Japanese tutor. The situation frustrated the missionary, and shortly after his arrival, he began occupying his time studying the scholarly French and German books in the consulate's library. The temptation to fall back into his academic interests was halted, however, by a coincidental visit by Bishop Innocent. The veteran missionary had been sidetracked to Japan and was forced to spend three weeks on the island. Noticing the distraction Nicholas faced with his scholarly books, Bishop Innocent "advised him to throw away his French and German books and to begin serious study of Japanese" (Bartholomew 1987:16).

> With new zeal, Nicholas tackled the obstacle of learning the language. As he later recollected,
>
> I spent much time during the first years on testing different methods of studying the Japanese language, because this language is truly the hardest in the world and presents an

> inexplicable enigma to anyone who sets about studying it. But patience overcomes everything. Japanese books opened up to me and speech began to flow . . . I battled seven years over the Japanese language and sighed nearly every day over the fact that the day does not have 100 hours and that even if it had it would be impossible to devote all of them to language studies (Kondrashov 1972:71).

Eventually, he found a teacher, Dr. Kimura, who was willing to help him. His thirst for knowledge was so great that he needed an additional two teachers to maintain his pace. Along with language learning, Nicholas studied the culture and history of Japan. He read their mythology and literature, and learned about Confucianism, Shintoism, and Buddhism. He even attended the sermons of popular Buddhist preachers and public storytellers in hopes of understanding the mind of the Japanese. For close to seven years he continued this intense study. Eventually, he became one of the foremost scholars of the Japanese language and went on to translate service and prayer books, catechism books, and the Scripture, as he waited for opportunities of evangelism to open within the country.

First Japanese Convert

In the Russian consulate, a certain samarai Shinto priest named Sawabe Takuma often came by to give fencing lessons to the son of an officer. Sawabe was a fierce nationalist and xenophobe who desired the expulsion of all foreigners from Japan. He took pride in the religion of his fathers and openly expressed hatred for the Christian faith and its adherents. One day he approached Nicholas with the precise aim of sharing his contempt for Christianity.

> "Why are you angry at me?" Fr. Nicholas asked Sawabe
>
> "All you foreigners must die. You've come here to spy on our country, and even worse you're harming Japan with your preaching," Sawabe answered.
>
> "But do you know what I preach?"
>
> "No, I don't," he answered.
>
> "Then how can you judge, much less condemn something you know nothing about? Is it just to defame something you don't know? First listen to me, then judge. If what you hear is bad, then throw us out." (Bartholomew 1987:20)

Sawabe did come back the next day and listened to Nicholas talk about God, man and the sacred history of the Old and New Testament. Soon, the samarai warrior began taking notes and asking penetrating questions, seeking to discover the truth behind Christianity. Nicholas rejoiced: "Imagine my joy when I

noticed that the listener had started to heed with keen attention the narration of the new, unfamiliar teaching and his previously arrogant mind began to humble itself before the astounding truth! Apparently God Himself was directing his thoughts along the right road" (Kondrashov 1972:70).

The Holy Spirit touched Sawabe in such a powerful way that he began secretly sharing his newfound treasure with others, even at the risk of his life. The Japanese law still demanded capital punishment for those who adopted Christianity. Undaunted, Sawabe continued his catechism with Nicholas, while simultaneously acting as a missionary himself among his fellow countrymen. He convinced two friends about the truth of the gospel, and after a period of time all three sought baptism. In April 1868, Nicholas baptized the three men in his office at the consulate with the names Paul Sawabe, John Sakai, and James Urano.

Through the enthusiastic efforts of these newly baptized converts, the church slowly began to grow. Over the next year, a small core group developed of twelve baptized Christians and twenty-five catechumens. In the meantime, Nicholas desired to return to his motherland in order to ask for help in establishing an official mission in Japan. Up to this date, the Russian church recognized Nicholas only as a consulate priest and offered no aid for missionary activity.

His request to the Holy Synod was well-timed. In 1868, the emperor abolished the feudal system in Japan and officially renounced its national isolationist policy. The Russian church interpreted these events as a sign to officially support the mission effort in Japan. Thus, on January 14, 1870, the Holy Synod endorsed Nicholas's request for an official mission by promising annual support of 6,000 rubles (approximately $90,000), and providing four other missionary monks to assist him in his work. Having accomplished his goals in Russia, Nicholas returned to his adopted homeland on February 15, 1871.

Within a brief period of their arrival, all the monks who accompanied him returned to Russia due to illnesses or personal reasons. This setback did not discourage Nicholas as he focused on the progress of his young converts. During his absence, the body of believers had increased to more than fifty in Hakodate alone. The seeds he had sown began to bear fruit. From the beginning, he emphasized to the new Christians the importance of sharing their faith and looking for every opportunity to boldly proclaim the

gospel. He knew the future of the church depended on the evangelism of the indigenous believer, not on foreign missionaries. Nicholas established guidelines for the neophyte church which emphasized this point:

> The evangelists shall be organized as a deliberate body. These evangelists shall teach Christian truth to other people while still continuing to study it for themselves. There shall be two kinds of meetings. In the first, the evangelists, together with others who know the essential doctrines but desire further study, shall meet to read and explain the New Testament. Such meetings shall be held twice a week, the evangelists taking turns in conducting them. None of the number should fail to attend; if any person is unavoidably prevented from coming, he ought before the next meeting, to learn from some one else what was said. The second meeting is for the benefit of those - whether men, women or children - who are commencing to study Christian doctrines. The evangelists shall explain to them the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. This meeting shall be held twice a week . . . Besides conducting the two kinds of meetings already mentioned, the evangelists shall go about the city every day trying to win new enquireres. If among those interested are persons unable to attend the meetings, the evangelists shall go to their houses in order to explain the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments. This is to be regarded as of prime importance and should be done even if, for lack of time, the evangelist is obliged to omit the meeting for reading the New Testament. When persons have thoroughly learned the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and are established in the faith, they shall be presented to the priest for baptism (Stamoolis 1986:36).

The original three converts became dynamic leaders of the fledgling church. In November 1871, Sawabe, Ono and Takaya established a chapel in the city of Sendai at the home of Ono. Their preaching inspired more than 150 people to attend their services and catechism. The growth of their church drew the attention of the government and shortly thereafter, the persecution began. On February 13, 1872, authorities arrested Sawabe and forty of his followers. Ultimately, more than 140 believers were jailed or placed under house arrest (Bartholomew 1987:35). Throughout all their interrogations not one follower apostatized. In fact, the ordeal only strengthened the faith of the believers. Nicholas described the situation:

> These persecutions have served, with the help of God's grace, to make it so that those who had the faith only in their mind, now had it in their heart. The enemies of Christ did not have the satisfaction of hearing even from women or children a single word of weakness or fear in professing Christ (Kondrashov 1972:72).

During these imprisonments, Nicholas pleaded with the foreign ambassador to intercede on behalf of the believers and eventually helped free all the believers. Sporadic persecution continued until 1873 when Japan finally abolished all the old edicts against Christianity. During this uneasy period of unrest, the authorities continued to imprison Sakai. This stopped after several instances, though, because the authorities realized that Sakai performed almost equal harm through his witnessing inside the prisons as out.

They complained, "To keep him in prison was nearly equivalent to placing a Christian chaplain there" (Stamoolis 1986:39).

While the indigenous evangelists proclaimed the gospel, Nicholas concentrated on strengthening the leaders and working on translations. In 1871, he worked with Ono and Mayam in editing a Russian-Japanese dictionary, the first genuine dictionary in Japanese history. Nicholas firmly believed that one of the conditions for the success and growth of the young church was the translations of the Bible and divine services, and the dictionary would immensely help in this area. As he noted, "If we are to have even the smallest Christian Church then it is absolutely essential to hold the divine services in Japanese" (Kondrashov 1972:73). In December of that same year, help from Russia arrived in the person of priest-monk Anatoly Tikhay. At this time Nicholas placed the work at Hakodate in Tikhay's hands, and moved the center of the church to Tokyo.

Growth of the Japanese Orthodox Church

By 1874, the result of Nicholas's labor became apparent. In Tokyo alone, indigenous evangelists pastored four different missions, with numerous others spread throughout the southern part of Japan. With the growth of the church, Nicholas felt a need to establish an annual general council which would help direct the path of the mission. The council, encompassing the evangelists and lay leaders of the church, acted as the main body of administration which addressed the pertinent problems of the day.

The first executive council met in May of that year and announced the feastday of Sts. Peter and Paul as the date of the annual meeting. In the General Council of 1875, twenty-eight indigenous representatives attended and together with Nicholas selected two men to become the first Japanese clergy. Upon the arrival of Bishop Paul of Kamchatka in July, Paul Sawabe was ordained to the priesthood and John Sakai became a deacon. Three years later, the bishop ordained five more Japanese priests.

As the church continued to flourish, Nicholas felt the need for the Russian church to assign a bishop to Japan. In the original guidelines he wrote for the church , Nicholas had suggested that once the body of believers reached 5,000 baptized Christians, a bishop should be assigned. By 1878, the church included more than 4,100 Japanese faithful. With the number growing rapidly, Nicholas requested the Holy

Synod to send a bishop to oversee the mission church. The church leaders of Russia agreed with his request, and decided to raise Nicholas himself to the episcopate. Thus, Nicholas returned home in 1879 for what turned out to be his last visit to Russia, and on March 30, 1880 Metropolitan Isidore consecrated him "Bishop of Revel and Vicar of the Riga Eparchy." In the consecration ceremony, the Metropolitan exhorted the new bishop with the following words: "You are to serve the cause you have undertaken to the end of your life, and let not anyone take away your crown" (Kondrashov 1972:72).

Nicholas returned to Tokyo on November 8, 1880 with new goals. During his trip in Russia, he had collected 131,834 rubles (more than $1,977,500) to help finance the ministry of the church. One of the areas in which the church expanded was in diverse publications. In the 1880's, the church regularly published the general periodical *Seikyo Jiho* (Orthodox Herald). Following the success of this newspaper, the church began specializing in other areas with a woman's literary magazine *Uranishiki* (Reverse Brocade), a family magazine, *Seikyo Yama* (Orthodox Instruction), and a philosophical journal *Shinkai* (Sea of the Spirit).

Along with these publications, Nicholas continued his translating. The bishop spent at least four hours a day in translations over the last thirty years of his life. When he worked on the Bible translations, he compared every verse with the original Greek, Vulgate, Slavonic, and English texts. He translated and revised numerous times the books of the New Testament, as well as most of the Old Testament. But he never did accomplish his dream of translating the whole Bible. Along with Scripture, he completed work on the main service books of the church, including the *Octoechos, Lenten Triodion, Pentecostarion, Horologion, and Typicon*. People of all denominations respected the work of the Orthodox bishop. One Protestant bishop of Kyoto even said, "There can be no doubt that [Nicholas'] translation of the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of John are immeasurably superior to all others in existence" (Bartholomew 1987:45).

Another major project during the 1880's was the building of a cathedral in Tokyo. Nicholas wanted to make a statement with the construction of a beautiful cathedral, like Orthodox architecture of past centuries. He emphasized, "This will be a monument; it will teach and amaze many, not for decades, I dare say, but for centuries, since it will be the most remarkable building in the capital of Japan" (Bartholomew

1972:47). Nicholas followed the ancient Byzantine style by building a bell tower of 125 feet, a main dome 115 feet high, and encompassing an area of 1053 square yards. Built on the top of a hill in the midst of Tokyo, any visitor entering the city immediately noticed this edifice to God. As one such observer described,

> Our attention was caught by a hill which dominated its surroundings, on which the walls of our Orthodox Cathedral shone with whiteness, with its cross penetrating the blue sky, the sign of Christ boldly penetrating the blue sky . . . It is for them [the Japanese] what Hagia Sophia is for the Greeks, their visible center, their sign, their support in faintheartedness, their promise of future triumph (Bartholomew 1987:47).

The church was completed on March 8, 1891 after eight years of construction, and consecrated with the name of the Holy Resurrection, although it became popularly known as Nicholai-do (the house that Nicholas built). Japanese officials, 124 inter-denominational missionaries, and more than 3,000 Orthodox believers attended the consecration ceremony (Ishido 1974:37).

Struggles of the Church

By 1891, the church had grown to 20,048 believers, including the bishop, twenty-two priests, six deacons, 136 preachers, and 219 churches. Still hindering greater growth, however, was the lack of missionaries to help guide and strengthen the church. Nicholas wrote to friends in Russia, "If the number of preachers here corresponded to the Mission's spiritual needs, there would be Orthodox Christians in all the cities and villages of all the provinces in Japan. All of Japan is ready to adopt Christianity and only men are needed to gather the harvest in the field of God" (Kondrashov 1972:73).

Nicholas emphasized his great concern for this lack of missionaries in a report written to the Holy Synod in 1896:

> Forty years have passed since Japan was opened to foreigners and work started here. The Christian missions have had enough time to become adapted in the new arena, to determine their approach to the people, to develop their systems and to produce the results of their activities. And what is the state of their affairs at present? The following are the Christian missionary forces in Japan as of the end of last year:
>
> 1. The Roman Catholics - 1 archbishop, 3 bishops, 93 missionaries, 25 monks - Marianists, 83 nuns - altogether 205 people.
> 2. The Protestants - 680 missionary men and women.
> 3. The Orthodox - 1 missionary.
>
> And here are the results of their activities by the end of last year:
>
> 1. The Roman Catholics - 52,177 Christians.
> 2. The Protestants - 38,361 Christians.

3. The Orthodox - 23,153 Christians.

> God is benevolent to His young plant - the Orthodox Church amidst the Japanese people, and shows indisputable signs of His Benevolence in granting Her success; but He uses the same to give a clear instruction to strengthen the Testament - to faithfully preserve and nurture His seedling . . . Therefore, my most urgent plea is to give thought to the state of affairs in the Church here and secure Her future well-being by granting an assistant to me, who could succeed me in supervising the Church (Kondrashov 1972:74).

Nicholas's pleas for more missionaries went unheard as a period of hostility developed between Russia and Japan. On February 10, 1904, the Russo-Japanese war began. Although the Russian government suggested that all her citizens return to their homeland, Nicholas held fast. As the church's bishop, he felt a responsibility to remain with his flock. In encylicals to the faithful, he wrote,

> I did not decide until yesterday whether I would go back to Russia or not because of the Russo-Japanese War. If I did go to Russia I could find financial help which might help our Church's mission work. But I decided to stay in Tokyo with my flock who asked me to remain here. I respect very much your opinion which suggested for me to stay with you. I thought that everything was God's decision, and I was especially aware of it today when I prayed at the Matins service. My hesitations until yesterday were my private deliberation. Frankly, I would like to go back to my home country because I have not been there for 23 years. However, this was only a private wish. My public life belongs only to the Japanese Orthodox Church and our Church is still young and needs guidance (Ishido 1974:40).
>
> From now on I will not take part in the public services of the Church. Until now I have prayed for the prosperity and peace of the Japanese empire. Now with the declaration of war between Japan and my homeland I, as a Russian subject, cannot pray for the victory of Japan over my homeland. (Bartholomew 1972:54).
>
> [But] carry out all the duties that are demanded of you as loyal subjects in this situation. Pray to God that he may give victory to your imperial army; thank God for the victories that have been given; make sacrifices to meet the needs of the war. Those of you who are called to the field of battle must fight without regard for your own lives, not out of hatred against the enemy, but out of love for your own people . . . But [remember], in addition to our earthly fatherland, we have another, a heavenly fatherland. To this all men belong without distinction of nationality, since all men are equally children of the heavenly Father and brothers of one another. This our fatherland is the Church, in which . . . the children of the heavenly Father in very truth make up one family. It is for that reason, brothers and sisters, that I do not separate myself from you, but remain in your family as though it was my own. (Neill 1964:376).

The Orthodox church in Japan suffered great persecution during the one and a half years of war. The Japanese portrayed Nicholas as a Russian spy and the Orthodox faithful as traitors to their native land. They accused the Russian tsar of being the head of the Orthodox church, and thus, the church an enemy of Japan. Nicholas tried to refute this accusation in an encyclical dated March 13, 1904:

> The sole head of the Church is Jesus Christ, whose teaching is carefully preserved in its entirety by the Orthodox Church. The Russian emperor, to the extent that he follows this teaching is as much a son of the Church as any other Orthodox Christian. At no time and in no place has the Church ever given him authority over her teaching or considered him

> her head . . . If the Russian emperor is not the head of the Church for Russians, much less is he the head of the Church for us. For us he is no more than a brother in faith as are all Russians who share our faith (Bartholomew 1987:53).

Throughout the war, Nicholas made it a point to minister to the 70,525 Russian prisoners of war. The bishop appointed twenty Japanese priests to act as chaplains in the prisons, and he established a "Society for the Spiritual Comfort of the P.O.W.'s" which helped minister to the needs of the prisoners.

Bishop Nicholas's Accomplishments

On April 6, 1907 the Holy Synod of Russia raised Nicholas to archbishop status and recognized Japan as its own diocese. Along with this, they fulfilled one of his strongest desires by sending an assistant bishop who would eventually succeed him as leader of the Japanese church. Bishop Sergy Tikhomirov arrived in Japan in 1908 and became the Bishop of Kyoto. The new missionary mastered the Japanese language within a year, through the guidance and help of the archbishop, and began preaching in the native tongue of the land. Bishop Sergy continued to serve as bishop and then archbishop of Japan until 1941, when he finally handed his shepherd's staff over to Bishop Nicholas Ono, the first indigenous hierarch of Japan.

In July 1911, Nicholas celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of his arrival in Japan. The accomplishments of this man's life, considering the minimal resources at his use, were remarkable. By his jubilee year, the church consisted of 33,017 Christians in 266 communities, with forty-three clergymen, including the archbishop, a bishop, thirty-five priests, and six deacons. There also were 121 lay preachers, 200 teachers, a seminary with ninety-four students, and two girls' schools with eighty children (Kondrashov 1972:75 and Bartholomew 1987:56).

A half year after his fiftieth anniversary celebration, on February 16, 1912, Nicholas fell asleep in the Lord. Large numbers of Christians and non-Christians came to honor the late archbishop at his funeral. The *Japan Times* reported in its February 23 edition as follows:

> The cathedral was filled with an unbelievable number of people, including representatives of the Catholic and Protestant churches, members of the diplomatic corps and a mass of Japanese dignitaries . . . The entire neighborhood and the streets along which the mournful procession passed were filled with onlookers. The enormous crowd made this the largest funeral of recent years (Bartholomew 1987:58).

The life and work of this modern-day apostle was praised by Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike. The Russian church greatly eulogized their missionary son at the time of his death, and eventually canonized Nicholas in 1970. Acclamations also poured upon him from non-Orthodox people. Bishop Tucker of the Episcopalian Church called him one of the most outstanding Christian missionaries (Neill 1964:377). Richard Drummond, a non-Orthodox historian, summarized his achievements thus:

> The life and life-fruits of Nicholas compel us to recognize him as one of the greatest missionaries of the modern era. In accordance with Orthodox tradition he respected highly the language and cultural traditions of the people among whom he served. He respected the people and loved them as persons. He went beyond the common traditions of Orthodoxy in freeing his work to an extraordinary extent from the political aims and interests of his homeland. His apostleship was remarkably nonpolemical for the day; he was in singular fashion an apostle of peace among men. His method of evangelization was concentrated upon the family, and he stressed above all the raising up of national workers and the indigenization of the Church, even as he urged it to remember its distinctive association with the kingdom of God (Stamoolis 1986:40).

Conclusion

Nicholas Kasatkin, Apostle to Japan, epitomized the life of a traditional Orthodox missionary. He lived a life centered in Jesus Christ and His holy church. He believed that his life should be guided by intensive study of the Holy Scriptures and church fathers, as well as active and frequent participation in the sacraments of the church. He imitated a servant's attitude of simplicity and humility to which Christ called all his disciples to follow. He proclaimed the gospel of salvation first and foremost with his life, but also boldly preached the message of good news with words which all people could understand. He endured struggles and sufferings with perseverance and unwavering faith, and placed all things in perspective of the kingdom of God. The archbishop could have been summarizing his own life, when, in his last years, he wrote,

> I am happy in the joy of serving to establish God's Kingdom on earth. There is no more important service than this. It is for this that God became man and Himself served the cause, to continue which H chose the Holy Apostles and they, on His instructions, chose their own successors and exhorted them to do the same from generation to generation till the end of the world. The field of this ministry is the whole world; the Gospel of God's Kingdom is to be preached to all peoples...
>
> We cannot ask God and His holy saints that they remove all the difficulties from our missionary road and everything that causes us moral suffering. We can only pray that He help us carry the cross, and enable us to survive the difficulties and moral sufferings that await us on our missionary road. Our service is giving birth to spiritual children for God; and what birth is not accompanied by pain? And for this we must be prepared to advance.

> But we have a source of great consolation. To serve with energy and success we must have confidence beforehand that our labour is not in vain and that our work will be crowned with success (Kondrashov 1972:76).

Nicholas followed the compelling call of missions to Japan, and God abundantly crowned him and his fifty years of work with glory and honor.

CHAPTER 9

ANASTASIOS YANNOULATOS: MODERN DAY APOSTLE

For the first half of the 20th century, the Orthodox church was relatively inactive in missions. The great missionary efforts of the Russian church came to a close as the communist curtain placed the church in bondage. Meanwhile, the Orthodox churches of the Balkans struggled to overcome the effects of the previous five centuries of Muslim subjugation. Although the Orthodox lands of Greece, Romania, Bulgaria, and Serbia gained their independence, a strong sense of nationalism prevailed within the churches, and the idea of outreach beyond the borders of their own countries was a concept to which few gave much consideration.

It was not until the late 1950s that a number of young Orthodox theologians began to raise their voices about the need for external missions in the church. From an international Orthodox youth conference held in 1958, a call towards missions began to develop. These young people expressed the idea that the church's responsibility towards missions was not simply something of the past, but rather a responsibility of the contemporary church as well. Despite the struggling situation of a poor church just freed from bondage, the apostolic call of the Lord bellowed for a response. The leader of this fledgling group was Anastasios Yannoulatos, a young Orthodox theologian from Greece. He challenged the church of Greece, as well as the Orthodox church at large, to recover its long held missionary tradition.

In 1959, Yannoulatos helped found "Porefthentes" ("Go Ye"), a missionary movement whose goal was to rekindle the missionary conscience of the Orthodox church, as well as to educate the non-Orthodox world about the rich missionary heritage of the Eastern church. This movement began to produce a journal in Greek and English called *Porefthentes*. In its inaugural issue, Yannoulatos wrote a provocative article entitled "The Forgotten Commandment," which challenged the church to rediscover its missionary zeal of previous generations. In this article, the bold theologian questioned the accepted apathy towards missions that prevailed in the contemporary Orthodox church:

> It is not a question of "can we?" but of an imperative command "we must." "Go ye therefore and teach all nations." "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." There is no "consider if you can," there is only a definite, clear cut command of Our Lord. . . If we let ourselves rest peacefully in this habitual inertia in the matter of foreign missions, we are not simply keeping the pure light of the Faith "under the bushel," but we are betraying one of the basic elements of our Orthodox tradition. For missionary work has always been a tradition within the Orthodox Church. . . Missionary activity is not simply something "useful" or just "nice," but something imperative, a foremost duty, if we really want to be consequent to our Orthodox Faith. (Yannoulatos 1959:2,3)

Yannoulatos emerged as a leading missions advocate in the following years. He dared the Orthodox faithful to recover the authentic meaning of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." He even hoped to establish some type of external Orthodox mission center. His enthusiasm, however, was derided within most Orthodox circles as an unrealistic goal. Following an address he gave on this issue to theological students at the University of Athens in January 1959, someone in the audience remarked skeptically that "the organization of an Orthodox External Mission is tantamount to a miracle." To this, Yannoulatos responded, "We fully agree. But as Christians we do believe in miracles" (Yannoulatos 1962:8). The life and work of Anastasios Yannoulatos, probably the foremost Orthodox missiologist in the world today, exemplifies the realization of this miracle in the contemporary Orthodox church.

Historical Background

Anastasios Yannoulatos was born November 4, 1929 to a pious Orthodox family in Greece. Raised in the faith, he actively participated in the church during his formative years. His first interest was in mathematics and throughout his teenage years Yannoulatos considered pursuing a career in this science. His views changed with the coming of World War II. During the war years, Yannoulatos began to experience his faith in a very personal way. He witnessed much suffering and disaster from the war and could only make sense of the chaos by delving deeper into his faith. For the world and for his own country to recover from the evil of both the Second World War, as well as the ensuing Greek Civil War, Yannoulatos understood the urgent need for a message of eternal peace, the peace that comes only through Jesus Christ.

This experience led Yannoulatos to abandon his interest in other disciplines and to pursue theology. So fervent was his desire that he has said, "It was not enough for me to give something to God, I had to be given totally to Him. I wanted to live with my whole being in Christ" (Yannoulatos

1993:Personal Interview). Thus, in 1947, he entered the Theological School of the University of Athens. He graduated with highest honors in 1951.

Following two years of service in the Army, Yannoulatos joined the brotherhood of "ZOE," a religious organization focused on the spiritual renewal of the church in Greece. Yannoulatos's personal responsibilities included missions to the youth of his country. He became the leader of student movements and teenage camps and strove to make the Orthodox faith real and concrete to his young charges. Through these experiences, Yannoulatos discovered the impact such outreach programs had on the church at large. He realized that without such missionary outreach the church loses its focus and ultimately diminishes.

During these years, Yannoulatos also participated in an international Orthodox youth movement called Syndesmos. He served as its general secretary during 1958-61, and then as vice-president in 1964-78. Here he met other young leaders with a similar zeal for proclaiming the gospel. Together they began to realize how Christ could never be satisfied with proclaiming the gospel simply within the church. His original command was to go to "all nations." Thus missions are not merely internal, but external as well. The Great Commission of the past is a great responsibility for the present. Yannoulatos wrote at the time:

> Church without mission is a contradiction in terms . . . If the Church is indifferent to the apostolic work with which she has been entrusted, she denies herself, contradicts herself and her essence, and is a traitor in the warfare in which she is engaged. A static Church which lacks vision and a constant endeavor to proclaim the Gospel to the *oikoumene* could hardly be recognized as the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church to whom the Lord entrusted the continuation of His Work (Yannoulatos 1965:295).

The 1960s - Following the Call of God

This understanding of the importance of external missions for the church filled the heart of Yannoulatos. Following his ordination to the diaconate in 1960, Yannoulatos founded the inter-Orthodox mission center "Porefthentes." The goal of this center was to educate the church in the area of missions, as well as to motivate and send missionaries throughout the world.

Yannoulatos himself planned on becoming a foreign missionary. Immediately following his ordination to the priesthood on May 24, 1964, he left for East Africa and celebrated his first liturgy in Uganda. Shortly after his arrival, however, the young priest contracted malaria and returned to Greece. Despite his doctor's recommendation he not return to Africa, Yannoulatos was not daunted by the setback.

He realized more than ever the importance of increasing the missionary awareness in the church and sought new ways to fulfill the Great Commission of Christ. Following the advice of one of his professors, Yannoulatos decided the best way he could influence the church was by making a significant contribution in the academic world. He believed that if he could not directly work in the mission field, he could still try to pave the way for others to go. He decided to pursue further studies in missiology and the history of religions.

From 1965-69, Yannoulatos studied the history of religions at the universities in Hamburg and Marburg in West Germany, with an emphasis on "Religious Plurality and the Orthodox Church." His work focused on the general history of religions, African religions, missiology and ethnology. He traveled to Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, to conduct field research and collect material for his doctoral thesis, "The Spirit Mbandwa and the Framework of Their Cults: A Research of Aspects of African Religion." Overall, he desired to establish a basis for the whole process of a serious study of missions in the Orthodox church. Through this research, he sought support for his original thesis that it was impossible to truly be Orthodox without having an interest in missions.

Along with his studies, Yannoulatos actively participated in the worldwide ecumenical movement. By taking part in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (CWME) of the World Council of Churches (WCC), the budding missiologist felt that he could both learn from other Christian traditions, as well as introduce these members to the rich missionary heritage of the Orthodox church. In 1963, Yannoulatos became the youngest member of the CWME at the Mexico City conference. He has continued to play a pivotal role in this ecumenical setting, and ultimately served as its moderator from 1984-91, the first Orthodox missiologist to hold such a place of leadership.

The 1970s - Planting Missionary Foundations Within the Church

During the following decade, the church of Greece began to hear and respond to the voice of this bold visionary. In 1968, Yannoulatos and his "Porefthentes" staff pioneered the framework of the Bureau of External Missions within *Apostoliki Diakonia* (the service branch of the church of Greece). The establishment of a permanent missionary organization within the official Orthodox church in Greece was a

milestone. The church recognized the work of Yannoulatos by elevating him in 1972 to the episcopacy as "Bishop of Androussa," and making him general director of the whole department of *Apostoliki Diakonia*. Through Bishop Anastasios' leadership, this commission of the church of Greece acted as the main body for all the missionary efforts of the church both within Greece and abroad.

Along with his ecclesiastical responsibilities, Bishop Anastasios continued to be active on the academic level. In 1972 the University of Athens elected him as their professor of the History of Religions. At the University, he established and directed a center for missionary studies during 1971-76. This center paved the way for another landmark, when a chair of missiology was finally created in 1976. In this academic atmosphere Bishop Anastasios continued to proclaim his "wake-up" call to the church, challenging her complacency in missionary outreach:

> Inertia in the field of mission means, in the last analysis, a negation of Orthodoxy, a backslide into the practical heresy of localism . . . It is unthinkable for us to speak of "Orthodox spirituality," of "a life in Christ," of emulating the Apostle Paul, founder of the Greek Church, while we stay inert as to mission; that it is unintelligible to write about intense liturgical and spiritual living of the Lord's Resurrection by us, while we abide slothful and indifferent to the call of ecumenical missions, with which the message of the Resurrection is interwoven (Yannoulatos 1968:19).

Bishop Anastasios continually tried to educate the Orthodox faithful to a fuller understanding of the Nicene Creed which proclaimed a belief in "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." Professing such a creed, while staying indifferent to missions, Yannoulatos held, was hypocrisy. As he noted,

> Only when it is realized that worldwide ecumenical mission is an initial and prime implication in a fundamental article of the "Credo," elemental for the Orthodox comprehension of what the Church is, and that what is termed "foreign mission" is not an "external" matter but an inner need, a call to repentance and aligning ourselves with the spirit of the Gospel and the tradition of our Church, only then shall we have the proper and hope-bearing theological start for what comes next (Yannoulatos 1968:20).

Foreign missions is not simply a branch of authentic Orthodox life, or even Orthodox theology, but rather is central to a proper understanding of the church. When Orthodox Christians confess, "I believe in one . . . *APOSTOLIC* church," apostolic does not refer only to apostolic succession. More importantly, it implies having an "apostolic fire and zeal to preach the gospel 'to every creature' (Mk 16:15), because it nurtures its members so that they may become 'witnesses in Jerusalem and in Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth' (Acts 1:8)" (Yannoulatos 1964:140).

Bishop Anastasios continued to challenge the apathetic attitude of the church towards missions by writing:

> The Gospel is addressed to all peoples, and therefore the work of the Church remains incomplete as long as it is restricted to certain geographical areas or social classes. Its field of action is universal and is active in both sectors that welcome the good tidings and those which at first may reject them. Mission was not the duty of only the first generation of Christians. It is the duty of Christians of all ages . . . Witness is the expression of the vitality of the Church as well as a source of renewal and renewed vigor . . . Everyone should contribute to and participate in it, whether it be directly or indirectly. It is an essential expression of the Orthodox ethos (Yannoulatos 1977:162).

Along with influencing the academic world in Greece and abroad, Bishop Anastasios had an impact on other areas of church life as well. In 1972, the bishop worked together with Fr. Anthony Romeos and founded a monastery of nuns whose emphasis would be on external missions. This group became the Convent of St. John the Forerunner in Kareas, Greece. Bishop Anastasios helped guide these women to become a convent which would actively participate in missionary work throughout the world. The convent also welcomed women from foreign lands to join their community and learn the monastic way of life, with the goal of carrying the monastic lifestyle back to their home countries.

The 1980s - Theory Becomes Practice

Back in the 1960s, when Yannoulatos first fell ill to malaria, his doctors told him that he would never be able to work overseas as a missionary. The providence of God spoke differently. In 1980, the Orthodox church of East Africa faced great difficulties. The region had been the most active Orthodox mission field in the world over the past two decades. The church's footing, however, was jeopardized by internal problems that ultimately led to the defrocking of a Kenyan bishop by the Patriarchate of Alexandria. The East African Orthodox church seemed to be on the verge of collapse.

During this time Patriarch Nicholas, the head of the Orthodox church in Africa, invited Bishop Anastasios to become acting archbishop of the Archdiocese of East Africa. The bishop consented, but continued to keep his responsibilities both at the University of Athens, as well as in *Apostoliki Diakonia*. During this transitional period, Yannoulatos saw his role as one of re-organizing the church of East Africa. His main priority was to create a strong Orthodox community led by local leaders.

By focusing on the training and establishing of indigenous leaders, Bishop Anastasios remained faithful to Orthodox missions tradition. As he noted in an earlier writing,

> The "incarnation" of God's Word in the language and customs of a country has been and must be the first concern of all Orthodox mission. Its intent is the planting and growth of a native Church, self-powered and self-governing, able to turn to account all the genuine strands of national tradition, transforming and hallowing them in harmony with the people's nature, to the glory of God (Yannoulatos 1968:21)

In 1972, Archbishop Makarios III of Cyprus built an Orthodox seminary in Nairobi, Kenya, but political instability in Cyprus prevented the Archbishop from completing his project. The school remained vacant for ten years. Bishop Anastasios's first action as the new leader of the church was to finish the seminary and open it immediately. During the 1970s, many of the faithful within the African Orthodox church became disillusioned and disheartened with the floundering church, and began to leave. Yannoulatos realized that the only way to bring these people back, as well as to bring new converts into the faith, was through the training of local leaders and priests.

Hence, Bishop Anastasios officially opened the "Archbishop Makarios III Orthodox Patriarchal Seminary" in 1982. Over the following decade, the school averaged forty-five students annually, using twelve professors from East Africa, Europe, and the United States. The acting archbishop eventually ordained sixty-two priests and deacons, as well as forty-two readers and catechists from the school's graduates These indigenous leaders came from eight different tribes in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania, and provided the foundation for the renewal of the church in East Africa.

Along with training local leaders, the acting archbishop also supported the Orthodox missionary tradition of translation, which he believed was sanctioned by Christ during the event of Pentecost. Thus, he concentrated on publications, organizing the translation of services into seven different languages. Bishop Anastasios also tried to establish a sense of permanency in the structures of the church by guiding the construction of sixty-seven new church buildings, twenty-three of them stone and forty-four wooden and mud. He also helped renovate twenty-five existing church buildings. His construction accomplishments included seven mission stations, seven health stations, five primary schools and twelve nursery schools.

His work in Africa drew worldwide attention. The Greek Orthodox church in America assisted him by sending missionaries to East Africa. The impact of these missionaries was felt not only within the

church of East Africa, but also throughout America. Many of the short-term missionaries returned to their homes in the United States, and helped increase a missionary awareness and consciousness within their own parishes. The Orthodox church in Greece and Finland also responded to a series of lectures the bishop gave on the imperative of missions by sending missionary teams of their own to Kenya.

The most important aspect of Bishop Anastasios's work in East Africa, however, was not the ordinations, the publications, or the missionary interest created by the mission teams. It was instead his efforts to assimilate with the indigenous Christians. By identifying closely with the Orthodox Christians of this region, he encouraged and empowered them to embrace the faith as authentically their own. As a result, the church of East Africa continued to mature even after his departure as acting archbishop in 1991.

In addition to his achievements in Africa, Bishop Anastasios has left his mark in other ways. In 1981, the Bishop began editing, through the auspices of *Apostoliki Diakonia,* the first official missionary magazine of the Church of Greece, entitled *Panta ta Ethne* (All Nations). This magazine continues to disseminate mission information, and challenge Orthodox Christians throughout Greece to respond to the missionary mandate.

The 1980s also saw Bishop Anastasios intensify his activity in the WCC. After participating in the World Mission Conference at Melbourne in 1980, as well as the general assembly of the WCC at Vancouver in 1983, the Bishop became the moderator of the CWME during 1984-91, and presided at the World Mission Conference at San Antonio in 1989. His missiological impact not only influenced the Orthodox world, but also touched broad ecumenical circles. As the prominent Protestant theologian and missionary David J. Bosch noted,

> Anastasios has remained the driving force behind the missionary movement in Orthodoxy. And since the Orthodox churches joined the WCC in 1961, he and others have made a major contribution to missionary thinking and practice in ecumenical circles . . . The cross-fertilization in the area of Missiology between Orthodoxy and Protestantism has indeed been a major area of theological renewal in the ecumenical movement since 1961. Only three papers were read in the conference plenary during the first few day . . . Whereas the first two papers were interesting and challenging, it was Anastasios' presentation that provided the theological framework for the conference theme "Your Will Be Done". . . its overall thrust was truly ecumenical in the best sense of the word (Bosch 1989:127).

The 1990s - Culmination of His Work

A new challenge confronted Bishop Anastasios with the coming of a new decade. In January 1991, the Patriarchate of Constantinople elected Anastasios to go to Albania as "Patriarchal Exarch" with the mandate to contact Orthodox people irrespective of their ethnic origin and re-establish the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania. The Orthodox church in Albania had been decimated after forty years of the most severe persecution. Before the country had finally overthrown its yoke of communism, the number of Orthodox clergy had diminished from 235 in 1960 to eleven in 1990. Once again, the opportunity to revive a Church on the brink of collapse confronted Bishop Anastasios.

Yannoulatos saw this new challenge as an opportunity to synthesize the elements of his life. Before communism, Albania was a country of sixty-nine percent Muslims. Bishop Anastasios had written a book and many articles on Islam. The political uncertainties which the church faced with the government was something he was accustomed to from his work in East Africa. The challenge to resurrect a local church from an atheistic abyss would require a miracle, similar to the miracle required in the early 1960s to establish an external Orthodox mission. But as his life has shown, Bishop Anastasios believes in miracles.

Overall, the priorities of Bishop Anastasios in Albania during his first two years of episcopacy were to train local leaders, perform responsible pastoral work to the twenty-one percent of the population that claimed an Orthodox heritage, and to open dialogue and bridges to people of other faiths. In response to his leadership, the church quickly established an Orthodox seminary with more than eighty students. The number of clergy increased from eleven to fifty-six within the first two years of his episcopacy. And the future looks bright with the influx of converts stemming from his outreach to young atheists and Muslims.

Conclusion

Over the past thirty years, the impact and influence of Anastasios Yannoulatos cannot be overstated. As a young theologian in the 1950s, he had a vision to rekindle the missionary spirit of the Orthodox church. Thirty years later, it is clear he has achieved his goal. Indeed, missions has truly become part of the basic life of 20th century Orthodoxy. As the Archbishop notes himself,

> Here is the first and major contribution I have made -- a theological contribution to help the church rediscover who she really is. It was a contribution of LIFE. My theological position has always been to live the mystery of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. To live the mission of the church with its proper universal and eschatological perspective (Yannoulatos 1993).

A summary of the Archbishop's life can be seen in his desire to conquer four different frontiers. First, he approached the Orthodox church herself by seeking to revive missionary interest and consciousness that has been a part of her tradition throughout the ages. Secondly, he sought to make a scholarly contribution to the field of missiology. Archbishop Anastasios has written nine scholarly books, five catechetical books, over sixty treatises (fifty of which are in foreign languages), and more than eighty different articles. He founded and published two different mission magazines, *Porefthentes* (1960-70), and *Panta ta Ethne* (1981-1992), and since 1981 he has been a contributing editor of the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research.* Along with this, he has appeared numerous times on television, appealing to the public to embrace the eternal message of Jesus Christ and His holy church. In 1989, the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massechusetts, granted an honorary Doctor of Theology degree to the archbishop. And in 1993, Archbishop Anastasios was unanimously elected correspondent Member of the Academy of Athens, which is the highest academic society of Greece.

The third frontier has been his life in East Africa and Albania. He desired to live the life and share the efforts of missions in the most remote places of the world. Here, he hoped to show all people of the world, regardless of their origin, that God loved and cared for them. Finally, the last frontier has been in ecumenical circles. Through the WCC, Archbiship Anastasios has given witness to Orthodox mission theology and spirituality to the non-Orthodox world. He worked together with his Christian contemporaries to define missions in the 20th century and to witness effectively to other faiths and traditions.

Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos's life and work can be summarized in his own words. Throughout his sixty-four years of life, he has tried to live and proclaim the mystery of the "one, holy, catholic and apostolic church." To live the mission of the church within its proper universal perspective. "Mission is an essential expression of Orthodox self-conscience, a cry in action for the fulfillment of God's will 'on earth as it is in heaven' . . . [Ultimately,] indifference to mission is a denial of Orthodoxy" (Yannoulatos 1989:88).

CONCLUSION

This select survey of inspiring missionaries attempts to offer a small taste of the rich missionary tradition of the Orthodox church. It includes missionaries from the apostle Paul to the 20th century missionary bishop Anastasios Yannoulatos. Their examples demonstrate that the Orthodox church has faithfully raised up people to fulfill Christ's mandate of preaching the good news to the nations. During periods of spiritual vitality, church leaders understood the unquestionable relationship between missions and the nature of the church by enthusiastically sending missionaries to many lands. Only when leaders were spiritually weak, or faced harsh historical circumstances, did the church fall short of its apostolic calling.

Each of the selected missionaries shares a number of common features. First and foremost, they all lived holy lives which radiated the presence of Jesus Christ. They realized that before they could ever preach the gospel, they had to experience the kingdom of God from within. Once the gospel transformed their lives, they then were ready to share it with others. All tried to follow the apostle Paul's dictum, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal 2:20). This is why many of them turned to seclusion in the desert or in monasteries, hoping to intensely experience a communion with God through their prayers and spiritual reading. They wished to unite themselves to Christ as completely as possible. Only after such union with God were they prepared for outreach and mission.

The Bible played a significant role during the formative period of these missionaries. A contemporary biographer of Cyril and Methodios noted that during their formative years the brothers devoted day and night "praying incessantly to God and conversing only with the Scriptures" (Kantor 1983:41). Stephen of Perm spent hours daily wrestling with the Scriptures at the St. Gregory Nazianzus monastery before he left for his mission to the Zyrians. Kosmas Aitolos devoted himself to the study of the Gospels while on Mt. Athos. In this way, he discovered the imperative command of missions and received his call to go forth and evangelize all people.

These missionaries made it one of their first priorities to translate part or all of the Bible into the vernacular of the people they were evangelizing. They realized how important it was for their spiritual children to read the Scriptures in their own language. Innocent stressed the necessity of Bible knowledge for both missionaries and their disciples. He said that everyone should "study diligently the foundations upon which our Orthodox Christian faith is built, that is, the actual books of Holy Scripture (Oleksa 1987:90). He even went so far as to say,

> How many Christians (or better put: how many of those who have received baptism in the name of Jesus Christ) have perished and are even now perishing simply because they do not and did not wish to pay attention to the foundations of our Orthodox faith [i.e. the Bible]? Anyone who despises this duty will have no defense at the fearful Judgement" (Oleksa 1987:90).

Another common trait among all the missionaries was their respect for the native people and their culture. They looked upon the indigenous people as children of God who deserved dignity and love because all people were created in the divine image. Many examples exist of such love - from Paul's sensitivity to the Athenians at the Areopagus, to the desire of Cyril and Methodios to support and solidify the Slavic culture, to Herman's defense of the Alaskan natives' right against the Russian traders. The missionaries also identified themselves with the natives by living humble lives of poverty and service. In doing so, they emulated the example and teachings of Christ by following His command, "If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all" (Mk 9:35). They did not try to rule over their spiritual children in an arrogant or self-centered manner. Instead, they stood by their side and shared their hardships and sufferings.

A final similarity among the missionaries was their perseverance in the face of many struggles. Each mission situation posed different obstacles which hindered apostolic work. Sometimes obstacles came in the form of persecution from the native people who resisted the proclamation of the gospel. Such resistance can be seen in the lives of Paul, Stephen of Perm, Kosmas Aitolos, and Nicholas Kasatkin. Other times the church itself persecuted the missionaries because it felt threatened by their innovative methods of evangelism, as in the case of Cyril and Methodios.

Besides persecutions, other difficult circumstances often confronted the missionaries. Extreme physical conditions, combined with the apathetic response of the natives, led Macarius Gloukharev to think

about abandoning his work. Innocent faced unresponsive people in the Thlinglits, as well as harsh and near insurmountable conditions in the frozen wastelands of Alaska and Siberia. Nicholas struggled for many years simply learning Japanese and waiting for the door of religious freedom to open in Japan. All these missionaries persevered, however, and in the end successfully organized permanent missions which in turn created an invaluable legacy to the Orthodox church and to the entire Christian world.

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