A THEOLOGY OF MISSION FOR ROMANIAN PENTECOSTALS IN A POST-DICTATORIAL CONTEXT: AN INTEGRATIVE APPROACH

by

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A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the degree of
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

School of Philosophy, Theology and Religion
College of Arts and Law
The University of Birmingham
November 2014

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Abstract

This thesis studies the ecclesiological development of Romanian Pentecostalism from its inception until after the fall of communism as well as analysing the contemporary situation and practice of the Romanian Pentecostal churches in context, both to diagnose the most important problems and to draw attention to and explain promising experiments and signs of hope.

It reveals that due to external factors such as socio-political and economic constraints and internal factors such as lack of resources, lack of vision, past traditional theological inheritances, Romanian Pentecostal Churches have not always been able to engage with their context in a missionary way, and their missiological praxis has not always been contextual.

The thesis aims to suggest that Romanian Pentecostal Churches produce a contextual theology that, in addition to being rooted in the Scriptures, is sensitive to the needs, struggles, and aspirations of the churches and the peoples of Romania today.

The thesis concludes by affirming that the churches need to be themselves missionary alternative communities embodying the values of God's Kingdom in their essence, structures and outlook.

Acknowledgments

There are a number of people without whose support and encouragement this research would have not been completed.

I would like to express my appreciation for the support, patience and counsel I received from Professor Allan Anderson, my academic supervisor, when it seemed that this thesis would never be written.

I have benefited greatly from the suggestions and comments made by the post-graduate students of the Centre for Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies at the University of Birmingham.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to Marius Ungur for his assistance with the fieldwork research.

I am grateful to Universities UK and Langham Partnership whose partial financial support in the early stages of my degree enabled me to undertake this research at the University of Birmingham.

I would like to thank the Keston Institute whose unique archive has enabled me to undertake careful research and verification of information through primary sources about the Romanian churches under communism.

And most importantly, I would like to add personal thanks to my wife Valbona for her encouragement and support throughout the research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background

During the years following the disintegration of Ceausescu's regime, I became concerned with how the church could become more relevant in the post-communist society. At that time, my particular concern was limited to finding methods of bringing people into the church and into a living faith.

My horizons in the subject of missions widened during my studies at the Evangelical Theological Seminary, Osijek, Croatia and I am indebted to missiology professors at Osijek who have helped me understand that mission lies at the heart of the church. I gained fresh insight into the connection between mission and the church in the post-communist Romania while I was working on my Diploma topic of 'Mission and Proselytism: Missiological Perspectives in the Romanian Context.' I noticed then that Pentecostals in Romania were facing serious challenges for which they were ill prepared. Further, during my years in the Graduate programme researching the ecclesiological practice of the Romanian Pentecostals I became even more convinced that they have not developed an adequate theology to help them engage with their context in a missionary way and their ecclesiological praxis has not always been contextual.

As a result, I became interested in undertaking research, which may assist, Romanian Pentecostals develop a relevant theology for their context.

1.2. Objective and Significance of the Study

The study seeks to answer this central research question and sub questions:
Why be concerned for an effective Pentecostal mission in Romania? What kind of competence does the church have in the development of a post-communist culture? How does Romanian Pentecostalism fit into this picture and in what ways it can contribute to the understanding of Christian identity in the contemporary culture, when there is no chance that it will ever be more than a marginal minority?

The academic investigation of Romanian Pentecostal mission praxis has not been possible before 1989 due to limited resources, restricted freedom, and the superficial training of the Pentecostals ministers and pastors. Even though the fall of communism has provided a way for such studies to be done, after more than a decade the outcome is still very modest. According to Romanian church historian Dorin Dobrincu, there are only few works written about Romanian Pentecostalism, and even those contain a devotional trait, at times with accentuated and exaggerated personal nuances.[1] Nevertheless, they prove to be essential in attempting to construct a past out of limited and incomplete data, for the sake of current issues and questions.

The present researcher will focus on the Romanian Pentecostal church to investigate their struggle in coming at terms with their experiences, and their endeavour to engage with their society as they seek to build a democratic social order. The researcher seeks to show how the theological legacy and activity of Pentecostals in the contemporary context needs to be transformed in the light of current

[1]Dorin Dobrincu, "Istoria Bisericii si Pericolul confesionalizarii cercetarii," in *Xenopoliana*, vol. VII/3-4 (1999): 131.

missiological trends and as a response to the needs and objectives of the process of democratic reconstruction.

The communist regime of Romania has inflicted lasting damage in the political, social, and economic sphere, as well as at a personal level. The collapse of the regime left the society with the gigantic task of social, political, economic, and moral reconstruction. Thus, Romanian Pentecostals, along with other Christians, find themselves at present in a different and challenging situation, in which they can make a significant contribution to the society, which is struggling to build a new social order based on democratic principles. Yet, confronted with a wide range of issues, which they have never encountered or considered before (such as business and market ethics, nationalism, and the role of the church in politics) Romanian Pentecostals tend to deny not just the duty but also the right of the church to interfere with political issues and intervene into social problems. Romanian Pentecostals regard experiencing a spiritual awakening as the only legitimate way of solving social problems. In their theology, mission is understood as providing the fundamentals of moral reform and the subsequent transformation of self. Moreover, the Pentecostal identity transcends the barriers of belonging to particular national community, which inevitably leads to certain marginalization.

My own constructive proposal will aim towards an integrative approach to mission, which seeks to confront such reductionist views by attempting to link mission with the broader cultural context.

1.3. Methodology and Procedure

The proposed research topic will be interdisciplinary, involving missiological, and theological analysis. I will give due attention to the historical background of the Romanian Pentecostal church, the reason for its early success, its mixed fortunes under communism, and its failure to engage with the post-modern culture after the collapse of communism. I will examine the difficult relations with the Orthodox Church, and evaluate the common perception that Pentecostals are overly influenced by the West and fail to speak to the culture and concerns of Romania. I will investigate the church's failure to address the current corruption in Romanian society, and will examine the Church's social, moral, economic, and cultural irrelevance.

The research is officially focused on the Romanian Pentecostals pre 1990 and post 1990 and their theological re-equipment for mission in Romania today.

The research will be conducted by consulting publications and written sources as available; by archive data, questionnaires, and interviews with key leaders in the Romanian Pentecostal movement, and by surveying and participating in group discussions and experiments, which are attempting to respond to the issues I shall address in my thesis.

We will aim to develop an appropriate mission strategy for the church, which will include developments in the ecclesiology and practice of mission, so that the isolation of the Pentecostal church from society and its evasion of involvement in the political and social context can be overcome.

Chapter 2 provides an important introduction to the Romanian context, which are necessary in terms of describing the framework for developing integrative and relevant mission praxis. In the second chapter, we will investigate the socio-historical context of the Romanian Pentecostals. One of the most pressing issues that concern members of various denominations in Romania is this: Who are the Pentecostals and how did they appear in the Romanian society, which is predominantly Eastern Orthodox? After offering a historical overview of the country, firstly we will examine the beginnings of Romanian Pentecostalism, the integration of Pentecostals in the Romanian context, and the impact of Pentecostalism in Romania prior to 1989. We will give due attention to the historical background of the Romanian Pentecostal Church, the reason for its early successes, its mixed fortunes under communism. Second part of the chapter will take into consideration aspects of the socio-political, economic, and religious transition.

Chapter 3 explores various aspects of church's attempt to engage with the post-dictatorial reality, and its endeavours to engage with the society after the collapse of communism. We will examine the difficult relations with the dominant church (Eastern Orthodox) and with the churches of the Evangelical Alliance (Baptist & Brethren), and evaluate the common perception that Pentecostals are overly influenced by the West and fail to speak to the culture and concerns of Romania. We will investigate the church's attitude to addressing the corruption in Romanian society and will examine the Church's social, moral, economic and cultural relevance. It will point towards the need for a contextual theology that, in addition to being rooted in the Scriptures, is sensitive to the needs, struggles, and aspirations of the churches and the people of the contemporary Romania. We will ask what means contextualisation

and the methods of contextual theology that will extend into analysing contextual challenges for the Pentecostals in the Romanian context.

Chapters 4 & 5 will seek to address the needs and challenges of Post-Communist Romania from a Pentecostal perspective. We will seek to show how the theological legacy and activity of Pentecostals in the contemporary context needs to be transformed in the light of current missiological trends and as a response to the needs and objectives of the process of democratic reconstructions. We will aim to develop an appropriate mission strategy for the church, which will include developments in the ecclesiology and practice of mission, so that the isolation of the Pentecostal church from society and its evasion of involvement in the political and social context can be overcome.

Building on the previous analysis, in the second part of the chapter we will explore different ways in which Romanian Pentecostals in their particular socio-context may contribute to the social renewal and democratization of their society. We will argue that this requires a radical rethinking of the Pentecostal approach to mission that would take in account the Romanian context and way of thinking and develop a theology for the whole gospel, which is to be relevant to all spheres of life and is not just limited to the spiritual.

CHAPTER 2

THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH IN ROMANIA

2.1. Socio-Historical Context of Romanian Pentecostalism

The present chapter will offer an investigation of the socio-historical context of the Pentecostals in Romania. The first part will contain a historical survey of the country from the formation of the Nation until the fall of communism. The second part will investigate the development of Romanian Pentecostalism, the integration of Pentecostals in the Romanian Context, and the impact of Pentecostalism in Romania.

The last part of the chapter will be a synthesis of Romanian Pentecostalism focusing on reasons for its early success, and its mixed fortunes under communism. It will also point out ways in which historical, traditional and contextual factors influenced their theological formation and missiological praxis.

2.1.1. The Creation of the Greater and Independent Romanian State

The formation of Greater and independent Romania has been for centuries the historic dream of poets, patriots and politicians. By 1848, Romanians inhabited a number of provinces but were primarily concentrated in the principalities of Moldovia and Wallachia. These principalities were respectively under Russian and Otoman occupancy. While liberal reform was never enacted in Moldavia, the Wallachian were able to briefly establish provisional government that promised political and economic reform.[1]

[1]Keith Hitchins, *Romania 1866-1947* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 1-10.

Russian intervention eliminated any opportunity for Romanian self-government, but in 1859, the Moldavian and Wallachian principalities each elected Alexandru Ioan Cuza as prince, thereby creating a de facto union between the two. Cuza's reign only lasted eight years before he was deposed and replaced by Prince Carol I of the German Hohenzollern-Sigmaringer dynasty. Following the Berlin Congress, the principalities achieved independence in 1878 and were recognized as a kingdom in 1881.[2]

Transylvania, the largest of the three provinces to form Greater Romania in 1918, had belonged to Hungary and the Habsburg Empire since the Middle Ages. For the briefest of times all, the three regions were united under Michael the Brave. The region was home to an array of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The ethnic Romanians were overwhelmingly rural and had little cultural representation in the cities. After the proclamation of political freedom and civil freedom in Budapest in 1848, Romanian intellectuals of Transylvania became motivated to take steps that would ensure the preservation of their identity. In the absence of political institutions, they relied on both the Orthodox and Uniate Church to provide an infrastructure and promote their cause among the population at large.[3]

Thanks to a combination of ruthless military action and clever diplomacy, the kingdom of Romania emerged World War I with an enlarged territory. The expansion was achieved by annexing Transylvania and Banat from Hungary, Bucovina from Austria, and Bessarabia from Russia. Romania's population also doubled to almost

[2]Steven D. Roper, *Romania: The Unfinished Revolution* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000), 2.

[3]Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 130.

18.000.000, including large minorities, particularly Hungarians in Transylvania and Jews in Bessarabia.[4]

2.1.2. Interwar Romania

For a country whose fate suffered devastation during the Great War, the beginning of the 1920's held great potential for developing the Romanian nation and state.[5] As Hitchins put it, the socio-economical efforts of the Romanians were characterized by 'striking contrasts between persistent underdevelopment and growing industrialization and urbanization.'[6] Land redistribution reforms were implemented whereby extensive properties were to be transferred from large landowners to smallholders.

During this period, Romanian politics promised to be different from any other period before 1914. Fundamental constitutional changes in 1923 promised full national liberty for all races, democracy and free elections, freedom of press and association, and equitable conditions for industrial workers. For a country that was devastated by the Great War, the achievements were no small feat. Unfortunately, the political progress proved to be episodic and of short duration. The change from a

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[4]Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*. On December 1, 1918, leaders of ethnic Romanian communities in Transylvania formed a Grand National Council and proclaimed the Union of these territories with Greater Romania. In October 1922, King Ferdinand (1865-1927) was declared ruler of the enlarged Romania. Charles King, "Romania", in Richard Frucht, ed., *Encyclopedia of Eastern Europe: From the Congress of Vienna to the Fall of Communism* (New York: Garland Pub., 2000), 7.

[5]Among the most impressive achievements were the introduction of majority vote (1918), democratic reforms were applied in 1921, the new constitution considered one of the most democratic in Europe was adopted in 1923 which created the democratic environment and pawed the way for economic prosperity (the industrial revenue doubled between 1923-1938 making Romania an important oil-producing centre ranking second in Europe and seventh in the World). The national income per capita was $97 in 1938 compared with $67 in Greece, $81 in Portugal, $141 in Czechoslovakia and $246 in France. During 1990's when Romanians began their transition toward democracy they turned to the golden age 1920's for inspiration.

[6]Hitchins, *Balkan States: Romania*, 658.

homogenous to a multi-ethnic Romania caused growing concern for Romanian elites and became an issue related to the security of the state. As the government struggled with the notion of pluralistic society, the ethnic and religious minorities were treated with hostility and discrimination. The new situation prompted Romanian elites to introduce a series of educational and linguistic reforms, aimed at assimilating certain ethnic minorities intended to Romanise all the new provinces of Greater Romania.[7] Romanization implied the displacement and substitution of all non-Romanians with ethnic Romanians in prestigious professions and the domain of public administration. The nationalist character of these policies yielded a continuous struggle between the state and minorities. Suppression of the minorities and violation of human rights resulted in growing social tensions, political unrest and disenchantment among the local aliens.[8] The religious minorities were regarded as a threat to national security and treated as unwelcome. Particularly, the Hungarian religious minorities in Transylvania logged many complaints about discrimination with the League of Nations and other international agencies.[9]

The debut of the 1930' aggravated existing social, economic and political problems and deepened the crisis for Romanian democracy. The gathering political confusion strengthened the appeal among Romanian elites to declare themselves

[7]D.A. Crowe, "The Gypsy Historical Experience in Romania," in Crowe, D.A. and Kolsti, John, *The Gypsies of Eastern Europe* (London: M.E.: Sharpe, 1991). 68-69.

[8]The most evident aspects of the Romanianisation reforms were applied to educational institutions especially in the new acquired territories. Even before the unification of Transylvania with the Romanian kingdom the University of Cluj was forcibly Romanised in 1918 and all non-Romanian were replaced with ethnic Romanians. After World War I discriminatory policies were extended to various state Universities. The action of State Commission in Bucharest during middle 1920's that issued Bachelor degrees in a discriminatory fashion triggered revolts among the non-ethnic Romanian students and ended with the discriminatory murder of a Jewish student named David Fallik. The killer, 21 year old Niculai Totu was acquitted on the grounds of defending the interests of the Romanian nation. Totu latter became a leading member of the Legionaire or Iron Guard fascist movement.

[9]Earl A. Pope, "Protestantism in Romania", in Sabrina P. Ramet (ed.), *Christianity under Stress. Vol. III: Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia: The Communist and Postcommunist Eras*, (Duke University Press, 1992):162-163.

against modernism and democracy and in favour of a nationalistic traditionalism based on Orthodoxy.[10] The accession of King Carol II to the throne (1893-1953; reigned 1930-1940) furthered Romania' s political instability and authoritarian tendencies as he openly expressed his lack of support for parliamentary institutions and his intents of establishing a royal dictatorship.[11] The establishment of Carol's dictatorship began with the enforcement of a new constitution that suppressed civil rights dissolved all political opposition, marking the end of democracy in Romania. The change in circumstances saw the ascendancy of the extremist Legionary Party, the Iron Guard that changed the direction of the country's affairs and promoted Romania's drift towards Fascism. As part of its turn toward fascism, Anti-Semitism became official policy when Horia Sima, Codreanu's successor as leader of the Iron Guard, was named under-secretary for public education. The construction of concentration camps in Romania further confirmed this trend.[12]

In 1940, the king was forced to abdicate and the authoritarian Antonescu took control. Romania entered World War II on the side of the Axis Powers in June 1941, invading the Soviet Union to recover Bessarabia and Bucovina, which had been annexed in 1940. In August 1944, a coup led by King Michael, with support from

[10]Sabrina, P. Ramet, "Holy Intolerance: Romania's Orthodox Church," in *Nihil Obstat: Religion, Politics, and Social Change in East-Central Europe and Russia*(Duke University Press: Durham&London, 1998), 190.

[11]Hitchins, *Rumania:1866-1947*, 378.

[12] The Iron Guard known also as the Legion of Archangel Michael was founded by Zelea Codreanu in 1927 and it had 270,000 members by 1937. Although it closely resembled German and Italian Fascist characteristics, the substance of Romanian fascism came from native sources and was inspired by a fanatical devotion to the Orthodox Church. They saw themselves as guardians of supposedly endangered traditional values – monarchy, Church, family and private property. Ramet, Holy Intolerance, 189-90.

opposition and the Army, deposed the Antonescu dictatorship and put Romania's battered armies on the side of the allies.[13]

A peace treaty signed in Paris on February 10, 1947 confirmed the Soviet annexation of Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina, but restored the part of Northern Transylvania granted to Hungary in 1940 by Hitler. The treaty also required that massive war reparations by Romania to Soviet Union, whose occupying forces stayed in Romania until 1958.[14]

2.1.3. The Communist Era: 1945-1989

While inter-war Romanian politics left much to be desired in their drift towards Fascism, the Romanian Communist Party (RCP), ' 'indifferent to Romania's political tradition…contemptuous of patriotic sentiments and aspirations…remained an unappealing marginal group until the occupation of the country by the Red Army in 1944' '.[15] With an estimated membership of 600-2000 at its emergence from illegality although the smallest communist Party in Europe it quickly assumed political control.[16]

Under Soviet pressure, King Michael had to dissolve the Radescu government and allow Moscow appointee Petru Groza, the leader of the Plowman's Front, to install an interim government in June 1945. By 1947, the Groza government had

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[13]Silviu Brucan, *The Wasted Generation: Memoirs of the Romanian Journey from Capitalism to Socialism and Back* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 21.

[14]Romulus Boila, *Captive Rumania: A Decade of Soviet Rule*, ed. Cretzianu, Alexandre (New York: Praeger, 1956), 18.

[15]Vladimir Tismaneanu, *Stalinism for All Seasons: A Political History of Romanian Communism*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 54.

[16]During the interwar period the RCP was isolated from the Romanian society and had no major political influence or representation. Thus, there is a consensus among Western Scholars and post-1989 Romanian historians that Romania could not have become a socialist country without the Soviet occupation.

already dissolved all political opposition, forced King Michael to abdicate and declared Romania a people's republic.

The first period of the communist regime in Romania, 1944-1958, is defined by Stephan Fischer-Galati as ' 'the loss of national identity by the annihilation of the bourgeois nationalist legacy and the diminution of Romania's national sovereignty under a virtual Soviet occupation.' '[17] From 1948 to 1952, the RCP embarked on an extensive programme of social transformation of the country according to Soviet models and directives.[18] The ' building of socialism' started, which meant nationalisation of industrial, banking and transport companies (1948), forced collectivisation of agriculture (1949-1962), and the introduction of planned, command economy with stress on Stalinist-type industrialisation.

All of this was coupled with repressive measure against the entire Romanian political and cultural elite which had nearly been eliminated from public life (its members were arrested and many of them died in prisons or were persecuted). The Soviet model was introduced in all fields of the society followed by a forceful campaign of mass education. The so-called declaration of independence in 1963 refuted many of the Soviet models and announced Romania's aims of economic autonomy.[19]

On the death of Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej (1965), the party leadership, which after 1967 was cumulated with the state leadership, was monopolised by Nicolae

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[17]Fischer-Galati, Stephen, *The New Rumania: From People's Democracy to Socialist Republic* (Cambridge: Mass, 1963). 7.

[18]Galaţi, *Twentieth Century Rumania* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 110.

[19]The policies implemented by the Romanian Communist Party coincided with Soviet directives to such an extent of coordination, imitation and subordination that any outside observer would conclude that it must have resulted from the strong relationship between Moscow and Bucharest. The leaders of the Romanian Communist Party were utterly convinced that USSR must be the leader of all socialist countries.

Ceausescu. At first, he gained popular support because of his rather nationalist stance showing a degree of independence from Moscow and even condemning the Warsaw pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. At home, he initially adopted a rather liberal approach to the freedom of speech.[20]

However, hidden behind this veneer was a more sinister reality, the formation of a communist state with the worst record of human rights record in the Warsaw Pact. Inspired by his visits to China and North Korea, Ceausescu embarked on a program of massive industrialization, greater austerity and social redevelopment aimed at blending cities and country into a soulless, agro-industrial community. Because of economic mismanagement and unrealistic targets for the industry and agriculture, the standards of living plummeted.[21]

At the same time, the personality cult of Nicolae Ceausescu came to the fore. While neglecting the real internal situation of the country, Ceausescu sought to increase his control of the government by placing trusted allies and members of his family in key state positions. Further, he set up a new department of State Security (Securitate), the arbiter and the enforcer of Ceausescu's will, growing to become the largest of its type in Europe.[22] The control of the *Securitate* pervaded all aspects of

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[20]Cesar Bîrzea, "Reforming the Romanian System of Education," in *Change Forces in Post-Communist Central Europe: Education in Transition*, eds. Eleoussa Polyzoi, Michael Fullan, and John P. Anchan (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2003), 79.

[21]His Stalinist ideology was to create a homogenous society and to achieve this the population had to be under his control. To achieve this he initiated a program of relocating peasant based people to larger urban centres.

[22]Dennis Deletant, *Ceauşescu and the Securitate: Coercion and Dissent in Romania, 1965-1989* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1995), 75. After assuming the newly established position of the president of Romania, Ceausescu demanded to be portrayed by the Communist media as the leader whose abilities was the source of all national accomplishments. The state controlled media lionised him as “guarantor of the nation’s progress and independence,” and “visionary architect of the country’s future”. His presidency was described as the “Golden Era.” He functioned as the Head of the State, of the Party, and of the army. In 1980’s the personality cult was extended to his family as 27 members of his family were promoted to key party and state positions.

society, and rumours spread that 1 in 3 people were working as informers for the Department of State Security.

In February-March 1977, about 200 people joined the ' 'Goma Movement,' ' named after its initiator Paul Goma. The group started a campaign of open letters to the leaders of the RCP and international organization to protest against Communist atrocities. The party however, quickly silenced the protesters and the initiators were eliminated from the public arena, imprisoned or forced into exile.[23]

In August 1977, 30.000 miners in Valea Jiului staged one of the most important protests against the Communist regime. It was an explosion of discontent that had accumulated over many years and it had been provoked by the deterioration of their standard of living and by the political situation in the country, which had become intolerable. Ceausescu came in person to negotiate as the miners had demanded, and under pressure, he promised that he would look into their concerns. However, as soon as the movement subsided, he ordered reprisals.[24]

Despite this tragic episode, there were further brave, yet spasmodic attempts by groups of manual workers to challenge the totalitarian rule. In January 1979, a group of 15 workers from the Danube Port of Turnu Severin set up SLOMR, ' 'the Free Trade Union of the Working People of Romania' '. Inspired by the example of the polish KOER (Committee for Defence of Workers' Rights, fall 1979) they called for the worker's rights including the rights of free association. However, the

[23]Matei Calinescu, "Romanian Literature: Dealing with the Totalitarian Legacy," *World Literature Today* vol.65/2 (1991): 245.

[24]J. F. Brown, *Surge to Freedom: The End of Communist Rule in Eastern Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 210.

movement collapsed after few weeks as Ceausescu had the founders of the movement arrested and sent to psychiatric institutions to be re-educated.[25]

By the 1980's living conditions decayed severely as Ceausescu introduced rigorous austerity measures to pay the country's foreign debt in a decade. The measures meant that many foodstuffs had been rationed including bread, meat, sugar, oil, creating shortages and resulting in many hours standing in the queues, however bad the quality. Ceausescu dismissed the seriousness of the crisis commenting that his policies were implemented as result of Romania's need to follow a nutritionaly-controlled diet.[26]

The growing economic hardships imposed on the country sparked off unprecedented waves of protests across the country. In May 1987 in the town of Iasi, in northeast Romania, two spontaneous protests were organized by industry workers and University students demanding pay rises and improved study conditions. However, the greatest challenge for the government came from the town of Brasov, the country's second largest industrial centre where several thousand workers organized massive anti-government protests. Ceausescu used force to silence the protests, imprisoned many and ordered that several hundred would be relocated to different locations in Moldavia.[27]

In reaction to the political changes occurring among Communist regimes in Eastern Europe in the wake of Soviet Reforms, Ceausescu refused to loosen his grip and forced Romania towards retrenchment. Ceausescu's Stalinist philosophy fiercely

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[25]Robert Weiner, *Change in Eastern Europe* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 120.

[26]Mary Ellen Fischer, "Politics, Nationalism, and Development in Romania," in *Diverse Paths to Modernity in Southeastern Europe: Essays in National Development*, ed. Gerasimos Augustinos (New York: Greenwood Press, 1991), 158.

[27]Sabrina P. Ramet, *Social Currents in Eastern Europe: The Sources and Meaning of the Great Transformation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 124.

opposed Gorbachev's program of *Glasnost* (openness) and *Perestroika* (restructuring) claiming they were incompatible with socialism.[28] Meanwhile, he became even more interventionist in the economy of the country setting production targets and reinforcing the rural and urban systematization he promoted at the beginning of the 1960's.[29]

In response to Ceausescu' s plan, in July 1988 a group of dissident intellectuals and workers joined Doinea Cornea in writing an open letter fiercely condemning his policy of destroying what Romanians regarded as 'the core of national identity'.[30] The letter pointed out how collectivization has transformed many of the peasants into a 'proletariat…eroding their moral and religious structure, outlook, customs and traditions accumulated over centuries.' She calls the traditional village 'a spiritual community…it is its cemetery…its church….The horizontal style of Romanian villages presupposes a stable existence, a certain relationship between man and God.'[31]

Only months later, in March of 1989 key members of the Communist Party wrote an open letter to Ceausescu expressing their disagreement with his policies and objections over his misuses of authority. Their letter was published in several Western countries, broadcasted on Radio Free Europe and became known as the manifesto of an underground organization called the National Front of Salvation. The letter had no impact whatsoever on the political front and at the 14th Congress of the Communist

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[28] Daniel N. Nelson, ed., *After Authoritarianism: Democracy or Disorder?* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1995), 60.

[29] Ceausescu accelerated his notorious 'systematization' plan to reduce the number of villages in half by the year 2000.

[30] Daniel Chirot, "What Happened in Eastern Europe in 1989?," in *The Revolutions of 1989*, ed. Vladimir Tismaneanu (London: Routledge, 1999), 35-39.

[31] *Romania:Religion in a Hardline State* (Puebla Institute: Washington, 1989), 2.

Party, in November 1989, just weeks before his fall, Ceausescu is re-elected head of the Romanian Communist Party.[32]

2.1.4. Transition to Democracy: From 1989 onwards

On December 16, 1989, the nation's discontent with the regime was reignited in the person of Laszlo Tokes, a young Hungarian Reformed pastor in Timisoara. When his congregation gathered around his residence to protect him from eviction, hundreds of other residents spontaneously joined in and amid supporting remarks the crowds started to chant anti-Ceausescu slogans. With the help of Western media, word of the Timisoara uprising quickly spread to other parts of the country. On the morning of December 21, Ceausescu called a mass assembly in Bucharest to condemn the uprising in Timisoara. The rally turned into a protest demonstration, sweeping the dictator from power. Ceausescu and his wife were sentenced to death on charges including genocide and were executed on December 25, 1989, by a firing squad.[33]

Within a few days the so-called National Salvation Front, headed by Ion Iliescu (a former communist official demoted by Ceausescu) had assumed power and dissolved the one-party system. The first free presidential and parliamentary elections were held on May 20, 1990. In the general elections, due to lack of any opposition parties the FSN(National Salvation Front) and its candidate for presidency Ion Iliescu won with a large majority of the votes. The 1992 elections revealed a continuing cleavage as the National Salvation from now FSDN (Democratic National Salvation

[32]David S. Mason, *Revolution in East-Central Europe: The Rise and Fall of Communism and the Cold War* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), 64.

[33]Ronald E. Powaski, *The Cold War The United States and the Soviet Union, 1917-1991* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 269.

Front) easily won re-elections over a field of five other candidates.[34] The election of 1996 witnessed a shift in political reorientation when the opposition formed the Romanian Democratic Convention (CDR) coalition and won the presidential and parliamentary elections. In elections in November 2000, the PDSR (Party of Social Democrats in Romania) came back into power because of Democratic Convention's failure to improve the standards of living.[35] On November 28, 2004 Romania again held parliamentary and the first round of presidential elections. Former Bucharest Mayor Traian Basescu, representing the centre-right PNL[36]-PD[37] alliance, delivered a surprise defeat to PSD[38] candidate Nastase. The transition period following the 1989 revolution has proved to be extremely difficult and the country has been often singled out as very slow to transition to the free market economy and politically, as it has been reluctant to introduce deep structural reforms.[39]

2.1.5. Overview of the Modern Religious State of Affairs

Since the establishment of the Romanian Kingdom, the Orthodox Church had been the nation's official and only recognized church. During its first half-century of independence the Romanian Orthodox Church underwent a series of changes that culminated with a series of laws legislating its religious practices. Cuza's church

[34]Adam Zwass, *Incomplete Revolutions: The Successes and Failures of Capitalist Transition Strategies in Post-Communist Economies* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1999), 209. Even though the party was successful in securing a second victory it proved to be unable to deal with the ever increasing corruption, souring inflation and unemployment.

[35]Ibid., 209.

[36] PNL stands for the National Liberal Party, a liberal political party in Romania.

[37] PD stands for the Democratic Party, a centre-right political party in Romania.

[38] PSD stands for the Social Democratic Party in Romania, is the major social-democratic political party in Romania.

[39]Tom Gallagher, "Visitor from Romania: A Lefty the Left Doesn't Like," *New Statesman*, 31 (January 2005).

legislation in 1864 gave him broad powers to interfere in the life of the Orthodox Church and secularize monastic property. A law passed in 1872 comprised strict guidelines about the selection and appointment of diocese officials, while an 1893 law, enforced the development of theological education.[40]

After the union of Transylvania and Bessarabia with the kingdom of Romania, the confessional spectrum of the country diversified dramatically as the new acquired territory was overwhelmingly non-Orthodox. The Alba-Iulia resolution of December 1, 1918 guaranteed ' 'equal rights and full ecclesiastical autonomy for all the religions in the State' '. The same provision was made in the Minority Treaty of December 9, 1919 according to which ' 'every inhabitant of Romania is entitled to practice freely any faith, religion, or persuasion, publicly or at home insofar as these practices are not contrary to public order and morality.' '[41]

The first inter-war constitution introduced in 1923 stipulated the religious freedom bill that was to be subsequently developed by specific laws, but it was not passed until later. The Law of Cults[42] was formalised on April 22, 1928 when specific provisions were made about the relations between the state and churches, the legal status of the churches in Romania, and relations between the different denominations. The Law classified the Romanian Orthodox Church and Greek-Rite Catholic Church as ' National Churches, ' other religious denominations as ' Historical' and the smaller communities also known as sects (Baptists, Pentecostals, Seventh-Day Adventists) as

[40]G. Rosu, M. Vasiliu, G. Crisan, "Church and State in Romania," in *Church and State behind the Iron Curtain: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, Romania: With an Introduction on the Soviet Union*, eds. Vladimir Gsovski and Vladimir Editor Gsovski (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1955), 258.

[41]Paul Negrut, *Biserica si Statul: O Interogatie asupra modelului "simfoniei" bizantine* (Editura Institutului Biblic Emanuel: Oradea, 2000), 91-92.

[42] The Law had become a necessity after the Concordate of May 10, 1927, at the insistence of the representatives of the Baptist cult demanding acknowledgment by the Romanian Government.

'minor denominations' .[43] All religious groups were guaranteed equal freedom and protection, but the law also specified that the State reserved the right 'to censor teachings contrary to the interests of the nation and to public mores'.[44] Even though the Law supposedly guaranteed equal treatment for all religious bodies, it has been subjected to various amendments. In 1929, the Government introduced severe penalties for some sects whose propaganda was considered to have affected the public order. The decree gave the authorities new powers to withdraw authorization from all religious associations on the grounds of being dangerous to public order.[45]

The inclusion of large numbers of Roman Catholics, Uniate traditions, and reformed Protestants posed the Orthodox Church the serious challenge of functioning in a confessionaly and ethnically plural context. The response of the Orthodox Church was to emphasize even more its role in promoting ethno-national values by protecting the country against modernism and materialism.[46] In this form, Eastern Orthodox identity became a major source of Romanian national identity.

The 1930's saw in Romania the ascent of the extreme right, and Romanianism was promoted by the slogan, ' 'to be Romanian one needs to be Orthodox' '. Against this background, with the exception of Roman Catholics, Neo-Protestant denominations, who recruited mainly from the Romanian Orthodox population, faced serious discrimination. Under the instigation of Orthodox clergy, state representatives carried out persecution against the Neo-Protestant proselytism. According to Rushbrooke, the Romanian gendarmerie comprised of ill-educated people shaped by

[43]Pope, *Protestantism in Romania*, 161-162.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Gary MacEoin, *The Communist War on Religion* (The Devin-Adair Company: New York, 1951), 76-77.

[46]Pope, *The Contemporary Religious Situation in Romania*, 119.

Oriental customs allowed to a 'free and habitual resort to physical violence unknown in more advance civilizations.'[47] Military commanders, prefects, and gendarmes, assaulted, imprisoned and fined preachers and believers, closed churches, seized properties and persecuted the children of the Neo-Protestant families in schools.[48]

During the 1940' s the government of General Antonescu restricted the freedom of all denominations, instituted a state firm control of the Orthodox Church and announced his aim of purifying the Church of all disloyal clerics. In response, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, through Patriarch Nicodim Munteanu, affirmed the loyalty of the Church towards the Legionary Guard. It meant that government representatives could occupy leading position in the administration of the church and control the church's finances. Thus, the state replaced the older bishops with those that had greater loyalty towards the Iron Guard and restructured theological education.[49] Antonescu's government issued a new law according to which all religions not recognized by the 1928 law, were now banned. Law 927 in 1942 stipulated that all religious associations in the countries must be abolished, and their goods, estates, funds and archives must be considered state patrimony. Since most of the Neo-Protestants reached Romania through Western channels, Antonescu accused them of being financed by America and Great Britain and that they refused to go to war. Churches were closed down or turned into warehouses, church meetings were declared illegal, and believers were sent either in concentration camps or in the

[47]Rushbrooke, *Baptists in Europe*, 161.

[48]Stanculescu, 241.

[49]Paul Mojzes, *Religious Liberty in Eastern Europe and the USSR: Before and after the Great Transformation* (Eastern European Monographs, Boulder & Columbia University Press: New York, 1992), 327-329.

army.[50] In addition, Neo-Protestant believers were forced to join the Orthodox Churches to escape persecution. A plan to deport all Neo-Protestants in Transnistria was prepared but not enforced. With the exception of the Neo-Protestant churches, all religious groups (German and Hungarian churches in Transylvania) cooperated with the Pro-Fascist government of Romania and Hungary as well as Nazi Germany.[51]

The developments in Romania at the end of World War II had major consequences as far as the relation between state and the churches is concerned. Generally, during the immediate post-war years the various religious communities were able to maintain their pre-war status. For the time being, it was in the interest of the Romanian state to uphold and cultivate the churches of national minorities. The State wanted to give the impression that it aimed at creating a culture of tolerance that preserved the territorial integrity of the country.[52]

The National Statute defined the legal status of the minority churches in 1945 and by the Paris Peace Treaty of 1947. Both guaranteed full freedom of religion to the inhabitants of Romania. Likewise, the first Communist Constitution of 1948 guaranteed freedom of religion and the right of churches to organize as long as this did not threaten public security and order.[53] Similarly, according to the article 84 of the 1952 constitution 'the citizens of the Romanian's People Republic can freely determine their religious allegiance and the religious denominations are free to organize and function'. The above article stipulated that no denomination, congregation or religious community could establish or maintain institutions other

[50]Paul Negrut, *Biserica si Statul*, 79.

[51]Vynson Synan & Valeriu Andreiescu, *Traditia Miscarii Penticostale: Miscarile Carismatice din Secolul XX* (Editura Betania: Oradea, 2004), 311.

[52]Preda Radu, *Biserica in State: O Invitatie la dezbatere* (Editura Scripta, 1999), 17-19.

[53]*Religious Life in Romania: Essential Information* (Department of Cults: Bucharest, 1987), 8.

than the training of clerics. The Constitution of August 1965, of the Romanian Socialist Republic also guaranteed 'freedom of conscience for all. Everyone is free to determine his own religious affiliation or whether to have a religious affiliation at all. The free practice of religion is guaranteed…church and school are to be separate'.[54] Nevertheless, the religious freedom has been understood in a certain way, most vividly exemplified by Ceausescu's remarks in 1979: 'Religious freedom is for those cults recognized by the law, but the cults have to respect the laws of the country and help build a socialist state. Romanians cannot close their eyes to any infringement of the law under the pretext of Christianity.'[55]

The first intervention in the life of the churches was made by the Groza government in 1945 and was aimed at co-opting the ecclesiastical leaders to the cause of socialism.[56] The communists were well aware of the significant role of the Orthodox Church in sustaining the Romanian consciousness throughout history and that traditions of the Romanian people were inextricably related to their faith from the origins. The Romanian state stood desperately in need of historical and existential legitimation, and the Romanian Orthodox Church had the resources to assist it significantly.[57] In return for providing the Communist state with important elements

[54]Dionisie Ghermani, "The Orthodox Church in Romania", *Religion in Communist Dominated Areas*, vol.27/1 (Winter 1988): 20-22. However as under the '48 constitution religious life will be regulated by the State and the cults were allowed very limited access to training of priests and pastors. "Rumania," in *Religious Digest*, No. 170 (December 1965): 1-2.

[55]Janice Brown, "Romania" in *Conscience and Captivity: Religion in Eastern Europe*, Janice Brown, Grazyna Sikorska eds. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988) 205.

[56]Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar: The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and USSR* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1987), 25-27.

[57]Earl A. Pope, "Religious Situation in Romania," in *Religion and Communist Society: Selected Papers from the Second World Congress for Soviet and East European Studies* , Dennis J. Dunn ed. (Berkeley Slavic Specialties: Berkeley,1983), 121.

of historic legitimacy, the Orthodox Church could ensure the continuity of its ecclesiastical functions in much better terms than non-Orthodox denominations.[58]

Inspired by Stalin, who destroyed the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine after 1945, the Romanian communists applied a similar policy against the Greek Catholic Church, which was forcefully unified with the Orthodox Church in 1949.[59] The reasons behind this imposition were the Communist objectives to produce a unified church that would represent the entire ethnic Romanian population. The communist regime preferred unity and homogeneity because it allowed easier control and overseeing of religious developments. It suited well with the government's expressed goal of creating ' the unitary socialist nation', that is, its desire to become the absolute master of its people. In view of this objective, the existence of an alternative religious organization institutionally and spiritually related to a foreign ' power centre' and to Western culture was regarded as potentially dangerous.[60]

In sharp contrast to its treatment of the Greek Catholic Church, the communist regime offered official recognition to the historical churches that were linked to ethnic minorities and to the minor denominations (Baptist, Pentecostal, and Seventh - day Adventist). However, the freedom was severely restricted and their activities carefully recorded. In addition, the leaders of the denominations had to be ultimately approved by the Department of Cults. Since they were not considered a

[58]Gavril Flora, Georgina Szilagyi, Victor Roudometof, "Religion and National Identity in Post-Communist Romania", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans*, vol.7/1(April 2005): 40.

[59]"Rumania," in *Religious Digest: Information about the Churches and Religion in the USSR, China and Eastern Europe and the Communist Attitude to Religion,* No. 94(August 1959): 13-14. See also "Rumania," in Religious Digest, No.148(February 1964):6.

[60]Ibid.

valuable asset in promoting national legitimacy they often ran into problems with authorities and were often repressed and openly ridiculed by the regime.[61]

At the beginning of 1950, the state introduced a set of restrictive regulations, ' The Regularization of the Religious Services and the Arrondation policy', which the Church Unions were ordered to implement. The *regularization* concerned the limitation of religious services and the *arrondation* concerned the closure of certain churches. The leaders of the various religious cults were forced to adopt the impositions and each write a petition to the government specifying that the Regularization and Arrondation policies were suggested by the Churches themselves.[62] Soon after the policies were enforced, all the churches reported a steady decline in church attendance and quality of the services. To match their policy of reducing the number of worship places the government further decreed a cut in the numbers of trained clergy.[63]

In the beginning of the 1970s, Romanian authorities unleashed an intensive campaign of repression against religion and religious activities. It all began with the promulgation of a law forbidding any believers to meet in unauthorized churches. Heavy fines were imposed on all those who were caught in illegal religious activities. Many pastors and teachers were relieved of their functions. Church activities involving young children were especially curtailed.[64]

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[61]Niels C. Nielsen, *Revolutions in Eastern Europe: The Religious Roots* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1991), 111-113.

[62] Baptists in Romania, in *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol.1/6 (1973): 19-22.

[63]Alan Scarfe, "A Call for Truth: An Appraisal of Romanian Baptist Church-State Relationship", in *Journal of the Church and State*, (Autumn 1979): 433.

[64]To the Worlds Christian Churches, *Open letter to the secretary general of the United Nations Organization*, New York (Romania, 1971).

Against this background, during the 1970' s and 1980' s various leaders engaged in open protests against the authorities demanding reinstatement of religious and personal freedom. At the beginning of 1977, a group of Neo-Protestants pastors drew up and published a document in which they denounced the violation of freedom of conscience in Romania, for which they were arrested.[65] A year later, at the initiative of several neo-Protestant believers, mainly Baptists, a committee for defending freedom of conscience A.R.L.C. was set up; it addressed the authorities several times, but also appealed to various international agencies requesting the observance of religious freedom in Romania. A day later all the signatories of the petition were arrested accused of undermining national security by sending in the West defamatory information about the Communist party and state policies. Other Neo-Protestants leaders were arrested for printing and spreading religious literature.[66] Despite the repressions, the committee continued to record the religious situation in Romania and to intervene on behalf of individuals from various denominations who were persecuted and imprisoned by the regime. Even though ARLC was started by a group of Evangelicals, it campaigned for the recognition of the Lord's Army, and the Catholic Church (Latin Rite) and the reinstatement of the Eastern Rite Catholic Church. They also prepared publications and reports on specific cases of abuses carried by the authorities against individual Christians.

ARLC intervened on the behalf of orthodox priest Gheorghe-Calciu Dumitreasa who was imprisoned because of protesting during the 1970's against the

[65]Scarfe, "Romanian Baptists and the State", in *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol.4/2 (Summer 1976): 15.

[66]Deletant, *Ceausescu si Securitate. Constrangere si disidenta in Romania anilor 1965-1989* (Bucuresti: Editura Humanitas, 1998), 219.

demolition of the Enei Church in Bucharest and because of his open portrayal of atheism as a 'philosophy of hopelessness.'[67]

Some analysts connect the sharpening of the persecution against the Neo-Protestant believers to the increase of their numbers in the 1960s and the beginning of 1970's, especially among the Romanian population in Transylvania, which was regarded by the authorities as a threat to the unitary and indivisible character of the Romanian national state. The initial prediction of the Communist Party, as it took power in 1948, was that religion would soon become a thing of the past. The revival that was taking place especially among the Neo-Protestants in the mid 1970s confused the communist ideologists.[68] Thus, they came up with a new theory stating the revival of religion among NeoProtestants had to do with the fact that for a certain time in socialism the religious feelings tend to get deeper, but of course, this was a transitory phenomenon. In the same context, Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu, in a major speech to the nation, announced that although religion has apparently survived the past decades, the Party would continue to pursue its goal of creating an atheist society.[69]

In parallel with the systematic persecution of the ARLC members, the Communist Party launched an extensive publication of scientific treatises aimed

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[67]Scarfe, *Dismantling a Human Rights*, 167.

[68]During the '60s Romanian authorities made numerous attempts to intensify the education of Romanian population in the spirit of materialist atheism. As expected the regime accompanied their efforts by positive reports and high faulting claims that the masses were literally devouring the thousands of brochures intended to annihilate religious dogma. Yet, a leading communist newspaper, *Scanteia Tineretului* published in April, 1961 revealed that in actuality over 90% of the population rejected the party's philosophy and characterized the attacks on religion as a "blasphemous impertinence." A leading Marxist author, Professor Paul Popescu-Noveanu remarked that atheist propaganda works were "few in quantity and feeble in quality" and stressed that they all gave "the vaguest general directives" and "equally vague advice" lacking a style and a language that the broad masses would understand. "Rumania," in *Religious Digest*, No.115 (May 1961): 15-17. See also, "Rumania," in *Religious Digest*, No.109 (November 1960):16-17.

[69]Ghermani, *The Orthodox Church in Romania*, 22.

especially at the Neo-Protestant cults.[70] The campaign's main motivation according to the Marxist militants was that the cults needed to be researched, properly understood and exposed for whom they truly are.[71] At the same time, the government sought to silence ALRC by imprisoning some of its leaders and by forcing the key members of the association to emigrate.

Through the expulsion of key Christian leaders, the churches in Romania were deprived of potential leaders. However, despite the virulent atheist propaganda and the exertion of the regime to restrict religious life, the Neo-Protestant cults continued to experience significant increase in membership throughout the Communist Era.[72] Part of their success was in their ability of offering an alternative space for those segments of the population who either were alienated from the traditional churches or have become increasingly disillusioned with the communist ideology.[73]

The revolution of December 1989 did away with the communist oppression and brought dramatic changes for all religious communities. For some churches the

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[70]The atheistic campaign aimed at dismantling religious life was applied uninterruptedly since the installation of the regime but it has never been as fierce as the ones carried out throughout '70s and '80s. Reports reveal that at one time only in one certain district, Ilfov, as many as 1,951 scientific brigades were unleashed against the "adherents of superstition". Ghermani, *The Orthodox Church,* 22.

[71]Petru H. Bucovineanu, *Faptele Reale ale Sectelor Religioase* (Editura Politica: Bucuresti, 1983). The atheistic campaign was not limited only to publishing specialized scientific treatises but it has been extended to all leading magazines and newspapers. A publication of the interior ministry entitled "Pentru Patrie," (For the Country) published periodical articles by prolific communist writers. During the 70's and 80's most favourite topics of debate concerned the Neo-Protestants who were considered as a threat and an obstacle in Romania's aim of becoming an atheistic society. Bruno Wurtz, *Doctrinele Principalelor Secte ale crestinismului contemporan* (Timisoara, Tipografia Universitatii Timisoara, 1988), 41-43.

[72]Pope, *Protestantism in Romania*, 207. A nationwide census published at the end of '80s revealed that there were 75.000 Baptists, 28.500 Brethrens, and 87.000 Pentecostals.

[73]According to Hack Johnston due to increased alienation of the communist ideology from the everyday experience during the 1980's, the childhood recollection of religion provided for many an alternative source of grounding. "Religio-Nationalist Subcultures under the Communists: Comparisons from the Baltics, Transcaucasia, and Ukraine," in *Politics and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe: Traditions and Transitions*, ed. William H. Swatos (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 19.

magnitude of the changes signified more than a turning point in history. The events were regarded as a *kairos* period, an action of God as the Lord of history. The new situation provided them with unprecedented opportunities for outreach and service to others. While some were able to adapt quickly, and articulate their mission in the fullest way, others were unable to set up priorities and take advantage of the new possibilities for their ministry and service.

2.2. The Pentecostals in Romania

2.2.1 Preliminary Definitions of Terms: Who are the Evangelicals?

The attempt to define who the evangelicals are in Romania proves to be a challenging task.[75] A presentation of the evangelicals is further complicated by the problem where to begin. What concerns the issue of defining Evangelicalism, James Stamoolis claims there are at least three ways in which the word is used. The first is to define a set of core convictions about the gospel that are a hallmark of the church from its earliest theological formulas. One can speak of a commonalty of faith, in which case the evangelical movement as a whole can be traced back to the earliest Christian communities.[76] As John Stott writes in his book on the essentials of evangelicalism, *Evangelical Truth*:

> The three broad Christians schools of thought (Catholic, liberal and evangelical) are not always mutually exclusive, for along with their divergences there are points of convergence. Indeed we rejoice and give thanks that the great majority of Christian believers affirm the Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds and that of majority of Protestants still affirm many Reformation truths. In other words, not all evangelical essentials are evangelical distinctives. At the same time, biblically and historically there are some truths that evangelical Christians have always emphasized and that they see themselves (with due modesty I hope) as holding in trust for the rest of the church.[77]

The second use of the term relates to the Protestant Reformation. Although the term itself derives from the Greek word *euangelion,* meaning ' gospel' or ' good news', it came to be identified in the sixteenth century with the early leaders of the Reformation who

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[75]According to Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston the abundance of books written on the subject of evangelicalism point out the difficult task of finding the institutional limits of evangelicalism or to define the movement in precise theological terms. *The Variety of American Evangelicals* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991). See also, Donald G. Bloesch, *The Evangelical Rennaisance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1973); Bernard Ramm, *The Evangelical Heritage* (Waco: Word, 1973); David Wells and John Woodbridge, eds., *The Evangelicals* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975); Donald Dayton, *Discovering an Evangelical Heritage* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

[76]James J. Stamoolis, "An Evangelical Position on Ecclesiology and Mission," in *International Review of Mission*, vol.XC/358 (July 2001): 309 (309-316).

[77]John Stott, *Evangelical Truth: A Personal Plea for Unity, Integrity and Faithfulness* (Downers Grove: Inter Varsity Press, 1999) 11.

emphasized the message of the Scripture and rejected the official interpretation of dogma by Catholic Church.[78] By the 1530s, the term 'Protestant' became more significant than ' 'Evangelical' ' in referring to the movement initiated by Luther. Protestantism, interpreted broadly as a protest against and emphases of the established religion, influenced Eastern Europe through the Radical Reformation, through German Pietism, and especially through a number of Neo-Protestant movements.[79] As pioneers of the Evangelical movement, German Pietists placed the emphasis on personal saving faith rather than routine membership in the national church, and stressed the importance of practical spiritual life, evangelism and church reform.[80]

The third and perhaps the most common use of the term evangelicals is regularly found in the seventeenth-century Puritan and Anglican devotional works meaning, to be grounded in the gospel. In the 1700s, Evangelicalism came to describe religious revivals such as those led by John Wesley and George Whitefield. These religious leaders emphasized the need for a personal conversion experience through a special act of God's grace. They also stressed the importance of leading a holy life.[81]

As Gordon Palmer claims, too often, the term evangelical is placed in the context of doctrinal points. Although it is true that there are, some cardinal points that evangelical

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[78]H.V. Synan, "Evangelicalism," Stanley M. Burgess and Gary B. McGee, eds. *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988) 281-284; Björn Bue, "Evangelicals: Who We Are? Historic Summary and Traits of Identification," in *Turn to God: Rejoice in Hope* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1998): 100 (99-109).

[79]Alister McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1994), 19-23.

[80]James Hastings, ed. "Pietism," *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics,* vol. X (T & T Clark, New York, 1918): 6-7.

[81]Randall Balmer, ed. "Evangelicalism," *Encyclopedia of Evangelicalism* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2000): 204 (204-207).

churches regard as central, mission and social action are also hallmarks of evangelical identity.[82]

According to McGrath, the three major sources of modern evangelicalism are: the magisterial Reformation initiated by Luther and Calvin with an emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the authority of the Scripture, English Puritanism spelled out by writers like John Wesley and John Owen stressing a ' 'religion of the heart,' ' and German Pietism in the writings of August H. Francke who placed considerable emphasis on personally appropriated faith, which was understood as a ' 'reborn' ' and personal living relationship with Christ.[83]

In their theology, Evangelicals agree on Christian cardinal doctrines based on the first ecumenical creeds. At its heart, Evangelicalism is historic Christian orthodoxy.

On matter of secondary importance, there is significant diversity within Evangelicalism. However, Evangelicals are not completely defined by the sole emphasis on doctrine. For most of them orthodoxy cannot be separated from orthopraxis. Several controlling convictions that constitute distinctive Evangelical characteristics will be summarized in the following section.[84]

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[82]Gordon R. Palmer, "No More than a spoonful of sugar? Evangelicals and Social Involvement," in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, vol.12/2 (Autumn 1994): 80-95.

[83]McGrath, *Evangelicalism and the Future of Christianity, 19-26.* David Bebington identifies as hallmarks of evangelicalism: "*conversionism*, the belief that lives needed to be changed; *activism*, the expression of the gospel in effort; *biblicism*, a particular regard for the Bible; and…*crucicentrism*, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross," *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 3. These were identified by using as criteria *The Blackwell Dictionary of Evangelical Biography 1730-1860*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), edited by Donald M. Lewis. Lewis noted Andrew Walls' view that common characteristics included "the intensification of the Christian life associated with a deep sense of guilt and an overwhelming sense of forgiveness through Christ; the application of preaching to conversion and transformation; the growing conviction of the universal significance of the Christian message…; the moral radicalism which springs from a new sense of personal accountability and the new pattern of church relations which produces both ecumenicity and schism as well as…the voluntary society" Vol. 1, xix. Bebington's criteria were held to integrate these, but it is interesting that the label had to be extended to also include those who "seriously claimed to be evangelical".

[84]Treatments of Evangelical distinctives are also to be found in *Evangelical Affirmations,* ed. K.S. Hantzer and C.H.F. Henry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 27-30. In "The Evangelical Denomination," in *Evangelicalism and Modern America* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), vii – xix, George Mardsen identifies five defining characteristics, as follows: (1) the Reformation doctrine of the final authority the Scripture, (2) the

First, Evangelicals are committed to the supreme authority of the Scripture. As Derek Tidball points out, 'Evangelicals are Bible People.'[85] Evangelical believers regard the Bible not only as a theological source of knowledge of God, but also as the authority in the matters of faith and conduct. As such, they strive to put themselves under this authority and accept the guidance of scripture.[86]

Secondly, for Evangelicals Jesus Christ is the focal point of Scripture. The whole system of evangelicalism is the outworking of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He alone is 'true God and true man,' born of a virgin, sent by God as a perfect sacrifice to bring man' s salvation, resurrected from the dead, and promised to return in power and glory. Our knowledge of God and our hopes for salvation are very dependent on the identity of Jesus Christ as our Saviour and Lord, the only Son of God, God incarnate. Christian worship and adoration focus on Jesus Christ's majesty and humility. Because Christ Jesus is the gospel of God, evangelicalism is Christ-centred, and evangelism centres on the proclamation of Christ.

Thirdly, Evangelicals stress the importance of the Holy Spirit, as the One who applies the Word of God to our minds and our lives, causing faith to be born from understanding, making our conversion possible through spiritual rebirth, and working to conform us to Christ.[87] Fourthly, Evangelicals believe that each individual has a need for personal conversion through spiritual rebirth and commitment to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. Evangelicalism should be seen as an intermingling of the Reformed emphasis on the right

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real, historical character of God's saving work, (3) eternal salvation only through personal trust in Christ, (4) the importance of evangelism and mission, (5) the importance of a spiritually transformed life.

[85]Derek J. Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals? Tracing The Roots of Today's Movement* (London: HarperCollinsPublishers, 1994), 12.

[86]Bruce J. Nichols & Bong Rin Ho editors, "Introduction: Evangelical Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues," *Beyond Canberra: Evangelical Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues* (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1993): 6 (6-11).

[87]David Parker, "Biblical Reflections on the Holy Spirit," *Beyond Canberra: Evangelical Responses to Contemporary Ecumenical Issues*, Bong Rin Ro and Bruce J. Nichols editors (Oxford: Regnum Books, 1993): 13 (12-21).

doctrine with the Pietist concern for a living faith expressed in such terms as 'a personal relationship with Christ.'[88] According to McGrath, Christian faith, in the deepest meaning of the phrase, is to be thought in *relational* and *personal*, not simply *propositional*, terms. God is one who is known, not simply known about; he is one who is encountered personally, not just read about in theology textbooks.

Fifthly, the Evangelicals emphasize the priority of evangelism, (expressed in the verbal proclamation of the gospel) and of mission. This sharing of the good news arises from the joy of knowing Christ and His transforming power, and from their concern to remain faithful to the Scripture's command to proclaim Christ's gospel to the whole world.[89]

Lastly, at its heart, Evangelicalism has a strong awareness of the importance of the Christian community to the duties of the spreading the good news of salvation, teaching and making disciples.[90]

Evangelicalism is not restricted to a particular denomination, or to a specific view of the church; it is therefore a trans-denominational movement. There are Roman Catholic Evangelicals, Lutheran Evangelicals, Reformed Evangelicals, Anglican Evangelicals, Baptist Evangelicals, Pentecostal Evangelicals, Eastern Orthodox Evangelicals, and so on.[91] Evangelicals are better described by their open commitment to the gospel rather than a particular denominational label. They believe that the truth shall lead to unity and seek to

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[88]Donald Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology: God, Authority, and Salvation,* vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 181-252; Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1994), 528-599.

[89]Edward Rommen, "Evangelical Theology," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, A. Scott Moreau ed., (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000): 340-341. See also, Chris Wright, "Scripture in Mission," *The Anglican Communion and Scripture*, John Stott and Others (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1996): 123-128.

[90]Rommen, 341.

[91]Robert H. Krapohl & Charles H. Lippy, *The Evangelicals: A Historical, Thematic, and Biographic Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 10-11. Krapohl points out those certain groups: such as the Mennonites, the Pentecostals, and the American Southern Baptists could be identified as "unintentional Evangelicals." They meet the doctrinal criteria and behavioral criteria, but are less self-conscious with their association with the Evangelical subculture.

have fellowship with other New Testament Christians. Due to a natural affinity given from their common commitment to a set of shared beliefs, there can be made reference to an ecumenical movement among Evangelicals.

In a narrower sense pertaining to our study, Evangelicals or Neo-Protestants is the term used for a number of Christian groups that emerged in Romania at the end of nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century: the Baptists, the Brethren, and the Pentecostals. These are Bible-believing Christians who had a personal conversion experience, and who attempt to bring Christianity into effective contact with the current needs of society and culture. However, after the fall of communism the Baptists, the Brethren, the Pentecostals and a fraction of Lord's Army formed the so-called Romanian Evangelical Alliance. Thus, in this thesis the terms Neo-Protestant and Evangelical are used interchangeably.

2.2.2. Roots of Evangelicalism in Romania

Although the former communist countries in Eastern Europe have been described as a homogenous entity, from an ethnical and religious point of view Romania is not the case. Evangelical believers represent a segment of the Romanian population whose historical identity and beliefs are relatively unknown to the larger public. The primary causes or factors that contributed to the development of Evangelical movements in Romania were of various natures. The evangelical denominations grew out of a broader context.

Hence, a proper characterization of the Romanian Evangelicalism would have to take in consideration two over-arching developments: the Western origins of the Neo-Protestants based largely on missionary work and influence, and the twentieth century internal spiritual renewals within the Orthodox Church.

There were first of all political causes such as a clear Western orientation in Romanian politics as a part of the process of modern nation building. Between the second part of the eighteenth century and World War I, Romanians turned away from the East toward the West. Commercial exchanges and foreign investment expanded, and the penetration of Western ideas and institutions obliged Romanian politicians and intellectuals to consider new models of development.[92]

This Europeanist orientation brought ideas of political pluralism and freedom of conscience. A direct consequence that followed the endorsement of 1866 Constitution was the secularization of political institutions and a diminished role of the Orthodox clergy in civil affairs. An important factor in increasing the receptivity of the people toward religious and spiritual matters was the First World War. Both revivals within the Orthodox Church and the beginning of the Pentecostal movement came in close connection with the outcome of the war.[93]

Among the socio-economic factors, we should note the development of economic relations with other European countries, particularly with Germany. The increasing industrialization and development of the Romanian provinces created new employment possibilities and brought people on the move, facilitating the spread of ideas. German workers brought to Romania not only their skills but also their new form of Christian faith. Moral corruption, vulgarism, and especially alcoholism affected Romanian society reaching alarming proportions in the first part of the twentieth century.[94]

As for religious factors, we should first note a great spiritual hunger among Romanians who for the first time had the chance to read the Word of God for themselves. In

[92]Josef Ton, *Credinta Adevarata* [The True Faith] (Wheaton: Societatea Misionara Romana, 1988), 6-7, 81-82.

[93]Stanculescu, *Romanian Evangelical Christianity*, 46-51.

[94]Ibid.

a time when the Orthodox Church printed the Scripture in a very limited manner, Cornilescu's translation of the Bible in modern Romanian language in 1921 played an important role in providing a clear understanding of the message of salvation through faith. As a part of the western influence on the Romanian people, the early development of the Baptist and the Brethren came through sustained missionary efforts from Germany and Switzerland. The large numbers of Orthodox believers and even priests defined by traditionalism and formalism but with very little knowledge of the content of their faith as it is expressed in the Scriptures amplified the moral and spiritual vacuum of the Romanian society.[95]

The attraction of the people to the Evangelical movements was a result of the spiritual vacuum of people characterized by traditions and superstitions, but who had not encountered the message of the gospel. It was also a reaction to the formalistic character of the traditional church in which membership constituted a certain necessity for every Romanian. In a certain newspaper, after talking about the persecutions dispatched against Neo-Protestant believers in the 1930s, Romanian writer Mihail Sevastos describes the religious vacuum of the people and their search for a new spirituality. His insights are valuable since himself was an Orthodox believer:

> Our land did not know Christian uprising, probably due to the fact that the peasants' religion (where the sects direct their action) was far from the Christian faith. The Bible and evangelism did not penetrate our people' s soul. Deep among simple folk there was fetishism, paganism, sorcery, anything but Christian faith. Even the priest wasn' t much different than the sorcerer…who exorcized the cattle.
> In these circumstances we can easily understand the absence of religious persecution from our past. It wasn' t due to tolerance, but to indifference. Yet, the peasant' s mind is on the move…The dominant religion does not make efforts toward teaching its faithful and toward mass propaganda. This is what the sectarians do. They answer to a spiritual need of the crowds. They lead the souls and minds of those who live in unrest. They give explanations and show new ways – whose outcome could be a salvation we failed to find so far. It is only today that among our people authentic Christian develops. The pagan shadows are discarded and Christianity comes forth[96].

[95]Stanculescu, 46-51.

[96]Ibid.

Summing up, we can assert that Romanian Evangelicals are heirs of the nineteenth century revivalism, influenced especially by the Pietists awakenings of the early nineteenth century. The Pietist spirituality has been an inspiration and example for Evangelicals in Romania and has played a major influence in shaping the expression of the today's Romanian evangelical spirituality.

2.3. A Short History of the Pentecostals in Romania

The end of World War I experienced the Azusa Street revival in various locations across the globe. Among the first who brought the Pentecostal revival to Western Europe was Thomas Ball Barratt of Norway, a Methodist minister later to be known as ' 'the founder and prime motivator of classical Pentecostalism in Europe.' '[97]

The Pentecostal message reached Eastern Europe and Russia around 1910 through the church planting ministry of an Englishwoman Eleanor Patrick among the German ethnic communities. The movement got a boost throughout the Slavic World, through the ministry of a Russian-born American Baptist pastor, Ivan Voronaev who received the Spirit Baptism in New York City in 1919. Soon after he established the first Russian Pentecostal Church in Manhattan. In 1921, he decided to return to Odessa in Ukraine, where he established the first Pentecostal churches, and marked the origin of the movement in the Slavic Nations. He was instrumental in spreading the Pentecostal teachings to neighbouring Bulgaria and in introducing Pentecostalism to southern Dobrogea, Romania. He founded the first local Union of the Christian Evangelical Churches in 1924 and by 1926, the union was reorganized as all

[97]Receiving a glossolalic baptism in an African American congregation, he returned to Oslo an ardent proponent and became a key figure in establishing indigenous Pentecostal churches throughout Europe and the British Isles. He was the initiator of a group of Pentecostal fellowship known as *Pinsebevegelsen* (Pentecostal Revival). Allan, Anderson. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism, Global Charismatic Christianity.* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 84-85.

Ukrainian Union of CFE, representing 250 counties, with 15.000 members and over 400 leaders. By 1927, Voronaev became the president of the Christian evangelical churches of Soviet Union representing a membership of 80.000 Pentecostal believers.[98] Because of his connection with Russian and Eastern European mission from Chicago, Voronaev was arrested in 1928 and sent to a communist labour camp. As reported by authorities, the circumstances of his death in 1943 have allegedly occurred due to a failed prison escape attempt. Voronaev's churches survived incredible persecution and became a major renewal movement in Russia and the former Soviet Union.[99]

2.3.1. Pentecostal Beginnings in Romania

According to I.R. Hall, before World War I Pentecostalism was evident among the ethnic minorities in Transylvania but did not gain prominence among Romanians until the end of 1920' s.[100] From analysing the existing body of Romanian Pentecostal historiography, there are several theories about the exact time and place of the beginnings of Romanian Pentecostalism. The following is a summary of all these accounts.

M. Codreanu points out that according to primary sources evidence of Pentecostal expressions among ethnic Romanians was noticed as early as 1918 in the north of Romania (Moldavia/Bukovina). Sources claim that Romanian soldier Victor Nisu came in contact with Pentecostal teachings during his army service in World War I in Russia (1914-18). When he returned to his birthplace in Vicovul de Sus in 1918, he established the first Pentecostal

[98]Anderson, 99.

[99]Vinson Synan, *The Century of the Holy Spirit: 100 Years of Pentecostal and Charismatic Renewal* (Nashville: Nelson, 2001), 76-80.

[100]I.R. Hall "Eastern Europe," in Stanley M. Burgess & Eduard van der Maas, *New International Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements:Revised and Expanded Edition* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003), 90.

congregation there. Supposedly, the theological construction of these churches was similar to the Russian Pentecostal communities that Nisu encountered.[101]

Another central figure in the development of Pentecostalism in the same geographical area was Filaret Rotaru (1885-1959). Rotaru is believed to have converted to Pentecostalism during a visit in USA around 1916 following the experience of a miraculous healing. He returned to Moldavia in 1918 and started a Pentecostal ministry that led to the establishment of a Pentecostal community in Udesti.[102]

Apart from the developments in northern Romania, there were other independent Pentecostal manifestations in Transylvania and Bucovina. Several sources claim that before World War I, the central Carpathian plateau, and the villages of Dirlos and Currey was the scene of intense Pentecostal manifestations. The support for this theory has been developed by Eugenie Bodor, whose research on the origins of Pentecostalism in Romania led him to reports about German Pietists who were spreading the Pentecostal message among the Transylvanian Saxons in the Medias region even before 1919.[103] Another support for Bodor's thesis comes from the work of German-American missionary known by the name of Konerth, who returned from America and shared the Pentecostal message with her community from Dîrloş (district of Sibiu).[104] This occurrence supports the theory that Pentecostal churches were established here before 1918 since at least one person claimed to have been baptized

[101]M. Codreanu, "Romania," in Stanley M. Burgess & Eduard van der Maas, *New International Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements:Revised and Expanded Edition* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003), 212. Valeriu Andreiescu points out that M. Codreanu interpretation on the beginnings of Romanian Pentecostalism emphasises predominantly the role of foreign missionaries and the import of Pentecostalism at the expense of indigenous workers. It is said that M Codreanu names the saxons as the establishers of Romanian Pentecostalism missing that all the saxon churches had large numbers of romanian believers and in the case of the church in Curciu, the church was predominantly romanian from its establishment. *Istoria Pentecostalismului Romanesc Volumul 1: Evanghelia Deplina Si Puterea lui* Dumnezeu (A History of Romanian Pentecostalism volume 1: Complete Gospel and the Power of God) (Casa Cartii:Oradea, 2012) 37.

[102]Codreanu, 212.

[103]Hall, *Eastern Europe*, 91.

[104]Sandru, *Biserica Penticostala*, 130.

with the Holy Spirit.[105] A missionary article published in the USA brings more supporting evidence about the events that occurred before the Great War. It details the experience of two Transylvanian women who travelled to Berlin to be baptized in water. After their water baptism, they were encouraged to seek the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Upon their return to Romania, one of the young women is said to have ' 'felt the call of God for evangelism and became the first to carry Pentecost to Romania, which resulted in a remarkable revival' '.[106] A further account relating Pentecostal mission in Transylvania centres on the Swedish missionary George Stehn. His pioneering work among the Transylvanian Saxons contains details about his role in organizing their incipient apostolic assemblies.[107]

Historians of religion I. Ramureanu and I.M. Popescu suggest that on the contrary, Pentecostalism may have been brought to Romanian from USA around 1910. According to this theory, Romanian emigrant, Paul Budeanu, has spread the Pentecostal teachings before 1918 through a Romanian magazine published in USA.[108]

Romanian Pentecostal leaders, Trandafir Sandru and Pavel Bochian, set the beginning of Pentecostalism in Romania in the early 1920s, in Paulis village, Arad district.[109] Two events had a significant impact on the development of Pentecostalism in this area. The first was the miraculous healing of Persida Bradin, who suffered from tuberculosis and hydropsy.[110] Gheorghe Bradin, a countryman from Cuvin (near Arad), grew up in an

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[105]Codreanu, 212.

[106]Ibid.

[107]Ibid.

[108]I.M. Popescu, *Istoria si Sociologia Religiilor* (Bucuresti: Editura Fundaţiei de Mîine, 1996), 231.

[109]Trandafir Sandru, *Biserica Penticostala in Istoria Crestinismului* (Bucuresti: Editura Bisericii lui Dumnezeu Apostolice din Romania, 1992), 125. The writer acknowledges other independent Pentecostal manifestations in the country in the same period, but believes the events in the Arad County gained pre-eminence.

[110]Ioan Ceuta, "The History of the Pentecostal Apostolic Church of God in Romania". DMin. Project (Columbia Biblical Seminary, 1990), 29. In writing his account on the history of Pentecostalism in Romania,

Orthodox tradition, was exposed to bible reading through an early Adventist influence, and in 1914 shortly before WorldWar I he became a member of the Baptist Church in Cuvin. After he returned from war he married but the following years were marked series of unfortunate events triggered with the death of his first-born, the loss of his only source of income and his wife's sudden illness. In 1921, he received news from Romanian friends who immigrated to United States about the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the supernatural cases of healing they witnessed during the evangelistic meetings of Aimee Sample McPherson from Los Angeles.[111] With renewed hope, the Bradins decided to pray to receive the Holy Spirit, and for a healing for their sickness. In his personal journal dated June 1922, Bradin wrote that his wife was healed from tuberculosis because of their prayers through faith.[112] The second significant event occurred when Bradin sent a letter to the Church of God publishing house in Cleveland, TN asking more details about the Pentecostal faith, and the answer came in Romanian language from Pavel Budeanu, a Romanian emigrant to the U.S.[113]

The letter on the Holy Spirit that he received from Budeanu in 1922 changed the course of his spiritual journey as he decided to open the first Romanian Pentecostal Church, in Paulis (near Arad).[114] Sandru marks this event as the birth of Romanian Pentecostalism: ' 'having complete light concerning biblical teaching, on the 10th of September, Bradin' s family constituted the first Pentecostal church at their residence in Paulis'.[115] By the end of

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Ceuta relies heavily on Bradin's personal journal. After the events on 1989, Ceuta separated from the main Romanian Pentecostal Union and formed the Romanian Assemblies of God.

[111]Trandafir Sandru, *The Apostolic Church of God in the Socialist Republic of Romania* (Bucharest: Pentecostal Publishing House, 1982), 26.

[112]Codreanu, 213.

[113]J.F. Tipei, "The Apostolic Church of God of Romania," in Stanley M. Burgess & Eduard van der Maas, *New International Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements: Revised and Expanded Edition* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003), 324.

[114]Sandru, *Biserica Crestina: Evolutie si Spiritualitate*(Bucuresti: Institutul Teologic Penticostal, 1995), 262.

[115]Sandru, *Biserica Penticostala*, 127.

the year, after hearing about the new faith and the extraordinary experience of healing shared by the Bradins, the new Pentecostal congregation in Paulis already had 30 members.[116] In February of 1923, a second church was started in Cuvin, near Paulis, in the house of Vasile and Persida Semenascu.[117] The experience of speaking in tongues started to be manifested in June 1923, when some church members received the so-called baptism with the Holy Spirit. The event produced great excitement among the new converts to Pentecostalism, happy to see and hear what they had believed and prayed for.[118]

2.3.2. Initial Attempts at Recognition and Inter-war Development (1922-1945).

From the early 1920's, the Orthodox Church launched a discriminatory campaign against all Pentecostal groups. In 1923, an Orthodox priest from Paulis, Corneliu Popescu, appealed to the authorities to forbid the existence of Pentecostal activities in the Radna Region. Concerned with the rapid spread of Pentecostal teachings among Romanians religious authorities reinforced the ban against Pentecostals in 1924.[119]

The Pentecostal leadership petitioned the Department against the ban, and asked the movement to be recognized as a religious association, specifying that Pentecostalism was widely practiced in America.[120] The background of the Romanian Pentecostal movement was described in the petition as the 'Baptist-Pentecostal Church.' With their petition, they have

[116]The Baptist version of the events is that Bradin's decision to open a new church was motivated by the postponement of his promotion to leadership in the local Baptist Church. Baptist church historian argues that under Budeanu's guidance, Bradin convinced most of the members of the Baptist Church to join the new church. Stanculescu, *Romanian Evangelical Christianity*, 250.

[117]Andreiescu, "Istoria Miscarii Penticostale din Romania", in Vinson Synan & Valeriu Andreiescu, *Traditia Miscarii Penticostale: Miscarile Carismatice din Secolul XX* (Editura Betania, Oradea, 2004), 301.

[118]*Cuvantul Adevarului* (May 1, 1931), 1

[119]Stanculescu, 254.

[120]Sandru, *Trezirea Penticostala*, 91-92.

also included the declaration of faith of the General Council of the Church of God, published in a fourteen-page booklet called *Declararea Fundamentului Adevarat* (The Declaration of the True Foundation).[121]

The ministry of religion answered indirectly through *Decision no. 5734/1925* 'The sect of Pentecostals…is led by Gheorghe Bradin. The sect is forbidden because their doctrine is not shared by all its members…It does not provide sufficient guarantee for the requirements stipulated in the Romanian Constitution'[122] However, because the Pentecostals did not commit any illegal acts and displayed proper behaviour, their activity was to be tolerated. This document was published in all leading newspapers and was the first of its kind to certify the existence of the Pentecostal church in Romania. In addition, this document caused much interest among the general population as Bradin received many letters and visits from different parts of the country.[123] Under Bradin's leadership the movement expanded gradually between 1923 and 1927 and new churches opened in different regions of the country: Bihor, Banat, Oltenia, Bucovina, Moldavia, and Bessarabia.[124]

In 1928, another appeal for official recognition was denied by the Minister of Arts and Cults and the decree nr. 24536 ruled that the Pentecostal sect was unauthorized to function as a religious association.[125] In the fall of 1928, 50 Pentecostal leaders met at Paulis, Arad district, with the objective of organizing the activity of the Pentecostal churches and discuss the new Declaration of faith.[126] In the meeting, Gheorghe Bradin was elected as president, Mihai Olariu as secretary, and Ioan Bododea as editor of the first Pentecostal

[121]Andreiescu, *Istoria Miscarii Penticostale*, 302.

[122]Gheorghe Bradin, "The Pentecostal Movement," in *Herald of the Gospel*, no. 11 (June 1946): 5.

[123]Bradin, *The Pentecostal Movement*, 5.

[124]Ceuta, *The History*, 39-40.

[125]Sandru, "Istoria Cultului Penticostal", in *Indrumatorul Crestin* (Bucuresti, 1976), 131.

[126]Andreiescu, *Istoria Miscarii Penticostale*, 305.

magazine, *Glasul Adevarului* (The Voice of Truth) firstly published in January 1929.[127] The magazine was renamed in March 1929 as *Cuvantul Adevarului* (The Word of Truth). In the February of 1929 the Pentecostals reorganized into ' 'The Apostolic Church of God,' ' with the headquarters at Brailita.[128] The new chairman, I. Bododea, introduced a new organizational system based on grouping the churches from one county or more in branches, which were to be represented nationally by an administrative and executive committee.[129] The new representatives of the Pentecostal movement sent a new petition for official recognition to Department of Cults in June 1925, admitting the agreement in practice and faith with the Declaration of Faith of the Apostolic Pentecostal Church of God.[130] The Ministry of Cults replied with the Decision no. 24536/1929, which recognised that the Pentecostal doctrine did not ' 'contain anything against public order, good morals and nothing harmful to recognised cults' ', but in order to function legally, the association had to fulfil all the provisions required by Law of Cults.[131] The decision 52881/1929 required added information about the activities of the new religious association. After what initially seemed to be a favourable attitude from the State authorities, the governmental decision 3114/1930 denied the recognition of the association under the objection that the Apostolic Church of God was ' 'Pentecostalistic and herewith we decree the closure of all their churches.' '[132] The ban against Pentecostals was repeated in 1933 when despite the exclusion of the term ' 'Pentecostal' ' from their official name, they were again placed among the ' 'prohibited sects.' ' In March 1931 the Inspectoral Council for Cults issued the order NR49/11 asking the prefects to submit detailed report

[127]Pavel Bochian, "Biserica Penticostala intre 1925-1930", in *Buletinul Bisericii Penticostale* No. 6(Nov-Dec 1989), 8.

[128]Sandru, *Istoria Cultului Penticostal*, 131.

[129] Popescu, *Istoria si Sociologia Religiilor* (Bucuresti 1996), 231.

[130]"*Cuvantul Adevarului*," (January 1931), 1.

[131]Ceuta, *The History*, 43.

[132]Bradin, "Miscarea Penticostala din Romania," in *Vestitorul Evangheliei* (June 1, 1946), 6.

about the conduct of Pentecostal believers, but despite many positive reports no official recognition was granted. During the inter-war period, seven decrees were issued against the Pentecostals by the Ministry of Arts and Religion.

Besides the obstacles raised by the refusal to be officially recognized, Pentecostals had to face open persecution from the government, local authorities, and the Orthodox Church. The Pentecostal magazine 'Cuvantul Adevarului, [Word of Truth]' sketches the extent of the persecution in all its issues of 1931. The Pentecostals were imposed severe fines, physical abuse and even prison sentences.[133] Their churches were closed, vandalized and emptied of furniture. In prisons they faced starvation, were forced to fast for 40 days at the time, and only occasionally they were offered bread with salt and a drink of water. They were described as a plague for the Romanian society, and communist agents.[134]

Two leading newspapers, 'Dimineata,' and 'Adevarul,' were scandalized by the level or religious persecution carried against the Neo-Protestants (Pentecostals). An article 'Dimineata,' of November 1931 details how the persecution was fuelled by Orthodox priests who demanded severe fines for all those who worshipped outside the Orthodox Church, or for the change of religion.[135] Mihail Sevastos protested fervently against religious persecution in an article published in 'Adevarul' of 21 November 1931. He illustrates how Pentecostal believers were physically abused and humiliated by being forced to carry large wagons of rocks and gravel around the streets of Ilva Mare (near Arad) and how children were beaten before their parent' s eyes.[136] In spite of repeated appeals and protests at the Ministry of Religion, the Decision of 114119/1933 again designated all Pentecostal groups as illegal

[133]"*Cuvantul Adevarului*" (January 1931), 3.

[134]Gr. Comsa, *Noua Calauza Pentru Cunoasterea si Combaterea Sectelor* (Cernica, 1925), 74-77.

[135]"Un Fenomen Nou in Romania," *Dimineata* 44/21 (Nov. 30, 1931).

[136]Ibid.

sects. As a result, Orthodox officials continued their actions against Pentecostal and requested from the authorities annihilation of any Pentecostal activity and the repression of Pentecostal followers.[137] The Orthodox bishop Grigore Cosma sought from the authorities in Arad the interdiction of all the destructive Pentecostal publications and the imprisonment of Gheorghe Bradin because of his illicit propaganda.[138]

Persecution of Pentecostals culminated during the military dictatorship of Maresal Antonescu when the Decree No. 9270/1942 banned all the religious associations. The prime minister issued a decree that authorized marshal courts to jail Pentecostals or send them to the battlefields. Many of those who refused to deny their faith and return to the Orthodox Church were arrested and threatened with deportation to the Russian region of Transnistria.[139] Despite all the repressions, the Pentecostal movement continued to grow in all regions of the country as a clandestine movement.

In parallel with the steady growth of Pentecostal faith, prior to World War II, signs of substantial divisiveness among Romanian Pentecostals became evident.[140]

The mainstream group led by Gheorghe Bradin, the Apostolic Church of God-Pentecostal was the largest Pentecostal faction, and represented the more conservative branch of Pentecostalism. The inflexibility of Bradin's views on certain doctrinal issue and his rigid interpretation of key texts on foot washing caused several groups to dissociate from Bradin's

[137]Sandru, *Biserica Penticostala*, 135.

[138]Andreiescu, *Istoria Miscarii Penticostale*, 310.

[139]Bochian, *Viata unui pastor din Romania* (Ed. Privilegiu: Bucuresti, 1997), 48.

[140]The extent of the divisions among early Romanian Pentecostals was pointed out by Non-Orthodox writers as well. C. Cuciuc argues that "some Baptist preachers recently converted to Pentecostalism manifested a nonconformist attitude since the beginning of 1930's. In 1931, Romanian Pentecostals divided: divisions were caused by the attempts of some leaders to introduce modernist behaviour (modern clothing, flexibility regarding marital relations, freedom to renounce the foot washing practice, and to establish various contacts with the worldwide Pentecostal movement.)[translation mine]. *Atlasul Religiilor,* 67.

faction. However, Bradin's group disintegrated in 1938, when he left the Pentecostal movement and returned to Baptists.[141]

In 1929, two members of the Russian and Eastern European Mission (sponsored by Assemblies of God) came to Timisoara to provide support and training among the Pentecostals but imposed their views in exchange.[142] Their more liberal views (did not practice foot washing and allowed the use of alcoholic drinks), led to the first split into the mainstream and led to the formation of the 'The Apostolic Church which is of God or Christians Baptized with the Holy Spirit' under the leadership of Alexandru Isbasa.[143] The second split occurred in 1931, when Ioan Bododea of Braila separated from ACG and formed a faction called 'Christians Baptized with the Holy Spirit'.[144] A third, but smaller group called the 'The Disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ,' emerged in 1931 but was confined only to Bucharest area.[145]

Various attempts to reunite these groups during the 1930's were unsuccessful because of disagreements on controversial topics of the Baptism with the Holy Spirit, the appointment of presidents of the Pentecostal church, and the use of alcoholic beverages.[146]

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[141]Bradin's group had very austere views maintaining abstinence from alcohol and simple dress code as prerequisite for salvation. Bradin advocated dependence upon God and His Spirit as vital for ministry and did not accept being paid for ministry. Andreiescu, *Istoria Bisericii Penticostale*, 313-315.

[142]Tipei, *The Apostolic Church of God*, 324.

[143]Ceuta, *The History*, 44-45.

[144]Sandru, *Biserica Penticostala*, 139. This group was considered to have had strong ties with Assemblies of God U.S. They represented the modernist branch of Pentecostalism evidenced in their modern life-style, clothing, and the use of alcoholic beverages.

[145]Ceuta, *The History*, 61. This group sought to promote a more indigenous form of Pentecostalism, resisted any Western influence, and maintained that prophecy is more important than the Bible.

[146]*Vestitorul Evangheliei* (Oct. 1946), 6.

2.3.3. Romanian Pentecostal Post-War Development: (1945-1989).

The period after World War II until 1947 was marked by the Romania's transition from Antonescu's dictatorship to the instauration of the Communist totalitarianism. The transitional period gave Romanian Pentecostals the opportunity to reorganize and prepare for obtaining legal status. In January 1945, a meeting took place in Pancota, Arad where a committee was formed that would give the Romanian Church a new status and organizing principles.[147] On the 20 May 1945, a subsequent conference of reorganization was held at Arad during which Gheorghe Bradin was re-elected as president. In August, they started printing the new magazine entitled 'Vestitorul Evangheliei', (Promoter of the Gospel) that played an instrumental role in promoting the unification of the Pentecostal factions.[148]

Decision 25411/1946, signed by the director for minor denominations, within the Ministry of Cults, Nicolae Grosu, allowed provisional freedom of worship to the Pentecostals and the election of leaders to take part in elaborating the new Law of Cults.[149] The Pentecostal Declaration of Faith and the Statute of the Church were approved in December 1946 and granted provisory recognition to the *Apostolic Church of God*. In 1947, the newly installed regime granted temporary recognition to the second Pentecostal group *Christians Baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Disciples of Jesus Christ,* led by Ion Jiloveanu, centred in Bucharest, which also received official recognition.[150]

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[147]Ceuta, *The History*, 68.

[148]*Vestitorul Evangheliei* (June 1946): 1-2.

[149]Ceuta, *The History*, 86.

[150]Andreiescu, *Istoria Cultului Penticostal*, 318. All three Pentecostal factions had together about 15.000 by 1945. Their numbers doubled by 1950 totalling 31.000 adherents. During the 1946-1650 representatives of the three factions (Pavel Bochian, Transylvania; Izbasa Alexandru, Banat, Eugenie Bodor, and Irimiuc Gheorghe, Bukovina) initiated intense campaigns to find solutions that would facilitate their unification. They achieved a consensus to unify by 1950 and each agreed to preserve their differing interpretations of John 13 regarding the issue of foot washing.

In 1948, the Ministry of Cults issued Decree no. 177 on August 4, guarantying freedom of expression to the recognized cults, set the legal framework for recognition, but imposed that all the leaders of the churches make an oath of loyalty to the Ministry of Cults. The attempt at the official recognition of Romanian Pentecostals meant for the cult an intensive campaign to reunite the three groups; February 1950, the CBHS unified with ACGP and in March 1950 DLJC also joined.[151] On 14 November 1950, the Board of the Great National Meeting of the People's Republic of Romania issued in Decree no.1203, the approval for the functioning of the Pentecostal church under the name 'The Pentecostal Denomination – The Church of God Apostolic'.[152]

Until mid-1950's Romanian Pentecostals enjoyed relative freedom and entered an extensive process of reorganization. The first Congress of the Pentecostal Denomination held in 1951 was attended by delegates from all the churches and had among its objectives the election of new leaders, settlement of doctrine related issues, and the setting up of training courses in different centres of the country.[153] Under the watchful eye of the authorities, they were allowed to create a centralized system of governing with a General Assembly, a central council, and an Executive Committee and a Pension and Assistant Office.[154]

The Pentecostals sensed the arrival of communism as liberation and were keen to express their appreciation for the new liberties brought with the end of the Second World War. The editorial board of the Pentecostal magazine *Cuvantul Adevarului* (The Word of Truth) portrayed the coming to power of the regime as 'the beginning of a new era of

[151]Stanculescu, 257.

[152]J.F. Tipei, "The Apostolic Church of God, Romania", in Stanley M. Burgess & Eduard van der Maas, *New International Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements:Revised and Expanded Edition* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003): 324.

[153]Rodica Pandrea, "A Historical and Theological Analysis of the Pentecostal Church in Romania", in *The Journal of the European Pentecostal Theological Association*, vol.XXI/2001: 113-114.

[154]Andreiescu, *Istoria Miscarii Penticostale*, 320-321.

democratic and revolutionary transformations, remarkable achievements … the end of the long periods of discrimination and persecution against the Pentecostal believers…the fulfilment of our desire for of religious freedom and the rights of free expression…'[155] Grosu Constantin, the representative of the branch of Northern Moldavian Pentecostals, argued that it was impossible for the younger generation of Pentecostals to fully appreciate their new freedom since they had not lived prior to 23 August 1944. He further, expressed his profound gratefulness towards the socialist state for the newfound liberty and urged the faithful to pray for all those in authority.[156]

The Communist authorities expressed a keen interest in the Pentecostal's resilience and suffering during the previous regimes and hoped that they will become allies both in limiting the powers of the dominant churches and promoting the new Romania in the West. Their attention was drawn in particular to the ecumenical dimension of the Pentecostal churches that was not present in any other established churches that were so closely identified with particular ethnic communities.[157] Even though the regime was concerned with many of the views and practices of the Pentecostals, it could not overlook the signs of moral qualities and the role it played in promoting reconciliation among rival ethnic groups that Romania so desperately needed. Their qualities were seen as having much in common with the Marxist policies and they were regarded as potential comrades in spreading the revolutionary work once they were set free from their mystical views.[158]

Following a period of tolerance during which they have simulated a so-called democratic game starting with 1954 repressive methods against the churches were gradually

[155]"23 August," in *Buletinul Cultului Penticostal* (May, 1976): 2.

[156]"Adunarea Generala Electiva a Cultului Penticostal 14 Iunie 1986," in *Buletinul Cultului Penticostal* (Jul.-Aug.1986): 4.

[157]Pope, *Protestantism in Romania*, 185.

[158]From among all Neo-Protestants cults, Romanian Pentecostals were very successful in recruiting from among all ethnic minorities in Romanian, especially among the Gypsies' estranged community, Ibid.

introduced. To prepare the way for the new regularisations the regime had forced earlier the three main Pentecostal fractions to come together in one Union.[159] The formation of the Union was the first step towards the centralization and control of the religious affairs of the denomination. The Union was to ensure that regularisations were passed to the local churches; pastors were to be paid by the Union; manipulation of the election to ensure that the leaders elected were amenable to government pressures; monitoring of church services that were aimed especially at women and youth.[160]

The first measure introduced by the authorities was the regularisation of religious services. The numbers of church meetings were reduced to only two a week – Saturday evening and Sunday morning.[161] The second decision to be carried out by the Pentecostal Union was the '*arondations*' a system whereby many churches were closed and the believers allocated to specific churches that were allowed to remain open. In addition to the closure and even demolition of the church buildings, applications for new churches were constantly delayed for long periods, and even when issued, were often accompanied by the withdrawal of an authorization to a different assembly in a different area.[162]

Other implementations that were carried by the Department of Cults, in collaboration with the Securitate extended to the appointment of pastors and preachers and approval or disapproval of important events such as conferences, congresses, relations abroad, publication and courses. For each baptism, list of the candidates had to be sent for approval to the territorial inspectorate of the Secretariat for Cults.[163] The Union had to

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[159]"1922-10 Septembrie-1992, 70 de ani de la deschiderea primei Bisericii Penticostale din Romania", in *Cuvantul Adevarului,* nr. 10 (Octombrie 1992): 3-4.

[160]Andreiescu, *Istoria Miscarii Penticostale*, 323.

[161]"1922-10 Septembrie-1992," *Cuvantul Adevarului* (Octombrie 1992), 4.

[162]*"*The Situation of Pentecostal Churches in Romania*"*, September 1979, unpublished paper, Keston Institute, 14-15.

[163]Tipei, *The Apostolic Church of God*, 324.

oversee any investments, recognition and acceptance of pastors, disciplinary transfers and fines paid by those who were in possession of religious publications, admission of young people from Pentecostal families to the seminary. Professional jobs were denied to Pentecostal believers in the humanities domain such as education, management and the media.[164]

To implement the new restrictions the authorities sought the cooperation of those Pentecostal leaders who had displayed malleability during the communist reforms.[165] To prevent the appearance of non-interference in religious affairs guaranteed by the 1948 Law of Cults, the restriction were passed on orally to denominational leaders who were to pass them on to their churches as though they were internal denominational matters. When individual leaders protested against the restrictions, they were referred to the President of the Union, Pavel Bochian as being responsible for the decisions enforced with Pentecostal assemblies.[166]

The regularisations imposed by the regime have been reinforced at the second Congress of the Pentecostal Union on June 1956 where many Pentecostal leaders had to be removed from their position because they had fallen into disfavour with the Communist authorities.[167] A new executive committee was formed under the leadership of Gheorghe Bradin, which remained unchanged until his death in 1962. Pavel Bochian succeeded Gheorghe Bradin as the President of the Apostolic Church of God in 1962 and served as its chairman until 1990. Well-known in close circles for his shrewd diplomacy, he followed a

[164]Tipei, *The Apostolic Church of God*, 325.

[165]Codreanu, *Romania*, 215.

[166]"*The Situation of Pentecostal Churches in Romania*", 10-14.

[167] A. Vamvu, T. Sandru, P. Cojocar and D. Zamfir were released from their position in the Executive committee of the Union with the accusation that they were lacked honesty and integrity of character. Soon after their licence to pastor was revoked and were expelled from the Union together with many other key leaders. Sandru, *Biserica Penticostala,* 147-148.

conciliatory policy from 1962 until the fall of communism.[168] Pavel Bochian praised both at home and abroad the accomplishments of President Ceausescu and the freedom that his church enjoyed in Romania. During the fiftieth Interconfessional conference held in Bucharest in 1987, he was the only Neo-Protestant who was quoted by the international press declaring, ' 'the republic had become more beautiful and stronger each year and that the Pentecostal communities were committed to a harmonious relationship of all religious communities and nationalities, and many houses of prayer had been built.' '[169] He expressed special gratitude to the state for the pastoral programme and the publications the churches were allowed to have. He pointed out the ecumenical dimension of the Pentecostal community, which integrated people from Hungarian, German, Slovak and Ukrainian ethnic communities. Bochian closed his address about Ceausescu's indefatigable work for global peace, a form of high praise for political leadership that was normative in Eastern European societies.[170]

During this period Romania's intention for political independence from the Soviet model required gaining support from the Western powers. Following Western protests surrounding the issue of religious freedom in Romania, the regime introduced with the inauguration of President Ceausescu a series of domestic reforms that were favourable to the Romanian Pentecostals. Starting with 1968, Pavel Bochian and Trandafir Sandru were able to

[168]According to the denominational constitution, this should only have been a temporary measure pending the appointment of a permanent replacement. Further, the constitution stipulates that every 4 years a denominational conference was to be held during which a new leadership had to be elected. However, the Department of Cults did not authorize anymore organizational meetings of the Union and Bochian remained in his position ever since. His leadership was carried in a context of increased state limitations but has also experienced periods of progress through remarkable growth, established the first Pentecostal seminary and by 1980 established partnership with the Church of God, Clevaland, Tennessee. G.B. McGee, B.A. Pavia, "Pavel Bochian" in Stanley M. Burgess & Eduard van der Maas, *New International Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements:Revised and Expanded Edition*. (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003): 436. The events of 1989 triggered a revolution in official Pentecostal leadership. Younger Pentecostal leaders have forced Pavel Bochian to resign from his position as president of the Pentecostal Union because of his distinguished attitude of obedience toward communist authorities.

[169]Pope, *Protestantism in Romania*, 184.

[170]Ibid.

visit Pentecostal churches in France and Great Britain and take part in various world and European Pentecostal conferences.[171]

One of the greatest achievements of the Romanian Pentecostals was the approval and opening of the Pentecostal Seminary established in 1976 by Trandafir Sandru.[172] The seminary was permitted to bring out a class of 15 graduates every four years, but since 1980, the number of students was gradually reduced to 10 and subsequently to 5 in 1984. Further improvement in the relations between Pentecostal Churches and the state was evident in the granting of permits to build new churches and the writing, printing and translation of Christian materials to support the courses at the Seminar.[173]

Towards the middle of the 1970's Romanian authorities reinstated the intensive campaigns of repression against religion and religious activities. Believers were subjected to heavy fines representing sometimes five months of a worker's wage. Believer's homes were searched, Bibles and religious books were confiscated, pastors were dismissed, and churches were unable to get licence because there were too many. Despite the rare reference in Western Pentecostal publications that refer to Romania, there were some indications of the true situation. In February 1976, *Euroflame*, a publication of the European Evangelistic Society reported that Pentecostal churches were being closed down; building of new ones stopped, and could not carry out any form of public evangelism. John Wildriane wrote that

[171]Sandru, *Trezirea.* 116-118. When Pavel Bochian attended the Pentecostal World Conference in Dallas 1970, was denounced by Richard Wurmbrand, an Evangelical Pastor known as "the voice of the Underground Church", as a "Communist stooge". Steve, Durasoff, *Pentecost Behind the Iron Curtain* (Logos International: Plainfield, New Jersey, 1972), 72-73.

[172]Sandru served as the president of the Seminary since 1976 and soon after started his literary activity authoring 12 books in various fields thus becoming the most prolific Pentecostal writer in Romania. He had previously obtained a degree in ancient history from the University of Bucharest in 1956. In 1992, Sandru received an honorary doctorate from the Church of God School of Theology, Cleveland, TN. J.F.Tipei, "Trandafir Sandru", in Stanley M. Burgess & Eduard van der Maas, *New International Dictionary of Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements:Revised and Expanded Edition* (Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2003), 1038.

[173]"Encouragement for Romanian Pentecostals," *Keston News Service* (27 October, 1976).

'within the framework of the present laws, the Pentecostal churches are able to function,' but he admits that 'possibly another side of the story could be mentioned…'[174] Normally however, the full picture is obscured. In an issue of *World Pentecost*, Jacob Zopfi of Switzerland describes the packed church services but makes no mention of the restrictions imposed by both the governmental and denominational authorities. American mission editor for *Euroflame* wrote in September 1976 of 'the great need for finances to build Pentecostal churches, which have already received government approval' but avoids mentioning that at the same time many churches had been closed.

In parallel with the persecution of individual believers, the regime had reinstated the atheistic campaign against Pentecostals characterized by ridicule, smear campaigns and distorted propaganda in the Communist Press. The atheistic propaganda was not limited only to publishing scientific treatises but made use of all the various newspapers and Romanian magazines. Particular reference can be made to an article in *Scanteia Tineretului*(Youth Spark) entitled 'Degradation of human reason' entirely dedicated to Romanian Pentecostals. The author Dr. H. Culea claims to have attended Pentecostal gatherings, which enabled him to form an accurate account of the beliefs and practices of the denomination. The actual antics of Pentecostals come in for a major attack, particularly the trances states which they get into. It is admitted that Pentecostals have stumbled across certain evidence of psychotherapeutic techniques and overall, they must be classified as fanatics and ignorant. Their gatherings were marked by acute mysticism and their practices guided by obscurantism. They were deeply involved in the realm of magic. Other elements that come under scrutiny refer to their goals and stress on the transformation of the human character and the self-criticism that accompanies this process. The article claims that because of their emphasis on divine miracles, some Pentecostals were opposed to any form of medical help.

[174]"J.P. Wildriane, "Pentecostal Revival in Romania," in *Euroflame* (October 1976): 6.

They displayed a tendency to cut themselves off from any form of cultural and educational activity, promoted isolation from the society, and retreat into an obscurantist religious conclave.[175]

In this period, against this background, there were reactions of protest. The most significant ones took place in 1977, and then in 1978, when the actions of protest of 9 Baptist individuals took the form of a Romanian Committee for the Defence of Religious Freedom and Evangelical Conscience (ALRC). The committee wrote a petition that demanded fundamental reforms in the Church-State relation and sent their programme to the leaders of the Communist Party, the Romanian Government, the Department of Cults, the Court of Justice, and to the secret service.[176] The action of the committee was described as ' 'the most far-reaching statement made up to that time; it challenged the state's authority in matters of great sensitivity that were more than interpretation of law.' '[177] Even though the action was started by a group of Baptists, the organization soon found appeal across denominations. Constantin Caraman and later Victor Rascol were the only Pentecostal participants in the actions of the committee. The members of the committee shared an eschatological vision developed in the context of the religious renewal that took place in Romania during the 1970's. It set to announce God's judgment over any form of sin and injustice, including the compromise that the leaders of the Church made with the Communist state and promote resistance towards both form of authority.[178]

All the leaders of the Cults involved, including the leaders of the Pentecostal Union were quick to react and describe the reaction of the protesters as political activity. The

[175]H. Culea, "Anticazania: Degradarea Ratiunii Umane", *Scanteia Tineretului,* 12 February, 1976, 2.

[176]The details of the programme of the Committee are available in *Religion in Communist Lands*, vol.7/3, 1979, 170-173.

[177]Pope, *Protestantism in Romania*, 181.

[178]Pavel Nicolescu, "Dupa Mine, expresia Biserica de Stat nu are nici un sens", *Crestinul Azi* (The Christian Today), 2/19 Iunie 1993, 12.

protesters reacted by saying that the leaders of the Cults were involved in politics as well, that benefited the Communist party, whereas the protesters were doing politics against the Communist regime, defending the rights of the Church, and of the persecuted Christians, regardless of their denomination. On the grounds of illegal political activity and insubordination to church authorities all the members of ARLC were excluded from their churches and forbidden to perform any religious acts.[179] The actions taken by the various church Union against the protesters came as a result of intensified pressure from the Department of Cults and the Secret Service.

Overall, the Pentecostal leadership continued to be on good terms with the state. Deciding that a certain degree of loyalty and ethical compromise was necessary from a strategic point of view, the Pentecostal leadership was open to accept any dispositions from the government without any opposition. Pope mentions that the Pentecostals leaders were paradigms of cautious discretion in relation to the state and were eager to practice their faith within the confines dictated by the Department of Cults. As they perceived it, the privilege of inner freedom they found in their faith superseded open concern with interference by state authorities, however disliked.[180]

Despite all the restrictions and the negative media campaigns against Pentecostals, they continued to grow numerically throughout the Communist Regime.[181] They gained

[179]Nicolescu, 12.

[180]According to an article in the Voice of Truth May 1986 "Foreign Speakers in the Romanian Pulpits," the Pentecostal Union was implementing the unwritten restriction dictated by the government more eagerly than any other religious minorities. Pope, Protestantism in Romania, 379. A point made also by Valeriu Andreiescu in his *Istoria Pentecostalismului Romanesc Volumul 2: Lucrarile Puterii Lui Dumnezeu*(A History of Romanian Pentecostalism Volume 2: The Works of the Power of God) Casa Cartii: Oradea, 2012, 14.

[181]O "Situatie Statistica generala a cultelor din R.S. Romania", published at the end of 1980's, mentions the existence of 87.000 Pentecostals with 729 churches, 126 pastors and 125 cemeteries (*Viata Religioasa din Romania. Prezentare Sintetica*, Bucuresti, Editor: Consiliul Consultativ al Cultelor din Republica Socialista Romania, Tipar executat la Tipografia Institutului Biblic si de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Romane, 1987, 47). At the same time, according to Western Reports at the end of Communism there were 300.000 Pentecostals with 1600 churches and 150 Pastors, Pope, *Protestantism in Romania*, 207. These numbers were extensively corrected at the 1992 national census where there were 220.051 Pentecostals registered (*Anuarul Statistic al Romaniei*(Statistical Yearbook of Romania), 1993, 95). However, it needs to be pointed out that

adherents, mainly from among the marginal segments of society, because their existence presented a sharp alternative to the official ideology of the Communist State that left many people untouched. They engaged the vacuum created by the development of communism with an emphasis on personal renewal through Christ as a response to the meaninglessness created by a godless, secular society.

2.4. Romanian Pentecostalism since 1989

Following the collapse of communism, the Pentecostals expressed great enthusiasm about the new era and recognized therein an acting of God as the Lord of history. Though the changes were dramatic and unpredictable, as Peter Kuzmic points out, 'followers of Christ all across Eastern Europe are aware that this is the work of the Lord of history who has seen their suffering and longing for freedom, answered their prayers and provided them with a special kairos period to call their nations back to God and to the spiritual foundations for a free and truly ' new society.'[182] The revolution made it possible for the first time in forty years for the Evangelicals to articulate their own mission in the fullest and most complete way.

Although Romanian Pentecostals were waiting and praying for freedom, in fact they were much unprepared for the unparalleled opportunities that had now arisen.[183] Beniamin Faragau, one of the most respected Evangelical Bible teachers in Romania, made the following statement some time ago: ' Those who did something significant before the

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Romanian Pentecostals count as members only those baptized. There is an extensive category regarded as "initiated" and includes the children of the baptized members who are not yet members but attend church regularly. None of the official census has yet taken into account or included the "initiated".

[182]Kuzmic, Peter. "Europe" in *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission,* Philips, James M. and Robert T. Coote, eds. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993): 148-164.

[183]Laslo Tokes, "The Possible Role of Rumania's Churches in the Social Upheaval of the Country," in *Religion in Eastern Europe* vol.10 (October 1990): 30.

Revolution have adapted quickly, continuing their ministry in a way relevant for the new conditions, while the others are still puzzled and don't know what to choose from the multitude of opportunities offered to them.'[184]

Since the dissolution of the Communist regime Romanian Pentecostals have taken steps to effectively use the freedom in the light of their perspective. Important leadership changes have taken both at local and national level, perhaps most dramatically with the replacement of Pavel Bochian. Leadership changes continued as many of the leaders that were voted out or retired or replaced were replaced by those who had been dissidents in the past.

2.5. Towards a Synthesis of Romanian Pentecostalism

Romanian Pentecostals represent the youngest of all religious denominations in Romania, and the movement has spread remarkably under adverse conditions. They originated in response to a deep concern for spiritual renewal following the aftermath of World War I. From their very beginning the Pentecostal were received with suspicion by both the Orthodox Church and the other Neo-Protestant groups.

The growth and spread of early Romanian Pentecostalism can be attributed to several reasons. Of primary importance was the fact that Pentecostals answered the spiritual needs of the people in a more personal and radical manner compared with the traditional churches who were accused of religious formalism and apathy. The experience of Spirit Baptism accompanied by speaking in tongues and prophecy attracted other Neo-Protestant believers in search of a deeper spiritual life.

[184]Danut Manastireanu, "Evangelical Denominations in Post-Communist Romania – I ," *East-West Church & Ministry Report 6* (Summer 1998): 7-10.

By examining the social strata from which the Pentecostals recruited their members it can be noted that most the Early Pentecostals were simple folk, peasants and common labourers. It emerged from among Transylvanian peasants, it maintained its sphere of influence in the same social sector and it rapidly spread to areas of Banat, Northern Moldavia, Braila and Galati and throughout Transylvania. Many of their converts were usually nominal Christians from the Orthodox fold.[185] A notable contingent of their members came from interdenominational transfer, from other Neo-Protestant denominations. For strategic reasons and because they were declared illegal for most of their inter-war existence, many Pentecostal churches identified with the Baptists. In their first attempt to obtain official recognition as a religious association, the Pentecostals applied under the name 'Baptist-Pentecostal church.'

From their incipient stage, Romanian Pentecostals showed an inclination toward pietism and emotive spirituality. Supernatural manifestations, the ability to prophesy, and the practise of divine healing were strongly emphasized. Concert prayers with everybody praying aloud simultaneously was purposed to prepare the congregation for the sermon, which was the central part of the church service.

Early Romanian Pentecostals were markedly ascetic. External issues, especially in matters of conservative clothing, tended to become strong rules within Pentecostal churches. Abstinence from smoking, drinking, jewellery, and dancing of any sort was central to Pentecostal spirituality and considered as necessary for salvation. According to Petru Lascau, Romanian Pentecostals concentrated exclusively on modest and humble conditions of the Romanian peasants. Instead of the social and economic emancipation experienced by the

[185]Valeriu Andreiescu, *Istoria Penticostalismului Romanesc, Volumul 1*, 74.

Romanian Baptists, the Pentecostals regressed.[186] This phenomenon seems to have been typical for the Romanian Pentecostals from the Arad, Bihor and the county of Bucovina.

Nevertheless, not all the historiographers of Romanian Pentecostalism agree with this description of early Pentecostalism. Some claim that the Romanian Pentecostal movement throughout its history 'came forth as a unitary/endeavour work.'[187] However, evidence shows that substantial divisiveness caused high fragmentation and disorganization among Romanian Pentecostals marking what was considered the darkest period in their history. Ceuta argues that divisions over doctrinal issues occurred for two reasons 'lack of educated people who could prevent conflicts, abuse and disagreements '…and the constant persecution by State and religious authorities.'[188] They were eventually forced to reconcile over their divisions and reunite as a result of Communist pressure.

Early Pentecostals displayed a tendency to oppose formal education; there was always a certain reservation among Pentecostals towards accepting pastors who were theologically trained and paid by the congregation. Instead, they inclined towards promoting lay ministry. A side effect of the low-level of theological training among early Pentecostals has been the theological fragmentation of the denomination. Internal conflicts often led to the spread of abnormal practices and false doctrines among the early Pentecostals.

The growth of Romanian Pentecostalism was accompanied by accounts of Spirit baptism and divine healings. The Pentecostal journals and the only recorded source abound with descriptions of spiritual manifestations and divine healings among the first Romanian Pentecostals. They often include name and circumstances of those baptized with the Holy Spirit, and cases of visions, exorcisms, prophetic messages, and divine healings. However,

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[186]Lascau, *Biserica in Asediu*, (White Wings: Streamwood, Illinois, 1992), 162-163.

[187]Sandru, *Biserica Penticostala*, 139. Pandrea, *A Historical and Theological Analysis*, 119.

[188]Ceuta, *The History*, 59.

renowned Pentecostal historian, Valeriu Andreiescu admits the subjectivity of the stories and points out 'it is not easy to confirm all these and separate the authentic from folk-lore.'[189]

Although Romanian Pentecostals believed their message was relevant to people and the larger society, they did not have a formal position or theological reflection on political involvement or socio-economic matters. However, locally at the village level, their way of living bore a strong testimony of the vitality of their relationship with God. Pentecostals believers contrasted so sharply and positively with the image of the drunken man in Orthodox parish. This often gave them credibility and respect in the eyes of those alienated by what they regarded as the corruptions of the social, political, and ecclesiastical establishment of their period. During the communist period, the Pentecostals were exposed to a system that was intent to eliminate myth and superstition that is religion and create a new socialist atheistic society. This did not mean that the churches were universally persecuted and sent underground. To a certain degree Pentecostals in Romania enjoyed a greater freedom that the Soviet Union, Bulgaria and Albania. Nevertheless, some Pentecostal individuals suffered martyrdom for criticism of the regime. Nevertheless, mostly the churches were allowed to exist, were discouraged from growing, had to avoid any criticism of the government or face imprisonment and martyrdom, and had to include in their message various portions of the official state doctrine.

During the regime's attempts to nationalize the country, major segments of the population (and of Romanian Pentecostals) were forced to move to towns and cities. Thus, Romanian Pentecostalism was about to enter a new phase of its development. From a rapid expansion to the rural areas of Romania, Pentecostalism penetrated the towns and cities so in the period from 1956 to 1976 Pentecostals in Romania grew from 54.000 to 100.000. Part of their success was to be associated with demographics – the Pentecostals opposed all forms of

[189]Andreiescu, *Istoria Miscarii Penticostale*, 309.

birth control and had larger families. A family with 10 children was not considered unusual among Pentecostals.

However, they also grew because they continued to appeal to people from the lower strata of society by providing an alternative place for the large segments of the rural population that was uprooted during the years when the regime industrialized the nation. People that were alienated by their forced move to the cities were soon able to find support in Pentecostal communities consisting of people like themselves.

The flexibility of the church services was another positive development of the Pentecostal services during the communist domination. Anyone in the church could contribute to the services through sermons, songs, poems and prayers.[190] The church carefully followed the progress made by the new converts and granted membership only to those who had count the costs and showed evidence of a transformed life. A support system existed among the members of the church that helped the new believers grow stronger in their faith. The church members were expected to exhibit integrity in all areas of life, sacrificially care for those in needs, actively contribute in church activities, and share their faith with the unbelievers.[191]

The Romanian Pentecostals did not consider evangelism one of the most important principles of faith and the proclamation of the gospel was to be initiated through the personal testimony of the new quality of life that had to be visible in the believers and their families. A further characteristic of Romanian Pentecostalism during communism had been the emphasis on miraculous healing. Medical care in government facilities was scarce and testimonies of healing among Pentecostal believers proved a powerful attraction especially, among the poor

[190]Kuzmic, *Why Romania has become the 'Korea of Europe'*, 30.

[191]Kuzmic, "Eastern Europe," in *Serving Our Generation: Evangelical Strategies for the Eighties*, Waldron Scott ed. (Colorado: World Evangelical Fellowship, 1980): 81.

and physically helpless. In addition, Pentecostals have used public events such as weddings and funerals to challenge non-believers to make a personal decision for Christ.

Nevertheless, the pressures of the communist regime have created a series of factors that have hindered the potential development of the Pentecostal Church in Romania. Because of communist policies, an acute lack of trained leaders was created among the Pentecostals. The shortage of pastors has forced the Pentecostal church to seek leadership from within the congregation. However, many of these leaders were not theologically trained and unable to perform proper pastoral duties. Besides, their preaching was not evaluated by the correct interpretation of the Scripture but rather by the enthusiasm it produced. Those leaders with the gift of prophecy had highest authority because they were regarded as speaking words of knowledge under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They could easily promote legalistic views and turn them into doctrines. In addition, lack of theological literature, coupled with lack of trained leadership often gave place to doctrinal errors. An example is how Pentecostals perceived the Baptism with the Holy Spirit as a sign of distinction (setting them apart as the true believers) rather than as an empowerment for the evangelization of the world. It has been associated with justification, and has been considered as an additional confirmation of forgiveness.[192]

Further, the possibility of making a significant impact on their society and influencing the state affairs was minimal. They lacked trained leadership, were usually marked by a weak organizational apparatus and had no public platform to articulate their convictions. Moreover, they were at disadvantage in promoting a dialogue with the Marxist regime because they have

[192]Petru Lascau, "The Pentecostal Church in Romania Today," in *The Voice of Truth* (Sept-oct. 1985): 4-6.

been deprived of higher Christian education, lack of theological publications, and no access to public means of communication. [193]

Further, as result of the restrictions and lack of systematic theological training, Pentecostals developed what Peter Kuzmic calls 'a speculative escapist theology'[194], which resulted in isolationism – the emphasis on personal piety, as opposed to engagement in the sinful world. Pentecostals advocated distinctiveness in relation to the world.[195] The concept had implication for values, and the personal/corporate world-view of the Romanian Pentecostals, resulting in a certain tension between church and the world. The Pentecostal churches cultivated a strong preaching tradition about traditional taboos and worldly desires that had to be kept out of the church. They also taught that believers should avoid the influence of non-believers and discouraged their members from aspiring to higher education. These attitudes and actions were often justified in terms of the cultural context and with the Bible.

This has created generational tensions between the older generation that entertained time conditioned forms of piety, coupled with legalism as the norm of Christian life, and lack of concern for socio-political issues, and the younger generation of leaders who wanted to address the challenges posed by Communist propaganda and preach the Gospel in relevant language and categories.

From their beginnings, the Romanian Pentecostals hardly had any period in their existence in which they could afford to let go the ' escapist' mentality. From their inception, they were regarded as recent incomers with shallow local roots, of foreign influence, which in

[193]Vasilica Croitor, *Rascumpararea Memoriei, Cultul Penticostal in Perioada Comunista*(Redemeeing the Memory, Penticostalism during Communism), (Succeed Publishing, Medgidia:2010), 22-23.

[194]Kuzmic, *The Communist Impact on the Church*, 73.

[195] Ibid. 73. Earl Pope points out how the Romanian Churches phrased Ceausescu's downfall as "good news this Christmas Day: The Antichrist is dead. For reasons Ceausescu never fully understood, the apocalyptic mythology of the ancient books of Daniel and Revelation were very popular with the Romanian Churches who had become disillusioned with his regime', *Protestantism in Romania.* 196.

its various fragmented forms poses a threat to the national and religious heritage. They were persecuted and discriminated against not just at the hands of state authorities, but also from the pressure of ancient, large churches – Orthodox, and sometimes Catholic. The present-day context has witnessed growing tensions between the Pentecostal and traditional churches; some of these tensions arise from differing perspectives on mission and proselytism. The numerous negative campaigns aimed at Pentecostal practices still makes them feel insecure. The situation allowed them little room to engage with the society and articulate their mission in the fullest way.

2.6. Transition from Communism and Post-Communism

2.6.1. The Socio-Political transition

Romania has gained a special status in the literature on east Central Europe's process of transition and transformation. The reason lies in the following events. First, was the Ceausescu regime: considered one of the harshest and most nationalistic of the communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe. Second, was the 'annus mirabilis' of 1989: unlike the other revolts in Eastern Europe, Romania's was a violent one and ended with the execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceausescu. Third is the transition: despite the bloody revolution, the political transition turned out to be reproducing the old administrative structures represented by the same party *apparatchiks* in power who apparently were able to reorganize itself in a general political association (the National Salvation Front), and later into a political party (the Party of Social Democracy of Romania). Consequently, the political parties did not devote to developing the kind of leadership for transition that would be able to seize the possibilities the revolution of 1989 opened up. Instead, the political strategies were nothing more than entourages for politically ambitious personalities. For those Romanians for whom communism has been such a devastating experience, the thought of its continuance on the Romanian soil has been abhorrent. For Romanian reformers and for outside observers, Romania has thus presented a special case, if not a 'special path' – a country under the shadow of an unfinished revolution. Seemingly, quite in line with the previous specifications, Romania's post-communist transition has been a tale of halting reforms, corruption, nationalism, ethnic tensions, and poverty. One of the biggest disappointments has been the failure of new economic dreams. People were expecting that after the communist 'inferno' and the purgatory of transition, to get to the paradise of a functional democratic capitalism. Yet, the transition has often been a bitter pill to swallow. The fall of communism has left

people without a framework for healthy economy that guarded against corruption and dubious privatization. What followed was not a free market, but a vacuum. The tales of corruption, organized crime, and failed attempts at privatization of industries are well known. Consequently, the current economic downturn has touched the lives of the ordinary people, their jobs, investments, pensions, and their future. The Romanian GNP sank 10 percent in 1990, with industrial production dropping almost 20 percent that year and exports down by 42 percent. The negative trend continued in 1991, with a 17 percent decline in economic productivity during the first seven months alone. With soaring inflation, creeping rent increases, and recurrent mass protests, the Daily Telegraph confidently predicted in October 1991 that Romania was spiralling into sustained anarchy and social and economic catastrophe. At the same time, Romania's poor health conditions were brought to light. International attention was especially focused particularly on Romanian orphanages containing large numbers of neglected children, many who were found to be suffering from acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) hepatitis and other serious illnesses. In the mid-1990s, Romania had one of the highest infant mortality rates in Europe. In addition, one harvested the fruits of the forty-year Marxist atheistic indoctrination efforts which has not brought forth the new socialist man, possessing all the divine attributes, but rather large groups of dropouts, alcoholics, drugs addicts, people with mental problems and people committing suicide.

In the process of replacement of Communist ideology by nationalist ideologies there has been an intense rediscovery of national-religious identity. The question of identity was ' 'unofficially forbidden' under the Communist regime. National awareness was covered by the official philosophy of 'proletarian internationalism', based on an assumption that real differences are not between different nations but between different classes. Moreover, even these were being wiped out on the way to a classless communist society. After 1989,

Romanians learn to discover that they are Romanians, East Europeans, Balkanics, etc. The positive aspect of this process has been the discovering one's own history and culture. The negative one has led to xenophobia and the tendency to create the image of an enemy and accompany it.

The problem with nationalism lies in the fact that it is not only a political and a cultural movement, but it is tied with the very identity of its followers. Not, which side are you on?' but, 'Who are you,' becomes the crucial question. The consequences of this question began to bubble to the surface as in March of 1990 a celebration of a Hungarian national holiday in the Romanian town of Tirgu Mures turned into a deadly clash between ethnic mobs. Attacks against Roma (Gypsies) in 1991 resulted in an exodus of Roma to Germany. However, in September 1992 the German government returned 43,000 refugees to Romania, more than half of them Roma. Ethnic minorities, which live mixed with the dominant population in all nation-states, are in fact, left with only two choices: either to emigrate, under varying degrees of duress, or to accept the status of second-class citizens, with varying degrees of deprivation of rights and repression. There is never any other choice.

After having described the present situation, the question raises about how the Romanian churches responded toward the new social, political, economic and cultural context. This project is concerned with the group of churches referred by the Romanian authorities as the Pentecostals known also as Evangelicals in order to distinguish them from the Reformation bodies but also called fundamentalists, sects, and more appropriately Neo-Protestants.

They arrived in Romania in the latter part of the 19th and early part of the 20th century. These groups enjoyed relative freedom from 1928 until 1937 before being repressed under Marshal Antonescu. However, after communist seized power, these groups were seen as posing very serious internal security problems, and great vacillation and perplexity always

existed regarding the wisest way to deal with them. They received official recognition under the control of communist regime in 1948 for a variety of reasons, and for this they were initially very grateful.

In spite of severe repression, the Pentecostals experienced phenomenal growth in the past forty years and now have over 2500 churches. There are serious statistical problems trying to determine their strength and estimates range from 500,000 to more than one million followers, making the Pentecostal movement in Romania the largest community in Europe of this nature outside of the former Soviet Union. These churches share a constellation of convictions and practices similar to those of the evangelical/charismatic movements in the USA.

The fall of communism and the alleged trial of Elena and Nicolae Ceausescu were followed on Christmas Day with the announcement, 'Good News this Christmas Day: the Antichrist is dead.' For reasons the communist leaders full comprehended, the apocalyptic mythology of the ancient books of Daniel and Revelation was very popular among the Romanian churches, which had become profoundly disillusioned with the regime. Following, the Pentecostals expressed great enthusiasm about the new era and recognized therein an acting of God as the Lord of history. Though the changes were dramatic and unpredictable, as Peter Kuzmic points out, ' 'followers of Christ all across Eastern Europe are aware that this is the work of the Lord of history who has seen their suffering and longing for freedom, answered their prayers and provided them with a special *kairos* period to call their nations back to God and to the spiritual foundations for a free and truly ' new society.' ' '[196] The revolution made it possible for the first time in forty years for the Pentecostals to articulate their own mission in the fullest and most complete way.

[196]Peter Kuzmic, "The Communist Impact on the Church in Eastern Europe," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 20 (1996): 60-76.

2.6.2. The Religious Transition

Romanian Orthodox theologian Ioan Bria states that there are many entry points into the contemporary religious situation of Romania.[197] Researchers often get lost into the contradictory fabric of the Romanian context. Thus, an analysis of the religious phenomenon in Romania is very complex and defies any brief and simple analysis. In assessing the development of religion in Romania since the fall of communism there are important questions that deserve our attention: Has the demise of communism in Romania resulted in a diminished role for the church in society? How do the changes taking place in the society affect the patterns of religious life, or traditional religiosity? Do religion and church remain integrating factors in this modernizing society? To what extent do individual orientations of the new system affect privatization of faith in the religious sphere? How do all these changes affect the theory and praxis of mission? As we seek the answers to these questions, we will point some missiological implications of the on-going changes in the Romanian religiousness and the importance of developing culturally relevant responses to the evolving challenges.

2.6.3. Nominal Religious Affinity survived Communism

If the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century were dominated by a view of general scepticism regarding the role and future place of religion on the social arena, the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century mark a spectacular and somewhat unexpected return of the religious phenomenon as an important factor in the public sphere. In recent decades, the role of religion has been seen as particularly influential, as a potential factor for social stability/ instability and as the motivation for individual

[197]Ion Bria, "Evangelism, Proselytism, and Religious Freedom in Romania: An Orthodox point of view", *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36/1(1999), 163.

conduct, indeed as an 'absolute necessity for democracy.'[198] The results of a decade of empirical studies conducted by Emory University throughout the world on religious sources and dimensions of human rights and democracy have confirmed that religion is a vital dimension of any democracy, as it offers the highest framework of reference and values, and gives content and coherence to the structure of human communities and cultures.[199] More specifically,

> Religion is an ineradicable condition of human persons and communities. Religion invariably provides universal sources and scales of values by which many persons and communities govern and measure themselves. Religion invariably provides the sources and scales of dignity and responsibility, shame and respect, restitution and reconciliation that democracy and human rights need to survive and to flourish. Religions must thus be seen as indispensable allies in the modern struggle for human rights and democratization. Their faith and works, their symbols and structures, must be adduced to give meaning and measure to the abstract claims of democratic and human-rights norms.[200]

The findings of the project, however, revealed a paradox regarding both the state of democracy and the actual contribution of religious groups:

> In the 1990s, the world seems to have entered something of a ' Dickensian era.' We have some of the best human-rights protection and democratic policies on the books but some of the worst humans-right abuses and autocratic policies on the ground. Religious groups – in all their theological, cultural, and ethnic diversity – have emerged as both leading villains and leading victims in this Dickensian drama[201]

Similar conclusions are confirmed by surveys conducted in recent years on the religious attitudes in Western Europe and in Central and Eastern Europe. They have found that while in the Western Europe on average three in four people are associated with a particular religion, in Eastern Europe over 80 percent of people identified themselves as religious.[202]

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[198]Christoph Von Schönborn, *Oamenii, Biserica, Tara. Crestinismul ca provocare sociala* (Bucuresti: Anastasia, 2000), 87.

[199] The findings of these projects were published in various journal publications and in a two volume, work entitled *Religious Human Rights in Global Perspective* (The Hague and London: Martinus Nijoff, 1996).

[200]John White Jr., "Introduction: Pluralism, Proselytism, and Nationalism in Eastern Europe," in*Journal of Ecumenical Studies* XXVI (1999), 1.

[201]Ibid., 2.

[202]*GfK Custom Research Worldwide* on behalf of Wall Street Journal Europe, Nuremberg/Frankfurt, 10 December, 2004.

Romania ranks among the highest in Europe in religious adherence, with an astonishing 99.96 percent of the population indicating they belong to a religious group, with the largest proportion affiliated to the Orthodox Church (86.8%), only 0.03 percent atheists and 0.01 percent indicating no religious affiliation.[203] The same survey reveals that the church leads among institutions in which Romanians place their trust, with 86 percent, followed by the army with 69 percent. However, the implications of this high religiosity for the everyday life of people and its effect on the concrete social, cultural, political and economic realities of the country reveal a disturbing and contradictory reality. Romania, the country with the highest ranking of religiosity in Europe, is also among the leading countries in terms of corruption, poverty and lack of trust.[204] This is how a Romanian journalist described in 2003 some of the Romanian characteristics:

> Defining psychological characteristics of the Romanian people include, for instance, great intolerance to other minority or ethnic groups, significant religious intolerance, great conservatism, unwillingness to participate in civic/social life and movements (unless remunerated!), hesitant to embark upon new trajectories in socio-political life, afraid of taking risks and making mistakes, lack of belief in their own strength and capabilities, uncertain about the future, waiting to join the EU but not involving themselves in the process of integration. Romanian society is portrayed as a traditional, conservative society still affected by a deeply embedded communist-era mentality, and traditional, rural beliefs[205]

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[203] According to the National Census conducted by the Gallup Organization, Metromidia Transilvania, 2002 and 2004. The other religious groups include: Protestants (6.8%), Catholics (5.6%) and other, mostly Muslim (0.4%).

[204]Silviu Rogobete, "Between Fundamentalism and Secularization: the Place and the Role ofReligion in Post-Communist Orthodox Romania," in *Religion and Democracy in Moldova*. Edited by S.Devetak, O. Sirbu and S. Rogobete (Maribor/ Chisinau: ISCOMET/ASER, 2005), 105-10. See also Tom Gallagher's impressive and detailed analysis of the complex causes and factors which undermined thedevelopment of a stable, independent, and autonomous democracy in Romania, *Theft of a Nation.Romania Since Communism* (London: C. Hearst & Co, 2004).

[205]Diana Evantia Barca, "Romanii, inamicii schimbarii," in *Evenimentul Zilei*, November 2,2003. A similar negative perception by the outside world media was revealed by a study produced by the Institute for the Communication Studies in the early part of 2004, after four months of close monitoringof the international media (US, UK, Germany, Russia). The conclusion is sombre: "Romania is a poorcountry where intolerance, corruption, abandoned children and drug trafficking rule. …Other negative issues international media discuss when reporting on Romania are organized crime, drug trafficking, religious discrimination…" In "Study: Romania Reflected Largely Negatively in World Media," [online], available at www.pressreview.ro, accessed 20.08.2004. See also Tony Judt, "Romania: Bottom ofthe Heap," in *The New York Review of Books*, 1 November 2001, translated into Romanian with various responses and reactions by Romanian analysts as Tony Judt, *Romania: la fundul gramezii. Polemici,controverse, pamflete*, (Iasi: Polirom, 2002).

The causes are many for such a state of affairs and for the lack of correlation between the predominant religiosity and the actual practice of life.[206] This discrepancy does not invalidate the thesis that religion has a potential for being a positive factor for social, economic, and political change. It shows, however, at least two things: first, that the religious 'potential' is not automatically translatable into the social realities; and, second, that it is not just any kind of religiosity that could contribute effectively to human flourishing and wellbeing.

[206]Rogobete ("Between Fundamentalism and Secularization," 116) offers these causes for the discrepancy, in the conclusion of his study: "[the] juxtaposition of identities (religious-denominational and ethnic-national) combined with the hatred and suspicion cultivated among the various religious groups are possible explanations both for the impersonal/unreflective appropriation and practice of religious life today and for the reluctance to accept other perspectives than one's own. Such attitudes can only lead to an absence of any kind of honest, constructive dialogue between various religious groups." Similarly, Inglehart and Baker have concluded their study on Romania from the empirical data generated by a decade of World Values Surveys regarding the values of trust, tolerance, wellbeing, and selfexpression that "Orthodox religious heritage and a Communist historical heritage both show negative impact on these values … with the ex-Communist variable making the greatest contribution by itself." Inglehart and Baker, "Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values," *American Sociological Review* 65 (2000), 22.

CHAPTER 3

MISSION AND PROSELYTISM: ORTHODOX AND PENTECOSTAL PERSPECTIVES ON SOTERIOLOGY, ECCLESIOLOGY, AND MISSION

Christopher Dawson, in *Dynamics of World History*, makes the remark that 'it is above all necessary to free the religious issue of all the extraneous motives that take their rise in unconscious social conflicts...[for] as long as those remain unsolved, religion is at the mercy of the blind forces of hatred and suspicion which may assume really pathological forms.' He thus calls for 'the purging of the mind from the lower motives which may contaminate our faith [and which allow] our religious attitude to be determined by forces that are not religious at all.'[1]

Starting from this observation by Dawson the present work attempts to apply his suggestion to a realm where religion has been responsible for more 'hatred and suspicion' than any other single area, that of proselytism. Attention will be given to the tensions, and conflicts surrounding the debate over Christian mission and proselytism in Romania, and to some roots of the problem.

The first part of the present section will focus on different perspectives on soteriology, ecclesiology, and missiology from Evangelical and Orthodox point of view, and how they influence the way mission is done. Having dealt with the above named issues and the way they relate and influence each other, the second part will offer an Evangelical proposal to mission in the Romanian Orthodox context.

[1]Christopher Dawson, "The Modern Dillema," *Dynamics of World History,* ed. by John J. Mulloy, (Peru, Illinois: Sherwood, Sugden & Co., 1957), 87.

3.1. The Challenge of Proselytism

In the following section I will focus on major challenge facing the Romanian churches, that of proselytism. I will be referring to the Established churches or historic churches (Orthodox or Catholic) versus Evangelical or Free churches. I will attempt answering questions such as, What is proselytism? Why is it an important issue in today' s East European context? Why the established Church is accusing the Evangelical Protestant Churches of proselytism? What are some of the roots of the problem?

Before we go any further, a short word of clarification is necessary. While there is no need to introduce and define the Orthodox Church, a working definition of what I mean by Evangelical movement is necessary. Due to the pluriformity of evangelical theologies, it is impossible to give a definition of the views that will represent everybody. However, some common features unite all the evangelicals into one broad movement. Two major denominators of evangelicals are that they are ' 'Bible people' ' and they are ' 'gospel people.' '[2] As Bible people, they stress the authority of the Scripture above any other authority in matters of faith and Christian conduct. As gospel people they stress that the cross of Christ is the heart of the gospel emphasizing the substitutionary aspect of the atonement; the necessity of personal conversion as a response to Christ's work on the cross; that the impact of the gospel should be visible in the life of believers, and that the gospel should be shared with all people through evangelism.[3] The central tenets of evangelicalism in Romania bind together the Brethren Church, the Pentecostal Church, the Baptist Church, and the Evangelical Free Church (Charismatic).

[2]Derek J. Tidball, "*Who are the Evangelicals? Tracing The Roots of Today's Movement*," (Marshal Pickering, HarperCollins: London, 1994), p.12.

[3]Ibid., 12.

Derived from the Latin *proselytus* and the Greek, *proselutos,* the proselyte is described as ' 'one who comes over.' '[4] It is a Septuagintal term and it was originally used to describe non-Israelites living in Israel and the one who converted to Judaism.[5] In the Christian context, the term is ' 'a description of highly motivated, high profile, and well-organized evangelism' ' and in the context of mission, the term refers to dishonest manner in the effort to persuade others.[6] The first negative use of the word comes from the 18th century writers, who attributed it to those who claimed to have an exclusive possession of the truth and who aggressively tried to win converts to a cause or ideology. It refers to the abuse of ' 'people's freedom and the distortion of the gospel of grace by means of coercion, deception, manipulation, and exploitation.' '[7] This type of recruitment of members has been an important issue of ecumenically inclined Protestants, Orthodox, and Roman Catholics leaders for over three decades.

3.1.1. Evangelical Protestants: Proselytism in the name of Universalism

Miroslav Volf states that 'one needs not to be an expert in Eastern European Christianity to know that at the very centre of religious turmoil are the issues of mission and proselytism,'[8] Also, the large amount of articles written on this subject proves that proselytism is an important issue on the missiological agenda of Central and Eastern Europe. According to Volf, the problem is that what 'Protestants (of Evangelical Church) consider to be legitimate *mission* Catholics and Orthodox (Established Churches) consider to be

[4]Walter Riggans, "Proselytism," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions,* ed. A. Scott Moreau (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 2000): 794.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Ibid.

[8] Miroslav Volf, "Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond: 'Mission and Proselytism in Eastern Europe," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20/1 (1996): 26.

illegitimate and culturally damaging proselytism.'[9] The Orthodox consider it proselytism for Evangelical Protestants 'to proclaim the Gospel to those whose only contact with the Orthodox Church may have been baptism, while Evangelicals view any with an inactive faith in need of evangelization.'[10] Proselytism is usually described as an attempt to convert in a particularly negative and unfair way, a believer from one faith to another.[11] As Hill rightly points out, 'deliberately choosing the least attractive characteristics of one faith and contrasting the resulting negative portrayal of another faith is not in keeping with Christian charity or civility'.[12]

The Geneva-based World Council of Churches, grouping inter *alia* the largest Orthodox, Lutheran, and Anglican communities, defined proselytism in 1961 as 'a corruption of Christian witness,' which used 'cajolery, bribery, undue pressure, or intimidation, subtly or openly, to bring about seeming conversion.'[13] Similarly, the Roman Catholic Church defined proselytism after Vatican II as 'a manner or behaving contrary to the Spirit of the Gospel, which makes use of dishonest methods to attract [persons] to a community – for example, by exploiting their ignorance and poverty.'[14]

Eastern Orthodox Churches define proselytism as referring to 'interchurch relations between non-Orthodox and Orthodox churches and it is based on their self-understanding as churches that exercise their ecclesiastical authority within the geographic domain of the people, or nation, whose evangelization was and continues to be the responsibility of the

[9]Volf, 26.

[10]Kent R. Hill, "Christian Mission, Proselytism and Religious Liberty: A Protestant Appeal for Christian Tolerance and Unity," *Religion, State & Society*, 25/4 (1997): 323.

[11]Ibid., 323-324.

[12]Ibid., 324.

[13]Ibid.

[14] Jonathan Luxmoore and Jolanta Babiuc –Luxmoore, "New Myths for Old: Proselytism and Transition in Post-Communist Europe," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36/1-2 (1999): 43 –65.

national church.'[15] Each Orthodox Church is 'autocephalous, or self-governing, within its canonical territory.'[16] This concept of canonical territory recalls the primary way of evangelization done by an apostle-missionary by whom a whole nation was Christianized and denotes the inseparable identity of 'people, culture, land, and church.'[17] It is due to this firmly ethnic identity of people and church, that Orthodox describe as illegitimate any attempt to convert the members of an Orthodox Church away from Orthodoxy.[18] In this context proselytism is defined as 'the active or passive encouraging of members of a given ethnic or national group to join a religion, denomination, or sect that is not historically rooted in that ethnic group or nationality.'[19] Kerr points out that the orthodox reaction toward proselytism is rooted in their experience of being the object of Catholic and Protestant strategies of conversion.[20] Analyzing the situation in Eastern Europe, as seen by the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches, Miroslav Volf observes, 'Foreign missionaries, equipped with the latest fishing gear, are eagerly fishing for poor souls in the Orthodox pond, left partly unattended during decades of Communist rule.'[21]

In a 1993 study, the Centre for Civil Society in Seattle observed that approximately 760 western religious groups, churches, and parachurch organizations were at work in former communist nations of Europe. There were 200 to 350 different groups in the Commonwealth

[15]David A. Kerr "Christian Understandings of Proselytism," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 23/1 (1999): 9.

[16]Ibid., 9.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Ibid.

[19]Ibid.

[20]Ibid.

[21] Volf, *Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond*, 26.

of Independent States, 120 to 200 in Romania alone.[22] At the conference of the European Churches back in 1992, Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and all Russia expressed his concern in these words:

> We thought with certitude that after we received freedom, the solidarity of our Christian brothers in the West would help us to organize and restore our witness to Christ in our country, and our catechetical and missionary work in order to enlighten those educated in atheism and still ignoring Christ. And this would be in the spirit of manifestation of the ' 'joint witness' ' to Christ excluding and condemning any proselytism. And the long-endured [anti-religious system] and desired changes for the best came. The atheist totalitarian system of prohibiting the free witness to Christ broke down. And what happened? When the territories of central and eastern Europe were opened for the public missionary endeavour and evangelism, the people' s rooted in millennial Orthodox traditions became objects of proselytism for numerous zealots calling themselves missionaries and preachers who came from outside to the new markets. We had a different idea about the joint Christian witness and the brotherly solidarity in strengthening our preaching of Christ and promoting cooperation in the ecumenical community in conditions of freedom…. Of course our people will also survive this invasion, as it survived even worse times of persecution and attacks from atheist propaganda. We withstood at that time, we shall withstand also now, since God was with us at that time and will be with us now.' '[23]

The Metropolitan Daniel Ciobotea stated, 'The intensification of religious proselytism in Romania, conducted by cults and associations financially and morally sustained by religious organizations in the West, is generating growing discontent,'[24] Further, he stated:

> In this tense confrontation, it is interesting and inevitably noticeable that a relation is developing between proselytism and democracy. Whereas for some adepts and supporters of religious proselytism, especially Americans, religious freedom and democracy are invoked as a screen and support for proselytism, for many Romanians and other Europeans proselytism and the religious hate-mongering it generates are not a sign of democracy but a danger to democracy…. Representatives of cults and politicians have inevitably to distinguish between religious freedom as the peaceful confession and testimony, with respect for others, of the faith of a person or collectivity, and provocative, aggressive religious proselytism which employs every means (including financial, economic, psychological, and political pressure) to convert and buy souls, [thereby] becoming sort of ideological and religious colonialism instituted on souls that cannot protect themselves.[25]

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[22]Robert C. Lodwick, "Proselytism Damages Church Relations," in *Remembering the Future: The Challenges to the Churches of Europe,* (New York: Friendship Press, 1995): 73.

23Ibid.

24Luxmoore, 57.

[25]Luxmoore, 57.

Ioan Bria while attempting to offer a description of post-communist Romania used words such as**,** 'a religious vacuum, a spiritual desert, and a fertile field for mission.'[26] Further, he states, 'this picture became the alibi of the Western evangelists, Eastern religious movements, and missionary agencies coming to Romania to fill the gap and conquer a new religious public.'[27] New teachers came proclaiming that one' s personal faith has nothing to do with national religion or the established church, and have encouraged the 'privatization of religion and deconstruction of Orthodox illusions concerning an established church.'[28]

Due to various reasons, the task of the Evangelical Protestant Churches to ethnic Romanians became a serious issue. One of the reasons shown by Bria is the confusion between local, recognized neo-Protestants communities and the foreign missionary groups, sects, and religious groups that came with 'the intention of evangelizing Romania with no respect for the Christian tradition of the country.'[29] Evangelical Protestants are accused by the Orthodox of taking for granted that communist Romania was a '*tabula rasa,*' a religious less arena and in the name of religious freedom facilitated the presence and action in Romania of all sorts of religious groups.'[30] Making use of the religious freedom (granted by the article 29 of the Constitution) and the 'return of religious,' foreign groups presented 'the most intolerable form of counter-witness against the local Orthodox communities.'[31]

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[26]Bria, "Evangelism, Proselytism, and Religious Freedom in Romania: An Orthodox Point of View," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 36/1-2 (1999): 163-183.

[27]Ibid.

[28]Ibid., 163 – 183.

[29]Ibid., 175.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid, 175.

On the other hand, Orthodox have defined proselytism so broadly that any missionary or evangelistic activity undertaken by non-Orthodox is labeled illegitimate, and persons engaging in such activities are often described as thieves.

One of the key issues involved here is the definition of proselytism. Evangelicals understand that those who have an active, living faith in Jesus Christ should not be treated as persons to be evangelized. They agree that evangelization which is coercive, deceptive, or manipulative should be labeled as proselytism. On the other hand, disagreement comes when evangelization and proselytism are likened. Not all-evangelistic activity can and should be labeled as proselytism; space must be left for legitimate evangelistic activity efforts toward individuals in other religious communities.[32] Following Robeck, some observations may be made in this regard:

First, definitions and applications of the term 'proselytism' differ. Second, those who use the term have defined it for evangelicals and not with the evangelicals. Third, when a term is defined for another group and then unilaterally applied to that group, 'the issue becomes one of ecclesial oppression.'[33] Fourth, since those who invoke against younger churches were themselves engaged in proselytism, the older churches may face the risk of self-incrimination. Fifth, it would be inappropriate to say that evangelical have not taken a stand concerning the issue of proselytism, for they have publicly recognized its harms.[34]

It is that kind of proselytism that is coercive, deceptive, or manipulative within the Evangelical Protestant churches that cause the most problems in the Romanian context.

[32]Cecil M. Robeck, "Mission and the Issue of Proselytism," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20 (January 1996): 6-7.

[33]Ibid., 7.

[34]Ibid.

3.1.2. Theological Factors at the center of the debate on Proselytism

Miroslav Volf points out that the differences in theology play a secondary role in the debate around the named missiological challenges. They are as follows:

First, there are *differing perspectives on the relation between church and culture.*[35] The Established churches view their role as the preservers of the Orthodox or Catholic character of their cultures and peoples, who need to be released from 'Communist and negative Western Influences.'[36] On the other hand, the Pentecostals define their call as addressing individuals, which need to be released from the influence of traditional culture. They see the Gospel in opposition to the existing culture.[37]

Second, there are *differing perspectives on the relation between church and state.* Established churches have not admitted all the implications of democracy as a political system such as 'cultural pluralism and a free market of goods and ideas,' and cannot accept the idea of being 'one among many players in the social game.'[38]

Pentecostal Christians here are of two kinds. Those rooted in traditions welcome democracy because it brings freedom but they want it without pluralism and competition. Even if they are on the opposite sides of specific issues, their understanding of the church/state relations is the same with the established churches.[39] Those Pentecostals influenced by Western ideas view plurality as 'a good that need to be protected, and

[35]Volf. *Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond*, 27.

[36]Ibid.

[37]Ibid.

[38]Ibid.

[39]Ibid.

competition of ideas as a value to be cherished.' Their understanding of the state/church relations is different from that of the established churches.[40]

Third, there are *differing perspectives of what a Christian is.* Established churches are more like 'mothers who embrace all children born to them – that is, all those who were baptized,' the evangelical groups 'are like stern fathers, and accept only those who behave – who actively believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord and act in accordance to their belief…therefore all those who do not behave – believe and act – are legitimate objects of evangelization.'[41]

Fourth, *there are different perspectives on the church.* For the established churches, the church is one, and it is visible. In the case of more than one church, or bodies that call themselves church, this is a serious problems, which has to be resolved by ecumenical efforts (in the case of those conservative all other are supposed to join the one true church that has existed through the centuries).[42] For Pentecostals, the church that is one is invisible. There are many visible churches; 'some are bad and ought to be left, others are good and can be joined if they suit one's personality, interests, and needs.'[43]

In terms of missiological and political approaches, Ioan Bria outlines several discrepancies between the Pentecostals and Orthodox. First, Pentecostals believe in an individual experience of Christians, in a universal gospel without boundaries. The issue here is the nature of mission and not its limits, whether internal or external. Hence, there is no concern for 'canonical territory' or existing local churches.[44] Orthodox reaction to such actions is to deny the validity of baptism administered in the Pentecostal churches. Another

[40]Volf, *Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond*, 27.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Bria, *Evangelism, Proselytism, and Religious Freedom in Romania*, 175.

difference lies in the definition of mission. Pentecostals conceive the church more as a movement than as an institution and are not open to various definitions of mission, including the Orthodox one. The established church views personal conversion as an act of incorporation into an ecclesial, liturgical community.[45] Orthodox response has been to disregard the Pentecostal congregations as visible expressions of the people of God and have been labelled as being 'outside the church.' In conclusion, Bria states, 'For the sake of common Christian witness and mutual understanding the dialogue with Evangelical Protestants must be taken seriously.'[46]

From all the above-presented factors influencing the missiological praxis in the Romanian context, I will concentrate in my present work on three key theological aspects of soteriology, ecclesiology, and missiology. More than anything, it is the different theological understanding of these key concepts, which determines the way mission is being practiced by Orthodox and Evangelicals in the Eastern European context.

3.2. Soteriology: Orthodox & Evangelical Perspectives

We will turn now to consider the Orthodox and Evangelical Protestant teaching about human nature and salvation.

3.2.1. Orthodox Soteriology

For the Orthodox Church, salvation is the act in which God, through the incarnation, death, and the resurrection of His Son, brought the humankind back to the personal communion with him, and gave to them the germ of a new and eternal life (1 John 5:11).[47]

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[45]Bria, *Evangelism, Proselytism, and Religious Freedom in Romania*, 175.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Ioan Bria, "Mantuirea," *Dictionar de Teologie Ortodoxa,* (Editura Institutului Biblic si de Misiune al ROC: Bucuresti, 1994): 261.

Relating to the Church Fathers, Bria stresses that the salvation was initiated by the divine, including not only the healing of the humankind and its restoration to the previous state, but also the outpouring of the new life, which is in God.[48] Salvation is including the entire humankind and the world, starting with God and carried out by God for humanity. Orthodox theology rejects the theory that the main purpose of Christ's mission was to reconcile humanity with God by reconciling God's love for man with God's justice hurt by man's disobedience.[49]

3.2.2. The Fall of Humankind

In relation to the fall of the humankind, Eastern Orthodox Christianity agrees that humankind lost its original deathlessness and holiness and because of the disobedience of the first humans, disease, corruption and death came. Deathlessness and holiness refers to the likeness of God lost in the fall, thus, for Orthodoxy, godly life is necessary in order to recover the lost likeness.[50]

Orthodox do not teach that humankind inherited the guilt of Adam' s sin, but that it was the consequences of the sin of our first parents (the human inheritance of disease and death) that passed on to the human race. Thus, all human beings are responsible for their own sins. However, in spite of having lost the likeness of God in the fall, humans still withhold certain aspects of the image of God, which includes reason and a degree of freedom to refuse sin.[51] Orthodox Christians do not mean by this that human can overcome sin by themselves,

[48]Bria, *Mantuirea*, 261.

[49]Ibid.

[50]Ibid., 49.

[51]Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin Books: Middlesex, England, 1993), 221-222.

but the choice to avoid sin is possible due to the 'image' of God in us, which is in itself a kind of grace, a power or ability given to every human present since our birth.[52]

3.2.3. The Position of the Church Fathers on Salvation

The position of the Church Fathers on salvation during the first centuries is expressed as follows: 'the work of salvation consists of three stages, which Christ successively reestablished: being, wellbeing, and eternal being. The first was established by the Incarnation, the second by the earthly life of Christ which culminated on the Cross, and the third by his resurrection.'[53] In the Romanian Orthodox understanding of salvation there is a strong connection between Incarnation and Salvation. According to Staniloae, incarnation is both 'a kenosis of the divinity and a divinization of humanity.'[54] Moreover, each of the acts of Christ represents 'a spiritualizing of the humanity which he assumed and this implies a growth of this humanity in freedom and authenticity.'[55]

The Orthodox understanding of salvation is based on the patristic teaching about the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, and of man in the 'image of God' having as final purpose the achievement of *theosis,* and on the teaching of 'the frustration of the divine economy by man' s fall.'[56] Eastern Orthodox churches agree that human beings were made in the image of God, with discernment and freedom, and in the likeness of God, with sanctity and deathlessness.[57]

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[52]Bria, *Mantuirea*, 50.

[53]Ware, 191.

[54] Dumitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church,* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980) 125-126.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ted A. Campbell, *Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction,* (John Knox Press: Louisville Kentucky, 1996) 47.

[57] Ibid., 48.

In their writings Orthodox theologians make use of these terms to distinguish that which was lost as a result of the mankind' s fall into sin (the likeness of God) from that which humanity retain after the fall (the image of God).[58] Reason, holiness, deathlessness, and liberty to do what God requires, described the original state of humankind. Reason and freedom constitute the image of God still present in humankind after the fall; holiness and deathlessness constitute the likeness of God absent because of the fall.[59] Each of the four terms (holiness, deathlessness, reason and freedom) is an attribute of God and taken together describe 'godliness,' the goal toward which the humankind should now strive.[60]

3.2.4. Eastern Orthodox Teachings on Theosis

For Eastern Orthodox theology, the understanding of the means by which fallen people undergo the process of salvation is of primary importance. The Orthodox theologians make use of the Greek word *theosis* (deification) to refer both to humanity's primary call and its redemption.[61] The aim of human being existence is 'deification,' the recovery of the original status of humanity to God.[62]

Deification does not mean that people become gods; the Orthodox the same as the Evangelicals, affirm that God is unique and transcendent. The doctrine of theosis refers to the deification of humanity through free communion with God. It implies the final destiny for which God created the man, and 'the process of acquiring godly characteristics, gaining

[58]Campbell, *Christian Confessions: A Historical Introduction,* 48.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid.

[61]Don Fairbairn, "Salvation as Theosis: The Teaching of Eastern Orthodox," in *Themelios*, vol.23/3 (June 1998): 42.

[62]Ibid.

immortality and incorruptibility, and experiencing communion with God.'[63] Ware points out that for Orthodox deification speaks of salvation and redemption[64] being as stressed by Eliade an expression of an impressive originality.[65]

According to Daniel Clendenin, the process of deification (theosis) includes three factors: (1) the mystical union with God having as purpose the transformation of the believers; 2) movement from death, mortality, and degradation toward life, immortality, and integrity; and 3) the ascent from the image of God to the likeness of God.[66]

The Orthodox regards deification as being, primarily, the result of the Holy Spirit's activity in people. The action of the Holy Spirit in granting deification to people is a function of God's grace. Leonid Ouspensky, as quoted by Fairbairn adds:

> Orthodox theology insists on the uncreated character of grace and defines it as natural processions, as the energy characteristic of the common nature of the three divine persons. By these energies, man surpasses the limits of the creature and becomes a ' partaker of the divine nature'.[67]

Thus, it is through the transmission of God's divine grace, by giving us those aspects of himself, which he chooses to share with people that deification occurs.[68] The means by which humans participate in the divine energies are the sacraments and the human efforts. In this sense Coniaris writes, ' 'From the Church, Christ reaches out to us with the Sacraments to bring to us His grace and love. Every sacrament puts us in touch with Christ and applies to us

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[63] Vasile, A. Talos, "Religious Pluralism in the Romanian Context," *Religion in Eastern Europe* vol. 25/4 (August 1998): 157.

[64]Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Penguin Books, 1993), 231.

[65]Mircea Eliade, *Istoria Credintelor si Ideilor Religioase (*Bucuresti: Editura Stiintifica is Enciclopedica, 1999), 509.

[66]Daniel Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 157.

[67]Fairbairn, *Salvation as Theosis*, 43.

[68]The assumption that grace is the energies of God that can be transmitted to the people and which led to their deification contrast with The Evangelical understanding. When Evangelical use the word grace they refer to the attitude of God toward people; God grants salvation as a gift to those who don't deserve it. The Evangelical understanding of grace is concerned with forgiveness, whereas the Orthodox concept of grace has to do more with power or energy. Ibid., 42.

the power of the Cross and Resurrection. St. Leo the Great said, 'He who was visible as our Redeemer has now passed into the Sacraments.' ...The Sacraments are the way to *theosis.*'[69]

The emphasis on the sacraments points out two principles. First, from an Orthodox perspective, the church alone is capable of actualize 'the saving power, through the inter-human sensibility achieved by the Holy Spirit. Secondly, the Orthodox teaching that the church is a sacramental community[70] emphasizes that there is no other possibility of divine-human dialogue for deification outside the sacramental structure of the church.'[71]

Furthermore, according to Ware, the sacraments are personal and are the means by which the individuals experiments God's grace.[72] Conform to the Orthodox teaching, God's esteem for human freedom made Him create humankind only with the possibility of communion with him, rather than force it enter a fellowship they did not want. In like manner, deification of people by God is possible only with their permission.[73]

In the light of these statements, it emerges that deification is both the result of Holy Spirit's participation, achieved by means of the church sacraments, as well as of human effort. For Orthodox, there is no division involving grace and works, hence the question of whether the salvation is by faith, or works is not crucial.

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[69]It is the divine grace that enables people to walk the road of *theosis,* grace which is being transmitted and materialized in the sacraments of baptism, penance and the Eucharist explained as one of the most important sacraments. Anthony M. Coniaris, *Introducing the Orthodox Church* (Minneapolis: Light and Life Publishing Company, 1982), 129-135.

[70] The Orthodox concept of church and deification depend closely on each other and the Orthodox stress on the church as the vehicle of salvation grows out of this association of ideas. Fairbairns, *Salvation as theosis,* 44.

[71] Talos, *Religious Pluralism*, 28.

[72]Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 283.

[73]Eastern theology place accent more on the human freedom than on God's sovereignty. Fairbairn, *Salvation as Theosis* 45.

Eastern Christianity describes grace not as an expression of the undeserved nature of salvation, but as the life of God that can be transmitted to the people.[74] Orthodox theology places the accent on the process of becoming united with God through deification.[75]

According to Orthodox teaching, Salvation and *theosis* are synonymous and include an ongoing process. One can attain salvation (*theosis*) by believing, praying, and obeying the divine commandments and receiving of divine grace through sacraments. Human works are fundamental for deification, yet they must flow out of love. For the attaining of salvation, the believer must persevere in the process of deification because God will take in consideration only the state the believer has when leaving this life. The Church can help by praying for those who died in faith to be transferred from hell into heaven, but only before the final judgement.[76]

There are some positive implications of this doctrine concerning mission. First, for the Orthodoxy the glory of God is the goal of mission, having as practical focus the worship. Second, in a period of devaluation of humankind, Orthodoxy promotes a high anthropological view. Third, the fact that deification of humankind was realized through the incarnation of Christ and *theosis* can be achieved only by union with Christ, special attention was given to the uniqueness of Jesus' Christ person and work. Forth, due to the unceasing need of grace and mercy in the process of deification, the believer develops a sense of respect and meekness before God. Fifth, since *theosis* is achieved only within the church, Orthodox believers pay a high respect to the church and their leaders.[77] Sixth, the Orthodox accent on the importance of the human response toward God's grace, which rejects the salvation by

[74]Fairbairn, *Salvation as Theosis,* 45.

[75]Orthodox theology doesn't emphasize that aspect of salvation which evangelicals do: the change that takes place in a person's statue before God when he begins to believe.

[76]Nicolae Corneanu, *Invatatura de Credinta Crestina Orthodoxa* (Bucuresti: Ed. IBM al BOR, 1992), 161-167.

[77]Talos, *Religious Pluralism*, 30-31.

works, is a powerful antidote against any 'antinomian tendency that might result from a (distorted) juridical understanding of salvation.'[78]

As we will see in the subsequent chapters, there are differences between Orthodox and Evangelical view on salvation. Orthodox understanding of salvation focuses on factors related to the process of sanctification (becoming Christ-like), while evangelicals focus mainly on elements related to justification.[79]

3.3. Evangelical View of Salvation

No issue is more important to Evangelicals than the doctrine of salvation. At the heart of evangelicalism is the conviction that salvation is a gift of God's grace that comes to sinners through their faith in Christ. Salvation cannot be earned or merited; it must be received by faith, apart from human works. Accordingly, being baptized or holding church membership does not really make somebody a believer. Each person needs to repent and trust in Christ. This is what the Evangelicals mean by being saved or born again, and therefore they invite others to receive Christ and experience conversion by the power of the Holy Spirit.[80]

Evangelicals agree in the teaching that the first human beings fell from their original statue of holiness and that all subsequent human beings lack any natural aspiration to obey God and to be saved.[81] The human beings in their natural state, apart from God's grace, have no ability to do what God requires and therefore all stand in the need of God's grace.[82]

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[78]Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity*, 158.

[79] The focus is on God's action of declaring a person righteous and acceptable before himself, because of the righteousness of Christ. Fairbairn, *Salvation as Theosis,* 46.

[80] Donald Bloesch, "*Essentials of Evangelical Theology: God, Authority, and Salvation,"* vol.1 (New York: Harper and Row, 1978), 181-252.

[81]Campbell, *Christian Confessions*, 224.

[82]Ibid., 225.

Almost all Evangelicals emphasize the lack of any native goodness and therefore our salvation must rely on God's grace. According to the prior statement, free will is not a natural ability but a gift of grace.[83]

3.3.1. Evangelical understanding of Repentance and Salvation

Another subject of importance for Evangelicals deals with the manner in which salvation becomes effective for human beings. Evangelicals agree in teaching that a crisis of awakening or repentance generally precedes conversion. During the 1600s and 1700s, the topic discussed in the Evangelical theological systems was described as the *ordo salutis*, the order, or way of salvation; two general patterns emerged for describing the way of salvation. The Calvinistic pattern followed Romans 8:30,[84] and another pattern different in nuance, appeared in the 1700s in the work of John Wesley.[85]

In this section, we shall deal with the first stage of salvation, which is repentance. For Evangelicals repentance was an important process understood as being a kind of crisis event in the life of a human being by which his or her eyes were suddenly opened to see the lostness of his/her soul.[86] In the Evangelical revival meetings, the significance of repentance

[83]Fairbairn, *Salvation as Theosis,*48.

[84] This pattern saw the stages of salvation as election, "calling," justification, sanctification, and glorification. The whole process was understood as being grounded in God's sovereign work of election and it was understood as a dangerous road on which the believer needed the aid of Scripture, other Christians, and the means of grace provided by the church. John Leith, "*Creeds of the Churches: A Reader in Christian Doctrine from the Bible to the Present,* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982,) 361-362.

[85] Conform to this pattern, the way of salvation was explained as having three stages, each marked by grace: "prevenient grace," in which the heart is prepared by grace and is led to repentance; "justifying grace" in which a person believes, her sin is forgiven, and she is given an assurance of forgiveness; and "sanctifying grace" in which a believer progressively grows in holiness toward the goal of "entire sanctification," complete love for God. Ibid.

[86]Methodist spoke of repentance as a distinct and terrifying experience of "awakening; Calvinist understood sincere, heartfelt repentance to be part of God's vocation or calling of an individual, it was a sign that grace was active in the life of the individual. Leith, 361-364.

was symbolized by the ' 'mourners' bench,' the sinner approached the altar by way of the mourners bench.

During the 1800s, the period of repentance could last from days to years, in which the sinner was not pressured to convert because repentance was the mean by which God would bring somebody to conversion.[87]

During the twentieth century a radical change occurred among the Evangelicals, that is the consistent loss of the centrality of the experience of repentance.[88] Some Evangelical have pointed out the loss of the centrality of repentance for salvation and have called to a restoration of the understanding of repentance as a vital part of Evangelical life.[89]

3.3.2. Evangelicals and Justification by Faith

Another issue of importance for Evangelicals is that of justification by faith. Evangelicals agree that believers are justified by faith in an experience in which they trust Christ, and as a result, they are assured of the forgiveness of sin and born again in Christ.[90]

The doctrine of justification by faith alone was a hallmark of Protestant Reformation;[91] Evangelicals follow also the wording of Reformation statements on

[87]Campbell, *Christian Confessions*, 230.

[88] One reason may be the liberal tendency to minimize sinfulness by emphasizing the positive side of human ability, another, is the tendency to urge unsaved persons to an immediate experience of conversion leaving no room for the extended period of conversion as in the earlier Evangelicalism. Ibid.

[89]Ibid.

[90]Campbell, *Christian Confessions*, 231.

[91]Reformation churches express this doctrine in their confessions, catechisms, and Articles of Religion. Ibid., 232.

justification by faith. However, there are some points at which the Evangelical understanding by faith differs from that of the Reformation churches.[92]

For Evangelical Christians, 'justification' (forgiveness of sins) is thought of happening at the same moment as 'regeneration,' which denotes the 'new birth' in Christ. Justification is the end of the old sinful self, regeneration is the beginning of the new self in Christ, and at the same moment the one ends, the other begins.[93]

[92] The first point of difference is the Evangelical understanding of faith not only as a trust in Christ but as a personal choice to renounce trust in all other things and place one's trust in Christ alone. The second point of difference was that Evangelicals expected a divinely given assurance of forgiveness to accompany the experience. Ibid., 232.

[93]Ibid.

3.4. Ecclesiology: Orthodox & Evangelical Perspectives

3.4.1. Eastern Orthodox Ecclessiology

The Church, as explained by Staniloae, is a communion of the faithful realized in Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit. It is communion and profound spirituality at the same time. And because of this, it is life. It is the communion in the Holy Spirit. The very existence of the Church is an effect, continually renewed, of action of the Holy Spirit in creating communion.[94] In addition, the church is defined as an entity formed from all those who believe in Christ, a fellowship and a community formed of people, which are in strong connection with Him.[95] Through the Incarnation, Crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension, Christ the Saviour laid the basis of the Church. Objectively but virtually, the Church comes to being through the resurrection and through the cross. The Son of God became human so that through his body would extend the salvation as godly life in us. It is this godly life extended through Christ to the humanity that constitutes the Church.[96] The pouring of the Holy Spirit or the Pentecost is the act of the extension of the work of salvation into the humanity. The Holy Spirit descended giving birth to the Church as the visible community of the people with God.[97] For the Orthodox, the Church is considered, as the body founded by God, constituted of those who have accepted and those who accept the baptism of faith.[98] Emphasis is put on the divine nature of the foundation, on the members, on the subject of faith, on the time of acceptance of faith, on the means through which faith is obtained, and on the way the faith is

[94]Dumitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church, 2*17-218.

[95]Ibid., 218.

[96] Dumitru Staniloae, *Teologia Dogmatica Orthodoxa, vol. II,* (Bucuresti, Editura Institutului Biblic is de Misiune al Bisericii Orthodoxe Romane, 1978), p. 196 and ff.

[97]Ibid.

[98]R. Newton Flew, "*The Nature of the Church,"* (Harper & Brothers: New York, 1952), 41-42.

kept. From here, we can outline the following: The Church is divinely founded, is composed of living individuals, and thus has a human character, it is and must be one, and her very foundation is faith in Christ demonstrated through love.[99]

3.4.2. Orthodox and the Oneness of the Church

From the Orthodox perspective, the Church is one; there is no ' either/ or between the one and the many. Orthodox ecclesiology operates with a plurality in unity and unity in plurality. For the Orthodox the Church is catholic and local, invisible and visible, one and many[100], the continuous presence of the Redeemer in the world.[101] In this sense, Orthodoxy claims its continuity with the apostolic faith of the New Testament, that it alone is the true visible church, and that there is no salvation outside the Orthodox Church.[102]

Their claim to be the true church is not based on their merits but on God's grace. In all humility, they are convinced that 'they have received a precious and unique gift from God; and if they pretended to men that they did not possess this gift, they would be guilty of an act of betrayal in the sight of heaven.'[103]

[99]Flew, 42.

[100]George Dragas, "Orthodox Ecclesiology in Outline," [Online]. Available at http://orthodoxinfo.com/general/dragas.htm. Accessed 30 May 2001.

[101]Patrick Barnes, "The Church Is Visible and One: A Critique of Protestant Ecclesiology," [online]. Available at http:// orthodoxinfo.com. Accessed 30 May 2001.

[102]Daniel B. Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Christianity: A Western Perspective*(Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1994), 30.

[103]Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 250-51.

3.4.3. The Church of the Triune God

In order to understand what the Orthodox mean by unity in multiplicity we have to deal with the Orthodox understanding of the nature of the Church. The nature of the church is to be understood as the Church of the Triune God; trinity being the supreme basis and source of the Church's existence. Accordingly, the Church is in the image and God's likeness. Being in the image of the Trinity reveals its nature, being in God reflects on earth God' s unity in Trinity.[104]

The starting point in understanding the nature of the church is the grace of the trinity. According to Staniloae, as referred to in Bartos, the Church is the work of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, being also called the icon of the Trinity since it reflects the perfect harmony from within the Trinity.[105] The unity of the Trinity in life and being serve as model for the unity of Church's persons in life and being.[106] Thus, orthodox 'Triadology,' based on the grace of Trinity, provides the basic 'ontological' categories for Orthodox ecclesiology.[107] Furthermore, The Church is an '*eikon*' of the Holy Trinity, a participation in God's grace made possible in and through Christ. It is Christ who established the link between the image of the Triune God and the Church.[108] In Christ the church has both the *eikon* and *kat' eikona* (that which is according to the image), thus the church is the Church of the Triune God as the

[104]Dragas, *Orthodox Ecclesiology*, Online.

[105]Emil Bartos, *Conceptul de indumnezeire in teologia lui Dumitru Staniloae,* (Editura Institutului Biblic Emanuel: Oradea, 1999), 359.

[106]Dragas, *Orthodox Ecclesiology*, Online.

[107]Ibid.

[108]Ibid.

Church of Christ. The Church is in the image of the triune God participating in the grace inasmuch as she is in Christ and shares of His grace.[109]

Further, the church is a 'God-created and God-given reality, the presence of Christ's new life, the manifestation of the new era of the Holy Spirit.'[110] In the Orthodox understanding, the church is thought of as 'a divine gift, with an eschatological reality whose function is to manifest the ultimate reality of salvation.'[111] The church bears the character of Christ and extends the incarnation of God in Christ. Zizioulas, as referred to by Campbel, stresses that the church is composed by its celebration of the Eucharist,[112] and in this respect, it is a mystery in which Christ is present in our world.[113] Thus, its structure – hierarchical, sacramental, and liturgical makes the church able of fulfilling itself as the body of Christ, as the temple of the Holy Spirit, to comprehend the nature of grace.[114] In Orthodox understanding there is no division between the invisible and the visible church, the latter being the expression of the former, the sacramental sign of its reality. Hence, the Eucharist is the all-embracing sacrament of the church.

3.4.4. The Eucharistic dimension of the Church

The definition of the church as Eucharistic is essential for Orthodoxy and it emphasizes specific elements. First, the ecclesial dimension of the church reveals not only the

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[109]Ibid.

[110]Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 197. Because of the Spirit's continuos presence, Orthodox regard the church as "unfailing" or "infallible." Ware, *Orthodox Church,* 307-311.

[111]Clendenin, 197.

[112] The Eucharistic being the event in which God's people are celebrating the incarnation, the death and resurrection of Jesus, sharing His glorified body and blood, tasting the coming kingdom. Ioan Bria, *Martyria Mission: The witness of the Orthodox churches today* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 67.

[113] Campbell, *Christian Confessions*, 55.

[114] Alexander Schmemann, "The Missionary Imperative in the Orthodox Tradition," E*astern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader,* ed. by Daniel B. Clendenin (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 1995): 198.

fact that the Church's life is a life in community and spiritual unity, but also that the Eucharist establishes the essential *koinonia* between believer and God. *Koinonia* is the most powerful attribute of the Christian presence and spirituality. The *Koinonia* became visible in the 'Christian agape present in the life of the Early Church, and in the partaking of the Lord's Supper, which is the symbol of reconciliation with God and with one another.'[115]

Secondly, the Eucharist is the sign of the eschatological unity of all in Christ. The Church's Fathers have called it the 'medicine of immortality' and the source of life during the exodus toward the future kingdom.[116] This does not mean that Orthodoxy renounces the idea that the Eucharist communion presupposes unity of faith, or affirming the same faith. The eschatological interpretation of the Eucharist may open a way toward this communion, being the sign of the future perfect unity of all believers in Christ, which is above the visible unity, which can never be perfect.[117]

According to Volf, the Orthodox understanding of church as being utterly eucharistic, speaks of its 'epicospocentricity.' On the one hand, the bishop as '*alter Christus*' mediates the presence of Christ and secures the catholicity of the local church and on the other hand, as '*alter apostolus'* he connects the various local churches in time and space. Concerning these two offices, the bishop is both necessary for the event of the eucharistic gathering and for the ecclesiality of the church.[118]

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[115] Bria, "*Studii Teologice,"* vol. 7-10 (1976), 695-704. [Online]. Available at http://www. crestinism-orthodox.ro/html/index3.html. Accessed 30 May 2001.

[116]Ibid.

[117]Ibid.

[118] What results is that no local church that is outside the Orthodox communion of churches can be referred to as a church because it lacks synchronic communion with all other churches Miroslav Volf, "*After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity,"* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1998), 131.

The Church is also 'human response to the divine gift, its acceptance, and appropriation by humanity.'[119] The purpose of the Christian community is the acceptance of the divine gift and the growth into its fullness. The church is fullness, and in the same time, the church grows in faith and love, knowledge and *koinonia.*[120] There are two aspects that follow this description constituting the dynamics of Christ life. The first aspect of the church is that is *God-centered*.[121] The ultimate purpose of the Christian life is the sanctification and growth in holiness, of both the individual and community, the 'acquisition of them by the Holy Spirit.'[122] It is the transformation of the old us into a new one and the restoration of the pure beauty that was lost through sin. It is the increasing victory over the evil powers of the cosmic world, the joy, and peace that make us partakers of the kingdom and of life eternal.[123]

The second aspect of the church is that is *man-or-world-centered*. The Church is left here in this world, in time and space, with a specific mission: 'to walk into the same way in which he walked' (cf. 1 John 2:6). The church is fullness and this fullness is given to the world, sent into the world as its salvation and redemption.[124] The eschatological nature of the church implies the perception of the world as the object of divine love. The whole other-worldliness of the church is the sign of God's love for the world, the very condition of the church's mission to the world. Thus, The Church is a missionary community, salvation not from, but of the world. In the Orthodox understanding, the church sacrament makes possible

[119]Schmemann, *The Missionary Imperative*, 198.

[120]Ibid.

[121]Ibid.

[122]Ibid.

[123]The Orthodox Church has always emphasized the mystical character of Christian life, as a life hidden with Christ. Ibid., 199.

[124]Ibid.

the church's mission.[125] Consequently, there are various implications for mission as implied in the Orthodox experience of the Church. The mission imperative is the expression of the church, as gift and fullness, its prominence in time and space. The day of the Pentecost signifies the beginning of the Church, when the fullness of church was realized, marking the last segment of the history of salvation. [126]

3.5. Evangelical Ecclesiology

For the Evangelicals the church is 'the body of Christ, the community of the redeemed, brought into being by the Word and Spirit and that on the basis of Christ' s acceptance we are called to accept one another.'[127] God's call to the church is to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and to strive toward the full stature of the unity in Christ. In the Evangelical understanding the church as body becomes visible as the believers gather in fellowship in local churches and in larger groupings, as they fulfil their calling and mission in proclamation, witness, worship, celebration of the sacraments and service.[128] For the Evangelicals all true believers, no matter what their racial, cultural, and denominational background is, can rejoice in their common membership of the one family of God.[129]

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[125]Schmemann, *The Missionary Imperative*, 199.

[126]Ibid.

[127]Paul Schrotenboer, "Toward a Vital and Coherent Evangelical Ecclesiology for the 21st Century," in *Evangelical Review of Theology* vol.21/1 (January 1997), 21.

[128]Ibid.

[129]The Evangelicals put all the emphasis on the personal relationship with God, in and through the Holy. Wherever one recognizes this in another person, there is unity. Klaas Runia, "Evangelicals and the Doctrine of the Church in European Church History," in *Evangelical Review of Theology,* vol. 8/1 (April 1984), 53.

3.5.1. The Church as a Church in Relation

Evangelical approach to ecclesiology starts from the view that the church is a church-in-relation.[130] The identity, significance and the nature of the church are partly derived from its relation to God and its relation to the world. Thus, in order to understand what the church is we have to look from the standpoint of who God is.[131]

A God-centered definition of the church recognizes God's decision in Christ, before the creation of the world, of 'begetting us again into a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus from the dead' (1 Peter 1:3b), and making us alive who were children of wrath, dead in trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:10).'[132]

Secondly, the understanding of the church as seen in relation to the world at best illustrated in the 'Lord's Prayer in John 17: 16-18.'[133] The relationship between church, God and the world can be outlined as follows: 1) called by God,[134] 2) called to serve God,[135] 3) called out of the world,[136] 4) called to save the world.[137] Thus, the church is the assembly in

[130]What is meant here is that the doctrine of the church cannot be understood apart from the doctrine of God. The connecting point between them is relation. The God of the bible is always God in relation. This can be seen in God's own being as Father, Son and the Holy Spirit, but also God in relation to his creation, so he is the God who creates, saves, speaks and so on. In the same way the church is always a church in relation. Melvin Thinker, "Towards an Evangelical Ecclesiology," *Churchman,* vol.105/1 (1991), 19.

[131] A proper understanding of the church includes the person, presence and work of the triune God. Ibid., 20.

[132]Ibid.

[133] Ibid.

[134]Chosen by him from all eternity, redeemed by the blood of Christ, united to him by the Holy Spirit and hearing and believing the Gospel (Eph. 1:4-14). Ibid.

[135]As his people we are to obey and glorify him so that we may be presented before him in purity (Eph. 5:27). Ibid.

[136] Our task is to live holy in attitudes, values and behaviour, submitted to Christ's lordship.

[137]God has called us to proclaim the gospel, the means of salvation, as well as through our holy lives to bring a change in the world. Ibid.

heaven and earth, of those whom God has united in Jesus Christ through the work and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

3.5.2. The Nature of the Church

The nature of the church can be seen only in a Trinitarian framework, and this real nature can be recognized only by faith. This spiritual reality can be seen in all the assemblies that come together, to hear the word preached and to partake the sacraments.[138] Concerning the understanding of the nature of the church, a central theme focuses on the presence of Christ resulting from the proclamation of his word, in preaching and the sacraments.[139] For Karl Barth, as referred to by Erickson, the church is the community, which comes into being as response to the God's proclaimed word. The church is a kerygmatic community, which proclaims the good news of what God has done for the humanity in Christ.[140] The church consists of the fellowship of those men and women who have been chosen by Jesus Christ to witness the victory that he has won. For Barth, the church is not an extension of Christ, but is united with Him, and called by him to serve the world. Christ is present within the church through the Holy Spirit.[141] The role of the Holy Spirit is important and is seen as the one who empowers and renews the church, unites it with Christ's redemptive work on the cross, and is the means by which Christ is made present to God's people.[142]

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[138] Runia, *Evangelicals and the Doctrine of the Church*, 52.

[139]Alister, E. McGrath, "*Christian Theology: An introduction, 2nd edition"* (Blackwell Publishers: Oxford, 1997), 475. This theme has been of particularly importance in the writings of Karl Barth.

[140]Ibid.

[141]Ibid.

[142]Ibid.

In what follows we shall explore three further aspects of the Evangelical teaching on the nature of Church as the people of God, the body of Christ, and the temple of the Holy Spirit.

3.5.3. The Church as the people of God

The concept of the church as the people of God emphasizes God's initiative in choosing them. This metaphor is connected with the Old Testament rootage of ekklesia. Just as Israel has been chosen to be God' s people so in the New Testament this concept is broadened to include both Jews and Gentiles in the church (2 Thess. 2:13-14; 1 Thess. 1:4).[143] As God has always expected Israel to be pure and sanctified alas, the church as Christ's bride as the people of God are expected to be holy.[144]

3.5.4. The Body of Christ

The most extended image of the church is its representation as the body of Christ. This image stresses that the church is the center of Christ's activity now just as in the times when he was present on earth. The image refers both to the universal and local church (Eph. 1:22-23; 1 Corinthians 12:27).[145] The image of the body of Christ emphasizes the connection of the church as a group of believers with Christ. As a result, salvation is in part a product of union with Christ. Christ in the believer is the basis of hope (Col. 1:27; Gal. 2:20).[146] Christ is the head of this body of which believers are individual members or parts. Believers, united with him, are being nourished through him, the head to which they are connected. As the

[143]Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd edition (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 1999), 1045.

[144]Ibid.

[145]Ibid., 1047.

[146]Ibid.

head of the body, Christ is the ruler and the Lord of the church.[147] The image of the church also speaks of 'interconnectedness between those persons that make up the church, as shown in 1 Corinthians 12.'[148] The body is to be characterized by genuine fellowship, by an intimate feeling for and understanding of one another. The body is a unified body and is universal. All barriers have been removed and Christ is all in all (Col. 3:11). As the body of Christ, the church is the extension of his ministry. (Math. 28:18.) The work of Christ will be done by his body the church.[149]

3.5.5. The Temple of the Holy Spirit

Stanley Grenz points out that in Paul's Trinitarian concept, the church is pictured as the temple of the Holy Spirit. The focal point of God's presence is not a special building but a fellowship of his people. The presence of the Spirit in the church brings life to it, brings unity to the body, creates sensitivity to the Lord's leading, and makes the church holy and pure.[150] Donald Allister singles out the pneumatic dimension of the church in these words:

> True evangelicalism sees its deepest biblical roots in Pentecost; not in the shallow contemporary fixation immediate experience of the Spirit, but the utterly comprehensive truth that the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord Christ has returned to his church in the person of His Spirit. This perception both undermines the weakness of incarnational and other partly developed ecclesiologies, and also contains and unites great truths to which they bear witness. In our true reformed and evangelical ecclesiology, the Holy Spirit applies the whole work of Christ to his Church. He alone is the vicar of Christ on earth.[151]

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[147]Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd edition, 1047.

[148]Ibid.

[149]Ibid., 1049.

[150]Stanley J. Grenz, "*Theology for the Community of God,"* (Broadman & Holman Publishers: Nashville, 1994), 608.

[151]Donald Allister, "Ecclesiology: A Reformed Understanding of the Church," *Churchman,* vol. 103/3 (1999): 252.

Other characteristics of the church as seen by Evangelicals include views such as the following:

The church is both *divine and human*, created by the Holy Spirit yet brought about by gathering human beings. It is no either one or the other of these – it is both at once. The church is both form and essence.[152] It is one, yet it is divided, it is holy, yet a communion of sinners.[153]

The Church is both *phenomenon and creed*. It is to be believed; yet what is believed is not seen. What is described as a phenomenon of the visible world cannot be described as the object of our faith. We cannot be part of an ideal church apart from the real one. The real must be challenged by the ideal, which must be understood and lived out in the real world.[154]

The church is *institution and community; organization and organism.* The community takes an institutional form; the institution only exists as the concrete expression of the community of persons.[155]

The church is both *visible and invisible.* The visible-invisible distinction came out in the first centuries of the church's life. Although the distinction may be important, it must be stressed that there is one church and not two. The one church, that it is identical in forms and in its fundamental nature, is always at once visible and invisible.[156]

The church is both *imperfect and perfect.* Luther was referring to the church as both just and sinful, holy and unrighteous, universal and particular. Faith in church's holiness, Moltmann said, 'cannot be an excuse of its unholy condition than the justification of sinners

[152] What is meant by essence of the church cannot be seen in its forms. Charles Van Engen, "The Church," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions,* ed. by A. Scott Moreau (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 2000): 193.

[153]Ibid.

[154]Ibid.

[155]Ibid.

[156]Charles Van Engen, *The Church*, 193.

means a justification of sin.'[157] The local church derives its constitutive nature as it displays the nature and of the universal church.[158]

The church has a threefold character, being related to God as the new covenant community of the Holy Spirit, to the believers as the community of the saints, and as the apostolic church sent to the world. The missionary movement has been the arena where the threefold character has taken shape as the church spread over the world.[159] Consequently, a definition of the church requires an examination of the shape the church has taken all through its missionary extension around the world. Moreover, it is impossible to understand church without mission. Mission activity is supported, carried out by the church, and the church receives the fruits.[160] The Church is present in the world through mission, finds its main goal the participation in God's mission, and engages in activities whose purpose is mission. In his book, *The Household of God*, Leslie Newbigin, said, 'A church which ceased to be a mission has lost the essential character of the church, and a mission which is not a truly church has lost its divine apostolate.'[161] Further, he said, 'an unchurchly mission is as much a monstrosity as an unmissionary church.'[162]

Having looked at the different views on the Evangelical doctrine of the church we can summarize in Thinker' s words, that the Evangelicals believe in 'the Church, local and universal, centered around the preaching of God' s word, attested by the two sacraments, corrected and ruled in everything by that Word, so that it might be a light to the world, and a

[157]Jurgen Moltmann, "Kirche in der Kraft des Geistes: Ein Beitrag zur messianischen Ekklesiologie," (Chr. Keiser Verlag: Munchen, 1975). 365-66.

[158]Engen, *The Church,* 194.

[159]Ibid.

[160]Ibid.

[161]Ibid.

[162]Ibid.

means of grace reaching out to those in need with the Gospel, and through life and proclamation the glorious kingdom of God.'[163]

[163]Tinkers, Toward an Evangelical Ecclesiology, 29.

3.6. Missiology: Orthodox & Evangelical Perspectives

3.6.1. Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology

The Orthodox Church has probably the most developed theological basis for mission. Since 1973, leaders of the Orthodox Churches have met on the regular basis to discuss the theology and meaning of mission and evangelism within the Orthodox tradition.[164] One of the starting points in understanding the Orthodox Mission is the Church itself as mission. Church by its very nature is mission and it is impossible to separate Mission from the Church. Aram Keshishian has stressed that the church itself has no mission other than to participate in God's mission. God's mission is the life of the church that goes beyond itself to embrace the whole of humanity and the whole of creation.[165] One of the primary goals of the Orthodox Mission is building the local liturgical communities,[166] because it is only within the Church, through the participation in the Liturgy and Eucharist that a believer can experience communion with God.[167]

According to the documents of the conference in Melbourne (1980), there are four major elements in the Orthodox mission: First, the importance of the liturgical community as the basis for mission and evangelization. Second, the centrality of Eucharist for the missionary movement of the Church. Third, the Christian witness in liturgical experience, which is the point of departure and arrival of all Christian life. Fourthly, the immediate

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[164] Professor Ioan Bria, has collected and compiled a series of essays from a number of these meetings, which is a very useful resource on Orthodox missiology. Ioan Bria, "*Go Forth In Peace: Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*," World Council of Churches, Geneva: WCC Mission Series, 1986.

[165] Aram Keshishian, *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission* (Oxford: Regnum Books/Lynx Communications, 1993), 98.

[166] "Report of the Orthodox Advisory Group held in Hildesheim Himmelsthur, FRG," in *International Review of Missions* 74/249 (April 1985): 259.

[167] Daniel D. I. Ciobotea, "Unity and Mission: An Orthodox Perspective," *International Review of Mission* 78/309 (January 1989): 32.

connection between the common witness of Christians in local situations and their visible unity at the universal level.[168]

3.6.2. The Trinitarian Model for Mission

The Orthodox concept of mission is grounded in Trinitarian theology. Trinitarian theology points to the fact that 'God is in God' s own self a life of communion and that God' s involvement in history aims at drawing humanity and creation in general into communion with God' s very life.'[169] Hence, the primary goal of mission is not the proclamation of 'intellectual convictions, doctrines, or moral commands, but the transmission of the life of communion, that exists in God.'[170] What is meant here is not only the humanity' s statue before God regarding its sinfulness, but also humanity' s final statue before God in the heavenly places.[171] Christ's descent makes possible the entering of humankind in the presence of God. Beside Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit is also a mean of entering God's presence. However, the total accomplishment of being partakers of the divine nature (*theosis*) will come to being with the final consummation of all things in Christ.[172] Still, the ascent into God's presence expressed in the church's worship[173] is made possible through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. Thus, in joining the incarnation, the church, and the liturgy, we have the three major elements of Orthodox missiology. Nothing discloses more appropriate the relation between the Church as fullness and the Church as mission more than the Eucharist,

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[168] Ion Bria, "On Orthodox Witness*," International Review of Mission* 69/276-277 (October 1980-January 1981): 527-528.

[169]Bria, *Go Forth in Peace*, 3.

[170]Ibid., 3.

[171]James Stamoolis, "Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,"* vol.8/2 (April 1984): 59.

[172]Ibid.

[173]The idea is that humankind can enter in union with God through the sacrament of the Eucharist. Ibid.

the central act of the Church's liturgy. Alexander Schnemann explains the Eucharist as being always 'the End, the sacrament of the *parousia*, and, yet, it is always the beginning, the starting point: now the mission begins.'[174] The liturgical witness and the local community as the key elements in the missionary witness of Orthodoxy have been given careful attention in the recent reflection on the subject.[175]

3.6.3. The Incarnation

The linkage between *theosis* (union with God) and mission lies in the fact that God desires all humankind to be united with himself through Christ. God's love for humanity is the strongest motivation for mission, since it was God's love that legitimated the incarnation.[176] Through his incarnation, Christ has restored the bond with us and has renewed the human being. It is in Christ that our being is lifted up to the image of God through partaking in the Spirit. Likewise, the Logos has instituted a new relationship between the creator and humans, which is created and completed through energies of God, effected by the Spirit.[177] By being restored to our functions, the Word transmits us the power to free ourselves from egotism, in order to understand others and enter in fellowship with them and with Him. He calls us to make humanity understand the insufficiency of rationality, and to help them find the personal origin of reason which is to be found in Christ.[178]

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[174]Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology*, 59.

[175]See Bria, "*On Orthodox Witness,* 527-528.

[176]The Orthodox understanding of incarnation is very similar with that of earliest church period. The Orthodox stressed that each nation, each culture, each particular group had the right to receive the gospel in its own language. Stammolis, 59.

[177] Bria, *Go Forth in Peace*, 4.

[178]Ibid., 5.

3.6.4. Orthodox Liturgy and Mission

The idea of missiological liturgy emerged in the ecumenical discussions of how the theology of mission (missiology) and the theology of the church (Ecclesiology) are related. In Orthodox theory and practice, the liturgical expression of the church is a method of evangelistic outreach.[179] 'Liturgy after liturgy' is the Orthodox concept of the ' extension of the liturgical celebration into daily life of the faithful in the world.'[180] There are two aspects to the missiological function to the Liturgy, the internal and external one. The internal one relates to the life and sustenance of the church.[181] The external one relates to the Liturgy as a motivating factor for mission, which provides both the context and the content for mission. The content is the return from God's presence to the need of the world.[182] The difference between the condition of the humanity as God wants it to be and the reality point toward the need of mission. The missionary content of God's message is that God in Christ has come to us to bring us back to him. Anastasios Yannoulatos points out 'it is impossible to participate in Christian worship without reference to the world mission and it is impossible to engage in real Orthodox mission without a living participation in Holy Communion.'[183]

3.6.5. Orthodox Mission and the Eucharist

In the Orthodox understanding, the church-sacrament makes possible the church-mission. The relation between church as fullness and church as mission is best illustrated in the

[179] James Stamoolis, "Orthodox Theology of Mission," *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions,* ed. A. Scott Moreau (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, 2000): 715.

[180]Ion Bria, "Martyria/Mission: The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1980), 68.

[181]Timothy Ware observes that it was the liturgy that kept Orthodoxy alive during the Ottoman period. Ware, *The Orthodox Church,* 111.

[182]Stamoolis, *Eastern Orthodox*, 60.

[183]Ibid.

Eucharist, the central act of the church's liturgy, the sacrament of the church itself.[184] In the Orthodox understanding, the Eucharist is considered as the source of unity and mission. In the Eucharistic rite, there are two actions: the movement of ascension and the movement of return. Through the ascension of the Eucharist toward the throne of God, we prepare to 'ascend into heaven with Christ and in Christ and to offer in him his Eucharist.'[185] This first act signifies God's acceptance of our Eucharist, which is already an act of mission. The Eucharist is offered' on behalf of all and for all'; it is the Church's achievement of its ecclesiastic function'[186];'the reconciliation of the whole creation with God, the sacrifice of the whole world to God, the intercession of the whole world before God.'[187] All this is possible through Christ 'the Creation's unique priest and by a total separation of the church from the world, by its ascension to heaven, its entrance in a new era.'[188] It is at this stage 'when having reached this state of fullness and having seen the true light and having partaken of the Holy Spirit, that the second action of returning into the world that begins.'[189] The Eucharist is always 'the end, the sacrament of parousia; and yet it is in the same time the starting point: now the mission begins.' The Eucharist transforming the church into what it is transforms it in mission.[190] Thus, when the Liturgy is over and the eucharistic assembly disperses, every believer goes into the world to witness by what he is. The Mission of the church rests upon the radiating and transforming power of the Liturgy.[191]

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[184]Schmemann, The Missionary Imperative, 199.

[185]Ibid.

[186]Ibid.

[187]Ibid., 200.

[188]Ibid.

[189]Ibid.

[190]Ibid. 200.

[191]Ioan Bria, *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1996), 21.

3.6.6. The Evangelistic Witness of the Orthodox Church

The evangelistic witness is only a part of the whole mission of the church; it is a call to salvation, to the restoration of the relationship of God and man as shown in the doctrine of theosis. It involves elements of preaching the gospel, conversion, and baptism.[192] The objects of the evangelistic witness are man and world. The Orthodox idea of evangelism is not affected by individualistic and spiritualistic connotations. The Church, the sacrament of Christ, means new life that can redeem the whole life, the total being of man. Every time a man responds to the divine gift, accepts it, and lives by it is saved.[193] For the Orthodox the state, society, culture, nature itself, are real objects of mission. It includes things such as raising the voice against social injustice, involvement into political, economic, and social structures, as well as preaching to the poor and oppressed.[194] For the Orthodox mission is not only for non-Christians but also for the nominal Orthodox, who superficially identify Orthodox Christianity with their national culture.[195]

The late D. J. Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission*: *Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission,* has ended his chapter on the mission paradigm of the Eastern Orthodox Church with the following words:

> The Church adapted to the existing world order, resulting in Church and Society penetrating and permeating each other. The role of religion – any religion – in society is that of both stabilizer and emancipator; it is both mythical and messianic. In the Eastern tradition the church tended to express form of each of these pairs rather than the later. The emphasis was on conservation and restoration, rather than on embarking on a journey into the unknown. The key words were ' 'tradition' ', ' 'orthodoxy' ', and the ' 'Fathers' ' (Kung), and the church became the bulwark of right doctrine. Orthodox Churches tended to become ingrown, excessively nationalistic, and without a concern for those outside (Anastasios Yannoulatos). In particular, Platonic categories of thought all but destroyed primitive Christian eschatology (Becker). The

[192]Bria, *Martyria,* 225.

[193]Clendenin, *Eastern Orthodox Theology*, 201.

[194]Bria, *Martyria*, 227.

[195]Ibid., 228.

> Church established itself in the world as an institute of almost exclusively otherworldly salvation.[196]

The Orthodox Church is aware of the potential challenges to its modern practice of mission. Among the issues considered obstacles in mission, the first is the old language of Liturgy. The Orthodox Church might be in danger to lose the impact on the younger generation.[197] Another obstacle is that of shortsighted nationalism and here is meant the fact of not limiting the church to the nationhood.[198] Further, another obstacle is that of nominalism. Orthodox Church has realized the need of 're-Christianisation' of nominal Christians, as an important task of the Church's evangelistic witness.[199]

3.7. Evangelical Mission Theology

Evangelicals agree that mission arises from the self-giving love of the triune God Himself and from his eternal purpose for the whole creation. Its aim is the 'God-centered kingdom of the Father, exhibited through the building of the Body of Christ, and cultivated in the fellowship of the Spirit.'[200] Since Christ's first coming and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, mission has an eschatological dimension. It invites both women and men to enter God's kingdom through Christ the Son by the work and regeneration of the Holy Spirit.[201]

John Stott, a prominent leader of the Evangelical movement, has defined mission as a comprehensive concept, 'embracing everything which God sends his people into the world to

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[196]D. J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission. Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis Books: New York, 1991): 212-213.

[197]Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, 189.

[198]Ibid., 199.

[199]Bria, *Martyria*, 69.

[200]The Evangelical-Roman Catholic Dialogue on Mission, 1977-1984: A Report, in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* vol.10/1 (January 1986): 7.

[201]Ibid.

do.'[202] Jurgen Moltmann has stressed that mission has to do with that aspect of the Church's life where she crosses frontiers toward the world.[203]According to Donald J. Bosch, mission is the task that God has set the church for the salvation of the world. In its missionary involvement, the church steps out of itself into the wider world. It crosses all boundaries, geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious, and ideological. In all these areas, the church in mission carries the message of God's salvation. Hence, mission means being involved in the redemption of the universe and the glorification of God.[204]

3.7.1. Elements of Evangelical Mission

Due to the pluriformity of the evangelical theology of mission, it is impossible to give a characterization of the views that will be representative for everybody. However, certain common aspect distinguishes an evangelical theology of mission: (1) a strong connection to the Bible, which is considered as all inspired and all sufficient for both life and doctrine, (2) accentuation of the atoning and redemptive work of Christ, (3) emphasis on personal conversion, (4) and the primacy of evangelization and the building up of assemblies in the mission field.[205]

3.7.2. Bibliology and Soteriology

The basic relationship between mission and evangelical theology can be defined in terms of two doctrines: bibliology and soteriology.[206] Evangelicals are characterized by a

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[202]John Stott, "*Christian Mission in the Modern World,"* (Inter-Varsity Press, Downers Grove, 1976): 15-16.

[203]Jurgen Moltmann, "*Gott kommt und der Mensch wird frei*," (Kaiser: Munich, 1975), 21-35.

[204]David J. Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-currents Today," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* vol.11/3 (July 1987): 100.

[205]Klaus Fiedler, "Evangelical Mission Theology I," in *Dictionary of Missions. Theology, History, Perspectives.* ed. Karl Mullers and others (Orbis Books: New York, 1997): 144.

[206]Edward Rommen, "Evangelical Theology," in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions,* 340.

strong 'commitment to divine inspiration, inerrancy, and the grammatical-historical method of exegesis.'[207] For evangelicals it is the firm adherence to the absolute authority of the Scripture that has formed their approach to mission. The Bible is divinely revealed truth, its authority being traced back to God's absolute authority.[208] The result is that all-prescriptive statements of the Bible must be fulfilled. Moreover, as the authority of the Scripture is accepted without question, the compliance with God's own commission to make disciples of all nations (according to Matt. 28: 19-20) has formed the primary motive for evangelical mission.[209] Arthur P. Johnston stressed that for an evangelist the verbal infallibility and full authority of the Scriptures is the theological basis for discerning and declaring the message with the power and stimulus given by the Holy Spirit.[210]

A secondary but still important reason for mission is the soteriological one. The necessity of mission arises, on the one hand, out of the humanity's spiritual need, and on the other hand, out of the redemptive work of Christ. Because of the fall, humankind is alienated from God, lives under his wrath, and will suffer eternal damnation.[211] Christ atoning death and his resurrection has opened a way for humanity. This soteriological orientation has been applied in two ways.

First, everyone who has denied the message of God's grace is lost. The Bible expresses very clearly that all people have sinned (Rom. 3:23), and that all sinners are subject to God's wrath (Eph. 2:3).[212]

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[207]*Rommen, Evangelical Theology*, 340.

[208]Ibid., 341.

[209]D. J. Bosch, *Witness to the World: The Christian Mission in Theological Perspective* (John Knox Press: Atlanta, 1980): 31.

[210]Arthur P. Johnson, "*The Battle for World Evangelism* (Tyndale House, Wheaton, 1978), 18.

[211]Rommen, *Evangelical Theology*, 340.

[212]Ibid., 341.

Secondly, the offer of salvation is addressed to all of humanity. Most evangelicals strictly reject any form of universalism. Since, the salvation made available to all can be achieved only by means of an individual act of faith. The result of a such view has led to a consistently driven desire to reach everyone with the gospel.[213]

Combined with the accent on the necessity of individual faith, the global outreach places the personal act of the will at the centre. There is no way around the personal faith in Christ and this is the message that should be offered to all.[214]

3.8. Summary and Conclusions

From the comparative study of both Eastern Orthodox and & Evangelical Perspectives on soteriology, eccelesiology and missiology the following concluding remarks can be made about the missiological implications in the Romanian Context.

Soteriologically. For Evangelicals the statue of a person before God is a crucial matter; to Orthodox this issue is not relevant in the light of the dominant emphasis on the process of becoming righteous through *theosis*. Thus, Eastern Orthodox understanding of Christian life is significantly different from that of Evangelical Protestants. For Evangelicals, the most important component of salvation is acceptance before God (being declared righteous), achieved at the beginning of faith and the process of sanctification grows out of this change of statue before God. To the Orthodox, the process of sanctification or deification is the vehicle to the ultimate goal of union with God. Since, *theosis* is a process rather than a momentous change, in Orthodox understanding people will not be entirely deified by the time they die. In addition, Orthodox theology affirms the continuation of deification after

[213]Rommen, *Evangelical Theology*. 341.

[214]Ibid.

someone's death. Orthodox do not promote the idea of purgatory, but they do admit the possibility of a state of purification after death. This conviction led to the creed that prayers for someone who has died could help them complete the process of *theosis*.

However, there are some common points in the Orthodox and Evangelical understanding of salvation. Both Evangelicals and Orthodox see salvation as being the work of the Holy Spirit, accomplished by grace. On the issue of sacraments both Evangelical and Orthodox assert that baptism and Lord's Supper represents forgiveness of sins, new life, and partaking of Christ. Orthodox insistence that salvation involves human effort is similar with the Evangelical assertion that genuine faith results in good works. (cf. Phil. 2:12; Jas. 2:14-26). From the above-analysed perspectives, we can list some factors that influence the way mission is done in the Romanian orthodox context.

The starting point of difference between Orthodox and Evangelicals is the point at which people must obtain salvation. Orthodox teaches that the grace of salvation is stored in the Church, and the Church imparts the grace of salvation through holy mysteries. Evangelicals believe that there is no need for the mediation of the Church for obtaining salvation. Each individual can receive Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour and Lord; the only mediator between man and God is 'the man Christ Jesus' (1 Tim. 2:5).[215]

A second difference between the Evangelical and the Orthodox doctrine of salvation regards not only the way it is obtained but also its nature. The Orthodox theology states that in the fall, man was partially deteriorated and that after the fall man is still compatible of becoming like him (*theosis*). Evangelicalism teaches the total depravity of humanity and the need for conversion and new birth.[216]

[215]Josef Ton, "Key Theological Themes Needing Attention in Post-Communist Europe," *Unpublished Work,* 7.

[216]Ibid.

Another split on the issue is that Orthodox Church offers a different explanation of the plight of humanity and an unsatisfactory solution to it. The person on the street it is somehow left with the impression that he can go on living as the world lives, provide he attends some rituals in the Church, because the church will take care of his soul.[217]

Ecclesiologically. There is some common ground between Orthodox and Protestants in the area of the mystical nature of the church. Both agree that the Church has an ontological union with Christ as her head in addition to a material existence. This is the core truth behind the idea that the Church is the body of Christ. Incarnation is central to this way of thinking. However, there, are differences in the doctrine of Ecclesiology between Evangelicals and Orthodox that influence the way mission is done in the Romanian context.

First, there is a major dispute about who constitutes the Church, and how membership is obtained. A different understanding of who is a member of the church determines different accents on mission for both Orthodox and Evangelicals. For the Orthodox the method of mission is more passive because all are considered members. For the Evangelicals the missionary method is more active expressed in the invitation to the others to become members. Protestants frequently connect membership in the Church with a conscious conversion to Jesus Christ as Lord by an individual who has reached the age of accountability, whereas the Orthodox will point to the moment of regeneration occasioned by 'infant baptism' .

For the Orthodox, the church is sacramental in the sense that it is the continuation of the incarnation of Christ in the world. Christ is present in the Church so that the Church is understood to be both divine and human. The Church therefore continues Christ's own prophetic, priestly, and kingly ministry in the world. This leads among other things to the

[217]Ton, *Key Theological Themes Needing Attention in Post-Communist Europe*, 7.

conclusion that the Church, through the hierarchy, conveys the redeeming feature of God through the sacraments.

The Evangelicals firmly believe that the church as the Body of Christ is in union with Christ as Head and that the Spirit indwells the members of the church. But it also believes that Christ, as head of the Church is nevertheless to be distinguished from the church. According to Evangelicals, the church points people to Christ for salvation through faith in him and does not believe that Christ is so united to the Church that the church through its sacraments is now the conveyor of the divine grace of salvation.

Missiologically. The Evangelical theology of mission is characterized by weak ecclesiology and a strong soteriology. The Soteriology is mainly Calvinistic strongly influenced in the direction of Arminianism by the Holiness movement that emerged from Methodism.[218] The conviction that all who do not believe in Christ are lost eternally, and the actual expectation of the imminent return of Christ, before which event the gospel must be preached to all nations, play an essential role in describing the need for worldwide mission and the necessity of reaching the lost with the message of the gospel.[219]

From these basic convictions, we can deduce that Evangelical theology of missions tends to be individualistic; its social engagement takes a concrete personal form rather than a socio-political form.[220] Identically, the Evangelical emphasizes more the local congregation than the church as a whole. In evangelical theology of mission, the understanding of unity is personal, (common faith is primary; structural unity is secondary). Continuity is explained as

[218]Fiedler, Evangelical Mission Theology I, 144.

[219]Ibid.,145.

[220]Ibid.

one of the same faith and doctrine and not as of the same church structure, whose doctrine and faith may change.

The Orthodox Church has a profound missionary tradition expressed along the centuries through the preservation of the Christian witness. Through the dynamics of liturgy in mission aims to operate effectively in the sense of breaking the obstacles often created by language, sociology, socio-political ethos that hinder the mediation of the memory of God to the new generations. The Eucharistic liturgy has its centre God's remembrance, the process where the church educates, teaches, anoints and nourishes its evangelists and missionaries.

Both Orthodox and Evangelicals affirm that mission or witness is inherent in the very nature of the church. In addition, there is a common consensus that the missionary task and nature of the church is to give witness to God the creator, to proclaim the Lordship of Christ over against all powers in society, and to witness for the living-giving Spirit of God in all nations. In terms of differences between Evangelicals and Orthodox, we can mention that one issue on the split is that the Evangelicals believe in an individual experience of Christians, whereas the Orthodox view personal conversion as an act of incorporation into an ecclesial, liturgical community.

The theological issues addressed in the present chapter are crucial to understanding the challenges to mission in contemporary Romania. It is the differing perspectives on central theological issues that define the mission practice of both Orthodox and Pentecostals. Furthermore, the issues of the relationship and differing perspectives on soteriology, eccelesiology and missiology are very relevant to the task that both Pentecostals and Orthodox undertake in assessing and addressing the missionary aspects of their engagement with the culture and further aspects of the present context will be explored further in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 4

TOWARDS CONTEXTUALISATION IN ROMANIA

4.1 The Necessity of Contextual Theology

Contextualisation was hardly mentioned at the Edinburgh conference in 1910, but has become since a central concern to missiology in addressing the need for the gospel to take shape differently in different contexts. As Stephen Bevans pointed out, 'there is no such thing as 'theology'; there is only contextual theology. … The attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context … is really a theological imperative.'[1]

Contextualisation refers to the ongoing and multi-layered process of allowing the gospel to take shape in a particular context. We can immediately see how important contextualisation is for mission, because if the gospel is to be communicated effectively it needs to speak to them within their culture, in their language and addressing their experience.

Contextual mission goes beyond what the Edinburgh conference called 'accommodation' to native customs, or 'indigenisation' through training local leaders. Going beyond the split between Christendom and heathendom, or (to use the language of Edinburgh) 'older churches' and 'younger churches', a contextual approach expects every local church—the church in every culture and the church in every broad region—to examine its context and critically interact with the gospel story in a deep and ongoing way, in a journey towards expressing God's Good News in ways that reflect our cultural identity.

Despite this widespread agreement, a number of factors render this methodological project more complicated than it might first appear. According to Daniel Von Allmen, three 'impasses' have been problematic historically for the development of contextual theology: (1) a colonial mind-set that regards the theological products of 'third' world theologies as more

[1] Stephen B Bevans, *Models of contextual theology*, Rev. & Exp. ed. (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), 3.

contextually bound than 'mainline' theologies (the problem of paternalism); (2) the difficulties associated with giving room to the insights and constructive developments of particular contexts while maintaining a commitment to the central tenets of the Christian faith (the problem of heresy); and (3) the tendency to view contextualization simply as a syncretistic blending of the Christian faith with some pre-existing set of beliefs (the problem of syncretism).[2]

In addition to these problems, a number of other concerns have been raised. Some question whether contextual methodologies adequately deal with issues like the unity of the Church, the prophetic and critical dimensions of theology, and the radical impact of sin on human cultural systems. Additionally, many associate contextual theology with the dialectical methodology developed by the Theological Education Fund; a methodology, which maintains the interdependence of text and context such that neither takes priority over the other.[3] Others point out that the plurality and multi-layered nature of contexts makes it very difficult to determine the parameters and characteristics any given context.[4]

In this brief incursion, we will ask what means contextualisation and the methods of contextual theology that will extend into analysing contextual challenges for the Pentecostals in the Romanian context. The aim of this process is to explore various aspects of church's attempt to engage with the post-dictatorial reality and point towards the need for a contextual theology that, in addition to being rooted in the Scriptures, is sensitive to the needs, struggles, and aspirations of the churches and the people of the contemporary Romania.

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[2]Daniel Von Allmen. "The Birth of Theology: Contextualization as the Dynamic Element in the Formation of New Testament Theology," *International Review of Mission* 64 (1965): 48-49. The last concern, syncretism, has been particularly prominent in evangelical circles; a concern that Harvie M. Conn points out is legitimately based on worries that "the authority of the Bible will become lost in the plethora of localized theologies" ("Contextualized Theologies: The Problem of Agendas," in *Constructive Christian Theology in the Worldwide Church* [ed. William R. Barr; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997], 91

[3]Max L. Stackhouse, "Contextualization, Contextuality, and Contextualism," in *One Faith, Many Cultures: Inculturation, Indigenization, and Contextualization* (ed. Ruy O. Costa; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1988), 11

[4]John Vincent, "Developing Contextual Theologies," *Epworth Review* 27.3 (July 2000): 69.

4.1.1. What is contextualization?

The notion of contextualisation often emerges as obscure as it is clumsy. In most general terms,

> contextualization therefore comprises all activities by participants which make relevant, maintain, revise, cancel…. any aspect of context which, in turn, is responsible for the interpretation of an utterance in its particular locus of occurrence. Such an aspect of context may be the larger activity participants are engaged in (the ' speech genre'), the small-scale activity (or ' speech act'), the mood (or ' key') in which this activity is performed, the topic, but also the participants' roles (the participant constellation, comprising ' speaker' , ' recipient' , ' bystander' , etc.), the social relationship between participants, the relationship between a speaker and the information he conveys via language (' modality'), even the status of ' focused interaction' itself.[5]

Among theologians it was first applied during the ' 70s, appeared in *Ministry in Context: The Third Mandate Programme of the Theological Education Fund* (1970-77)[6] and referred to a variety of theological models (indigenisation and inculturation, politics, development, liberation theology, black theology, feminist theology).[7] In its outset, contextual theology pointed towards a new paradigm shift in theological direction.[8]

4.1.2. Models of Contextual Theology

With the advent of the two-third world theologies in the course of the 20th century, there was the realization that the Western accent in mission had to be reformulated. Whereas Western theology was regarded as mainly elitist enterprise and operated under the assumption

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[5]Peter Auer, *The contextualization of language*. (Amsterdam [u.a.]: Benjamins, 1992): 37

[6] David J. Hesselgrave and Edward Rommen, *Contextualization: Meanings, Methods, and Models* (GrandRapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 28.

[7]J. Ukpong, *What is Contextualization?,* in Neue Zeitschrift fur Missions-wissenschaft, vol.43(1987), 161-168.

[8]P. Frostin, The Hermeneutics of the Poor – The Epistemological 'Break' in Third World Theologies, in *Studia Theologica*, vol.39(1985), 127-150.

that it 'was supracultural and universally valid'[9], contextual theology was a reformulated theology from below so that it would expressed through local people with a local accent.[10] Bosch rightly points out the difference:

> Whereas, at least since the time of Constantine, theology was conducted *from above* as an elitist enterprise (except in the case of minority Christian communities, commonly referred to as sects), its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) was *philosophy*, and its main interlocutor the *educated non-believer*, contextual theology is theology ' '*from below*' ', ' 'from the underside of history' ', its main source (apart from Scripture and tradition) is the *social sciences*, and its main interlocutor the *poor* or the *culturally marginalized*.[11]

Thus, contextual theology signaled what some theologians call an epistemological break when compared with traditional theologies.

Colonialism championed the superiority of western civilization, evolutionism legitimized this in terms of history, and science and Christianity provided the intellectual foundations on which the whole was built. It is not surprising, therefore, that the period from 1800 to 1950 was anticontextual in its approach. The emerging theologies from Asia, Africa, and Latin America often termed 'Third World theologies' attempted to reinterpret the theological task in the face of historical, ideological and economical changes that were sweeping their continents.

Contextualization has been defined by various models attempting to explain how the gospel how the Christian message takes shape in various cultural contexts. Haleblian explores the difference between the translation model of contextualization exemplified by Charles Kraft and the semiotic model developed by Robert Schreiter. Stephen Bevans also suggests five models of contextual theology. They are: (1) the translation model; (2) the anthropological model; (3) the praxis model; (4) the synthetic model; (5) the transcendental model. These models are helpful in understanding the relationship between the gospel

[9]David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series, no. 16 (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1991), 421.

[10]Ibid, 422.

[11]Ibid.

message and culture. David Heselgrave speaks of contextualization as a direct result of ascertaining the meaning of the biblical text, consciously submitting to its authority, and applying or appropriating that meaning to a given situation. The results of this process may vary in form and intensity, but they will always remain within the scope of meaning prescribed by the biblical text[12]. For our purposes, we will look at several contextualization models and propose for an integrative contextualization model.

4.1.3. Contextualization as Communication.

The first approach to incarnational contextualization was evidenced in the Journal of Practical anthropology and involved a combination of linguistics, translation, and communication theory (as elaborated by Louis Luzbetak, Eugene Nida, Charles Kraft).[13] This model will interact with the culture by actively listening to the culture to identify 'the presence of God, who it is convinced, has been in the culture even before Christianity's arrival.'[14] It would attempt to identify the unique threads and pattern that form the cultural patterns and values. It will seek to preserve the cultural identity by purifying the message of the gospel. When the cultural receptors will understand that what is required of them is not a complete betrayal of culture, they will be more likely open to adopt the Christian way of life. Following, they will be active participants in contextualizing Christianity for their own culture.[15] In time, their unique form of theology will provide insights to Christians of other cultures.

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[12]David J. Hesselgrave, "Contextualization That Is Authentic and Relevant."*International Journal of Frontier Missions.* (July 1995, Volume 12:3): 115-20.

[13]*Charles Van Engen*, *Missions on the Way*: Issues in *Mission* Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1997), 73 -75.

[14]Stephen B. Evans & Roger P. Schreiter, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today,* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., 2004), 60.

[15] Schreiter, *Constants in Context*, 60.

4.1.4. Contextualization as Liberation.

Another aspect of that which also stimulated much of African theology in the post-colonial era can be associated with the emergence of liberation theology, giving theological dimension to struggles for the socio-political transformation in South Africa. This, however, represented another model of contextual theology recognized as the 'praxis model,' or the 'liberation model,' born out of regional factors, concerned with highlighting the consequences of structural injustice caused by the economic, political, and cultural domination. The following three social factors, 'a situation of domination and oppression, the emergence of a consciousness of the possibility of liberation, and the lack of effective political channels to harness collective efforts toward a constructive implementation of that consciousness,' are named as decisive in the establishing the format of Liberation theology in Latin America.[16]

Liberation theology can be outlined as containing three particulars. Firstly, it codetermined the expression of faith by an analysis of the patterns and issue of social injustice. The social perspective on injustice prompts the reading of the bible from the perspective of those suffering from systemic injustice to empower with meaning and perspective on their suffering by helping them to see in the Bible reflections of their own struggles. Thirdly, it led to a change in theology vocabulary that reflects the concrete experience of people in their everyday lives.[17] Leonard Boff describes Liberation theology as a departure from traditional ecclesiology signifying the move towards *ecclesiogenesis* that is the genesis of the church is born of the faith of the people.[18]

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[16]Francis Anekwe Oborji, *Concepts of Mission: The Evolution of Contemporary Missiology* (Maryknoll, NY, Orbis Books, 2006), 187.

[17]Risto A. Ahonen. *Mission the New Millenium* (Hakapaino Oy: Helsinki, 2006), 166-167.

[18]BOFF Leonardo. *Church, Charism, and Power* (London: SCM Press, London: 1985), 131. One inevitable consequence of this approach is that being a member of the church starts with an act of obedience

Liberation theology had proven to be a catalyst that would inspire many other forms of contextual theology more notably, the Minjung Theology out of South Korea and the various schools of feminist theology. Minjung Theology was the first liberation theology to come out of Asia. As a significant theological movement within Korea, it raised critical issues about Christian theology. It was not by Minjung people and certainly not intended only for them, even though minjung means 'common people'.[19] Developing from the wider context of minjung movement in Korea, it identifies the struggle for justice of those oppressed politically or economically, and those alienated sociologically.[20] It operates under the conviction that ' to know God' (theological beholding) means concretely to stop building the house through unrighteousness (ethical walking)'.[21]

4.1.5. Contextualization as global conversations of theologies[22]

The necessity and importance of contextual theologizing is now widely affirmed and accepted, though limits on such activity continue to be hotly debated. There is a danger that overemphasis on the necessity and importance of contextualization detracts from some potential weaknesses in the method. According to Bosch, 'There is not only a danger of relativism, where each context forges its own theology, tailor-made for that specific context,

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towards the poor which steams out of the understanding that the poor constitute the locus of the true church. Paul Davis, "Ecclesiogenesis": Base ecclesial communities in contemporary perspective, in *Encounters Mission Ezine*(Issue 23 April 2008):2.

[19]Hyun, Younghak. "Minjung Theology and the Religion of Han." *East Asia Journal of Theology 3:2* (1985): 354-359.

[20]Kane, Margaret. "Minjung Theology." *Theology 90* (1987): 351-356.

[21]Koyama, Kosuke. "'Building the House by Righteousness'" The Ecumenical Horizons of Minjung Theology." In A*n Emerging Theology in World Perspective: Commentary on Korean Minjung Theology*, ed. Jung Y. Lee, CN: Mysti Twenty-Third Publications, 1988) 137-152.

[22]The term global conversation of theologies was coined by Kirsten Kim and this section will follow her proposal for contextual theologies in global dialogue. See Kirsten Kim, Missiology as Global Conversation of (Contextual)Theologies, in *Mission Studies*, (Volume 21, Number 1, 2004): 39-53

but also the danger of absolutism of contextualism.'[23]Werner Ustorf, speaking out of his studies of missiology in the Nazi period when the Volkskirche idea bound theology to culture, points out that contextualization that merely affirms culture may compromise the Christian gospel and lose sight of the 'mysteries of God.' However strong the internal debate, there is no denying contextual theologies can become captive to the new cultures and lose sight of their contextuality.

This problem as Kim points out, is often compounded because of the logic of contextual theologies is often that theology in one context cannot be challenged by outsiders to that context. Because a theologian from a certain context attempts to theologize in a manner corresponding to his immediate context, it is not subject to evaluation by criteria developed in a different context.[24] This will mean as well, that contextual theologies will run the risk of relativism or become tools of ideological manipulation.

Mission in the sense of *Missio Dei,* Kim defines as 'commitment to God's loving concern for the world….an antidote to relativism in theology'. On the one hand, the missionary impulse in each theological tradition provides the motive for contextual theologizing but, on the other, it gives global awareness and provides both the impulse and the opportunity to cross boundaries between theologies.[25] If theology done in a particular context has no awareness of global concerns or interest in the theology of others, it risks the parochialism that missiology inherently challenges.

Felix Wilfred wrote: 'One of the tasks ahead is to forge greater dialogue among the various contextual and regional theologies.' Every Christian theology is influenced by certain contexts, but at the same time, it is an expression of a universal whole, a universal religion. In

[23]Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 428.

[24]Kim, 46.

[25]Kim, 46.

so far as each Christian theology is part of a whole, contextuality means not to be isolated from this whole but rather to be an integrative part of the universal unity. This plurality in unity can only function if there is a dialogue between people, between theologians of different cultural contexts. Such a dialogue across the cultural boundaries, such an intercultural dialogue prevents misunderstandings, isolation and one-sidedness.

4.2 The Romanian Context

Any attempt to formulate a framework for contextual theology is bound to analyze historical-cultural elements that influenced the shape of the theological praxis in a particular context. In order to have a grasp of the Romanian Pentecostal theological praxis, it is important to firstly identify some if its characteristic elements that are part of the broader Romanian cultural tradition. A general outline of the selected feature of the Romanian socio-political and religious context has been attempted in the first two chapters of the thesis. Following, this section will focus mainly on the Romanian Pentecostal theological identity, seeking to both understand and evaluate some historical and also existing patterns of the most influential theological features in terms of the their impact on ecclesial life and mission. It is important to outline these features as they form a background and a contextual framework for developing an integrative approach to mission theology and praxis in Romania.

4.2.1. Where Have We Come From: Coming to terms with the Changes

Since the fall of communism, one can barely reflect on the Marxist legacy in a neutral and detached way. Especially Christians have always regarded Marxism to be very irrelevant to their thinking, and it appears that the demise of communism has vindicated their position. In addition, many Western scholars fail to grasp the effects that communism as a political

form or social organization, and Marxism as an ideology, have left on the current generation, many of them whom are still in decision-making positions. Just as the Western world is tempted to interpret the collapse of communism as the victory of capitalism, so the church is tempted to interpret the collapse as the victory of Christianity. Yet, these interpretations are not true. Communism was not defeated, but collapsed under its own burden. Indeed, a system rooted in Western Christianity proved to be viable, while the other, atheism par excellence, failed. The cause of communism's failure was neither the heroic fight of the West, nor the steadfastness of the Eastern European churches. It was simply the economic impotence of the communist system.[26] Yet, not only just theologians and particularly the evangelicals, but also politician thinkers have not demonized communism enough. Communism has left it legacy deep embedded and reflected in the fact that laws passed during the communist era are still part of the constitutional basis of society. Moreover, those who held power are comfortable with the old methods, and use these methods of control they were brought up with.[27] Otherwise, in Romania would not have existed a neo-communist party that has ruled the country for virtually 15 years, with the exception of a short period of reorganization when they strengthened their public discourse and strategies. Thus, exposing the dreadful effects and consequences of communism is a task that both theologians and political thinkers need to seriously consider. If we regard communism no more than a savage, non-important part of the history, we may assume nothing to fear, and even less to learn. Yet, how we have pointed out in our research, communism has been very successful for developing and implementing 'a sense of separation which had grown throughout the nineteenth century— between social

[26]Peter Lakatos, "Denominational and Cultural Models and A Possible Ecumenical Strategy From a Romanian Context Part II: The Christian Churches and Social Responsibility," *Religion In Eastern Europe* vol.28/6 (December 1998): 16.

[27]Mark Pargeter "Communism and Religion: Telling the Story for the 21st Century," *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol.23/6 (December 2003): 52.

justice and Christian morality, and between secular radicalism and paternalistic reform.[28] One could argue that the missiological task in Romania is so urgent and so future-oriented that the experience of the past decades is irrelevant, and perhaps even paralyzing. Yet, being future oriented and effective in mission requires lucid awareness of the theological and moral resources one brings to the task. Failure to discern the inner meaning of the past decades would be to go forward with illusions. Peter Lakatos refers to Karol Toth who points out the dangers of totally ignoring the past:

> The past summarily disowned and rejected without any analysis can unequivocally be regarded as opportunism. It is high time that we should give a theological answer to our past. But this should be done as a real task of theology and not simply as an opportunistic antithesis of all theological reflections that were considered ' official theology' in the forty years of socialism. It would be a great mistake to replace the quasi-theological thinking of yesterday with another ' quasi theology' of today. We should avoid any new manipulation with theological values.[29]

We surely need to look deeper into the emergence of totalitarian, atheist, materialist communism, with its repressive and genocidal policies. Yet, as Leonid Kishkovsky proposes, the task of assessing the past should not stop only with the emergence of communism, but must go deeper into the history of the twentieth century. He says, that as Christians ' we have the moral obligation to look more deeply into the troubled history of our time. Nazi ideology and Nazi totalitarianism emerged in Germany, in a society divided between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Thus, the twentieth century has seen massive apostasy from Christian faith in societies deeply influenced for centuries by Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism.'[30] In addition, the attempt to evaluate the period before 1989 must take into consideration several aspects regarding the Pentecostals in this area. They suffer and have suffered discrimination not only from the secular and atheistic state authorities, but also from

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[28]Babiuch, *The Eastern European Church After Communism*, 6.

[29]Lakatos, *Denominational and Cultural Models and a possible ecumenical strategy from a Romanian context Part II*, 16.

[30]Leonid Kishkovsky, "The Oradea Declaration: An Orthodox Reflection," 166. *Unpublished draft.*

the pressure of ancient churches – Orthodox and Catholics. Pentecostals by contrast are minorities not rooted in the ancient religion, which is often closely bound with ethnic and national identities, so that Pentecostals seem to outsiders, and maybe to recent incomers, with shallow local roots. As pointed out by Earl Pope, representatives of an interfaith delegation from United States observed in Romania 'an alarming absence of any feeling for religious and ethnic pluralism' that was marked by 'strained relations, inter-ethnic friction and inter-religious strife.'[31]As such, the question arises: Why be then concerned for an effective Pentecostal mission in these places? What is the contribution of Pentecostal Christianity when there is no chance that it will ever be more than a marginal minority?[32] Pentecostals can contribute towards breeding a new generation of theologians that are free from nationalistic and ethnic mind-sets who can contribute to the understanding of pluralism, both religious and political. They have a special responsibility to provide positive models for a society, which is still struggling to find its way towards reconciliation, justice, and truth at many different levels.[33] The way there as suggested by Laszlo Tokes starts with the realization that' the church in Romania must convert and…be cleansed' to be the instrument of God to transform society, promote universal reconciliation, and create a 'new dignified and just world order.' The starting point of the theological analysis must be repentance, not self-triumphalism. It must be acknowledged that the church survived not because, but in spite of, its attitude. As Tokes pointed out in all likelihood, 'this task will be at least as difficult as it was to stand in opposition to the dictatorship.'[34]

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[31] Earl A. Pope, "The Role of Religion in the Romanian Revolution," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol.12/2 (March 1992): 13.

[32]Haddon Willmer, "Post-Communism," *Transformation,* vol.16/1 (January 1999): 14.

[33]Pope, *The Role of Religion in the Romanian Revolution*, 13.

[34] László Tökés, "The possible role of Rumania's Churches in the Social Renewal of the Country," *Religion in Eastern Europe,* [Online.] Available at

4.3. Social Factors that shaped the Church's Engagement in Society

4.3.1. The Legacies of the Past

In what follows, we will look at some areas of Church life that were influenced to the greatest extent by communism. The focus will on those aspects, which deal with the reminiscences of communism that has had impact on the relationship between Church and Society.

4.3.2 The impact of Theological Activity

Possibilities for theological training were almost inexistent under communist regime. As such, Romanian Pentecostals had never had a written, formal theology. The inexistence of theological training was supplied in the ministry of the church by an informal set of principles that were held in common, mainly through oral tradition. This has often led to the presence of many inconsistent concepts and a general minimalization of the role of theology in the church. It came to be understood as something remote from the life of believers – all that one needed was to walk with God and to do His will. In such a framework, problems and questions were resolved on an ad-hoc basis. The consequences of this stance became obvious after the fall of the communism.[35]

What is the situation today after more than a decade since the fall of communism? Many Christians still believe that theology is something that is to be regarded as completely irrelevant. Many keep on believing that all that Christian life is all about is for one to walk with God in one's life and to do His will. Due to the lack in theological training and due to

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http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/TOKES.html. Accessed January 10, 2004.

[35]Mark J. Harris, *Historical Perspectives of the Evangelistic theology and methodology in Eastern European Evangelicalism* (Portland: Community Vision International, 1999), 8.

naïve openness to all kinds of movements many Evangelicals have imported Western disputes, which are not relevant to the Romanian context.[36]

4.3.3. The impact on the mentality of Christians

To be an active Christian in a communist society meant to be a second-class citizen, with everything that comes with that (prejudices, limited opportunities, etc.). This had a tremendous impact on attitudes and ways of thinking.

Many Christians had a special kind of 'inferiority complex'. To be recognized as a believer was something similar to living with a physical handicap. In spite of the responsibility to 'go out and preach the Gospel', they tended to spent most of their time with fellow Christians, preferably from the same denomination. To keep the faith and pass it on to one's children was the supreme goal - and of course, not easily achieved.

There was strong pressure to keep faith and religion in the private sphere which had nothing, or very little, to do with public life (political or professional). In the minds of many Christians this dichotomy became deeply rooted. Just to identify with Christianity, to say 'I am a Christian', was usually a brave act, sometimes with existential consequences (being dismissed from university or scientific institutes, lower wages, children not allowed to study, etc.)[37]

Although there are many Christians trying to integrate their faith with what they are doing, still now after more than a decade since the fall of communism a majority of Pentecostals still live in two separate worlds. This stance is reflected in the Christian literature that dominates the market in Romania. There are only few or no articles in Christian

[36]Manastireanu, *Evangelical Denominations in Post-Communist Romania – I*, 7-10.

[37]Kusnierik, *Evangelicals in Central and Eastern Europe*, 25.

magazines that deal with important issues in society, such as nationalism, crime, privatization, unemployment, or other economic, social or political problems.

One of the most damaging reminiscence of communism on the life of church and society has been what Marsh Moyle identified as *lack of responsibility* both in church and in the public life. Responsibility for public life is critically underestimated, especially in smaller Protestant denominations. This is caused by the seemingly hopeless efforts to change, or at least influence, anything. Campaigning and lobbying are very unusual practices - although it is slowly changing. Another reason could be an insufficient theological background for such actions.

This is a general problem in all post-communist societies, and as such is present in the Romanian Pentecostal denominations. Christians get lost in the complexities of public life simply because they do not ask fundamental theological questions. To questions such as 'Who is responsible for my wellbeing? Who is responsible for the education of my children? Who is responsible for the environment I live in? The answer was the state and its institutions. Because I can do nothing! I am an insignificant small wheel in a big machine. And politics, education, economics, etc. are not my business anyway.[38] This attitude proves that we do not have a strong sense of responsibility for the public life of the society. We are convinced that is entirely the responsibility of the state apparatus to take care of it.[39]

[38]Kusnierik, Evangelicals in Central and Eastern Europe. 25.

[39]Ibid. In relation to this issue, Peter Lakatos points out that such an attitude "is easy to understand, since strict state control actually prevented any private or independent initiative. The fact that the state provided employment, housing, education, and medical care, etc. suggested that the socialist state takes care of its citizens and that private enterprises are useless.' 'Part II: A Possible Ecumenical Strategy From a Romanian Context – Church and Social Responsibility," in *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol.18/6 (December 1998): 18.

4.3.4. The Impact on the Strength and Influence of Traditions

The strength and influence of traditions grew during the forty years of communism. This was in keeping with the general atmosphere towards anything new or innovative. Outreach and communication between the Church and the society around it were limited or non-existent. This helped preserve older traditions as well as create new ones.

The subcultures created by various denominations had their roots in the fifties when the churches had to struggle seriously for survival under stiff Stalinist oppression. However, traditions played an important role even when it was not so necessary. They gave many Christians a certain level of identity. Certain traditions were actually misunderstood as a sign of separation from a sinful world. The result was sometimes on the edge of absurdity. For example, having a beard has been considered a serious sin in some communities.[40]

A specific language was created by a ghetto mentality (especially among the smaller evangelical denominations). It was usually very different from the common language spoken by the rest of society. As such, evangelical language was confined to its newly developed subculture and, as such, was perceived as very alien to the secular population. Empty traditions are becoming barriers for the modern sceptical population. Accepting traditions is often mistaken for accepting Christianity.[41]

[40]Moyle, "Shadows of the Past: The Lingering Effects of the Communist Mindset in the Church and Society," in *Transformation*, vol.16/1 (January 1999): 18-19.

[41]Ibid.

4.3.5. The Impact on Church's Structures

During the 40 years of atheistic dominance, the communist countries were organized and governed centrally. It is also no surprise to find out that all other registered organizations, including churches, were forced by the authorities to centralize decision-making. As such, the leadership of the church had no influence beyond the walls of the church. They withdrew and complied with the serving in their congregation. The centralized structure of the church was soon understood to be quite natural and, after all, the only right (biblical) way a church should function. A soon as freedom from communism came many tried to stretch the bounds of possibility.[42] In spite of this, in certain areas in the church the authoritarian aspects persist. As such, there has not been much change in terms of making and accepting decisions even today. A lingering tendency to 'keep the church under control' even now, where dictatorial tendencies have prevailed, where leaders still serve only in their enclaves and do not look outside.[43] Where many did not learn to carry responsibility, it is interesting to note that in the context of the vacuum created by communism many pastors feel over-responsible for the well-being of their believers even to the extent of taking full responsibility for their personal decisions, relationships, and the quality of their family life.[44] The methods that are used by some of the leaders are the practice of insensitive and emotional manipulation. The results are a weak and unappealing church that is full of passive church members.[45]

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[42]Janos Pasztor, *Our Mission Today: Perspectives on the Church in Post-Communist Europe*. Unpublished.

[43]Josep Pungur, *An Eastern European Liberation Theology* (Calgary: Angelus, 1992), 110-116.

[44]Anne Marie-Kool "A Protestant Perspective on Mission in Central and Eastern Europe," in *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol.20/6 (December 2000): 6. Juraj Kusnierik gives here an example of how a pastor told a gifted musician to change his vocation since it is not good for a Christian to be musician. *Struggling with the Past.* 3.

[45]"The Kingdom of God and the Kingdoms of the World," in *Mission as Transformation: A Theology of the Whole Gospel*, Vinay Samuel & Chris Sugden editors (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1999): 494

This means that the attitudes of the era of dictatorship linger on. We all know that one did not dare to critique the ruling party, but was punished: prison or isolation might have been the result. Sadly, this fear nurtured by some church leaders is still alive in the form of another survival mechanism practiced during the communism. Some react to this by withdrawal as in the case of the younger generation who is extremely sensitive toward imposed control and manipulation.[46]

4.3.6. The Impact on Church's activities

The social activities of the Pentecostals were considered by communist extremely dangerous and as such, they were very limited. As already pointed, the only activities that were allowed had to be carried out behind the thick walls of churches and Christian communities. With the exception of the dark era of persecution during the 1950's most of the Pentecostals were not persecuted in the traditional meaning of the word, one was permitted to practice his faith as long he or she kept it only in his or her private life. The same applies to registered churches or Christian organizations.[47]

The State also decided which forms were acceptable and which were not. A Church choir, for example, was ' permitted,' a Bible study group was not. A logical solution was to have a choir that would sing nice songs but the point was the Bible study program behind it.[48]

Most Pentecostal churches still recall, in living memory, the negative attitudes of secular society held towards them. This strengthens of being a small, unimportant group of

[46]Moyle, *Shadows of the Past: The Lingering Effects of the Communist Mindset in the Church and Society*. 18. In the same context, Iosif Ton points out the dictatorship tendencies among the leaders of the Evangelical Churches expressed in the way they treat their people with the same harshness of the former boses. *Key Theological Themes Needing Attention in the Post-Communist Europe.* 9. Unpublished.

[47]Don Rogers, "Churches in Romania," [Online.] Available at http://www.united.edu/romania/rom-ch.shtml. Accessed 10 05 2003.

[48]Kusnierik, *Shadows of the Past*, 24.

good people in a hostile environment. One of the essential ambitions of the Christian church is to reach out from itself into the secular world. This minority attitude reinforces the tendency toward uniformity, strong loyalty to the group, isolation from the outside world and the black-and-white concept of the world common in most evangelical communities.[49]

Churches are aware that they cannot be completely isolated from society. One of the core values of evangelicals is to witness to the non-Christian world. They have to communicate to get new converts, church members and supporters. A certain level of openness is necessary. If the level of openness is low, the outside world is perceived as 'enemy territory'. This is expressed by the attitude 'he who is not with us is against us'.

Complete isolation from the world is not only wrong, it is also impossible. The 'world' penetrates small Christian communities in various ways. Christians have no other place to live than the world as it is expressed in their particular cultural context. Some areas of culture (such as politics, philosophy or rock music) are seen as a threat to Christian group identity. Involvement in them is discouraged and suppressed.[50]

The way out of this theologically weak and culturally irrelevant Christianity is to learn, think and talk about the greatness of the church, which is the body of Christ. It is greater than a small group meeting behind closed doors in small, dimly lit rooms. Studying church history, communication with other Christians, getting information about what is going on in the Christian world – all this might help in the struggle with our sense of smallness.

Another important subject, which might help in overcoming the barriers between church community and the outside world, is the question of identity. The Church in all of its expressions and forms should build its identity on Jesus Christ and not on the weak legs of denominational, institutional and cultural peculiarity. The community, which gathers around

[49]Jaura, *Taboos in Central European Church*, 14-15.

[50]Ibid.

the corporate knowing and adoration of God, corporate seeking and discovering His thoughts about this world, does not need to be afraid of openness. It does not need to be afraid of the world in which it should be salt and light.

4.3.7. The Sacred Secular Divide

In this section, we will look at some aspects of the coexistence of Christian communities and society. The society that is, in one sense, around our churches, but of which we also are a part - whether we like it or not. Pentecostals have found themselves always in a permanent and, probably, unavoidable, tension in their attitudes to the ' world outside'. On the one hand, they give much of their time and energy to evangelism, to crossing the imaginary walls of their churches with the saving news of the Gospel. On the other hand, they want to grow in holiness, in their intimate personal relationship with God - and by doing that foster those imaginary walls. In the following section, we will try to capture the essence and atmosphere of this tension.

Traditional analysis of why the Church has failed to make an impact in the public sphere has tended to focus on a whole host of external factors – ideological, technological and economic. All these factors are said to have combined in the post-war period to relegate faith – all faiths – to the private sphere. Faith was reduced to a matter for personal, private reflection. It was put in a compartment. It had no place in the public arena, whether that be in work, school or politics. Faith ceased to be the central organizing principle that informed all of life and all of life's decisions and actions.[51]

According to Mark Greene, the problem with blaming social conditions for the irrelevance of Church is that it is based on the assumption that Christian doctrines and

[51]Mark Greene, *Imagine: How can we reach the UK* (London: LICC, 2003), 12.

lifestyle have no power to resist their onslaught. In other words, we blame the world for the demise of Christian values, and perhaps do not ask ourselves to what extent we might be responsible.[52]

The primary reason Christianity has had little impact on the public sphere is not because the world has privatized the Gospel but we have. In the light of extensive research, more than half of church attendees say that the teaching they receive in their churches is irrelevant to their daily lives. When looked closely at the situation one understands the church teaching is least helpful when it comes to where people spend most of their time, namely at home and work. The core issue is the relevance of the message to people's lives. The problem is not primarily one of form but one of content.[53]

A drop in the practice of spiritual disciplines parallels the drop in the perceived relevance of church's teaching to daily life. This reaction is not surprising given the fact that all too often contemporary preaching is unable to contextualize the teaching of the Bible to the 21st century context. In consequence, Christians spend less time in focused reflection on God and less time with people who share their worldview and their concerns.[54] The practice of spiritual disciplines did not cease because people are uninterested but because they are not anymore sure that God has something to say about how to live in this world or that prayer will make any difference in their daily lives. This is a tragedy evangelistically because millions of people are seeking to find meaning for their existence. People may not be directly interested in the Gospel, but many are interested in how to choose a career, a partner, make a marriage work, raise their kids and thrive economically. The failure to connect the word of God with daily living applies to many Pentecostal churches across Romania. Therefore, even

[52]Greene, *Imagine,* 14

[53]Ibid.

[54]Ibid.

before we get to the question of whether the Church is successfully carrying out its missionary task we have to deal with the reality that many Christians simply do not see the compelling relevance of Christianity to their daily Christian lives. Why?

Inheriting, as Pentecostals traditionally do, a negative attitude towards culture and intellectual matters, most Romanian Pentecostals manifest a dualistic and Platonic approach to life. The dualistic platonic approach involves the pervasive belief that going to church must be considered 'more holy' than going to a movie, preaching must be a 'more blessed activity' than speaking at a political gathering, sharing the Gospel with an unbeliever must be more important than selling peaches at the marketplace.[55]

Danut Manastireanu gives an example of this approach to life as being the obsession with full-time ministry as the highest possible calling. The result has been the tendency of many young people to leave promising professional careers to become pastors and evangelists. Given the shortage of people in ministry, this may be explained as necessary, but when it is prompted by a deformed and unbiblical perception of reality and definition of Christian ministry, it can have disastrous effects on the incarnation of the Gospel in Romanian society. This trend is especially promoted by Western missionary agencies who recruit for a very low price gifted young people to further their specific activities. What Western agencies do not realize is that their actions often to creating divisions in the local churches by depriving them of their best people.

Consequently, because of the sacred-secular divide that many Christians in the Pentecostal communities do not get significant support for their work from the teaching, prayer, worship, pastoral or community aspects of church life. It is because of the sacred-secular divide that Pentecostals have not developed an interest in theology of work. This is exemplified by the fact that one can rarely if ever hear a sermon on works. In addition, our

[55]Kusnierik, *Evangelicals in Central Europe*, 45.

support in prayer goes to the people who are involved in Christian ministry per se but we never or rarely pray for those who work in secular jobs. The sacred-secular divide has led to the belief that involvement in the local church once a week is more important than the daily secular job.[56]

This narrow view of ministry and the absence of a theology of calling are among the distinct features of the Pentecostals in Romania. One can trace these attitudes back to their pietistic roots with its narrow view of spirituality as a personal, existential and emotional awareness of relationship with God. Another root lies in the experience of communism, which limited the public expression of Christianity into a private, religious sphere of life.[57]

What has been the impact of the sacred-secular divide on the missiological praxis of the Pentecostals in the Romanian context? As Andrew Kirk argues, 'the dichotomy is fatal to a coherent view of mission, for it allows a particular culture to believe that the message of the gospel is applicable only to some esoteric segments of life – what people do in private.'[58] The sacred-secular divide, which keeps our daily lives separated from our church lives, has led to flawed theologies of the Church and outreach. The impact of the sacred-secular divide has led to see the ' church gathered' as more important than the ' church scattered.' Indeed, the vast majority of church evangelistic initiatives have tended to be domestically focused and pastor-centred. The goal becomes to get non-believers into a domestic or church context to listen to a pastor as opposed to get the non-believer into relationship with Christ through a relationship with a Christian.

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[56]Greene, *Imagine.* 15.

[57]Kusnierik and Marsh Moyle, *Trends in Central and Eastern Europe – Ten Year Later*, (Bratislava: SEN, 1999), 33.

[58]J. Andrew Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations* (London: Darton, Logman, and Todd Ltd. 1999), 214.

In consequence, many resources are invested in trying to work out how to make the church a place people will want to come to, and little energy working out how we can train Christians to make the most of the places they already go to.[59] This leads to the tendency to develop what Dave Tomlinson calls 'a parallel universe' of the Christian subculture.[60] Within this subculture, Christians create imitations of things in the wider culture within which they can remain safe.[61] This has to with a Romanian Pentecostal perspective which is negative, and which regards the whole society outside the church as evil, 'while creating a dated subculture within which unknowingly apes many of the worst features of consumer society.' 'Wherever such an attitude towards culture predominates, a practice of 'sanctification through withdrawal and protection' is applied.[62]

In consequence, the sacred-secular divide has profoundly affected who does evangelism, in what contexts and in what ways. It has led to a situation where the missionary praxis of the evangelicals has ignored where many people spend most of their time – at work, at school, at college – and focused instead on where they spend less time and have fewer relationships. We have rather allowed the location of the church building and the expertise of the pastor to determine the scope of our missionary activity, rather than the location of God's people and their potential. [63]

However, the division of life into secular and profane compartments is not in line with the legacy of historic biblical Christianity, especially not with its Protestant expression. If

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[59]Greene, *Imagine.* 15.

[60]Dave Tomlinson, *The Post Evangelical* (London: Triangle, 1995), 124.

[61]Pete Ward, "The Tribes of Evangelicalism," in *The Post Evangelical Debate*, Graham Cray and others (London: Triangle, 1997): 24-25.

[62]Graham Cray "The Post-Evangelical Debate," *in The Post-Evangelical Debate*, Graham Cray and Others (London: Triangle, 1997): 10.

[63]Paul Weston, "Pathways to Faith: Reflections on Congregational Evangelism," in *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, vol.16/1 (Spring 1998): 54-55.

God is the Creator and Ruler of the whole world, if there is no place, where His sovereignty is limited; if the Gospel really is the good news about the renewed relationship between God and His creation, then there is no profane activity, no 'non-sacred' area of our lives. The key to mission and social transformation in Romania is expressed very well by Leslie Newbigin who states 'the primary action of the Church in the world is the action of its members in their daily work.'[64]

4.4. Pentecostals versus Orthodox: Crossing Paths and Crossing Swords

Christopher Dawson, in *Dynamics of World History*, makes the remark that 'it is above all necessary to free the religious issue of all the extraneous motives that take their rise in unconscious social conflicts...[for] as long as those remain unsolved, religion is at the mercy of the blind forces of hatred and suspicion which may assume really pathological forms.' He thus calls for 'the purging of the mind from the lower motives which may contaminate our faith [and which allow] our religious attitude to be determined by forces that are not religious at all.'[65]

Starting from this observation by Dawson the present section attempts to apply his suggestion to a realm where religion has been responsible for more 'hatred and suspicion' than any other single area, that of proselytism.

According to Miroslav Volf, 'one needs not be an expert in Eastern European Christianity to know that at the very centre of religious turmoil are the issues of mission and

[64]Leslie Newbigin, *A Word in Season: Perspectives on World Christian World Missions*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Company, 1994), 154.

[65]Christopher Dawson, *Dynamics of World History,* ed. by John J. Mulloy, (Peru, Illinois: Sherwood, Sugden & Co., 1957), 87.

proselytism.'[66] John Witte describes the situation as 'a new war for souls has broken out in these regions – a fight to reclaim the traditional cultural and moral souls of these new societies and a fight to retain adherents and adherence to indigenous faiths.'[67] As Romanian Orthodox theologian describes, the Pentecostal Churches and Western missionary agencies show no respect for the Christian tradition of the country, and view the religious vacuum of the post-communist Romania as an alibi 'to fill the gap and conquer a new religious public.'[68] Volf brings the problem of proselytism back to a difference in missiological theologies. Thus, the Orthodox do not consider Romania as 'terra missionis' but rather as a country, people, and culture that are inextricably related to the Orthodox faith from the origins. The Pentecostals, however, view all the people of Romania as their legitimate, indeed divinely mandated, mission field and claim that only by a personal decision for Christ in an evangelical, biblical community could one gain truly salvation. [69]

Consequently, the Pentecostals are considered a dangerous sect, of foreign Western influence, which in its various fragmented forms poses a threat to the national and religious heritage. However, the antagonism is not one-sided. The negative reaction of the Orthodox Church to what Pentecostals present as the gospel just confirms that they need to be evangelized. All too often, Pentecostal's first point of evangelistic endeavour involves harsh criticism of the Orthodox Church. Whatever church is predominant in one area, it slanders the other denominations.

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[66]Miroslav Volf, "Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond: 'Mission and Proselytism in Eastern Europe," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20/1 (1996): 26.

[67]John Witte, "Introduction: Pluralism, Proselytism and Nationalism in Eastern Europe," in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol.36/1-2 (Winter-Spring 1999): 3.

[68]Ioan Bria, "Evangelism, Proselytism, and Religious Freedom in Romania: An Orthodox Point of View," Journal of Ecumenical Studies 36/1-2 (1999): 173.

[69]Kent R. Hill, "Christian Mission, Proselytism and Religious Liberty: A Protestant Appeal for Christian Tolerance and Unity," *Religion, State & Society*, 25/4 (1997): 323.

Thus, slander may be the worst element that permeates the Romanian religious context and threatens the relevance of the church. It is clear that there is an ecumenical crisis in Romania that has posed serious problems not only for the churches but also for the society for which they hoped to become positive models of tolerance and ecumenism.

I want also to underline briefly that the conflict over mission and proselytism is not confined only to the encounter between Pentecostals and the established churches. It involves also the established Pentecostal churches who accuse the newer movements such as charismatics with the charge of proselytism. As such, they have never accepted these expressions as part of their movements.

According to German missiologist Joachim Wietzke the time has come that a 'position of polite detachment' in relation to 'these Protestant fundamentalist movements' is not enough: 'what is called on their part is a public condemnation of any form of proselytism.'[70] He also requires a change in attitude on the Orthodox side. It should be pointed out to the Orthodox that 'branding the missionary activities of these Christian minorities as proselytism reveals a traditional view of homogenous denominational states for which there is no place in a plural Europe any longer.'[71]

4.5 Structural Expansion

Another problem that poses our attention is the preoccupation of Romanian Pentecostalism with its structural expansion at the expense of its contact with society. In this sense, one of the most widespread mission strategies has been to send missionaries to the villages to start church plants. Toward this end, there is an Alliance for Saturation Church

[70]Joachim Wietzke, "Christian Witness in Eastern Europe and Central Asia," in *Mission Studies*, vol.XI-1/21 (1994): 68.

[71]Ibid., 63.

planting. If in 1989 there were close to 400 evangelical churches in Romania, today there are over 2,500 churches. Therefore, the decadal growth for churches that have been started has been between 125% and 165%. Yet, even though the number of the churches had increased dramatically not all the evangelical denominations has experienced significant growth in membership. A first explanation for the behind the drive for church plantings lies in the fact that under the old regime many Pentecostal groups did not receive the right to be constituted as a local church. As soon as the opportunity arose evangelicals formed new churches. It is, of course, understandable and necessary that, after the collapse of Communist rule, the church should rebuild its own battered infrastructure. However, the size of the buildings constructed today often exceeds the present and even the foreseeable needs of the congregations. At the same time, most of the funds for these projects come from the West. This is understandable in Romania's present economic condition, but it has created at times an unhealthy financial dependence and it has affected the feeling of ownership and responsibility that the believers should have for their churches.[72] Moreover, it would be a mistake, just the same, to concentrate on expanding its structural expansion while ignoring the doubts and anxieties of the society within and around it.[73] The emphasis on strengthening its position using legal and institutional mechanism may rather point out that the church still feels weak and disoriented and thus has been lulled into silence on the many grave new problems confronting society – poverty and unemployment, nationalism and xenophobia, insecurity and hostility to refugees.[74]As Manastireanu concludes, although the majority of the Pentecostals are convinced that change is a necessity, it appears the solutions proposed often only touch the surface, rather than the spiritual core of the problems.

[72] Manastireanu, *Evangelical Denominations in Post-Communist Romania – I*, 7-10.

[73]Jolanta Babiuch, "The Eastern European Church After Communism: Seeking New Ways to Serve – or new enemies to fight," in *East-West Church Ministry Report* vol.5/1 (winter 1997): 5-6.

[74]Ibid.

A second factor that played a role in the priority for church planting process has been that dogmatic, practical, or personal differences among believers resulted in the unnecessary fragmentation of existing communities. According to Kool, many argue that the incentive for the priority to planting new churches in these countries is given with the statistical fact that hardly any 'viable' churches are available, which can reproduce them. Thus, instead of working on the revitalization of the existing churches they chose to give priority to starting new ones.[75] Juraj Kusnierik questions whether this approach to church planting is effective. 'Saturating' a country with churches might be a good motivational goal in itself, but if that means, 'reproducing small, closed, theologically superficial and culturally irrelevant communities, the spiritual impact might actually be quite marginal'[76]

In this context it safe to ask together with Kusnierik: 'why do we think 'our' alternative will work better? He argues that church planting should not be made a single objective in and of itself, because then we mistake the essence of what the Church is.

> We need to address issues of quality at least as much as issues of quantity. A cynic might say that God does not want more churches that are introverted and do not honor his name or climb beyond a vision of a village God. First, we must raise our vision of God and His kingdom and then talk about increasing the number of locations at which He is worshiped.[77]

It is obvious that all too often the church planting movement tend to focus more on quantitative growth than qualitative growth. It tends to drive the missionary to struggle to show their success in the form of tangible results – a new church or churches planted. Besides, there is a tendency to try to reproduce the home church in all its forms and doctrines. All too often, this leads to denominational rivalries and ecclesiastical imperialism in relation

[75]Kool, *Protestant Perspective on Mission*, 13.

[76]Kusnierik and Moyle, *Trends – Ten Years On,* 27.

[77]Ibid.

to the new churches.[78] In this case, we can agree with Kusnierik that it does not help us at all to have more introverted churches, but it would great if a lot of our effort will go into transforming the existing churches into communities that are culturally relevant and might have a greater spiritual impact on society.

Sadly, many of the Western missionaries that came to Romania in the first 12 years after revolution did not make personal mentoring a priority in ministry formation – instead lots of foundations and associations were established, projects and new churches were begun and new denominational flags were planted, in many cases drawing the younger people into these new institutions and away from the established churches.

4.6 When the East meets the West: Church and Mission between Individualism and Collectivism

The idea of Christian mission was associated until the fall of communism, with going to distant exotic countries to bring the gospel to those who never heard it before. The activities of missionaries in Eastern Europe were usually secret. In the immediate aftermath of Communism, many thousands came through the 'window of opportunity' to meet the needs of the church. The unprecedented opportunities for mission in Eastern Europe found the churches in these countries with a living faith purified through fire, but lacking resources in many ways significantly weak in leadership and resources. Alternatively, the Western Churches did not undergo the fire of persecution, have experienced a significant development of resources for mission and individual initiative.[79] It became commonplace in the West to

[78]Cyril C. Okorocha, "Scripture, Mission and Evangelism," *The Anglican Communion and Scripture*, John Stott and Others (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1996): 67.

[79]Paul Negrut, "Church and Mission: An Eastern European Perspective," in *Transformation* 16/1 (January 1999): 21-22.

affirm that 'Eastern Europe is a mission field…The opportunities are now to reach Eastern Europe for Christ.'[80]

The existing mission strategies are often seen as a kind of 'hit and run' or 'terrorist evangelism' in which western Christians arrive with 'outdated translations of the Bible,' share the 'born again' salvation principles and leave the new 'convert' in isolation and without support to 'die on the vine.' This new convert often feels as though he has tried Christianity and that it offers nothing but disappointment.[81] As such, there are strong warnings that in their desire to help many of the Western missionaries have ignored many key principles of missionary endeavour.[82]

The response from Eastern European Christians displays a variety of opinions ranging from unselective acceptance to unselective rejection of foreign missionaries. One example is that of a Russian Baptist minister who launched the following appeal:

To all missions and churches in Norway, Sweden, Finland, USA, Great Britain, Germany and Canada. Murmansk Christian Mission, 'Good Samaritan', asks for help and support in Jesus' name. We need videocassette players, films in Russian language, books and more. People in Russia are very open to the gospel now. We need to develop our Christian work and fulfil the proclamation of God's word.[83]

Alternatively, when asked by a Western Christian ' How can the church in the West help you?' and an Eastern European minister answered: First, pray; second pray; third pray and please stay away!'

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[80]R. Davies, *After Gorbachev? How can Western Christian Help* (Eastbourne: MARK, 1991), 17.

[81]Peter Lowman, "European Missions at the End of the Cold War," *The Brethren Contribution to the Worldwide Mission of the Church*, Harold H. Rowdon ed., (Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 1994): 104 – 105.

[82]R. Davies, *After Gorbachev?* 25.

[83]Ibid.

Western missionaries are equally unclear regarding how to involve in the Romanian religious life. Thus, opinions are ranging from private and organized Christian tourism in the area: alongside trips to Jerusalem and Obermagau are offers of hands-on experience with Churches in Eastern Europe – blatantly items of curiosity as never before. 'Adverts detail: Come meet real Christians!'[84]

On the other side, Josef Ton suggests that there can be a fruitful cooperation between East and West. He affirms:

> In all Eastern European Countries, there is a rush from hundreds of organizations in the West to do mission there. Some of them do good, some of them not so good, some of them do bad things…It would be much better if someone who is serious and really means to help would say, ' We see that you don' t have a children' s ministry. We have a project for you. Here is exactly what we can do for you. Here is how much money we are prepared to spend on helping you develop this children's ministry.' If you do not have such a project and you are not ready to spend money, do not go there to deceive people into believing that you are there because you want to help.[85]

As Negrut rightly concludes, it looks like ' projects' and ' money' are the marks of missiological correctness regardless of the fact that such ' projects' may be or not needed in Eastern Europe. All attempts to strategize and coordinate the missionary work in Eastern Europe focuses on resources, projects, results, frustrations, misunderstanding, and the like. It is no wonder that there is no mention about what the Church and its missionary mandate should be.[86] Consequently, all attempts to strategize and coordinate the missionary work in Eastern Europe focused on resources, projects, results, frustrations, misunderstanding, and the like. The pressure to meet the expectations of the donors at home for success stories made it difficult for missionaries to work in places that were less visible. As such planting one' s own flag, establishing a 'satellite' organization of a Christian 'multi-national,' were pointing

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[84]B. Jose, *Current and Future Trends in Central and Eastern Europe* (Leesdorf-Baden: Austria, 1990), 14.

[85]Ton, *Toward Reformation in Romania*, 1-2.

[86]Paul Negrut, "Western Ministry in the East: Sorting Out Praise and Condemnation," *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, vol.7/1 (Winter 1999): 10.

that at the centre of everything was the demand to raise more money. Thus, a great factor that influences the way missions is done is the way missions is funded in Romania and its implications for missions.

The theme of missions and money started to be addressed back in 1988 by John Bonk. The Western missionary enterprise is money intensive, Bonk said, and secondly, the western missionary is part of affluent society. Further, Bonk outlined the hidden costs in effectiveness and credibility of western missions. First, possession of wealth makes western missionary insulation highly probable. The indicators are evident in the type of housing missionaries seem to need, the appliances they import, the brimming medicine cabinets, insurance policies, the costly mobility, educational opportunities for children, vacations, and numerous technological aids, the ever-necessary computer.[87] Another thesis Bonk developed was that insular affluence of the missionary makes independence possible, segregation from local colleagues necessary, and isolation from the poor unavoidable. Third, the independence, segregation and isolation resulting from the missionary affluence translate into an unbridgeable gulf between rich and poor, thus making fraternal friendship virtually impossible. Fourth, the personal affluence of the missionary in a context of poverty therefore raises legitimate doubts concerning a missionary's willingness to obey and ability to teach the whole counsel of God regarding mammon. As a result, Bonk pointed out that the money, power based strategies, and statuses generated by the institutional and personal affluence of western missionaries contradict principles, which are at the heart of Christian mission as described in the New Testament, namely an incarnational style.[88] Therefore, he and we must ask – does this not mean that both the motives and the message of affluent missionaries are

[87]Jonathan J. Bonk, "Mission and Mammon: Six theses," *Ministry and Theology in Global Perspective: Contemporary Challenges for the Church,* Don A. Pitmann, Ruben L.F. Habito, Terry C. Muck, eds. (Grand Rapids, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996): 309.

[88]Ibid., 311.

suspect. How can the missionary challenge toward a way of life he is himself unwilling to live?

Now, fifteen years later, the truth of his concern is more relevant when we have the world of post-communist Eastern Europe in contrast to the first and third - in view. The economic prognoses are bleak for any return of the second world to the standards of first world affluence. When one visits places across Eastern Europe or visits so many smaller cities where factories are no longer working, or travels past miles of former state farms not in use, one begins to personalize the condition. This points us to manifested unwillingness of Westerners to comprehend other worlds and relate to them. Yet, as Walter Sawatsky points us, the mission societies now a days tend to get lots of volunteers for short-term missions that are of ever shorter duration and greater individual cost. Often these are narcissistic missionaries, persons who want a quick immersion somewhere, with an eye open for the quickest escape route, but they want an experience that will help them meet God, and have that epiphany to make faith worthwhile.[89]

4.7. Impact on Leadership training

During the communist regime, possibilities for theological training were greatly restricted in Romania. Seminary training, although allowed, was closely monitored by government through restricting the number of students who could attend seminary. The inexistence of theological training was supplied in the ministry of the church by an informal set of principles that were held in common, mainly through oral tradition.

In the early years following the dissolution of communism, the newly formed Pentecostal churches created an acute need for pastors. Thus, the most important priority was

[89]Walter Sawatsky, "Without God We Cannot, Without Us God Won't – Thoughts on God's Mission Within CIS in the Future," *Slavic Evangelicals in Mission* (Prague IBTS Lectures), Unpublished Draft. Used by permission from the Lecturer.

to solve the issue of the shortage of pastors. In such a framework, ordaining lay pastors without formal theological training was the only option. Unfortunately, most of the leaders promoted were incompetent theologically and without an obvious calling for full-time ministry. They were somewhat easy to ordain and set in place, but difficult or impossible to remove if they proved to be unfit for the job. In addition, the Romanian church leadership style often portrayed a mix of control and fear. On one hand, this has to do with inherited forms of the communist leadership mentality. The basic attitude incalculated in every one who has given even the smallest position of authority or leadership was class hatred. In this context, no opposition was to be tolerated. As a result, everybody who held a leading position at any level, even the lowest clerks, became sour, harsh and dictatorial. Josef Ton points out that pastors treat their people with the same harshness of the former bosses. Moreover, as soon as one is promoted in a leadership position, one becomes a little dictator.

A second step that was taken in relation to the issue of shortage of pastors was to train them via seminaries. One of greatest challenges facing the theological seminaries in the early years has been the lack of qualified teachers. The temporary solution that was adopted was to import theology teachers from the West. This has led to an almost exclusive theological dependence upon the West. As pointed out by Wesley and Cheryl Brown, in a recent issue of *Tranformation* dealing with theological training in Eastern Europe, Americans frequently attempt to use money to control the theological orientation and curriculum of the schools in Central and Eastern Europe. In other cases, American missionary organization assured seminaries of its financial support provided the Americans could appoint the faculty and bring whomever they wished to teach from North America. Some organization seemed to believe that only they have the correct theology and know with whom the seminary should associate. Their desire to control reveals a theological aggressiveness, clothed in the language

of theological imperialism, which portrays distrust in the Holy Spirit's ability to lead Central and Eastern European Christians.[90]

A third approach taken has been to send promising young people to study theology in the West. Although this has brought promising results it also had its own risks. First, some of the Pentecostal churches have been hesitant to accept young people who are theologically trained and paid by the congregation. Especially the first generations of students who graduated from the seminary were received with great difficulty, especially by the older generations of believers. A number of older pastors who lacked opportunities for theological training felt threatened by a seminarian who has more knowledge. This insecurity has often been expressed in disdain for education and by saying that all a pastor really needs is the Word and the Holy Spirit. After all, this is how most of the Pentecostal churches survived during the communist regime. A side effect of the lower level of theological education, which is characteristic of most Pentecostal leaders, is the theological fragmentation of the denomination.

A second aspect worthy to be noticed is that most of the seminaries are still reluctant to hire indigenous theologians and teachers because they need to be paid. If Western teachers are invited to teach, they pay their own way, do not need to receive any salary, and even bring financial benefits to the schools. The downside of this has been that many gifted young people never return from the West. How can seminaries find a way to transition to their own national faculty and pay them a living wage?

Bill Prevete, Assemblies of God World Missions, Director of Research and Development, who is also fellow researcher at the Oxford Centre for Mission studies has been researching the interaction of Romanian Evangelical churches and Christian NGO' s with reference to their engagement with children. He pointed out that presently the most

[90]Wesley and Cheryl Brown, "Progress and Change in Theological Education in Central and Eastern Europe." *Transformation*, vol. 20/1 (January 2003).

neglected category in the Pentecostal churches is the children and youth. He further explains that unfortunately, in Romania, the older leaders still do not understand and embrace the idea of mentoring or the spiritual development of the younger leaders. This may be rooted in the fact that most of the older evangelical churches do not embrace the idea of relevancy, that the church should somehow be relevant to the broader culture.

Earl A. Pope concludes his article on Protestantism in Romania with:

> More than forty years of oppression, corruption, paranoia, and social atomization have taken their tragic toll. This is a critical and dangerous period in the history of the Romanian nation. There are great fears that democracy will not take root and that a new totalitarianism will seize control and the nightmare will begin anew. All of the Protestant churches are keenly aware of the dangers they confront, but they are also conscious of the possibilities of positive developments. [91]

Pope's opinion offers us a glimpse of the cultural climate that surrounds the churches of Romania and the missionary efforts that have come into the country since the revolution of 1989. The Pentecostal Churches in particular are deeply sensitive to what they perceive to be an historic opportunity to lay the moral foundations of a new society; this helps to explain their missionary zeal. However, one of the Pentecostal's greatest handicaps is their foreign origin. The Orthodox accusation that the Pentecostal churches are a western importation, estranged from the spirit of the Romanian nation and culture is legitimate to a certain extent. It should be admitted that in many cases Pentecostal theology, 'liturgical' practices, music, and missionary activities, were hastily imported with very little effort of cultural adaptation. Some of the churches are very western in feel, reflecting the western churches they are patterned after. This is a case of under-contextualization, where cultural forms from the sending churches are imported, making the church seem foreign. In addition, the evangelical way of being in particular still wears the clothes and speaks the language of ghetto. Many Pentecostal communities still retain an inferiority complex and feel threatened by this 'evil

[91]Pope, *Protestantism in Romania*, 206-207.

world'. What is the root of our isolation? One of the reasons maybe the influence of the long history of being repressed and persecuted, from insufficient and wrong views of the world, humanity, evil, sanctification, holiness; from a limited, individualistic view of the gospel; a misunderstanding of the concept of vocation. Pentecostals in Romania have accepted to practice a strict separation from the world. Some have called this attitude a fortress mentality, in which the emphasis is placed on the contrast between the church and the world; even deepening those contrasts by church laws and practices so that the distance between the believer and unbeliever is maximized.

The missionary zeal of the Pentecostals invested both in evangelization and church planting has caused considerable apprehension on the Romanian religious scene. Most of the Orthodox partisans consider the Pentecostals to be lost and perverse sectarians, even traitors. Most of the Pentecostals (especially those who entertain dispensational eschatological convictions or are just showing open resentment) consider that a true ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox is very unacceptable. They describe the Orthodox as formalist, idolatrous, superstitious, and corrupt. The question arises: can there be any dialogue between the two?

Another sensitive issue for Pentecostals is that of fragmentation and denominationalism. They seem more concerned with bringing an individual to conversion and little concerned with the church order, and are sometimes content if they can draw a soul to Christ without worrying if it were drawn into a historical Christian community. Consequently, their tendency is to identify Christianity with individualism and to encourage the emergence of a variety of new religious associations and separate denominations. As the gospel proclaimed by the church has been reduced to individual salvation, that salvation has itself become the purpose and the program of the church.

That works in the case when the gospel one proclaims evangelistically is reduced to the individual, the personal, and the private. We must, therefore, be profoundly concerned

about the implications of a reductionist gospel for the church. No doubt that this might be the most important aspect of the Gospel – the way into the kingdom, but it is not the whole content of the Gospel. Our historic roots as well as constraints forced upon us by the totalitarian regime resulted in our negligence of other aspects of the Good News: justice, truth, relationship in the community, human dignity, the impact on creation, our understanding of history.

In consequence, whenever searching for methods of missions Pentecostals are again tempted by the lure of using propaganda. In their missionary zeal and desire for efficiency, they reduce the gospel to a series of advertising slogans in order to 'sell' it. They forget that the message of Christianity involves the whole of the human personality and that the number of converts is no measure of success. In this context the most profitable, way to do evangelism would be for the world to come to the church – the church should not go to the world. For some an attitude of resistance against the world seems to be a permanent feature, and it will continue to cause great hindrance in the attempts that the churches make in the process of evangelism.

Sadly, some Pentecostal communities are not very sensitive to these trends. Their main goal seems to be 'to keep it as it is'. They hope for a major revival, with hymnbooks from the 19th century being taken from the shelves again, and enthusiastic evangelists 'boldly preaching the Word' on the streets. Yet, the pre-Communist practice neither of interweaving the state with a church, which at that time was powerful, nor the ghettoized situation nor underground existence of past decades can provide useful starting points. Resisting it does not result in a 'heavenly harmony' or sentimental holiness. It often leads to tensions and ambiguity. But is there any other way? To overcome this is one of the most important tasks of the Pentecostal denominations in Romania.

4.8. Post-Communist Romania as a New Mission field

In considering the socio-political context as an opportunity for Christian mission in Romania, we can notice a window of opportunity for the preaching and teaching of the Christian faith. Yet, when we speak of this opportunity, it is necessary to have an understanding of the context in which we proclaim the gospel. As rightly Peter Kuzmic, points out the churches today must have an informed mind, 'the gospel of Jesus Christ is not preached in a vacuum. As we are faithful to the truth and authority of the inspired scriptures so we must be equally clear about the world in which we take it. Thus, we need a better knowledge of both the Word of God and the world of man in order to move from text, the revealed Word and the written deposit of our Christian faith, to the context, the ' 'world out there.'[92] The contextual changes offer fundamental challenges not only to the way we talk about mission, but to the way we attempt to do it – that is to present the gospel of Christ. Key areas in this sense are the areas of globalization, secularization and postmodernity. Hence, in what follows we will look at these key areas and point out the missiological implications.

4.9. Religion and Globalization

An increasing area for the background of missiological praxis today is the ongoing process of globalization. Globalization is understood as the homogenization of society by market economics and technology. Several activities have been globalized: finance, trade,

[92]Friedemann Walldorf, Die Neu-Evangelisirung Europa: MissionsTheologien im europaischen Kontext, (Giessen: Verlage Brunnen, 2002), 261.

technology, communications, and the ideological conceptualization of the world[93]. The consequences of globalization are both good and bad. It is reducing the time lag between the West and Eastern Europe. More and more people have access to increased information in an unprecedented way. While all this seems exhilarating, it does have its ominous side as well. We now have to acknowledge the existence of global culture, fostered by the media, the Internet and multinational companies. Where is the power centre of these forces? In the West, of course. Values, fashions, politics and opinions are being shaped without regard to national borders. We may not like the fact, but it is more and more obvious that the West has entered a phase of neo-colonialism in a form, which is much more subtle and dangerous.[94] The problem is that globalization is based on the ideas of limitless growth and utilitarianism. The guiding principle is that what is economically profitable should be promoted. Thus, economics overshadow everything. The Norwegian politician and theology, Kjell Magne Bondevik warns us about the dangers of the economic dominance: Western Europe has been dominated by economic thinking. A materialistic worldview tells us that our values as human beings are dependent on our social value, related to our ability to work, productivity and economic success. This worldview is not in accordance with Christian thinking. It has brought Western Europe on the wrong track.[95]

Since it is not my primary purpose to offer a detailed analysis of the market economies, I will refrain here at pointing out two of its consequences. The first aspect is the marginalization and degradation of people. Faced by the market mechanism with the

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[93]Milan Opocensky, "Theology Between Yesterday and Tomorrow," *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol.24/1(February 2004): 5.

[94] Walter Truett Anderson notes: 'Global subcultures such as those of science, business, and diplomacy also flourish and created new patterns of international society…This looks to some people like nothing more than the Westernization of the world. They're not entirely wrong, and the spread of Western influence is something you can view with dismay, or perhaps with a bit of hope.' *Reality Isn't What It Used to Be: Theatrical Politics, Ready-to-Wear Religion, Global Myths, Primitive Chic, and Other Wonders of the Postmodern World*, (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1990), 23.

[95]Walldorf, *Die Neu-Evangelisirung-Europa*, 266.

alternative of compete or perish, many people perish; the merciless machinery of the market system crashes them to the ground. The second problem is the destruction of the nature. For the market, system nature is only a resource to be utilized, a consumer good to be sold or to be bought.[96] The overemphasis on economic success connected with the overall worldview chaos will pave the way for the Gene- and Biotechnology, which is seen by many as the new saviour. It is therefore crucial that we as Christian pay attention to these developments. Moreover, the pressure to succeed economically will make effective care for marginalized people and the despoiled environment extremely difficult. The more Romania will advance towards the status of market economy, the more will fall prey to the danger of economic dominance. In this context, Walldorf quotes Bondevik who mentions the danger of marginalization of those people with unsatisfactory genes. This in turn will lead to selective abortion 'removing those whose genetic endowments are deemed unsatisfactory.'[97] This tendency to bring about a new world whose confidence is placed in science, technology, and a rationally ordered society, has is built on idolatry and comes against a Christian understanding of the renewal of the world through Jesus Christ.[98]

Hence, the emerging global civilization requires a re-examination of theological and ethical questions, the principal question being how God wants us to live in the new global era. As Opckensky sees it, a Christian response to the context of globalization requires 'a return to reading the bible and listening to the stories of faith in search of orientation. We must ask, who is our God, and what is the ' good life' that the triune God provides us? The context for these questions is guided by the words of Psalm 24:1 which points out that 'the

[96]Volf, *When the Unclean Spirit Leaves*, 4.

[97]Walldorf, 269.

[98]Michael Goheen, "Building for the Future: Worldview Foundations of Sand and Rock," *Religion in Eastern Europe.* [Online]. Available at http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/goheen_bft.html. Accessed 28 November, 2003.

earth is the Lord' s and all that is in it, the world and all who dwell in it'. The common *oikos* as the household of life is the model and vision for a biblical understanding of economy and ecology.[99] As suggested by Volf, Christians need to propose that the guiding principle of the wheel of economy must be supplemented by respect for the right to sustenance. Assuring the material prosperity of each country is not simply of mater of charity, but of justice. In engaging the challenge of economics, Christians cannot stop only at justice and general rights, Inspired by Christ's example on the cross, they are to strive for loving kindness in relation to their neighbours.

Yet, as pointed out by Miroslav Volf, Christians in Eastern Europe have not reflected extensively about socio-economic issues. They have been prevented to do so by the policies of the communist regime that prohibited any appearance of religion on the public scene.[100] Now, that not only the barrier between the so-called first and second worlds, but also between the second and the third worlds, the time is ripe for the Eastern Europeans and Two-thirds world theologians to produce a global theology that will address the crisis they face together. In the new context, Romanian Pentecostals need to do a lot of catching up and in this endeavour, they can be enriched by the sustained Two-Thirds World theological reflection on socio-ethical issues. Nevertheless, they also need to make an important contribution for a theology relevant to the issues of the day, for the present society has been made object of a unique experiment in history. Yet, even though the communist experiment has failed, still Romanian Christians need to learn from its failure.[101]

[99]Opocenksy, *Public Theology in Eastern Europe*, 14.

[100]Volf, *When The Unclean Spirit Leaves*, 2.

[101]Ibid.

4.10. Religion and Postmodernism

'We have truly entered into an epoch fundamentally at variance with anything we have experienced to date…there can be no doubt that the new situation is confronting the church with unprecedented challenges.'[102] This is how David Bosch refers to the emerging condition for which has not yet been found a unifying description, which is being referred to as the postmodern condition. This new epoch characterized by a shift in the way, we experience and relate to our world, no objective criteria to guide or shape our choices, the collapse of the distinction between knowing and experiencing.[103] The purpose of this section is to look at some missiological issues and opportunities created by the current cultural changes taking place in the European context.[104]

The emerging postmodern condition with its emphasis on difference and its focus on the now tends to lead to a fragmentation and plurality that can easily drift into relativism and pluralism. Pluralism is the juxtaposition of difference, so that peoples and beliefs, which might at one time have been separated by geography, are now rubbing up against one another in a cacophony of meaning. Relativism is the gradual but inevitable result of pluralism.[105]

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[102]David Bosch, *Believing in the Future: Toward A Missiology of Western Culture*(Trinity Press International: Harrisburg, 1995), 1. In his *Transforming Mission,* Bosch speaks of the emergence of a postmodern paradigm: "A time of paradigm shift is a time of deep uncertainty – and such uncertainty appears to be one of the few constants of the contemporary era and one of the factors that engender strong reactions in favor of hanging on to the Enlightenment paradigm, in spite of signs from all quarters that it breaking up." To deal with this uncertainty Bosch called for a reorientation of mission. Idem, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 1991), 349.

[103]Craig Van Elder, "Mission in the Emerging Postmodern Condition," *The Church Between Gospel & Culture: The Emerging Mission in North America,* edited by George R. Hunsberger and Craig Van Elder (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996): 114 (113-138).

[104]In this respect Alan J. Roxburgh states, "Christian Thinkers as diverse as Lesslie Newbigin, Richard Neuhaus, Stanley Hauerwas, Langdon Gilkey and Hans Küng all speak of an important cultural turning point – a turning point that requires us to find new ways of reaching a new generation." *Reaching a New Generation: Strategies for Tommorow's Church* (Intervarsity: Downers Grove, 1993), 10.

[105] "The apparent danger of pluralism is that it leads to a debilitating relativism. If pluralism relativizes all traditions, it seems to imply that because they are equally good our own choice of values or meanings is arbitrary." John B. Cobb, *Christ in a Pluralistic Age*, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 58.

When the truth claims of various cultures and religions sit side by side over time, there is a natural inclination for the absolute status of any of them to be eroded. Each will come to be seen as one perspective amongst others, valued for its insights provided it recognizes its partiality. Christianity, among other faiths such as Islam, is seen as being marked by intolerance and therefore as a poor neighbour in the global metropolis. In this context, a statement such as that of John 14:6, 'No one comes to the Father except through me', is regarded as arrogance and bad manners.[106] For most of Christian history, the gospel has been held to be exclusive truth; the sort of truth, which must prove all other, views wrong in order to prove itself right. However you regard this proposition theologically, culturally it is a very difficult position to advance. The implicit dismissal of other religious traditions is viewed as repugnant and lacking in compassion. Our claims to exclusivity are scandalous; the question is whether this is a necessary scandal, which must be borne because of the gospel, or whether there are other approaches, which are still faithful to the tradition yet, less culturally offensive.[107] If we are to promote Jesus as the truth, we may need to think about what we mean by the statement, and what the best way of communicating it might be

Probably the most important issue in any philosophical system is its concept of truth, or epistemology. While the classic concept of truth says, there is just one Truth, valid all the time and in all places, the modern concept of truth says there are many relative truths. Postmodernism says truth does not really matter. Everything is just a heterogeneous communication, a collection of texts, a language game.[108] The whole topic of truth has grown increasingly problematic, and not only because of the corroding effects of relativism. After

[106] "We are more and more aware of other cultures, other national histories, other religions than those which we ourselves have inherited. In such a world it becomes difficult for many to see anything but arrogance in claims made by Christians for the finality of their own faith." Norman Pittenger, *Christology Reconsidered*, (London: SCM, 1970), 88.

[107]Pittenger., 88.

[108]Juran Kusnierik & Milan Cicel, *The Impact of Communism on the way people think in postcommunist society* (Bratislava: SEN, 1997), 36.

all, there is always the counter-argument that acknowledging the partiality of perspective does not necessarily discount the reality of that which is observed. However, as we all know, or are soon to find out, postmodernity casts doubt on the whole notion of truth. It is sometimes described as the 'death of absolutes'. Modernity did a good job of shifting the basis of truth from one of divine revelation to that of scientific verifiability.[109] The split between fact and value left religious claims languishing on the heap of non-verifiable propositions which were suitable for personal preference, but not worthy of appearance in the public realm.[110]

The repair job was completed just in time for postmodernity to deconstruct the entire 'truth-game'. Attention to the social construction of language revealed that the connection between words and any apparent external reality was tenuous indeed. Something may exist 'out there', but if so, there is no way of accurately knowing it. The entire venture of making truth claims has been described as a covert power game, intended to force others to conform.[111] The gleaming gods of modernity - reason, coherence, verifiability - were dethroned and pilloried as essentially subjective pretenders.[112] The advantage for Christianity is that it now shares a level playing field with every other assertion of knowledge. The bad news is that the cultural relativism suggests that all our human knowledge is relative to God's

[109]James D. Hunter, "What is modernity? Historical roots and contemporary features," *Faith and Modernity,* 13.

[110]Ibid.

[111] "But the claim to have grasped reality as it *really* is (beyond the contingencies of history, particularity and change) discloses our desire for another sort of mastery, that over human beings. By granting an aura of universal truth to our local conventions, the Western intellectual commitment to realism serves ideologically to legitimate Western conquest and political superiority." Richard Middleton & Brian Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than it Used to Be: Biblical Faith in a Postmodern Age*, (Downers Grove: IVP), 34.

[112]"We are now able to see that what has passed for objective, universal knowledge has in fact been the interested claim of the dominant voices who were able to pose their view and to gain either assent or docile acceptance from those whose interest the claim did not serve. Objectivity is in fact one more practice of ideology that presents interest in covert form as an established fact." Walter Brueggemann*, Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination,* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 9.

truth, which can be found only through our attempts to live it out in whatever culture we find ourselves.

Lyotard's well-known understatement of the postmodern intuition is that of 'incredulity toward metanarratives'.[113] By this, he means a hermeneutical suspicion of all grand stories, which purport to order history and experience according to an overarching insight or myth. These, it is suggested, are nothing other than mechanisms for the expression of social power.[114] Since there is no 'meta-narrative', all we have are many fragmented stories and everyone should have freedom to choose for himself different stories for different parts of his life.[115] Certainly, when we come to speak of such majestic syntheses, Christianity has the reputation of being the mother of all metanarratives for the entire society. What else was Christendom than the highest expression of a culture living out a metanarrative in every aspect of its corporate life, illustrating perfectly the way in which control is exerted through allegiance to a central vision?[116] Liberation from such political and intellectual tyranny, it would seem, requires that we refuse to submit to any such ideologies again.

The force of this philosophical critique has made itself felt at the popular level through what we might describe as fragmentation. It is as if someone has taken the mirror, which we once thought of as reflecting a good picture of the universe, and shattered it into a thousand pieces. Ordinary people now collect what shards they can, and assemble them into personal mosaics of meaning.[117] Christianity is struggling to adjust to a new climate in which

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[113] Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv.

[114]Merold Westphal, "Postmodernism and the Gospel: Onto-theology, Metanarratives, and Perspectivism," *Perspectives* vol.15/4 (April 2000): 8 (6-10).

[115]Rose Dowsett, "Dry Bones in the West," *Global Missiology for the 21st Century.* 457 (447-462).

[116]Westphal, *The Postmodern Condition*, 8.

[117] Gene Edward Veith, *Guide to Contemporary Culture* (Crossway Books: Leicester, 1994), 211.

totalizing views seem quaint and impossibly naive. We exist in an environment where the religious equivalent of the artistic technique of 'assemblage' is prevalent. People select beliefs and spiritual practices from anywhere they find them, and are content to have them live side by side even when they are unusual companions or even contradictory.[118] The danger for Christian faith is what we might call the 'Hinduisation' of Jesus, where he becomes one religious figure among others in a divine democracy.[119]

We live in an age in which the institutions are falling. The most obvious example of this in the West is the way in which monarchies of every description have lost their political and even their symbolic power. But alongside the ancient tradition of royal rule, we could name such institutions as the military, the public service, and the church.[120] All of these are struggling as they face the winds of anti-institutional sentiment in the emerging culture. People are unwilling to give their allegiance to large and remote organizations, let alone to endure regulation of their lives by such bodies.[121]

Whatever else the church may be, it is an institution. Probably this is unavoidable, as the movement of Christ is kept alive in historical continuity from one generation to the next. However, the shape and nature of the church's institutional life has in our time become a significant barrier to the gospel. Hierarchical structures, abusive practices, authoritarian attitudes, self-selected leadership, manipulative processes, and a desperate concern to control speak more loudly than the gospel they contradict.[122] It is much easier to speak of Jesus than

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[118]Veith, *Guide to Contemporary Culture*, 211.

[119] Leslie Newbigin describes the way in which a portrait of Jesus was hung in an Indian Hindu monastery and revered: 'Jesus was honoured, worshipped, as one of the many manifestations of deity in the course of human history.' *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 3.

[120]Philip Samson, "The Rise of Postmodernity," *Faith And Modernity,* ed. Philip Sampson, Vinay Samuel, and Chris Sugden (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 1994): 45-46.

[121]Ibid.

[122] Dietrich, *A Particular People*, 349.

it is to mention either Christianity or the church in the current climate. To join one's spiritual pilgrimage to an archaic ecclesiastical institution is considered religious and intellectual treason. Yet our faith cannot neglect some form of corporate life without denying its character and history. We need to find some new structural clothing for our faith.

4.11. The Challenge of Religious Nominalism

For 40 years, the communist regime in Romania has concentrated on creating an atheistic society. Communism gravely curtailed the possibilities of religious education and practiced a materialistic indoctrination in all public institutions. In essence, secularization was imposed as a part of the total package of the Marxist of the Marxist dictatorship. Whatever its precise causes, though, the Marxist propaganda did not bring about a complete breakdown of religion. On the contrary, within a few days of the fall of communism everyone was ready to renounce any associations with the Marxist ideology, including atheism. This became evident when hundreds of thousands of people kneeled down in the public squares of Timisoara, Bucharest and other cities and recited the Lord's Prayer. In those dramatic days, the multitudes shouted: 'God exists! God is with us!' These were powerful statements after four decades of massive atheistic propaganda.[123] Consequently, Churches were full, Christian symbols became publicly used again. The Romanian Orthodox Church represents 87 percent of the population, and is the second largest Eastern Orthodox Church in the world. About 95 percent of ethnic Romanians consider themselves Orthodox Christians.[124]

With a half million members, the Evangelical churches in Romania represent one of the largest bodies of Evangelicals in Europe. As we can see, forty years of the atheistic

[123]Giles Thomas, "Romania's Latest Revolution," *Christianity Today,* vol.37/4 (May 1993): 83.

[124]Vasile A. Talos, "Religious Pluralism in the Romanian Context," *Religion in Eastern Europe,* [Online.] Available at http://www.georgefox.edu/academics/undergrad/departments/soc-swk/ree/reeful184.html#N_25. Accessed 10 December, 2003.

regime did not hurt the nominal religious affinities of people. Baptisms, church weddings, crammed churches at Christmas and Easter services belong to common culture again. Two years later in the national census of Romania, only 0.2 percent of the population declared themselves atheists. Nevertheless, as pointed out by a leading newspaper, Romania Libera carried an article entitled 'Practical Atheist' which pointed out that, while people registered in the census as Orthodox, their thinking is completely atheistic.[125] While most Romanians identified with the Christian faith, by December 1989 most acted like nominal Christians. Gibbs' description of the nominal Christian is as follows… 'who, for whatever reason, want to be known as Christians, even though they may have lost contact with the church, have serious doubts concerning beliefs basic to Christianity, by living lifestyles which are incompatible with the values of the kingdom of God, or by failing to maintain an ongoing relationship with the Lord due to neglect of the means of grace which He has provided for our spiritual sustenance.'[126]

Moreover, the vast majority of Romania's population does not attend church and demonstrates no commitment to Jesus Christ. Most of the people are religiously ignorant. They cannot interpret the most common symbols of the Christian faith in the old buildings in their towns and cities.[127] This perspective was evidenced also by the participants to the Interconfessional Conference of Christian Churches (June 2000) who identified that the main cause of Romania's today's problems is 'a lack of active faith in God.' Reference was made to this situation in many ways: 'lack of faith in practice' 'no fear of God,' 'loss of sense of sin,' 'secularization of society,'loss of true faith,' 'departure from God and from Christian values,' and 'the promotion of atheism.' The situation is likened by the words of a Polish journalist

[125]Talos, *Religious Pluralism in the Romanian Context*, Online.

[126]Ibid.

[127]*Preliminary Report: The State of the Evangelical Church in Romania*, 8.

who observes, 'In the great black hole after communism…the Catholic hierarchy sees the secular state as the new Public Enemy number One. In this view….the aggressive atheism of Communist society is being replaced by the practical atheism of a consumer society.' The church, he said, no longer speaks the same language as its people; it does not address the modern needs.[128]

Thus, nominalism is expected to pose a serious problem for all churches in Romania in the future. Atheistic propaganda and the lack of religious training have shaped the Romanian people's secular worldview over the last forty years. Many lost their religious faith in that hostile secular environment. After the fall of communism, there was psychological pressure to deny the atheistic ideology of the Communist Party and to identify with a religion, especially Orthodoxy. Thus many agnostics, even atheists, have claimed to be Christian. During the communist dictatorship, people had very few options for spending their free time. The Church offered an alternative to the ideological slavery of the people.[129] Today Romanian society is heading toward democracy and people have more freedom and options as to how to spend their time. Privatization and the free market economy challenge them to work harder to earn money. Young people are fascinated with music, movies, video and Western television. Individualism, hedonism and pragmatism, which according to Gibbs represent ' some of the principal features of the contemporary neo-pagan society,' have had noticeable effects on Romanian society as well. Religious movements and cults have flooded the country and especially attract nominal Christians who are most vulnerable and susceptible. The fall of communism has marked not only a new era for the church evangelization task, but it also opened the door for new temptations for people living in post-

[128]Talos, *Religious Pluralism in the Romanian Context*, Online.

[129]Ibid.

communist context.[130] In addition, the reality of nominalism within Orthodoxy has been focused on in recent years. Professor Ion Bria, Deputy Director of the WCC's Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and Secretary for Orthodox Studies and Relationships, acknowledged that there are many who have been baptized, and yet put off Christ, either deliberately or through indifference.

With respect to culture, at large Ton highlights the after effects of communist indoctrination concerning moral aspects. This degradation of moral values has been promoted by the communism's the mandatory system of lies. From the day communism was born, one of its primary aims has been to conceal or distort what actually takes place. The effort was successful that even the leaders themselves did not know the truth about the situation in their country. All this tactics were directed towards deceiving people into believing in the goodness of socialism. In order to be able to have achieved this goal the government robed the lands and people from their resources. As such, the oppressed populace in turn had to steal its daily bread from the government. Consequently, stealing was understood as fact of life, an act necessary for survival.[131] Following, one learned to believe one thing but to speak another. People learned to live in a state of permanent lie. As such, the lie became a mode of existence, a way of life. Parents instructed their children to agree with everything their teachers say, even if they were aware of the falsity of what they were being taught. To all this was added the slogan that all about life is here and now and no one exists to reward morality and punish dishonesty. The double standard imposed by the circumstances caused the working morale of people to deteriorate. This became evident as soon as people have adventured in starting new business, which often bear the marks of a system that functioned

[130]Josef Ton, "Towards Reformation in Romania," *East-West Church & Ministry Report,* vol.1/2 (Spring 1993): 1-3.

[131]Alexandr, Solzhenitsyn, "Communism at the end of Brezhnev Era," *National Review* vol.35/1 (January 21, 1983): 28.

on lies, dishonesty, harshness, and brutality.[132] Consequently, waves of wickedness, vengeance and dishonesty continue to plague the society. The unprecedented growth of crime and abortion indicates deep spiritual and moral decay. It is not only the post-communist culture that reflects the after-effects of communism, it is also the church and its membership, who is not very distinguishable from the rest of the population in promoting high ethical values, says Danut Manastireanu.[133] What has happened is that has been created a complete separation between one's moral life and one's spiritual life. Even though such a separation may seem from an ontological viewpoint impossible, the reality reflects that is happened. People believe that they can have a good relationship with God, but they still live like the rest of the society.

In this respect, the theological task of the Evangelicals is to present the personal relationship with Christ in such a way that a gap between this relationship and the moral life would become impossible. As Christians, we need to recover the moral vision and build communities, which will embody moral practices. To live virtuous lives, in addition to the 'union with Christ,' we need communion with our brother and sister. The Church, as the community of those who follow Christ, provides what sociologists call 'plausibility structures', which make transmission of moral values and moral practices effective. Tson, is therefore right in calling for movements for holiness or sanctification in the contemporary context of Romania.

The danger is however, that Christians in Romania will be deluded with the current return of the religious. It might be possible to rely on evidence of the phenomenal success of the evangelistic campaigns in Romania, or the huge increase in the numbers of the churches planted in many parts of Romania as steady indications that Evangelicalism is immune from

[132]Ton, *Towards Reformation in Romania*, 3.

[133]Manastireanu, "The Wall's Long Shadow," *Christianity Today* vol.43/13 (15 November, 1999): 30.

trends towards decline and secularization afflicting the Western societies. However, we should view such claims with considerable scepticism.

The question is: how relevant are the Romanian churches for nominal Christians and for secularists? Bria argues that 'the re-Christianization of Christians is an important task of the church's evangelistic witness.'[134] Yet, Klass Bockmuehl points out that overall, Evangelicals have not bothered too much with the phenomena of secularization and noted that they are often content 'if they add to their numbers even when the overall state of Christianity deteriorates.'[135] In fact, the born-again phenomenon in America suggests that it is possible for very considerable numbers of people to profess conversion without such a movement resulting in any significant change in the surrounding culture. In the words of David Wells:

> The vast growth in evangelically minded people in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s should by now have revolutionized American culture. With a third of American adults now claiming to have experienced spiritual rebirth, a powerful counter current of morality growing out of an…alternative worldview should have been unleashed in factories, offices and board rooms, in the media, universities, and professions…But as it turns out, all this swelling of evangelical ranks has passed unnoticed in the culture…the presence of Evangelicals in American culture has barely caused a ripple.[136]

As we can learn from the example of the American evangelicalism, it is possible for a movement to experience significant numerical growth without this affecting the dominant values and ethos of a secularized culture in the slightest way. Thousands of people may claim to be born again, yet business goes as usual. Jesus may be praised as Lord in lively and joyful celebrations on Sunday, but the counter-cultural values of the kingdom he proclaimed seem to be non-transferable when it comes to the realm of education, media, business and

[134]Talos, *Religious Pluralism in the Romanian Context*, Online.

[135]David Smith, Crying in the Wilderness: Evangelism and Mission in Today's Culture (Carlisle, Paternoster Press, 2000), 70.

[136]Ibid.

commercial activity. The technical term used to describe this change in the function of religion is privatization.

The challenge facing the churches in Romania is missiological: How can Christians perceive the nature and task of these new secular cultures and address them missionally? Can they find out how to translate the gospel? Can they learn the language, the interior shape of these cultures and become, within them, culturally bilingual? Can they become, again, light, salt, and leaven in their context?

The Churches in Romania need to be ready to address questions of relevance when we defend our faith with non-believers; and modern society does not see the Church as a place where real needs are met. Rather it is often perceived as a bastion of traditions and beliefs alienated from modern economic, political and social realities. This is why Evangelicals must concentrate towards preparing leaders that can understand the elements that make up our view of the world and of life, and it must make them aware of the distinctively Christian elements of the interpretation of the total existence.

4.12. Towards an Integrative Approach

The Romanian Pentecostals are deeply sensitive to what they perceive to be a unique opportunity to contribute to the renewal of their society; this helps explain their missionary zeal. At the same time, it became obvious, that when confronted with challenges they not envisaged (the role of the church in public life and politics) they recoiled and continued to preach the gospel of personal salvation. They regard experiencing a spiritual awakening as the only way of transforming the society. Consequently, the purpose of mission is limited to the individual's vertical relationship with God and the subsequent transformation of self, and does not retain any further implications for the wider society.

Because of their conservative choice on many issues, Pentecostals are criticized at times for supporting policies often associated with antiliberal and even nondemocratic principles. They are frequently perceived as being more interested in their own social, economic and political interests, than in supporting and encouraging renewal of society. Similarly, they show an obsession with structural expansion, pursuit of power and property, rather than committing themselves to help the poor, pursue justice for the weak and marginalized, and empowering the powerless.

Of great concern for the Romanian Pentecostals is the need for adequate theological training for the pastors. Because of limited freedom and lack of resources under communism, ministers and pastors were superficially trained. Pentecostals are making efforts to raise their theological standards, but there are still gaps that are not adequately patched. Because of their manifested tendency towards pietism and anti-intellectualism, they are hesitant to accept pastors who are theologically trained and paid by the congregation. Further, since 1989 Pentecostals have been dependent on their Western counterparts, especially the United States for theological resources, concepts, materials, and teachers. North American Pentecostals often promise Bible Schools in Romania financial support, provided they have control over the theological orientation and curricula of the schools. They insist that only they have the correct theology, which should be translated into the Romanian context, and consequently they should be the only theological partner of the Romanian Pentecostals. It is questionable whether North American Pentecostal theology is the best model for post-communist Romania, when it has taken shape in a different cultural, intellectual, and religious context. Romanian Pentecostals need other theological partners, rather than only dialoguing and being under the dominance of mainstream North American Pentecostalism. These partners would need to include Eastern Orthodoxy and others with whom it already has some affinities, for discerning and assessing how these partners might stimulate and support, but not control the theological work of the Romanian Pentecostals.

In the light of my presentation, I can conclude that the issue of contextualisation is very urgent for the Romanian Pentecostals. The period of dictatorship did not allow the two churches to engage with the local culture and to fully contextualise the gospel. The churches were unable to engage in contextualization because the regime had a monopoly over the culture and, therefore, no one could engage with it critically. They used the culture to legitimise themselves and as a result, there was no official recognition of the 'real culture'. The regimes did not recognise the existence of certain elements of the culture. They tried to engineer the culture to suit them and denied aspects of the culture itself. The churches under dictatorship struggled to survive, as it was, (because of the restrictions placed on them), they did not have time, resources and ability to engage with the culture. Thus, Romanian Pentecostals have not always been able to engage with their context in a missionary way and their missiological praxis has not always been contextual.

In the past the main reasons for failing to engage fully with their contexts and to develop an integrative approach to mission, were in part, to external factors such as socio-political and economic constraints, and internal factors such as lack of resources, lack of vision and past traditional theological inheritances.

Despite these shortfalls Evangelicals have had a certain amount of impact on their particular societies in different ways, often according to their theological and ecclesiological inheritance and proportional to their size. Nevertheless their impact upon society might have been greater if they had the courage, vision and strength to develop a truly contextual missiology that was in true dialogue with their contexts.

The Romanian Pentecostals find themselves at present in a different and challenging situation, where they could make a significant contribution to their societies. The societies in both countries are struggling, and it seems are unreservedly committed, to building a new social order based on democratic principles.

This exercise is proving to be very difficult because of past legacies, experiences, traditions, the complexity of the task, and the lack of expertise and resources. Romanian Pentecostals have a unique opportunity, and responsibility, to assist the reconstruction process of their societies. However, for this to happen they need to develop a theology, which engages their contexts in a creative way. This entails that the churches rethink and realign their theological construction to their new socio-political, cultural and economic realities and revisit their ecclesiology.

This entails that the church in a post-communist context can no longer afford to be isolated from the social and political process. After reviewing their role in the dictatorial past, the churches cannot remain silent or passive in the face of injustice, when people suffer and when the power is not accountable for its acts. They cannot just be alternative communities and isolated churches. They cannot afford to shy away from the reconstruction process either. They are called to face the challenges posed by society.

In the following chapters I will suggest a number of ways in which a contextual missiology could be developed and a number of areas that need to be addressed. I will argue that the church in a post-dictatorial context needs to be themselves a missionary alternative community embodying the values of God's Kingdom in their essence, structures and outlook. Furthermore, by analyzing and continually observing relations, trends and values in society, the church in a post-communist context will work with others towards bringing reconciliation, healing past memories, and towards shaping the culture by challenging unjust and destructive value systems and practices and by encouraging new constructive value systems.

The question can arise: Why be concerned for an effective Pentecostal mission in Romania? What is the contribution of Romanian Pentecostalism when there is no chance that it will ever be more than a marginal minority? The communist regime of Romania has inflicted

lasting damage in the political, social, and economic sphere, and at a personal level. The collapse of the regime left the society with the gigantic task of building a new social order based on democratic principles.

Romanian Pentecostals along with other Christian traditions, have a unique opportunity to contribute to the renewal and transformation of the society, and the cause of democratization. For this to happen, Pentecostals need a change of mentality in their attitude to social life, economics, politics and the wider culture in general. Equally, its harsh criticism of the Orthodox Church and the claim of offering the only way to salvation must also be challenged. Even if many Romanians are only formally Orthodox, they have a strong emotional attachment to Orthodoxy, and will not be open to Pentecostal mission when it is done in a way that threatens the essentials of their own identity. Romanian Pentecostals need to undergird their actions with a search for a theology of the whole gospel that addresses all aspects of culture and society, and is not limited only to the ' spiritual.' They must integrate their praxis into a holistic vision of the kingdom of God, and proclaim the gospel for what it was, is and shall ever remain a public statement – about all reality, about God, about human beings, about the world, about truth, about meaning, about life.

CHAPTER 5

PENTECOSTAL MISSION IN THE ROMANIAN CONTEXT: A PROPOSAL

5.1. Contemporary Romania Context

The religious contemporary context in Romania is a peculiarly complex one and generalizations are hardly possible since the situations and status of the churches differ from country to country and there are significant variations between different parts of the same countries. Doing mission in the contemporary context requires thoughtful reflection on the part of the Church. Although the emerging contemporary context is a complex phenomenon, the reality of its existence is becoming clearer. As I have suggested in my research, into such ferment, that Church faces increasing challenges while it seeks to communicate the gospel in the contemporary Romanian context. While in some senses, it has never been harder to faithfully communicate the gospel, in other ways the doors of opportunity are wider now than they have been for a long time. To meet these challenges and maximize the opportunities, the Church in the contemporary context is called to struggle with the messages and the meanings of the postmodern culture until it can confidently announce that which represents the good news of Christ.

In this regard, the following aspects intend to be proposals (rather than something that can be asserted with surety) that the Church is encouraged to consider as it engage in bringing the gospel to the post-communist society. The section will seek to address the needs and challenges of Post-Communist Romania from a Pentecostal perspective. We will seek to show how the theological legacy and activity of Pentecostals in the contemporary context needs to be transformed in the light of current missiological trends and as a response to the needs and objectives of the process of democratic reconstructions. We will aim to develop an

appropriate mission strategy for the church, which will include developments in the ecclesiology and practice of mission, so that the isolation of the Pentecostal church from society and its evasion of involvement in the political and social context can be overcome.

Building on the previous analysis, the second part of chapter 6 will explore different ways in which Romanian Pentecostals in their particular socio-context may contribute to the social renewal and democratization of their society. We will argue that this requires a radical rethinking of the Pentecostal approach to mission that would take in account the Romanian context and way of thinking and develop a theology for the whole gospel, which is to be relevant to all spheres of life and is not just limited to the spiritual.

5.2. Evangelism and Mission in Contemporary Romania: The Challenge for Pentecostals

Although the term evangelism is used very often in the discourse of the churches and viewed as an essential part of their outreach ministry it is not always clear what it means, especially in terms of its relation to ecclesiology. Different church leaders, evangelists and theologians emphasized various facets, and most discussions on this theme focus rather on various methodological approaches and their effectiveness, rather than seeking to understand and define what evangelism is. This is further complicated by the fact that unlike western missiological language, which distinguishes ' evangelism' from 'evangelisation', there is only one word in Romanian *' evanghelizare', which* encompasses all sorts of meanings.[1] In the Romanian context is important to mention that what Pentecostals imply as 'evangelism' is admittedly not always the same as when used by the Romanian Orthodox Church. Therefore, for example any activities aiming at 'soul saving', which are part of the evangelistic outreach of Romanian Pentecostalism, are perceived by the national church as culturally destructive

[1]John Clarke, *Evangelism that Really Works* (London:SPCK, 1995), 4-5.

proselytism. On the other hand, the efforts of the Romanian Orthodox Church to re-evangelise are often disqualified by Pentecostals as further nominalizing a society already deeply embedded in Orthodoxy, and criticised for being tradition-based rather than biblical and therefore lacking emphasis on repentance and Christ-centred renewal. Whilst recognising that, 'ultimately, mission remains indefinable; it should never be incarcerated in the narrow confines of our own predilections'[2] and though both 'mission' and 'evangelism' are terms that have been used with a 'wide diversity of meaning'[3], it is still necessary to attempt some integration of the relations between evangelism and the Christian community, theology and gospel, within the broader view of social and cultural witness. Ronald J. Sider points to four divergent models when it comes to defining evangelism: 'Individualistic Evangelical', 'Radical Anabaptist', 'Dominant Ecumenical' and 'Secular Christian'. In order to understand these four basic types, it is essential to grasp the underlying issues that shape the different four models. There are ten such underlying issues that differ in these models on the basis of interpretation of 'sin', 'anthropology', 'content of the gospel' , 'meaning of salvation' , 'history and eschatology' , 'source of theological truth' , 'object of evangelism' , 'the way the gospel is shared' , 'the way the society is changed' and locus of God' s activity. By applying Sider's typology, Romanian Pentecostals would be classified into the 'Individualistic Evangelical' category. Thus evangelism is often perceived by many as a synonym of 'mission' and thereby understood on a local level as 'a given', something that is essentially part of the church's ministry, that all the members are encouraged to participate in, not necessarily understanding what is meant by it, apart from sharing faith with others in the hope of seeing local church growing in numbers. It is here that churches today lack clarity both in defining their

[2]Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 1991.

[3]John M. Hitchen, "Evangelism and Mission –What is the Gospel? " in *Scottish Bulletin of Theology,* vol.19, No. 1 (2001): 21.

missional[4] task in wider terms and in understanding of their own faith. This relates to the wider issue of needing to integrate evangelism, theology and the church rather than placing a special emphasis on fervent spiritual activism, which is characteristic of the Romanian Pentecostalism. Though in some important ways evangelistic fervour has to be seen as significant for mission today, especially when seen as an expression of one's faith in everyday life, activism alone fails to address some important aspects of mission by overemphasizing the personal/human contribution in terms of what Christians plan and do for God. It also results in definitions of evangelism in terms of ' method' and 'style' usually relating to different types of proclamation seeking to expose individuals' sin and calling for repentance and a personal decision to follow Christ. The decades following the fall of communism were marked by discussions centred on various methods and styles of evangelism. In the beginning of 1990's, only few months after the overthrow of Ceausescu's regime, representatives from Baptist, Pentecostal, Brethren and the Lord's Army formed the Romanian Evangelical Alliance with cooperative evangelism as one of its five-pointed adopted strategy.[5] In the first decade of 1990's mass evangelistic campaigns was the fashion. In partnership with Western missionary organizations, Romanian Evangelicals have seen such events as important steps in raising awareness for public proclamation of the gospel and hoped that through their association with gifted Western evangelists their credibility will be established in the eyes of the Romanian people. Joseph Ton, a prominent Evangelical Leader, remarked in his capacity as the President of the Romanian Missionary Society, that both the local churches and Western missionary agencies placed too much emphasis on evangelism. A decade later, Paul Negrut, principal of Emanuel Bible Institute Oradea, Romania summed up the missionary

[4]Ron Sider, "What is the Gospel?", *Transformation* (1999): 26.

[5]The five-point strategy adopted by the Romanian Evangelical Alliance targets evangelism, church-planting, Christian education, the fostering of a work ethic, and the promotion of democracy. Dwight Gibson, "Evangelical Alliances: They Make Common Cause and Common Sense," *East-West Church & Ministry Report*, 1 (Spring 1993), 3.

efforts as attempts to strategize and coordinate the missionary work through a focus on resources, projects, results, frustrations, misunderstanding, and the like. As such, 'projects' and 'money' became the marks of missiological correctness, which was symptomatic of the fact that the church and its missionary mandate were hardly mentioned.[6] The polemic points to some of the deep problems faced not only by Romanian Pentecostals but also by other evangelical churches seeking rapid growth after the fall of communism and hoping that various methods, plans and strategies will solve this issue. However, Bosch warns that the definition of evangelism 'primarily in terms of method and its aim solely in personal, spiritual, and otherworldly categories is…dangerous reductionism'.[7] Unfortunately, some Pentecostals in Romania, uncritically and unintentionally, fell into such reductionism, which put greater emphasis on continuous searches for new methods and styles reaching unbelievers but without placing this in the wider holistic framework for mission. Sometimes the results of this approach are contrary to the objectives. This concern is expressed in an article by Joseph Ton 'Towards Reformation in Romania,' where the author points to the problem of an overemphasis on numerical church growth without an equal emphasis on qualitative church growth. Both individual Western missionary and Western missionary organizations seemed to be motivated towards seeing good results evangelistically, being able to report upon their return to the west many conversion in Romania as a result of their ministry. Ton identifies this strategy as seriously flawed especially as applied to the Romanian context where the call the Evangelist's call to accept Jesus is gladly accepted by everyone because they do not understand what it means. No wonder, Ton says that in a city like Constansa there were 26.000 conversions reported when in actuality the total evangelical population amounts to only a 1000. Manastireanu concludes that the mass evangelism strategy in Romania proved

[6]Paul Negrut, "Church and Mission: An Eastern European Perspective", *Transformation* 16:1(1999):22.

[7]Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 150.

partly ineffective due to little appreciation shown for 'the way Romanians think or understand God'.[8] Ton challenged a sole emphasis on evangelism (oriented on numerical growth) and suggested that it needed balancing with a deeper pastoral role for people oriented towards 'training locals to organize and pastor churches, to work with youth and other people. Otherwise, the conversions will come to nothing.'[9] The OCI Preliminary Report on 'the state of the Evangelical Church in Romania,'identifies some barriers to evangelism, which classify in three groups: ' internal barriers'; 'external barriers' and ' spiritual barriers'.[10] Significantly, among the 'internal barriers;' the report points to 'language barriers', 'cultural barriers', and 'philosophical barriers', which all affect evangelism. The report emphasizes that the economic situation in Romania created new challenges in developing new attitudes economic, political and social context 'as the church planting experts the largest barriers to accepting the Gospel are often more social than religious'.[11] These are some concrete pastoral challenging issues when it comes to defining the evangelistic task today. What is important to note in this context is that within the individualistic evangelical model there are two sub-groups: one that while believing that evangelism is primary, still insists that evangelism and social action are both important; the other focuses largely, if not exclusively on evangelism.[12] In other words, while the first group's mission thinking includes both evangelism and social action, the second group completely identifies mission with evangelism. There are examples of both these schools of thinking among Romanian Pentecostals, but as already noted, due to rapidly evolving transitional context, there is a growing concern to include social responsibility

[8]Danut Manastireanu, "Evangelical Denominations in Post-Communist Romania," *East-West Church & Ministry Report 6* (Summer 1998), 7-10.

[9]Ton, *Reformation in Romania*, 1.

[10]God's Heart For Romania. *Report on the State of the Evangelical Churches in Romania,* OC International and Misiunea Mondială Unită, (2001): 38-50.

[11]Ibid. 45.

[12]Sider, *What is the Gospel*, 33.

within the framework of evangelism. Many Pentecostals are beginning to realize that sole emphasis on proclamation is not enough in today's context. While a combination of individualistic orientation of evangelism with an emphasis on gaining new converts and initiating them into Christian communities is probably one of the strongest objectives among Romanian Pentecostals, it by no means follows an integrative approach to mission, and when it is emphasized at the expense of a balanced approach to missions can lead to a very narrow understanding of both gospel and evangelism.

The second approach to evangelism which Sider identifies as ' radical Anabaptist' also finds its expression in the Romanian Evangelical milieu, mainly among some of the more progressive evangelical churches. The important difference between this model and the ' individualistic evangelical' one lies in the awareness of the social dimension of sin and therefore broader view of evangelism. Unlike in the first model, the understanding of the gospel is not individualistic, but it does not equate salvation with socio-political liberation either.[13] Bill Prevette' s study on 'Evangelical Faith Based Agencies and Churches involved with Children and Youth at Risk in Romania since 1989,' provides helpful background to the emergent progressive evangelical churches that are keen to stress an evangelism strategy that does not emphasize the individualistic approach.[14] His research uncovered an emerging generation of Romanian Evangelicals that adopted cultural and theological positions distinct from that of the majority conservative Evangelical Churches. Called 'hybridized Evangelicals' they are adaptive, open to new ideas, consider relevance to the greater culture to be important, and want to be engaged with social concerns and broader cultural issues. They are increasingly involved with at risk youth and children, and the poor and are set to represent a

[13]Sider, *What is the Gospel*, 37.

[14]Bill Prevette, *Evangelical Faith Based Agencies and Churches involved with Children and Youth at Risk in Romania since 1989*, Seminary Paper Presented at Oxford Centre for Mission Studies 26 October 2005. *Unpublished*.

new form of Romanian Evangelicalism aimed to have sustainable impact and influence on the Romanian Culture. Thus, evangelism is still central in this model, but it is not limited just to a verbal proclamation and it implies the life of discipleship and in this way the church as a community of the redeemed is seen as part of the gospel. Significantly, the research conducted by Dr. Corneliu Constantinueanu, a Romanian Pentecostal theologian, on '*The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul' s theology, With Particular Reference to the Romanian Context',* contributes to a growing awareness for the social dimensions of Paul' s gospel and challenges the church in Romania to broaden her understanding of the evangelism. Based on extensive biblical exegesis, Constantineanu explains that Paul's intention was to show that the gospel the believers have received has clear and concrete implications for their everyday lives.[15] Furthermore, Constantineanu uses the model of social reconciliation found in Paul as a criterion to assess the practice of reconciliation within the Romanian Evangelical Churches. Regarding the Evangelical Christians in Romania finds that their Christian existence is shaped by significant relations with the Scripture (and Paul's teaching in particular), that their understanding and practice of reconciliation have strong Pauline resonances. The experience of reconciliation, in Christ, is for them a social reality manifested within the community, which enables them to transcend ethnic and social barriers. While this was a positive assessment compared with Paul, 'the EC have also fall short of the Pauline reconciliation by withdrawing from the wider world and thus limiting Paul' s notion to insiders'. [16] Constantineanu urges Evangelical Christians to serve the gospel by promoting a 'spirituality that leads to the wellbeing and human flourishing of all in the Romanian context.' A proper eschatological understanding of reality modelled on the eschatological

[15]Corneliu Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's theology, With Particular Reference to the Romanian Context*(The University of Leeds School of Theology and Religious Studies and The Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, 2006), 279.

[16]Ibid., 271.

outlook of Paul's Christianity would not hinder their involvement or suggest a withdrawal from an active social life. By placing Christian existence in a larger framework within which everything else makes sense and is placed in its proper dimension, allows for a serious engagement of the church with the wider political life of society while at the same time relativizing the ultimate claims of politics.[17] The Pentecostal theologian argues that for Paul to respond to the gospel is 'to acknowledge and accept the truth it proclaims, and to live according to the logic of the gospel, the logic of the kingdom of God, the logic of the vision of the new creation.'[18] But to live according to the logic of the gospel and in the light of the life of Christ also means 'to be community oriented; and that is a community where everyone is to nurture and embody reconciling practices, which enhance and enrich the life together: harmony and solidarity, peace, love, and regard for others.'[19] By integrating the concept of reconciliation in Paul' s thought into the close relationship of his theology to ethics, Constantineanu combines a very important emphasis on both word and dead instead of exclusive proclamation of the word. In this way, the significance of 'lifestyle evangelism' gains momentum indicating the much needed important shift in a broader understanding of evangelism, beyond that of verbal proclamation that effective evangelism will require raising standards of modelling personal and social ethics in the light of the gospel.

This is a broad spectrum of views of evangelism within Romanian Evangelicalism. It becomes obvious that is not an easy task when it comes to defining 'evangelism' in relation to ' mission'. There is no consensus in the global missiology about the relation of evangelism and mission either. Thus, the meaning, means and message of evangelism, continue to be defined in various ways, often depending on a perception of its position in relation to

[17]Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's theology,* 273.

[18]Ibid., 251.

[19]Ibid.

mission. Some use mission and evangelism synonymously in different variations which range from exclusive understanding of mission/evangelism as soul activity, and some balanced attempts which point to the importance of social responsibility, to complete identification of mission/evangelism with this-worldly project aiming to transform the existing structures of society.[20] Others distinguish ' evangelism' from 'mission'. There are various approaches. Some see the difference between 'evangelism' and 'mission' as being identified in that the goal of the two are not the same and stress that 'evangelism' has to do with communicating the gospel in a post-Christian context, while 'mission' refers to sharing the faith in the third world. Others either emphasize the importance of 'evangelism' as a broader term than mission, or the other way around.[21] The missiologist Professor David Barrett who looked at the various developments and tensions associated with the term 'evangelism' throughout history and as used by different traditions noted that the word 'evangelize' has come to be understood in two quite different senses. In the first sense, 'to evangelize' means 'to preach, bring, tell, proclaim, announce, declare (the gospel), whether people accepted it or not, whether they are then won or converted or not, although this is the intent'; while in the second definition is defined as 'not just to proclaim but to actually win or convert people to the Christian faith'.[22] The difference between these two descriptions is based on the premise of whether the intended results for this activity (i.e. number of conversions) are to be included. Effectively, the first definition is preferred by biblical scholars, most of whom disagree with the perceived synonymy of 'evangelisation' with 'conversion' while the second is often used by practitioners which categorise their ministry in terms of its results and attribute the first definition as 'mere proclamation' or ' seed sowing' which results in the people receiving 'only

[20]David Bosch, "Evangelism: Theological Currents and Cross-Currents Today," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research,* vol. 11, No.3 (1987): 98.

[21]Ibid., 98-100.

[22]David Barrett, *Evangelize: A Historical View of the Concept* (New Hope: 1987), 51.

rudimentary exposure' to the good news.[23] Similarly, *The Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions,* which contains a definition of 'evangelism' addresses the issue of limiting the term 'evangelism' exclusively as either 'the gospel declaration' or 'seeking to rectify injustice' and contends that both are necessary.[24] It also includes other definitions related to different variations of evangelism in contemporary missiology, such as ' cross-cultural evangelism' ,[25] 'crusade evangelism' ,[26] 'presence evangelism' and 'proclamation evangelism,' [27] 'life-style evangelism' ,[28] 'child evangelism' ,[29] and also a special section on 'evangelism and social responsibility' ,[30] Evangelism has been a priority among Pentecostals throughout their history, however there have been various degree of approaches about the evangelism and social ministry in Pentecostal practice. Grant Mc Clung has listed various alternatives explaining the relationship between the two as 'social ministry is evangelism', social ministry or evangelism', 'social ministry for evangelism', 'social ministry and evangelism', and 'social ministry in evangelism'.[31] Clearly, there are some disagreements, misconceptions and differing perspectives when it comes to defining mission and evangelism, which are often the source of some reservations in this area of Church ministry. Nevertheless, as Andrew Kirk

[23]Barrett, *Evangelize,* 51.

[24]Robert E. Coleman, "Evangelism" in Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, eds A. Scott Moreau, Harold, A. Netland(Baker Book House: 2000): 341-44.

[25]Guthrie, *Evangelism,* Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, 244.

[26]Harber, *Evangelism*, Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, 247.

[27]Prigodich, *Evangelism,* Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, 785, 791.

[28]Beougher, *Evangelism*, Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, 578.

[29]Klaus, *Evangelism*, Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, 176.

[30]Hiebert and Cox, *Evangelism*, Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions, 344.

[31]Grant, Mc Clung, *Connecting to God's Work in Your World*(Pathway Press: 2000), 164-65.

stresses in what concerns the church today 'there can be no authentic evangelism apart from a living testimony to the transforming power of the gospel in action'.[32]

Keeping in perspective the complexity of relations between mission and evangelism it is important nonetheless to attempt some integration of these approaches within the Romanian context. Given the situation where mission among many Pentecostals as already referred to, still often and uncritically has been identified with evangelism that is mainly understood in individualistic terms of proclamation, it is essential to broaden the scope between mission and evangelism. Such broadening of terms becomes theologically possible if mission is not treated synonymously with evangelism, but rather distinguished from it. Furthermore, a consideration of mission as embracing both evangelism and social actions is deeply significant in the light of today's situation in Romania. However, in order to set the framework for the reconceptualization of mission-evangelism relations it is necessary to first define the content of the gospel that constitutes both of them.

5.3. The Content of the Gospel – The Good News of the Kingdom

Positive steps forward in mission and evangelism require a clear understanding of the message as it is the evangel that determines evangelism. Thus, giving theological attention to the gospel will inevitably lead to a renewal in mission and more evangelism in new directions. The issue has been at the centre stage in ecumenical circles culminating into how the concept of salvation is understood by different Christian traditions. With the emergence of the Liberation Theology the concept of salvation was approached from the perspective 'of liberation from the power of destructive forces of life', and the rise of South African black theology linked the gospel with the issue of identity and human dignity before God as well as

[32]Andrew, J. Kirk, *What is Mission? Theological Explorations*(London DLT, 1999), 57.

liberation from guilt and oppression.[33] Disagreements over the meaning of salvation plagued the ecumenical dialogue of the twentieth century and it is summed up by Bosch' s helpful portrayal of the issue as follows: 'When the Evangelicals ask the ecumenists whether you weep for lost souls, the ecumenists ask the Evangelicals, do you weep for starving people'?[34]

Differing views are compounded by the linguistic variances used by New Testament writers to portray salvation to cover everything to which mission is called. For example, Luke emphasizes salvation here and now, while Paul puts greater emphasis on the future and the final dimensions of salvation.[35] Luke uses salvation language to portray a wide range of life transforming experiences and liberation from various enslaving powers such as poverty, discrimination, illness, demon possession, sin and so forth.[36] Forgiveness of sins thus opens the door to renewal of every aspect of life bringing healing and liberation so that a person might lead a life of human dignity.[37] Paul emphasized salvation as reconciliation with God, but as a process that had both social and political consequences. For him new life and spiritual renewal are an essential part of the process of being saved, but everything focuses on the future and return of Christ. Paul' s view of reconciliation is spelled out in Romans 5:10: 'For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life.' For Paul salvation is an eschatological process, in which the future is already present.[38]

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[33]Risto A. Ahonen, *Mission in the New Millenium: Theological Grounds for World Mission* (The Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission, Helsinki: 2000): 86.

[34]Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 393.

[35]Stan, Nussbaum, *A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll: 2005), 97.

[36]Norman, E. Thomas, *Classic Texts in Mission and World Christianity* (Orbis: 1995), 122-23.

[37]Ahonen, *Mission in the New Millenium*, 86.

[38]Nussbaum, *A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission*, 97.

Ronald Sider points out that contemporary Evangelicals fall short of defining the gospel the way Jesus did. Frequently, the impression is given that the core of Christian faith, the essence in comparison with which other things are less important, is forgiveness of sins. Sider argues that forgiveness of sins is not the primary way Jesus spoke about the gospel.[39]

Most exegetes today agree that the ministry of Jesus, as described in the gospels, focused on ' announcing' and demonstrating the kingdom of God which formulated one of the central aspects of his teaching ministry reflected the good news of the kingdom. At the heart of the Jesus message in reference to the gospel, was the gospel of the kingdom mentioned in 122 instances in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.[40] Of all the gospel writers, Mark seems to vividly capture the essence of the message of Jesus as the gospel of the kingdom of God: After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!' (Mark 1:14-15, NIV). It is noteworthy, that Jesus is said to proclaim a ' gospel', a ' good word' a message of liberation, even the 'gospel of God'. This is no slip of the pen; it is the older phrase that is sometimes also used by Paul (e.g. Rom 1.1; 1 Thess 2.2). It denotes a wider movement in Israel's history in which Jesus came to play a crucial role.[41] Paul Hanson describes the event as the culmination of a long awaited decisive action in addressing evil….and making way for the kingdom of God. Jesus message announced those who believe the gospel that even now God was the compassionate Deliverer, not willing the death of the sinners, but the sinner's salvation.[42]

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[39]Ron, Sider. What is the Gospel? *Transformation* (16:1, 1999), 31.

[40]Ibid.

[41]Peter J. Thomson, "Jesus and His Judaism,"*The Cambridge Companion to Jesus*, Markus Bockmuehl ed.(Cambridge University Press, Virtual Publishing, 2003): 29.

[42]Paul D. Hanson, *The People Called: The Growth of Community in the Bible* (Westminster John Knoz Press, Louisville, Kentucky: 2001), 397-98.

Furthermore, commenting on this passage in Mark 1:15, Padilla emphasises that the good news of the kingdom is concerning 'something that can be seen and heard' and points to five characteristics of the gospel:

> (1) It is news concerning a historical fact, an event that is taking place and that affects human life in every way; (2) it is news that is of public interest, having to do with the whole of human history;(3) it is news related to the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy (the *malkuth Yahveh* announced by the prophets and celebrated by Israel has become a present reality); (4) it is news calling for repentance and faith; and (5) it is news resulting in the formation of a new community, a community of people who are personally called.[43]

Jesus proclamation at the beginning of his ministry spoke of the presence of God in his actions, particularly in the miracles, in the healings that he performed: the presence of the Spirit of God signifies the presence of the kingdom. When John the Baptist sent messengers to ask Jesus whether 'he was the one who has come' he replied: 'Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, and the good news is preached to the poor' (Lk. 7:22, Matt. 11:5).[44] Thus, Jesus announced and demonstrated the arrival of the reign of God among the people in various modes not only bringing healing to physically ill, but also offering forgiveness to sinners, fellowship open to the outcast and ministry among the poor, all of which constituted part of the 'politics of the kingdom of the God'[45], work concerned with the making of whole persons, relationships and bodies.' Restoration to wholeness in the light of God's kingdom is central in Jesus' proclamation of the gospel.

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[43]Rene C. Padilla, *Mission Between the Times. Essays on The Kingdom*(Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1985), 189.

[44]Douglas, Moo.Ed. Divine Healing in the Health and Wealth Gospel. *The Gospel and Contemporary Perspectives, Vol. 2: Viewpoints from Trinity Journal* (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1997): 62.

[45] Rene C. Padilla, "The Politics of the Kingdom of God and the Political Mission of the Church, "in Samuel, Vinay. & Sugden, Chris. (eds) *Mission as Transformation: a theology of the whole gospel*. (Regnum Books International, 1999): 180-198.

However, as Ron Sider argues, such wholeness articulated in the good news of the kingdom, has to incorporate both a 'vertical' and a 'horizontal' component. The vertical aspect emphasises that people can only enter Jesus' kingdom by 'sheer divine grace' which can be actualized only by faith alone in Jesus' atoning death on the cross and his resurrection, that are the heart of the Christian faith. But that is 'only half of the meaning' of the gospel of the kingdom.[46] Jesus was not a 'lone ranger' or an 'isolated prophet' and thus he called a group of disciples to follow him and inspired them to live in a way that would reflect a visible expression of Jesus' teaching, the new reconciled relationships, and the new community which formulate the horizontal aspect of the gospel of the kingdom.[47]

In other words, a right relationship with God, according to Jesus' teaching, cannot be separated from right relationships with others. It implies that both vertical and horizontal aspects are implicit to the gospel, which is not just limited to the 'spiritual realm.' There is overwhelming agreement among scholars that the message of Jesus had political and economic implications. Politically, anyone announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God is at least by implication criticizing the present Kingdom. On the economic side, in the gospel narratives, preaching of the Kingdom of God contains socio-economic components in that justice prompted affirmative action in view of impending realities.[48] The coming reign of God brought about a reformation of life on all levels, personal, social, political, and economic.[49] It is also important to note, that the gospel also has an eschatological dimension that is both realized and future. Jesus spoke repeatedly about the present arrival of the kingdom: For in fact the kingdom is among you (Luke 17:21) and the final arrival of the

[46]Sider. *What is the Gospel?*, 32.

[47]Ibid., 32.

[48]Jonathan J. Bonk, *Mission and Money: Afluence as a Missionary Problem…Revisited*(Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York:2006)208-09.

[49]Hanson, *The People Called*, 420.

Kingdom of God which will take place in the future and which Jesus was anointed to proclaim and inaugurate as the promised outpouring of the Spirit makes present the 'last days' (Acts 2:17).[50] The dynamic interplay between the 'already' and 'not yet' of the kingdom points to it both as present and eschatological reality. In the context of the proclamation of the arrival of the kingdom of God, the gospel is the good news as it points to 'God's act of eschatological deliverance in Christ.'[51] The intervention of God, which is the content of the Gospel, establishes the entire renewal of human life and history. Therefore, the gospel points to the need for re-ordering of human life in the light of Christ's transformative action on the cross.

There are at least two important implications of such understanding of the gospel. Firstly, the grace that enables the good news of the kingdom to be demonstrated is followed by the imperative to believe and follow Jesus (Mk 1:15). Cray, commenting on a theology of the kingdom emphasizes that 'the kingdom invades the old age through the person and ministry of Jesus, and that this ministry consists both of the proclamation of the kingdom with accompanying call to follow Jesus, and of the effective demonstration of the power and reality of the kingdom.'[52] As such, the grace mediated by Jesus does not articulate 'a vague tolerance associated with principled commitment,'[53] but rather points to a holistic vision of good life in all its aspects, which is built on the values of the kingdom. Nevertheless, such an understanding of the kingdom which incorporates both 'divine

[50]Eckhard, J. Schnabel, *Early Christian Mission: Jesus and the Twelve, vol. I* (Intervarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 2004), 212-213.

[51]John Webster, "Eschatology, Anthropology and Modernity," *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, vol2:No 1(2000):13-28.

[52]Cray, Graham. "A Theology of the Kingdom." *Transformation: An International Journal of Holistic Mission Studies.* October/December 1988. 5: 24-31., 25.

[53]Ibid, 26.

initiative' and 'human response', the response can never fully reveal the complete scope of God' s reign, as the 'already' and 'not yet' are both evident.[54]

Secondly, the proclamation of the gospel is not just directed to isolated individuals, but seeks to create life-transforming communities called to bring authentic witness to the dynamics of God's kingdom in the world. As Ramachandra has put it, 'The gospel creates new human community and that new human community is itself part of the gospel to be proclaimed.' According to this, the gospel brings a message of faith in a communal God who cares, who is active in love and who sets people free. Castro comments on the content of evangelistic message by referring to the theme of the Nairobi assembly 'Jesus Christ Frees and Unites', which affirms that:

> The gospel always includes the announcement of God' s kingdom and love through Jesus Christ, the offer of grace and forgiveness of sins, the invitation of repentance and faith in him, the summons to fellowship in God' s church, the command to witness to God' s saving words and deeds, the responsibility to participate in the struggle for justice and human dignity, the obligation to denounce all that hinders human wholeness, and a commitment to risk life itself.[55]

Such understanding of the gospel calls to manifest God's love through word and deed and to integrate service with proclamation that is not triumphalist, but rooted in solidarity with the hurting world. All too often, this kingdom dimension of the gospel is neglected in contemporary practice of evangelism. Limited understanding of what the gospel, or rather preoccupation with certain perspectives functioning in churches when it comes to doing evangelism often affects the practice of evangelism, but also its perception by the wider community. Therefore, it becomes necessary to reflect on evangelism in the light of the holistic content of the gospel.

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[54]Graham. *A Theology of the Kingdom*, 31.

[55]Emilio Castro, Freedom In Mission: The Perspective of the Kingdom of God, (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1985) 91.

5.4. Towards a Theology of Evangelism for the Whole Gospel

The ' annus mirabilis' of 1989 ended for the Romanians with the overthrow of one of the harshest and most nationalistic communist dictatorships in Europe. The Romanian Pentecostals expressed great enthusiasm about the new era and recognized therein an acting of God as the Lord of history who answered their prayers and provided them with a special Kairos period to call their nations back to God and to the spiritual foundations for a free and truly - new society. Therefore, when commenting on 'evangelism in Romania' since 1990, not many Pentecostals connect it with 'theology,' but rather focus on practical methods and programmes employed in 'soul saving' and church planting. Rene Padilla warns against the dangers of divorcing evangelism from theology, which can easily lead to reductionist interpretations of the gospel and an inadequate practice of evangelism. He further asks a challenging question: 'Can there be evangelism that is really biblical – that really presents the whole counsel of God – without theological reflection that seeks to understand the relevance of the gospel to the totality of human life in a given context?'[56] This is certainly a valid question when considering theology of evangelism in post-communist contexts. Kusnierik and Moyle, observe that among evangelicals in Central and Eastern Europe, important concepts of 'creation', 'sin', and the kingdom of God have little impact for the life of the individual and society.[57] As an isolated social minority, Romanian Pentecostalism emerged from decades of communist persecution with little experience in relation to issues of social concerns, or the structures of civic society. In addition, both the cultural roots of Romanian Orthodoxy and a pietistic theology that elevated personal holiness over social concern had

[56]Rene, C. Padilla. *Mission Between the Times. Essays on the Kingdom.* (Grand Rapids: Michigan, 1985), 99-100.

[57]Juray, Kusnierik, Moyle Marsh. *Trends- Ten Years On.* (Unpublished Sen Research Paper, Bratislava, Slovakia, 1999), 34.

influenced the operative theologies of the Romanian Pentecostals. Cristian Romocea, an emerging Romanian leader, describes the theological understanding of the churches:

> Neo Protestant Churches in Romania do not generally have a clearly defined social agenda, or when some of their theologians do, it is completely isolated from an adequate theological notion. Neo-Protestant churches in particular tend to reduce social reality to its vertical, individual aspect, which refers to the relationship among church members and with God, with no bearing on further implications for the wider society. This stance corresponds to their pietistic and socially conservative tendencies in which their relationship with God is a personal matter, which does not retain a wider social implication.[58]

Pentecostal theologian Constantineanu points out that since their inception Neo-protestants saw themselves persecuted and pushed to the very margins, making it difficult for them to engage effectively in any way in the social or political life of the country. Marked by a weak organizational apparatus and no public platform to articulate their convictions, and backed by their own eschatology, 'Romanian Neo-Protestants compensated by living in the spirit, in the heavenlies, and their sense of what is to be church was thus freed from the call to be reconciling in the world outside church. They turned the Christian faith into a private religiosity with all the drawbacks that result from that.'[59]

A 2005 study about the attitudes towards Church's intervention in politics shows that Romanian Neoprotestants[60] tend to deny not just the duty but also the right of the church to interfere with political issues and intervene into social problems. They regard experiencing a 'spiritual awakening' as the only legitimate way of solving social problems.[61]' In their

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[58]Cristian, Romocea. "A Strategy For Social Reconciliation In The Ethnic Conflict In Transylvania*",* *Religion in Eastern Europe XXIII*, (5 October 2003):26

[59] Constantineau, The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology, 264-65.

[60]The term Neoprotestants refers to a group of churches comprising largely the Baptists, Pentecostals, Christians according to the Gospel (the Romanian designation for "Brethren") and Seventh-day Adventists. In order to distinguish them from the mainline Protestant communities, the Romanian authorities referred to them as "neo-Protestants" (a name adopted subsequently by these churches to identify and present themselves). Even though they arrived in Romania beginning with the eighteenth , and mostly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these churches grew very quickly and became among the largest communities of neo-Protestants in Europe.

[61]This point is reiterated also by theology lecturer Danut Manastireanu who notes amongst Neo-Protestants an obsessive preoccupation with revivals as an answer to the plethora of societal problems in

theology, evangelization is understood as providing the fundamentals of moral reform and the subsequent transformation of Self. Thus, the neo-Protestants' identity transcends the strict barriers of belonging to a particular national community…. inevitably leading to certain marginalization."[62] Because of their conservative stance on many issues, Pentecostals are criticized at times for supporting policies often associated with antiliberal and nondemocratic principles. They are frequently perceived as being more interested in their own social, economic and political interests, than in supporting and encouraging renewal in society. Similarly, they show an obsession with structural expansion, pursuit of power and property, rather than committing themselves to help the poor, pursue justice for the weak and marginalized, and empowering the powerless.[63]

Romanian sociologist of religion Rogobete notes that Neo-Protestant churches practice a form of religious sectarianism - the construction of a parallel world, an alternative to the secular world. They are separated from the world, self-sustaining and self-sufficient, with well-defined boundaries and high walls, with strict rules of adherence and expulsion. It is a religion that constructs its own social world with its own alternative culture. It reflects a lack of trust in the state's institutions, and it sets up its own schools, businesses, leisure activities, as alternatives to the ones offered by the secular world. They are dominated by a simplified epistemology, often concerned with the *ad literam* application of the bible texts. Hermeneutics is denounced as demonized. Rogobete concludes that such an approach, rooted in self-sufficiency runs the risk of further exacerbating social isolation and marginalization.[64]

Romania. "Evangelical Denominations in Post-Communist Romania," *East-West Church & Ministry Report* 6 (Summer 1998): 7-10.

[62] Gavril Flora, Georgina Szilagyi And Victor Roudometof. Religion and national identity in post-communist Romania. *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* (Volume 7, Number 1, April 2005): 44-45

[63]Manastireanu, Evangelical Denominations in Post-Communist Romania, 10.

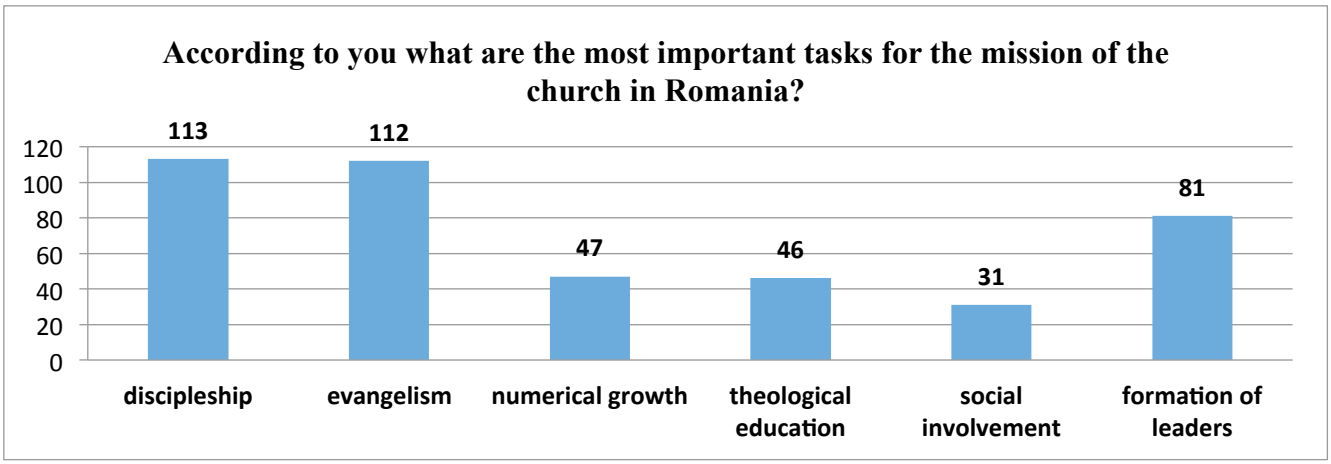
[64]Silviu Rogobete, *Religie şi schimbare socială. Câteva reflexii asupra rolului religiei în societatea contemporană* (Religion and Change. Reflections on the role of religion in the contemporary society. Unpublished draft article, New Europe College, 2002): 4-8.

In the light of these considerations, it is important to evaluate how these views are reflected in the changing mentality of Romanian Pentecostals today. In order to illustrate present ways of thinking about evangelism and mission I conducted a survey. The survey was conducted during May – November 2008 and was completed by 162 respondents. Of a total of 14 questions included in the survey, 12 were selected for the purpose of this chapter. The criterion in choosing the respondents was on the basis of their claimed Pentecostal affiliation and involvement in Christian ministry. Therefore, the survey was filled only be four groups of people: pastors, church leaders, lecturers (theologians) and theology students from the main representative Pentecostal seminaries located in the capital Bucharest, and the other from the city of Arad in Western Romania. Out of the total of 162, 84 were pastors (here are represented 20% out of 400 pastors), 36 were presbyters (Unlike other evangelical groups, in Romanian Pentecostal churches the function of the presbyters differs from that of the pastor. They perform all church functions under the supervision of the pastor), 20 theology students. 96% of respondents are male, as ordination of women is not officiated in the Romanian Pentecostal Churches.

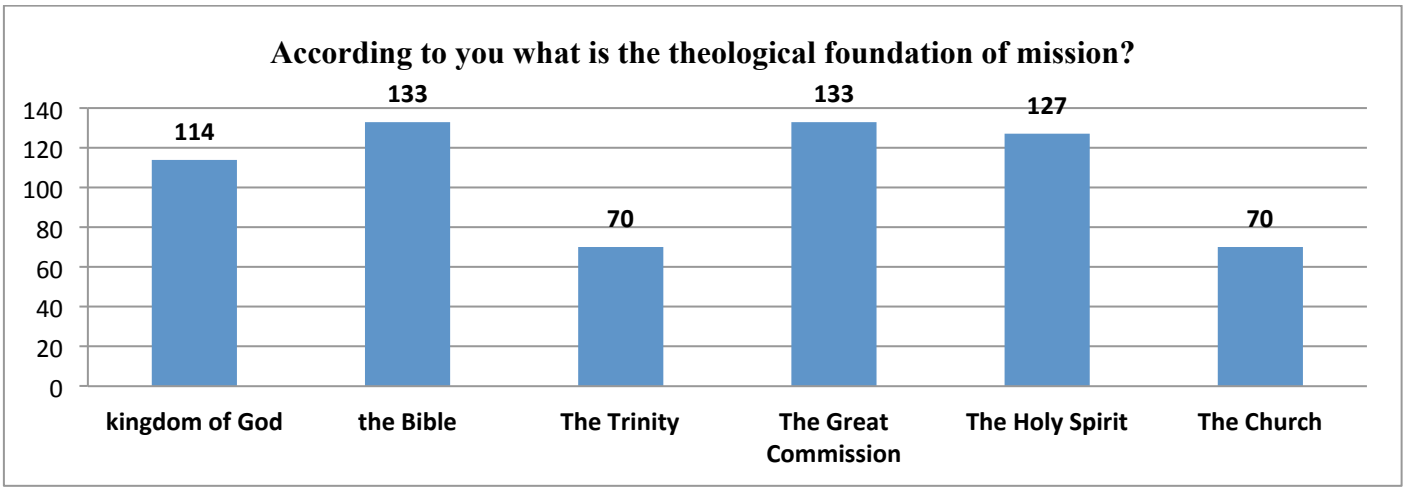
All the participants were made aware that the questionaire is part of a doctoral thesis on Romanian Pentecostalism in completion at the department of Pentecostal & Charismatic studiesat the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom titled 'A Theology of Mission for a Post-Communist Context: An Integrative Approach.' by Vasile Marchis, Supervisor Dr. Allan Anderson. The purpose of the questionaire was stated as intended to identify key issues facing Romanian Pentecostalism today. Questionaire states that participants and answers given are entirely confidential and anonymous.

This is a thematic survey on a selected group of people and as such, it does not claim to be a normative value for the whole of the Pentecostal movement in Romania and can only

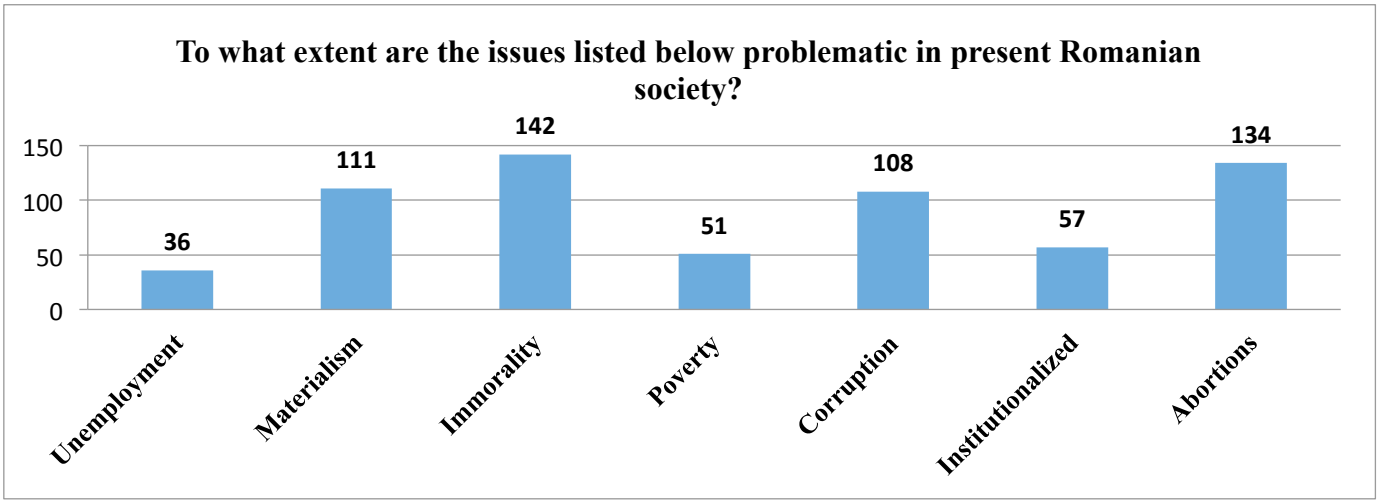
serve as informative indicators of certain tendencies and views among Pentecostal pastors, leaders, lecturers, and theology students.



The aim of this question was to identify certain priorities in mission as perceived by various Romanian Pentecostal leaders. The result quite clearly indicates that the vast majority of respondents (70%) claim that evangelism, discipleship and formation of leaders are the most important priorities in mission. What is surprising is that only 29% of the respondents claim that the priority task is numerical growth of the church, while in actual practice there seems to be far greater emphasis on this element. While 19% claimed that social responsibility was very important, 43 % claimed it to be important (This is the second highest total in the important category). This points to a growing recognition of the social implications of the Gospel.

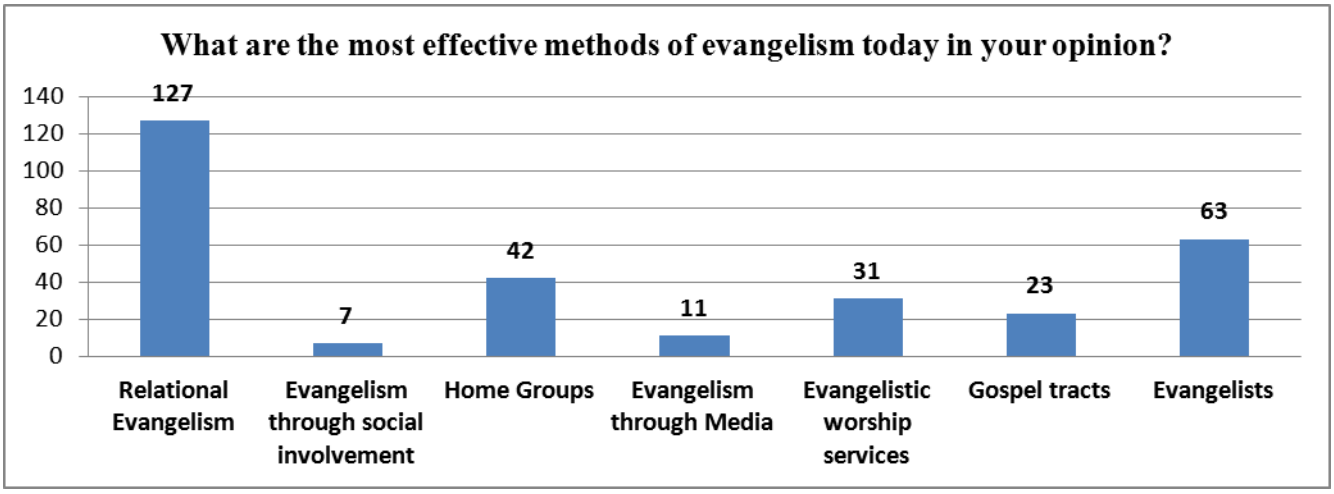


This question sought to identify theological foundations of mission, especially in relation to the answer given to the first question on priorities of mission. The Bible, the Great Commission, the Holy Spirit seem to stand out as the most important theological foundations of mission. The most surprising results from this question concerns the Trinity and the Church as foundational. While a considerable group named the Trinity as foundation for mission there is still need for a greater awareness of the theological and practical implications of the doctrine of the Trinity for church and mission.

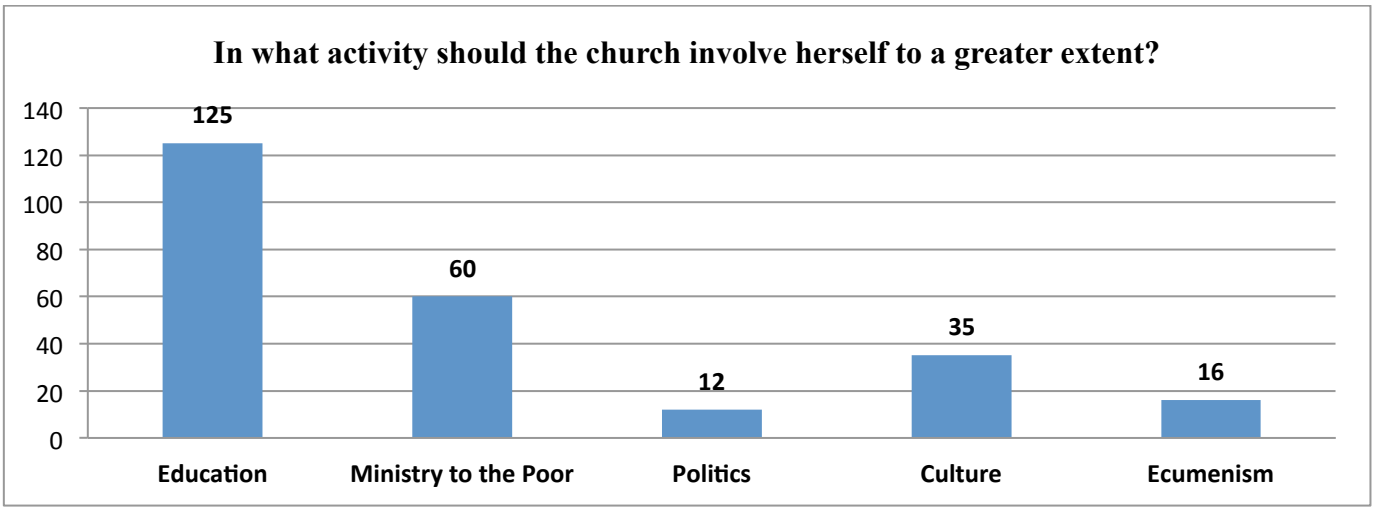


The purpose of this question is to see what social issues are deemed important. Immorality, abortions, materialism and corruption are named as the biggest social issues, which raises many

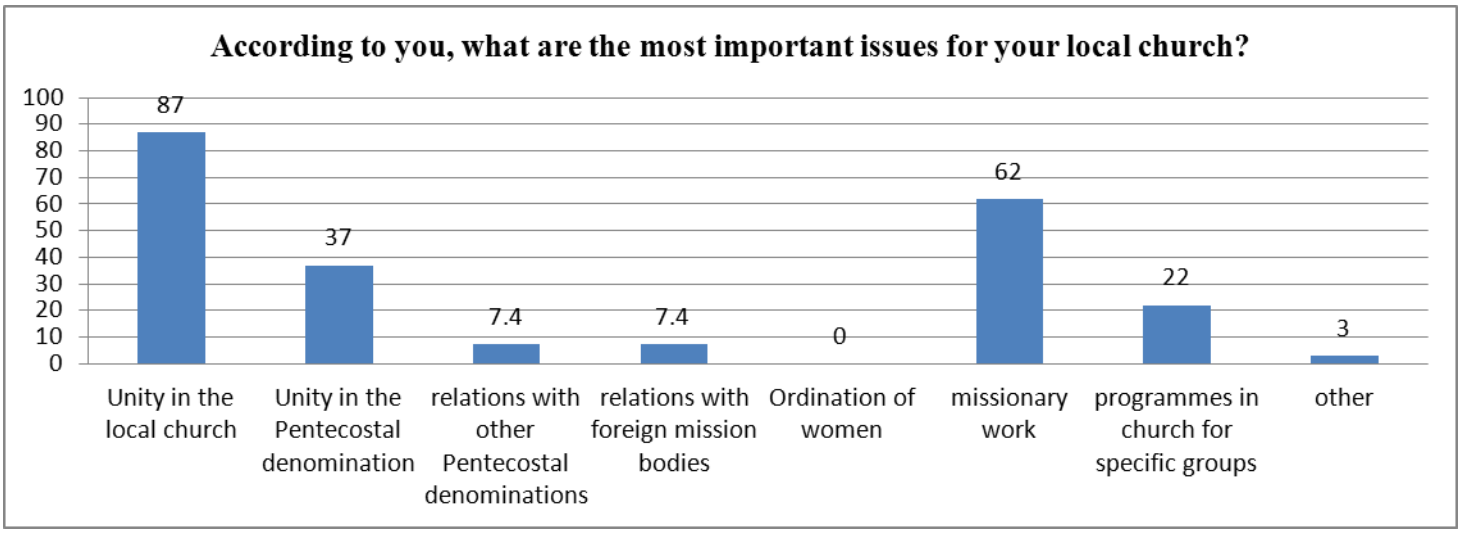
questions about the Christian response. Unemployment does not seem to be a pressing social issue since Romania has been experiencing population losses to nearly every western country. Addressing poverty does not rank high, as Romania's economic boom between 2003-08 led to rapid gains in poverty reduction; however, regions of the country still rank as poorest in EU. What is surprising is that only 35% considered the issue of orphaned/institutionalized children as a very important social issue.



This question seeks to evaluate the perception of contemporary models in comparison to ' traditional approaches.' What is quite notable is that the category of ' Relational Evangelism' seems to be most effective. While more traditional approaches such as ' evangelistic worship services,' and the use of ' Evangelists' seem to have lost their priority status in mission. Even so, the two categories were identified by 53% of respondents as effective evangelism models. This points to a broader change taking place in the church that requires more personal and participative models of evangelism. A growing number of respondents (25% - ' most effective', 54% effective) see home groups as a potential to meet present needs. Significant number of respondents considered Evangelism through social involvement (45%), Evangelism through media (48%), Gospel tracts (40) and Evangelists (51%) as effective tools in mission. What is notable is that a great majority (38% - most effective, 51% effective) see evangelism done by someone with a special calling as a very important evangelism strategy.

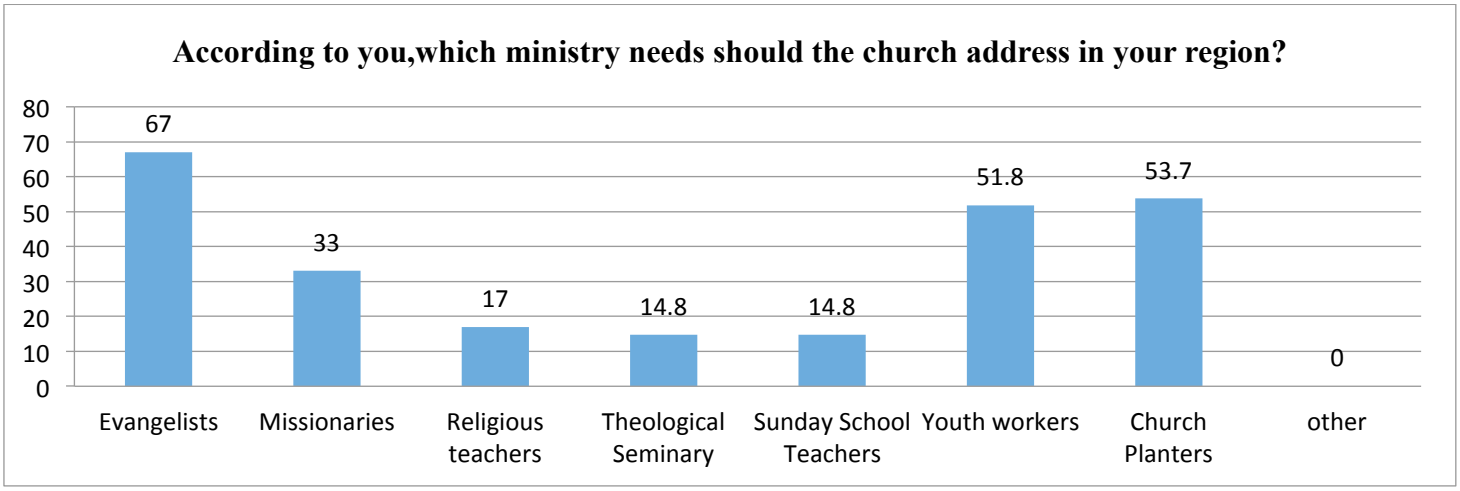


Significantly, the largest group of respondents point to ' 'education' ' as the highest priority (77%). It points to a growing need for information and understanding of the multifaceted situation that Romanians find themselves in. (This is not just limited to Christians). 'Ministry to the poor' is seen as ' important' by a vast majority of respondents (53%). This points to an increasing social consciousness among Romanian Pentecostal leaders. However, involvement with 'politics,' (7% very significant) 'culture,' (21% as very significant) and 'ecumenism,'(9% very significant) does not seem to be as important as other issues.

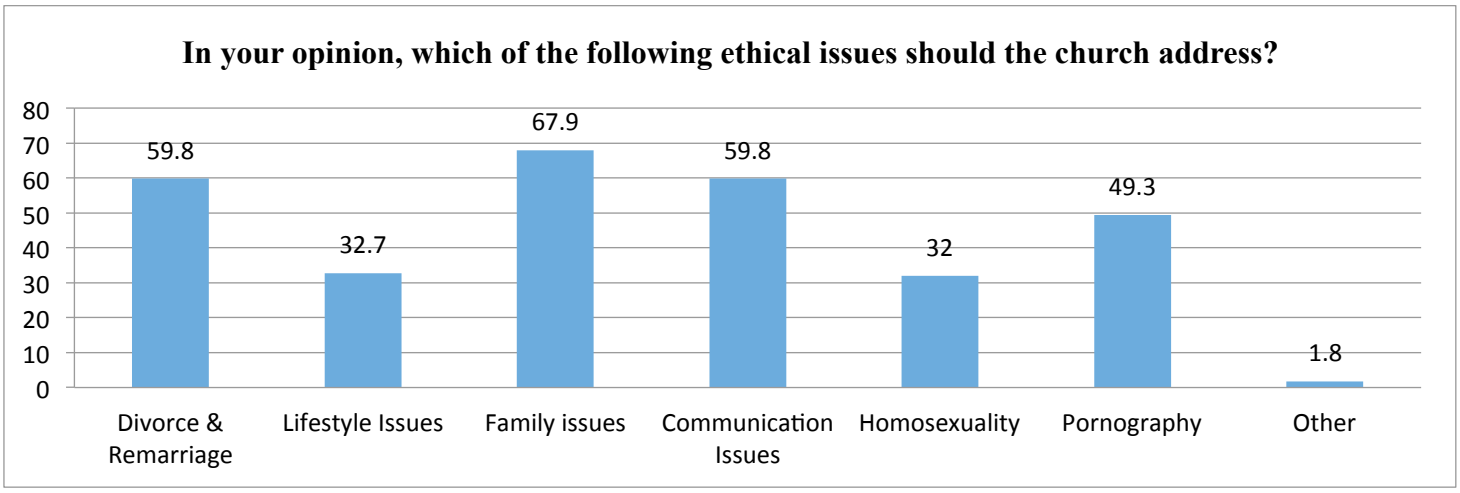


The aim of this question was to determine what are the priorities in terms of issues confronting the local church. 87% of respondents, by far the highest percentage were concerned, with maintaining unity in the local church. 62% of the respondents expressed the need for the local church

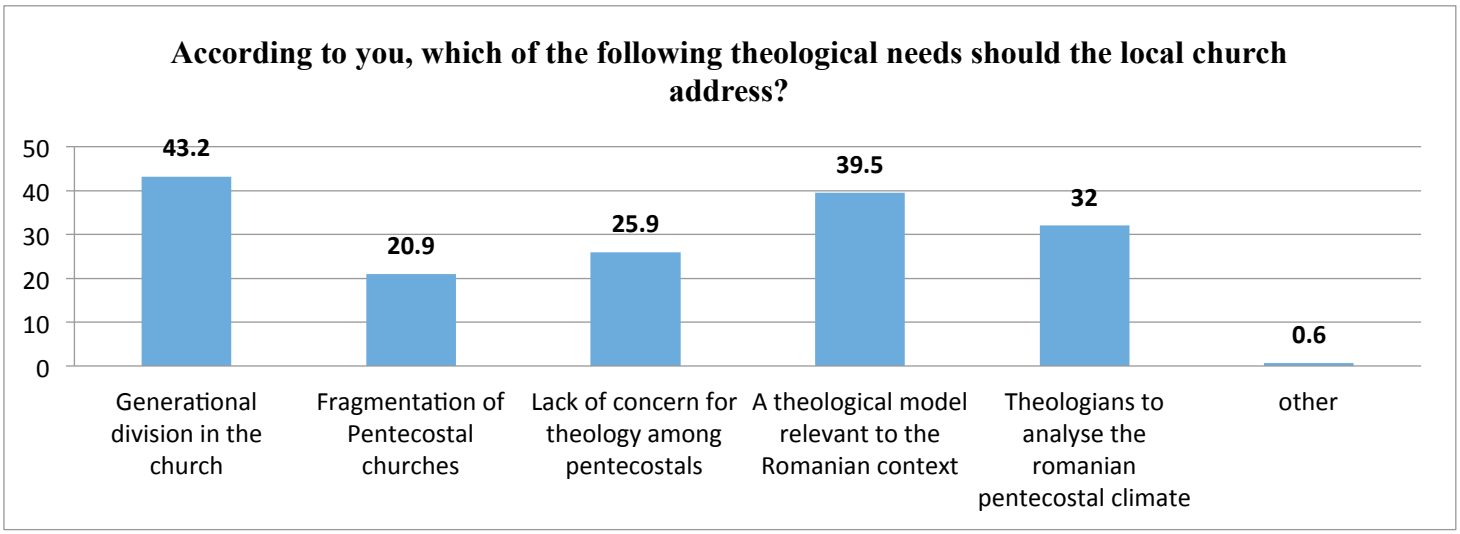
to be involved in missionary work. Unity within the denomination was seen as most important by 37% of the respondents. Relations with other Pentecostal churches and relations with foreign mission bodies were seen as relevant only by 7.4% respondents. The most surprising issue concerns the ordination of women in pastoral positions. None of the respondents regarded the issue as most important, 3.7% of respondents deemed it important, 14% as less important and the great majority of respondents 74% thought the issue was unimportant.



The purpose of this question was to see how each local church sees the ministry needs of the church in its regional context. 67% of the respondents identified the need to train evangelists as the most important priority. Youth Workers 51.8%, Church planters 51.8% and Missionaries 33% were identified by the respondents as very important priorities for the regional needs of the local church. Religious Teachers 17% very important, Theological Seminary and Sunday school teachers 14.8% were seen by the respondents as very important priorities for the church. There does not seem to be a strong bond between local churches and theological schools.

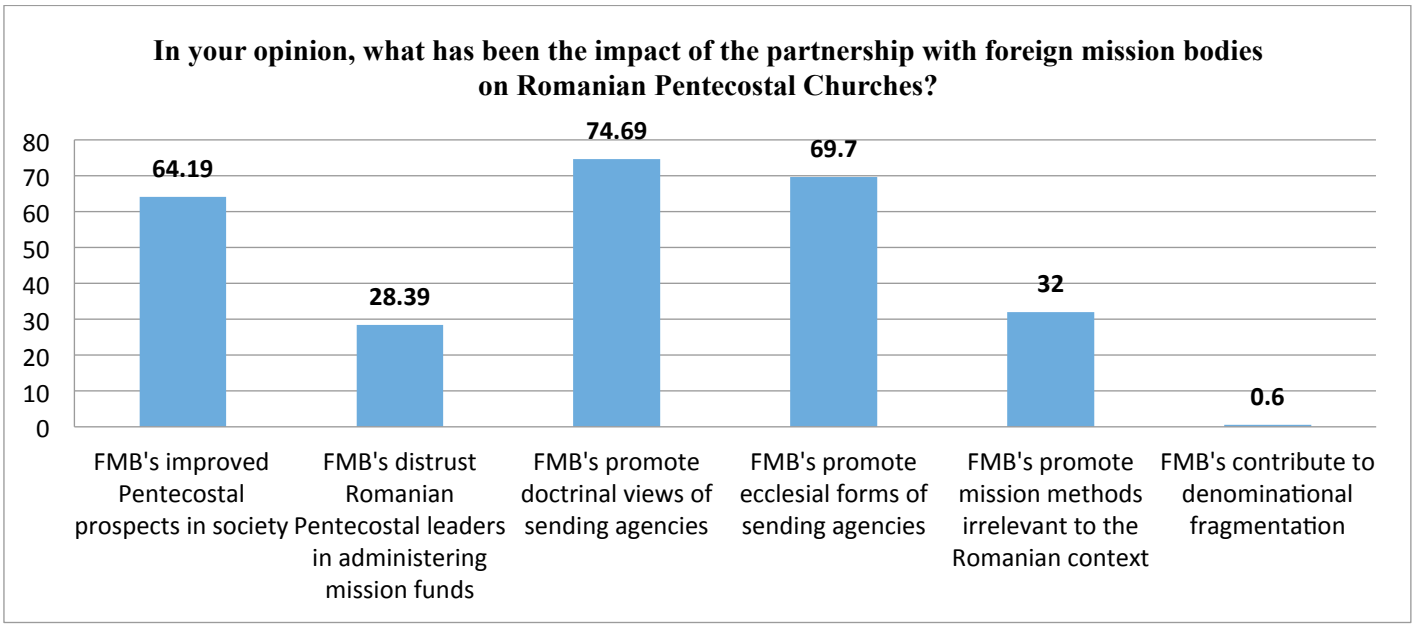


This question sought to identify what ethical issues are deemed important by the leaders of the Pentecostal churches. Family issues 67.9% with an emphasis on marital issues and children education, Divorce & Remarriage 59.8% and Communication issues(within the Christian community) 59.8% were named as the most important ethical challenges for the church. The issue of pornography, 49.3% Lifestyle issues 32.7% (appearance and behaviour), and homosexuality 32% were listed as very important by the respondents as well.

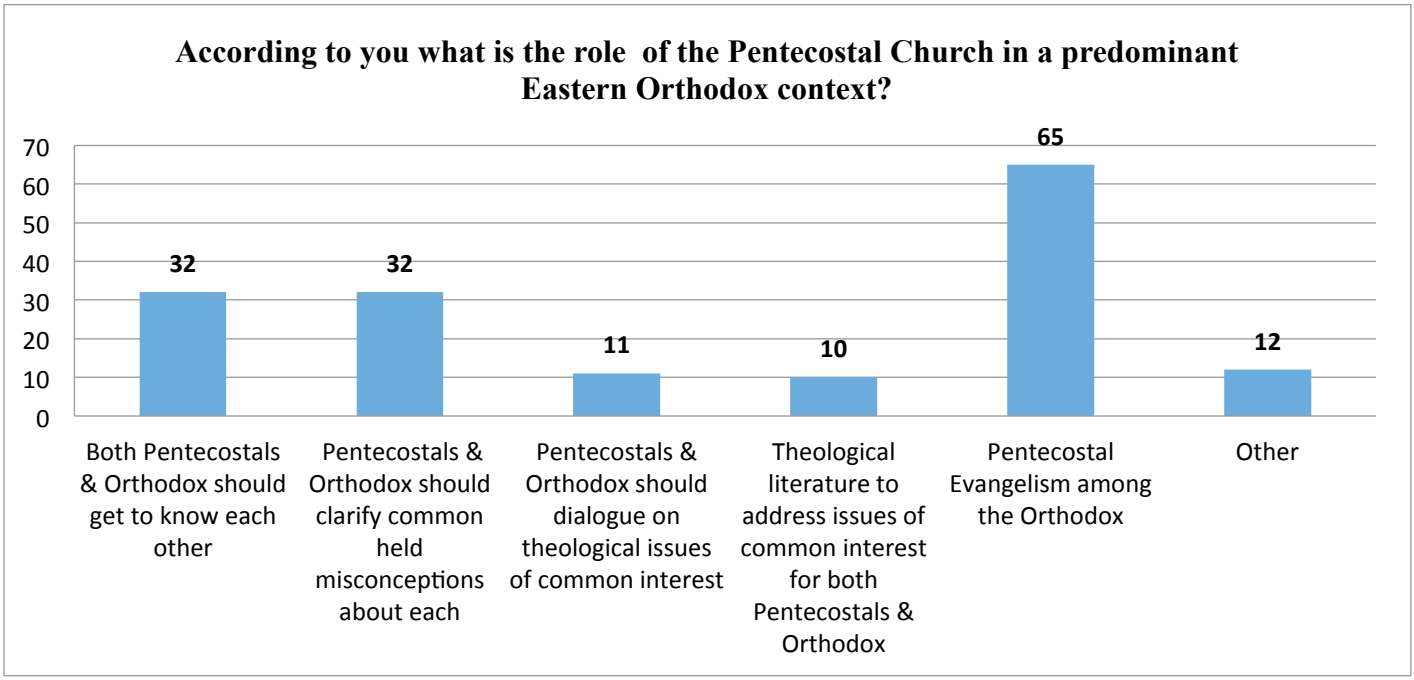


This question seeks to outline which theological challenges are deemed as most challenging for the local churches. The single highest concern was identified by 43.2% of respondents as posed by the generational division in the church, closely identified by 39.5% of the respondents as the need for a theological model relevant to the present Romanian context. There is a rapidly growing division

between the younger Pentecostal leaders in Romania and their elders. This has created ongoing power struggles within the without the church. 39.5% of the respondents pointed towards the importance of theologians able to analyse the current Romanian Pentecostal climate. This is reflected also by 25.9 of the respondents who draw attention to the challenge posed by the fragmentation of churches taking place within the Romanian Pentecostal churches.



The purpose of this question was to assess the efficacy and the partnership outcome of the local churches with the foreign mission organization. Overall, 64% of the respondents describe in positive terms the dynamic of partnership with the Western Agencies. Nevertheless, there is agreement over certain aspects of the partnership in terms of doctrinal 74.6 % respondents, ecclesial 69.7% respondents, and mission practices 32% of respondents. What is interesting is that Romanian leaders did not seem to establish the link between the operational methods of Western missionary organization and its influence on denominational fragmentation. As more Romanian Pentecostal leaders worked with Western FBO' s since the revolution started adopting some Western cultural and theological positions. The primary outcome led to the creation of a new form of Romanian Pentecostalism whose leaders gave rise to emergence of hybrid churches and ministries largely dependent on Western funding and assistance.



The purpose of this question was to see how the Pentecostal leaders in Romanian see their role and responsibility in a context that is predominantly shaped by Eastern Orthodoxy. Romania contains the largest population of Orthodox Christians in the world today, second only to Russia. Romanian Pentecostalism is only a marginal minority representing about 1% of the population. Historic difficulties have characterized Pentecostal attitudes towards the Orthodox Church difficulties remain in areas of communication and religious freedom between Orthodox and Pentecostals in Romania. 65% of the respondents have identified evangelization of the Orthodox as the most important task of the Pentecostal Church in Romania. 32% of the respondents pointed to both the need for Pentecostals & Orthodox to learn more about each other and for both Pentecostals & Orthodox to work towards clarifying misconceptions they have about each other.

5.5. Summary and Conclusions

A general overview of the survey points to certain tendencies that are significant when it comes to considering a theology of evangelism for the whole gospel. First, it seems

that the working practical implementation of the kingdom of God for evangelism is one of the key issues. In other words, while many Romanian Pentecostals claim the Kingdom of God to be central to their mission, it does not seem to be applied in practice to evangelism, often solely concerned with 'soul saving.' Furthermore, evangelism done by people with this special calling can very easily become, for the believers in churches, a way of easing their conscience for not being involved evangelistically in the natural environment where they spend most of their life. The kingdom then is often interpreted in 'spiritual' terms without taking into consideration its broader social implications. Admittedly, there are signs now that Romanian Pentecostal scholars are becoming interested in serious reflection on the social dimension of their faith.

Secondly, there does not seem to be a clear connection between church and kingdom in Romanian Pentecostal thinking which sometimes results in limited views of ecclesial life by seeing the role of the church exclusively as a vehicle to establish God's kingdom in people's hearts. This often results in a black and white vision of the world, rejection of culture at large, and discourages any involvement in it. Thus, another reflection has to do with reflections on the role of Trinity. Vital elements of the Trinitarian faith cannot be ignored in today's mission thinking. Finally, the importance of seeking new ways of thinking about evangelism that will take into consideration a holistic view of the gospel that touches every aspect of life must not be overlooked.

If Romanian Pentecostals are to serve the gospel and promote spirituality that leads to the wellbeing and human flourishing of all in the Romanian Context, they have to enlarge their view they have to enlarge their view of reconciliation with the social dimension that we have explored in Paul. A proper eschatological understanding of reality should not hinder in any way their involvement in the world. On the contrary, far from suggesting a withdrawal from active social life, the eschatological outlook of Paul's Christianity, by placing Christian

existence in a larger framework within which everything else makes sense and is placed in its proper dimension, allows for a serious engagement of the church with the wider political life of society while at the same time relativizing the ultimate claims of politics.[65]

They need to undergird their actions with a search for a theology of the whole gospel that addresses all aspects of culture and society, and is not limited only to the spiritual. They must integrate their praxis into a holistic vision of the kingdom of God and proclaim the gospel for what it was, is and shall ever remain: a public statement – about the whole of reality, about God, about human beings, about the world, about truth, about meaning, about life.

[65]Constantineau, The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology, 264-65.

5.6. The New Romania: What is to be done?

The Orthodox accusation that the Neo-Protestant denominations are a western importation, estranged from the spirit of the Romanian nation and culture is legitimate to a certain extent. It should be admitted that in many cases the Neo-Protestant theology, ' 'liturgical' ' practices, music, and missionary activities, were hastily imported with very little effort of cultural adaptation. Some of the churches are very western in feel, reflecting the western churches they are patterned after. This is a case of under-contextualization, where cultural forms from the sending churches are imported, making the church seem foreign. Thus, Romanian Evangelicals need to work at a more contextualized, indigenous church for people of eastern persuasion. It is worth asking how far evangelicalism can be Romanianised without ceasing to be evangelicalism. I truly believe that when that point is defined or discerned, then it will be the culture that must be challenged ... rather than evangelicalism dropping its key distinctives. Nevertheless, before that point is reached, then it is the merely 'Western' aspects that probably need to be dropped. Where Romanian evangelicalism has picked up on the mid-20th-century fetishes of Western evangelicalism: a) fundamentalism (in proper meaning of that word) doctrines of Scripture i.e. directed not, as it properly should be in Romanian context, against Orth. emphasis on authority of tradition/church,but against the liberal Bible criticism that was a distinctively western issue; b) or drinking, smoking etc.; c) or has led to widespread of dispensationalism etc.... then a thorough 'Romanianisation' is in order.

Yet, the difficulty with the status of the evangelical theology has not been only the lack of the context's influence upon it or church life. Rather, the problems with evangelical missiological praxis have stemmed from Romanian evangelical theology's own lack of identity and its lack of confidence and acceptance of itself as a unique and particularized expression of theology. That is, its inferiority complex in relationship primarily to Eastern

Orthodoxy and Western Protestantism, both of which have contributed to her own unique identity. These shortcomings can be further traced to Romanian evangelical theology's lack of conscious self-awareness and self-critical analysis of its own theological constructs and practices and from its failure to come to grips intellectually and existentially with the totality of contexts that have and do contribute to its life as a tradition. Such conclusions however, are not meant to be stone throwing criticism. Rather they wished to be balanced by the fact that cruel and harsh existence until recently has made such a self-understanding next to impossible. Nevertheless, if a mature Evangelical theology is to emerge in the next years, then these identity issues need to be addressed seriously. What has complicated the issues is also the fact that western, often North American conservative evangelical theology has dominated this tradition. This is partly due to an often-necessary dependence upon the movement's Western counterparts for theological resources – concepts, materials, and teachers. It is partly due to Western evangelical insistence, many times prevalent, that only its questions, forms, and content taken together form a truly Christian and evangelical theology.

However, new contextual realities are beginning to call for new ways of thinking. Fifteen years on from the fall of communism might point out that the stage is now set and that the time is now right for Evangelicals to ' 'come of age' theologically. Initially, this simply will entail striving to understand the context within which its own theology developed. From this position then they will be able to suggest which direction they might head for the future. In the words of Miroslav Volf, a future contextual Eastern European theology needs to be 'rooted in the Scriptures, and sensitive to the needs, struggles and aspirations of the churches and the peoples in diverse Eastern European countries.'[66]

[66]Miroslav Volf, "*Eastern European Faces of Jesus: Theological Issues facing Christians in Eastern Europe,"* Unpublished Work., 22. See also, Miroslav Volf, "When the Unclean Spirit Leaves: The Task of Eastern European Churches After the 1989 Revolution," in *European Journal of Theology*, vol.1/1 (1992): 13-24.

I also believe that it will also involve seeking other dialogue partners, especially those with which it already has some affinity, for discerning and assessing how these partners might stimulate and support, but not control, the theological work of the Romanian churches. Contextual theologies like Latin American liberation theology or Asian theology may offer insights in settings similar to those of today's Evangelicals in Romania. Moreover, there are couple of interesting case studies in contextualization in the Romanian context. One is the Greek Catholic church, which is part of the Roman Catholic Church, but expresses the Eastern Orthodox practices of liturgy, spirituality, discipline and theology. In this case, we have a Roman Catholic Church contextualized to an Eastern Orthodox culture. Other phenomena worthy of note are the 20th century evangelical revival movements that occurred within the Romanian Orthodox church. These movements emphasized a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The most significant is the Lord's Army, which features hymn singing, ordained and lay preaching, and evangelistic publications.

The Protestants in Romania have to realize that their responsibility in this respect is not to invent something new. The story of our Lord Jesus Christ, who came into the world to proclaim the good news, and to die and to rise for the salvation of the world, is the gospel for the whole world. Thus, we have to understand that the Gospel is not something created by us, but rather something that was entrusted to us.[67] Consequently, we have to keep in our minds that our context requires a preaching of the gospel in our own language and consideration has to be given to the fact of how the Gospel intersects with the culture in which God has placed us.[68] The task of carrying out mission and evangelization in Romania does not mean saving heathens or new heathens, as if there has been no Christian Church there for the past fifty

[67]Volf, *When the Unclean Spirit Leaves*, 34

[68]Ibid.

years and that Christian faith largely died out.[69] We need to be aware that also in Romania, Jesus Christ was not only present but also worshiped by millions of peoples. When we talk about mission in the Romanian context, we have to recognize that even if Jesus was worshiped in a wrong way, half-heartedly or only from the lips, he still was there and was worshiped.[70]

Thus, there is no need for Jesus to be brought to Romania as if he never was there. What is needed to be done by the Christians in Romania is to wash the beautiful face of Jesus that has been dirtied by the compromises that our churches have made with the communist Regime.[71] Another aspect of our mission besides washing the face of Jesus is the rediscovering the Romanian face of Jesus. Volf points out that ' 'John 1:5, 9, shows that Jesus is the unconquerable light that shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' '[72] Hence, the task for the Church is to embark on the road of rediscovering the Romanian face of Jesus and in obedience to his message of salvation proclaim confidently the good news of the gospel.

[69]Christoph Klein, "Turning to God for Renewal in Mission in Central and Eastern Europe," *International Review of Mission* vol.137/347 (October 1998): 475-76.

[70]Volf, *Eastern European faces of Jesus*, 23.

[71] Ibid., 24.

[72]Ibid.

The second task that needs to be taken in consideration concerns the *religious context of our country*. We cannot but to realize that we live in a nation in which religion and ethnicity are convergent. If one is not Orthodox, the question is being raised as to whether one is a 'real' Romanian. Hence, the lines of ethnicity and national allegiance define one's faith. The question involved here is not just, of what is the Orthodox attitude toward us, but also where we have failed in valuing our culture, learning from our history, including Christian history, initiating dialogue with the Orthodox, and the study of the church history.

We cannot overlook the fact that our context has been shaped profoundly by the Eastern Orthodox Christianity. Presently, as already discussed about, there are serious tensions between the Orthodox Church and Evangelical Churches in Romania arisen from the debate on the Evangelical practice of proselytism among the Orthodox believers. Consequently, Orthodox believers call Evangelicals 'intruders' and 'innovators.'[73] They will not recognize Evangelicals as a church insisting that they are a dangerous sect. On the other side, Evangelicals call Orthodox priests 'power-hungry' blaming them as initiators of false human traditions and insist that they are an apostate church.[74] The sad reality is that neither Evangelicals nor Orthodox believers know each other. Although the Evangelical Christians do not abuse Orthodox to the same degree the Orthodox seem to abuse Evangelicals, but neither do they bless them. As pointed out by Volf, the situation given is first a challenge for the Evangelicals (with whom the present writer identifies himself) 'to not cross swords with our presumed enemy but to reach our hands out to them.'[75] Further Volf gives a powerful example of how the Christians in Romania should relate to each other. He says: 'even when

[73]Volf, *Eastern European faces of Jesus*, 24.

[74]Ibid.

[75]Volf, *Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond*, 28.

we see ourselves as weak minority whose only solution is to fight back we should remember that the same as Messiah who when abused did not abuse and when suffered did not made threats, (1 Pet. 2:23) the same we are called to be.'[76] One would wonder what the situation would be like if instead to repay their seeming abuse, the evangelicals in Romania would start to pray for a spiritual renewal within the Orthodox Church. Evangelicals can show appreciation and respect toward the Orthodox Church for preserving the right doctrine about Christ and Trinity in the context of today's challenges where these doctrines are qualified as wrong and oppressive.

Of course there are differences that divide us, and we should not pretend that they are not existing or that are unimportant. However, the right way to deal with differences is not done by telling the Orthodox that we believe that we are right and they are wrong. Such an attitude is inappropriate since the Evangelicals in Romania have also limitations in what concerns their knowledge of God's as well. In this respect, I agree with Miroslav Volf that a different way, in which we can deal with our differences, is by *starting to listen*. Whenever we do not agree with aspects of the Orthodox theology, we must make sure that is done according to what they believe and not according to what we think they believe.[77] In addition to listening carefully to their theology, Evangelicals need also to open to listen to Orthodox have to say concerning our theology and practice.

Following the need to listen is the need to testify. We need to testify to the Orthodox Church about what we believe to be the truth of God's Word. Our testimony, as pointed out by Volf, has to be done in a gentle and intelligent way as possible and above as faithfully to

[76]Volf, *Fishing in the Neighbor's Pond*, 28.

[77]Under the same umbrella, Kishkovsky points out that in the same way the Orthodox disagreements with the Protestant theology should be founded on what actually Protestant believe. *Response to Miroslav Volf,* 31.

the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we can.[78] If we put together the need to listen and the need to testify and we will apply them not only to the Orthodox Church the results will be remarkable.

Finally, Evangelical Christians will have to redefine their faith according to the biblical sources and not according our culture, liturgical form, or according to national and ethnic allegiance. Moreover, Evangelicals must find new forms of expressing and presenting the Christian Faith, the Gospel of Jesus Christ in non-sectarian ways. In this respect, developing a non-sectarian ecclesiology must be one of the top priorities. We have to know how to relate the Church to the central teaching about the kingdom of God. Our commitment in fulfilling the Great Commissions makes it vital for us to keep asking ourselves: How to do mission without giving the impression of proselytism. Our task is to call the so-called 'Christendom' to biblical accountability, in order that the Christians will be defined not in terms of national or ethnic identity or cultural history and liturgical forms, but will once again be defined by the same criteria as when people were first called 'Christians.' By doing this we can identify the Christians by criteria that is historically reliable, and verifiable by experience in the way they live the Gospel of Jesus Christ as individuals and as families, as communities of living faith. Our responsibility is to develop Christian thinking that can demonstrate the relevance of biblical teaching not only for churches but also for our societies, special attention given to public morality.

Reaffirming the Historical truth of the Gospel. As already pointed out, the contemporary culture has difficulties with the declarations of Christianity as the bearer of truth. The collapse of communist ideology as the only truth and only way to truth put a question mark behind any notion of objective truth. People are especially suspicious, even

[78]Volf, *Eastern European Faces of Jesus*, 25.

allergic, to whatever files like an ideological system. They want to have the freedom to choose, to doubt, and to create their own small truth. What was once perceived as unquestionable, indubitable, objective truth is considered now a language game of an expressive rationalism.

In this time of relativity and denial of all absolutes, when the very truth of any truth is under suspicion, the validity of the gospel truth is either out rightly denied or largely ignored.[79] As Peter Kuzmic argues, the proclamation of the gospel must again be a reminder of the foundational facts of Christian faith as revealed in the Holy Scriptures and centred in the life, teaching, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ as explained in 1 Corinthians 15: 2-5. The proclamation of the gospel must be grounded in this universally valid truth. This truth is to be proclaimed not only as the truth about God and our own lost condition apart from Christ, but also as 'the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes'(Rom. 1:16).[80]

The truth of the gospel begins with the revelation of God and the calling of human beings into faith and obedience. It confronts the postmodern world into faith and obedience, pointing to another structure of truth that calls out of meaninglessness and invites us to live by faith in God's truth, which gives sense to the fragments of meaning with which we live.[81] Further, the gospel invites us to look for truth in the relationship, which God has established with human beings through the work of the Holy Spirit in Christ Jesus. The objective reality we seek with our reason and finally give up on is replaced by the living other whom we cannot control but to whom we respond and discipleship. Truth is the character, the action,

[79]Kuzmic, "Europe," *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission,* ed. James M. Phillips & Robert T. Coote (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1993): 157 (148-163).

[80]Ibid., 158.

[81]Charles West, *Power, Truth and Community in Modern Culture* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 46.

and, in inclusive sense, the word of this God.[82] We are invited to explore the world, of nature and of human affairs, in and through this relationship. Our calling is to discern how Christ takes form in all of them and in their relations with one another. In so doing we will discover flexible, open, and changing forms of community and will work to keep them open to the challenge of outsiders and of God. This is a process of discovery, repentance, and transformation that will end only on the final judgment day. In the meantime, we witness of a divine truth in human form, whose mystery we can explore but never control even with our logic or our doctrine. This truth of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ, begins with the justification of sinful humanity in all its self-centred expressions, including religion, ideology, and postmodern pluralism. All human truths are under judgment, the judgment of a redeeming God who forgives by placing us in a new relationship, with a new perspective. In this new relationship, we live by grace, not by our own virtue.[83] We are therefore empowered to risk being witnesses to God' s truth in the daily business of life, to name false spirits and unjust powers when we discern them, to invite others to follow Christ, knowing that in so doing we are open to correction and change by God' s word and our fellow human beings, whether believers or not. The truth of God is trustworthy, concrete, and historical, now as then. This truth has the form of Christ the servant, the crucified and the risen Lord.[84]

Proclaiming the Gospel with Intelligence, Clarity and Relevance. What Peter Kuzmic stressed on this point is the absolute necessity of bridging the biblical world and the contemporary world, in other words, the task of contextualization of remaining faithful to the gospel, open to the Holy Spirit, but also being open to learning in a continual dialogue with our society. In this regard, Kuzmic exhorts seminarians to get acquainted with disciplines

[82]Charles West, *Power, Truth and Community in Modern Culture*, 46.

[83]Ibid., 48.

[84]Ibid.

such as psychology, philosophy, and sociology in order to be understood in the modern world. Even though the Gospel never changes, but the audience for it changes constantly. As German theologian, Helmut Thielicke reminds us 'the Gospel must be preached afresh and told in new ways to every generation, since every generation has its own unique questions. This is why the Gospel must be constantly forwarded to a new address, because the recipient is repeatedly changing his place of residence.'[85] In order to address the complexity of this task we need to start with Companjen suggests, namely:

> The teachers of the church and the preachers of the Gospel need to be able as in the first century, to out-think and outspeak the advocates of the bankrupt worldview of our day – in East and West. This requires work in our seminaries… .Their task is to discover how to reshape the biblical Christian worldview through pastors they train and send into the world and the churches. One major opportunity to affect the worldview is in the field of education. … If the Churches would get behind sound Christian educators and enable them to help in this task is probably the most significant contribution that could be made to turning around the ideological turmoil in the East and getting back to a Christian Europe as a whole.[86]

Part of the process implies a need to rethink ecclesiology and the nature of the gospel. Questions about ecclesiology require that we let the gospel speak in fresh and new ways. A fresh hearing of the gospel marks the effort to return to the essence of what it means to be the church. As Hans Kung contends, God's gospel truth always becomes embodied in relation to the church as it becomes located in human faith communities.[87] Hence, the Church must embody the gospel message it seeks to proclaim, if it is to move beyond 'the paralysis of wallpapered Christendom, or to find enough resources for engaging an energized secularity.'[88]

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[85]Helmut Thielicke, "*How Modern Should Theology Be?*" (Visser't Hooft: London, 1970), 10.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Hans Kung, *The Church* (Image: Garden City, 1967), 22-24.

[88]Elder, "Response to the Haze of Christiandom," *The Gospel and Our Culture*, vol.14/1(March 2002): 5

It is at this point that an insight offered by Leslie Newbigin, still waits to be considered. As Newbigin sees it, in the emerging condition, the church must come to a self-awareness that it is the hermeneutic of the gospel. It is the embodied character of the gospel within the living faith community that provides compelling evidence of the truth the gospel makes.[89] Furthermore, the gospel will challenge the public life of our society only 'as local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God' s redeeming grace for the whole life of society.'[90]

The Church as an alternative community. The struggle to create alternative communities is a resistance movement against the economic and cultural imposition of the free-market system with its tendency to perceive all aspects of life as commodities. In this regard, the term alternative is related to values, relations and allegiances. As pointed out earlier in the research the contemporary culture is promoting a hedonistic way of life that places self-fulfilment at the centre emphasizing the selfish dimension in nature. One example is found in the way the contemporary culture places the perfection of the body through the advertisement of thousands of beauty products that are meant to enhance physical pleasure in all its forms. As such, materialism and consumerism are the new values promoted by the contemporary society.[91] In such context virtues such as sacrifice, asceticism, modesty, self-discipline, and the like, are marginalized and redefined in individual terms. According to Bosch, much of the consumerism mentality has entered our churches, tangibly in the 'prosperity gospel.' In such a context, argues Bosch, 'the gospel becomes inoffensive and inoperable, with Christianity being another societal element.' Therefore, the church is called to implement an alternative

[89]Newbigin, *The Gospel in A Pluralist Society*, 232-233.

[90]Ibid., 233.

[91]Escobar, *The Global Scenario at the turn of the Century*, 36.

culture that will challenge the hedonism around us, incalculating something of the spirit of being 'resident alien' in the world.[92]

In this regard, Mike Pivalachi illustrates very well some further implication of what it means for the church to be a counter-cultural community. He says,

> There are certain things that we are meant to be counter-cultural about. When the early Christians translated Jesus' words from Aramaic they changed the packaging but they left the gift intact. While Jesus changed stories, he never deviated from the message he came to give. The message is a challenge to many aspects of the culture; instead of selfishness it talks about generosity; instead of sexual freedom it talks about purity; instead of death being a kind of nothingness it talks about heaven and hell. Sometimes we are meant to be prophetic to the culture, not to be so absorbed in it we are indistinguishable from it.[93]

Thus, the Church is to rethink its identity as the community of those who confess Jesus as Lord, with a distinctive life from the rest of the secular community and yet with an overriding sense of responsibility for that nation in mission, social criticism and service.[94]The Church as an alternative community can make a powerful witness when it chooses to live differently from the dominant society, even at just a few key points as argued previously. In this way, the Church as a counter-cultural community makes visible and witness faithfully to the inbreaking reign of God.[95]

Reclaiming Spirituality. The postmodern openness to perceiving life in a variety of ways has contributed to the re-emergence of spirituality as a viable and necessary part of human struggle for meaning today. However, few of those who explore the realm of the spirit

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[92]Bosch, Believing *in the Future.* 57.

[93]Pivalachi, quoted in Meic Pearse and Chris Matthews, *We Must Stop Meeting Like This* (Kingsway Publications: EastBourne, 1999), 185.

[94]Smith, *Crying in the Wilderness*, 37.

[95]Michael Amaladoss, "Mission In A Post-Modern World: A Call to be Counter-Cultural," *Mission Studies*, vol.13/1&2, 25&26 (1996): 76 (68-79).

have thought of the church as part of their pilgrimage. This is the result of the fact that Christian is not regarded as having much to do with spirituality.[96]

In this context, we need to ask ourselves, Do we and the churches we seek to plant, demonstrate an authentic spirituality; a spirituality that can put people in touch with the Divine in a tangible, experiential way that makes sense of our experience of life? Does the spirituality we offer answers the deep longing for a spirituality that provides authentic answers to the real questions people have about suffering, environmental degradation, abuse of power by authorities, sexual and racial discrimination, etc.?

According to Mark Riddel, the reason is that our rich heritage of spirituality has been submerged under a flood of doctrine. Many practicing Evangelicals have very little understanding or experience of affairs of the spirit, having transfigured the faith into an entirely pragmatic programme for getting ahead in a materialistic world.[97] In this context, the Church is called to reclaim spiritual direction and to reconstruct the framework of spiritual disciplines, which nurture our communion with Christ.[98]

In this respect, a primary task for the Evangelicals is the need to recover a massive dose of realism. There is often a big discontinuity between what we affirm and teach and how it actually works in life. One aspect that can be mentioned here is the way the word perfectionism is present in our worship and teaching. In the context of this section, perfectionism is about the tension between the ideal and reality. The perfectionist option that

[96]John Drane notes: "You might suppose this renewed awareness of the spiritual is good news for Christians. But the exact opposite is the case. The western Church is actually in a weak position, for the very simple reason that to most people it is a part of the same institutionalized authority structure that helped create the mess in the first place. Among the leaders of today's generation, there is an insistent and growing belief that Christianity is irrelevant." Evangelism for a New Age: Creating Churches for the Next Century, (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994), 14.

[97]Mike Riddel, *Winning the West: The Gospel In A Strange Land*, Unpublished.

[98]Robert W. Jenson, "How the World Lost Its Story," *First Things*, vol. 36 (October 1993): 23 (19-24).

is very much present in our Evangelical circles entertains the illusion that changes can occur over night that all of your questions will be finally answered, and your relationships will always work perfect.[99] As such, the Evangelical churches too often convey the impression that being a Christian leaves a person with no unanswered questions, no doubts, and no unmastered sins. So often needy people are kept at a distance because we seem so self-assured. Yet we know that reality is different. We need to affirm that Christian life is as much about failure (in our struggle with sin, in evangelism, in relationships, in our everyday walk with God) as it is about victory, and yet we are generally silent on the subject of failure. How often our prayers for healing are met with silence? How often does our sinful nature win over the Spirit? How often is our evangelistic endeavour an unbearable failure? Yet in our sermons, in our corporate singing, the emphasis lies on victory and advance against enemy. No wonder that many new converts rapidly become disillusioned when the reality of the Christian walk fails correspond with our evangelistic promises.[100] Instead, we need to tear off our masks, to let ourselves be seen, as we really are – poor sinners living only by the grace of God.

Christian Faith and Civil Society. Social involvement, or the public side of Christianity, has always been an important part of life with God. During the communist regime, these both issues have been seriously affected by the lack of philosophical education, irrational laws, and corrupt officials. During the time of communism, this attitude was fostered by political and ideological pressure. Christians were advised to withdraw from public life, to mind their own business, and to stay in their own little square. These phrases have given way to the formation of a new philosophy of life expressed in personal isolation

[99]Dusan Jaura, *Taboos in the Central European Church* (Bratislava: Sen, 1999), 15-16.

[100]Peter Stephenson, *Christian Mission in the Postmodern World*. [Online.] Available at http://www.postmission.com/articles/pomisgen.pdf. Accessed 20 March 2003.

and social non-involvement. Under the same umbrella, Vladimir Fedorov argues that ' 'the most urgent task that all the Eastern and Central European churches face are: arousing in believers the spirit of mercy and love, encouraging charitable activities and interest in social ethics, and introducing these subjects in educational systems at different levels. Several generations have grown up under the influence of overwhelming state atheism when any social activities of the church and even preaching charity were officially prohibited.' '[101]

Twenty years after the fall of the communism, Romanian society faces extreme economic pressures. The plight of the orphans and the horror story of the handicapped children, and the reality of 43% of Romanians that live below poverty line, points the need for a theology of social involvement for the church.[102] As pointed out also by Gustavo Gutierrez the army of marginalized people represent one of the most decisive and pressing issues to confront Christians in all parts of the globe:

> This phrase means that those who until now were ' absent' from history are gradually becoming ' present' within it. This new presence of the poor and oppressed is making itself felt in the popular struggles for liberation and in the historical consciousness arising from these struggles. It is also making itself felt within the church, for there the poor are increasingly making their voices heard and claiming openly their right to live and think the faith in their own terms.[103]

The continuing existence of the socially dislocated is a tremendous challenge to the theological reflection, conscience and action of Christians everywhere. How are we going to relate our missionary challenges to these realities? How can we respond to the tremendous needs and pains of our own time? What can realistically be done about the situation?

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[101]Vladimir Fedorov, "Ecumenical Missionary Needs and Perspectives in Eastern and Central Europe Today: Theological Education with an accent on mission as first priority in our religious rebirth," in *International Review of Mission*, vol.XCII/364 (January 2003): 71-72 (66-83).

[102]"*Preliminary Report - The State of Evangelical Church in Romania*," (Bucharest: OC International, 2000), 7.

[103] Gustavo Gutierrez, *The Truth Shall Make You Free: Confrontations* (Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 1990), 8.

Notwithstanding, the church's social program must be developed for at least two reasons. First, it is inseparable from the mission of the Christian church. Without concrete actions, the proclamation of the gospel is in the best case not more than well-intentioned moralization. Second, the way church fulfils this responsibility is a model of how society should understand human dignity and social solidarity.

It is appropriate to mention that generally the Church has been involved concretely in working for the betterment of the social conditions of the poor. Yet, as Samuel Escobar indicates, observer and scholars have pointed out the Church's struggle for the poor has been characterized by a 'paternalistic approach which aimed to create a more just society for them rather than with them.'[104] This was expressed in the tendency to be caught in mere developmentalism, and to doing things without sensitivity to the larger socio-economic context in which poverty operates.[105] Melba Maggay argues that the Church is called to address and confront the powers that be in their structural dimensions in which injustice is rooted.[106] Charles Elliot argues that in this attempt, the Church is called to create 'an alternative consciousness, which in the spirit of the magnificat and beatitudes puts the poor and the powerless at its centre.' He explains:

> This alternative consciousness is not paternalistic or condescending: it is a consciousness that turns upside down the priorities and assumptions of twentieth century industrialized, secularized acquisitiveness (whether capitalist or socialist) and judges relationships, structures, and economic ties not by what profit it brings to the dominant partner but by how much it enlarges the life chances of subordinate partner….The rich and powerful, in other words, have to learn to

[104]Samuel Escobar, "The Global Scenario at the Turn of the Century," *Global Missiology for the 21st Century: The Iguassu Dialogue,* edited by William D. Taylor (Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2000): 42.

[105]Charles Elliot, *Comfortable Compassion? Poverty, Power and the Church* (Paulist: New York, 1987), 116-117.

[106]Melba Maggay, *Transforming Society* (Regnum Books: Oxford, 1994), 65.

use their wealth and power not for their own aggrandizement, but for the goals set by the poor and the powerless.[107]

Since in most cases the poor are present in a significant percentage in the Christian communities worldwide, it results that the Church has an interest in the transformation of their situation. There are four tasks that most accompany the Church in the struggle for justice, and they can be expressed as follows: (1) expressing solidarity with the struggles of the poor; (2) involvement in the struggle against the powers of exploitation and impoverishment; (3) proclaiming a gospel of justice, and (4) overcoming materialism.[108]

1. *Expressing solidarity with the struggles of the poor*. The solidarity aspect involves a deliberate choice to enter in some degree into the world of those who have been left on the margins of the society, mistreated, bypassed, and left helpless.[109] By entering the world of those deprived and by sharing their suffering our compassion will be extended and deepened.[110] The practical ways solidarity can be expressed is by joining hands across the continents to act in support of the struggles of the poor against oppression. The voluntary joining in the community could be the most telling witness of the Gospel.[111]

2. Join the struggle against the powers of exploitation and impoverishment. As Waldron points out, the structures that promote poverty, injustice and oppression will not release their

[107]C. Norman Kraus, *Christian Mission in the Postmodern World: An Inclusive Gospel?* (InterVarsity Press: Downers Grove 1998), 117-118.

[108]In the section that follows, I am dependent on the helpful outline that explores these theological principles as provided by Andrew Kirk in *What Is Mission?* 111-117.

[109]"Melbourne Conference Section Reports," *Your Kingdom Come: Mission Perspectives* (World Council of Churches: Geneva, 1980), 177.

[110]Raymond Fung, "Good News to the Poor – A Case for A Missionary Movement," *Your Kingdom Come.* 87.

[111]"The Implications for Theological Reflection," *To Break the Chains of Oppression: Results of an Ecumenical Study Process on Domination and Dependence* (World Council of Churches: Geneva, 1975),69.

grip on the lives of the poor willingly. Therefore, the Church must actively enter the struggle against the powers that create and maintain the present situation.[112] This requires first, a careful analysis of the oppressive forces at work in society. Next, it requires seeking out, unmasking and exposing the way these forces really work. It requires careful engagement with these forces, both in criticism and constructive proposals, toward directing them away from their own drive toward profit, control and domination toward the service of justice and the common good. It involves continual struggle towards improving the level of justice on an unjust world.[113]

3. Proclaiming a Gospel of Justice. Andrew Kirk points out that often the church was quick to condemn the sins of the oppressors without considering its own participation on the side of the oppressive side. Nevertheless, if the social and political views of Christians are not molded by the Gospel, the Christians do not dare to judge others. In this sense, it is not only society, which must be denounced, but also everything in the church, which in some way or another reflects or consolidates all that dehumanizes.[114] This means that the Christian community must judge itself as part of the ruling order that must be changed. Without repentance, there can be no valid criticism of all that is unjust.[115] The Gospel is a reminder to a cynical and indifferent humanity that suffering and exclusion are not the final word of the universe.[116] The message of the gospel is an annunciation of the 'freedom for the captives' and 'liberation of the oppressed.' The Gospel is an announcement of God's victory through Jesus over all forms of oppression. It is a pronouncement of judgment on all oppressive

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[112]Waldron, *Bring Forth Justice*, 247.

[113]Charles C. West, *Power, Truth and Community in Modern Culture* (Trinity Press: Harrisburg, 1999), 126.

[114]The Implications for Theological Reflection, *Breaking the Chains of Oppression.* 67.

[115]Ibid.

[116]Kirk, *What is Mission?,* 113.

structures, actions, as well as thoughts and intentions, regardless of who the perpetrators might be. Where the Good News has been proclaimed, restoration of the dignity and personality must be evident together with the restoration to wholeness, to humanness.[117]

4. Overcoming Materialism The global god of 21st century, materialism, wants us to believe that life consists of buying and selling, weighing, measuring, and trading, and then finally sinking into death and nothingness.[118] As described by Stott, materialism is not the mere possession of material things, but an unhealthy obsession with them.[119] In a similar vein, Kirk draws the attention to the fact that 'the notion that happiness is the outcome of purchasing products – be they material goods, leisure activities, drug-related experiences or alternative spiritualties – is one of the greatest illusions of our age.'[120] The media portrays this hedonistic way of life by incitement to expensive pleasure that fills the screens of TV sets in poor societies. The young people especially crave the symbols and instruments of a sophisticated hedonistic West, while not having met some of the necessities of their own material life, such as adequate housing and running water.[121]

We have been fooled to believe that bigger houses, prosperous business, and the accumulation of things are the means to happiness in life. Yet, the more we make, the more we think we need in order to live decently and respectably. As a result, we are caught in an absurd, materialistic spiral. In consequence, a consumer mentality blinds us both to the true needs of the poor and to our own ability to meet them. Hence, we are to escape the cycle of

[117]Canaan Banana, "Good News to the Poor," *Your Kingdom Come.* 119.

[118]Brueggemann, *Deep Memory, Exuberant Hope*, 74.

[119]Stott, *Our Social and Sexual Revolution*, 95.

[120]Kirk, *What is Mission?,* 116.

[121]Escobar, *The Global Scenario at the turn of the Century*, 36.

materialism that captured us 'via diabolically clever and incessant advertising'[122] This can be done by a decision to follow the teaching of Jesus and the early Church in renouncing covetousness, materialism and luxury, and to care sacrificially for the poor. Stott continues saying that in the light of the biblical truths and the destitution of millions, it is not possible for affluent Christians to 'stay rich,' in the sense of accepting no modification of the economic life-style.[123] Here we can consider Stott's reference to the passage from 1Timothy 6:17-19. This passage points to the danger that rich people are exposed to: (pride, looking down on the poor) and materialism (enjoying the gift and forgetting the giver), and calls the Christians to cultivate generosity on the one hand and simplicity with contentment on the other. John expresses the principle of generosity in these terms: 'If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?' In this context we are called to accept our responsibility toward those in need, not out of self-interest or a cold sense of duty, but spontaneously from the knowledge that all we have is a God given gift. The practice of generosity can lead us to true freedom and to liberation from the bondage of selfishness and false values (2 Cor. 9:6). The cost is the loss of our lives – indeed, we must have them crucified in order that the life lived from self to self can be lived from Christ to others.[124]

In the context of participation in the poor's struggle for dignity and justice, it is my hope that we have made certain discoveries about the poor, and the reality of oppression and justice. It is my expectation that these discoveries will challenge us to participate in the suffering of the community of the poor, the disinherited, the victimized, the outcast, and the broken-hearted. As the messengers of the gospel, the church cannot remain uninvolved and

[122]Sider, *Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger*, 192.

[123]Stott, *Our Social & Sexual Revolution*, 96.

[124]Kirk, *What is Mission?,* 116-117.

indifferent. The challenge to denounce injustice reminds us that silence in the face of oppression speaks even louder than words. Hence, it is impelled to side with the poor instead of the forces in society that create oppression, dehumanization, marginalization, paternalism, tyranny, capitalism and poverty. In preparing to meet one of the greatest challenges facing the mission of the church in the immediate future, we are encouraged to consider the following questions:

> Will we allow the gospel to convert us to God' s concern for the poor? Will the church repent economically and politically in order to express solidarity with the poor and powerless? Will we allow the Spirit of God to break our captivity to the syncretism with our culture that keeps us from being light and salt? The issue is really not them, but us; not about poverty, but affluence; not about saving our lives, but loosing them—all for the sake of Jesus and the gospel.[125]

Social Conflict and Reconciliation. There is another theme touching social involvement that is not appropriately addressed, namely the theme of social conflict and reconciliation. The official policy of communist regimes was the propaganda of a society free from social conflicts. The question of identity was 'unofficially forbidden' under the Communist regime. National awareness was covered by the official philosophy of 'proletarian internationalism', based on an assumption that real differences are not between different nations but between different classes. And even these were being wiped out on the way to a classless communist society. In the process of replacement of Communist ideology by nationalist ideologies there has been an intense rediscovery of national-religious identity. After 1989, Romanians learn to discover that they are Romanians, East Europeans, Balkanics, etc. The positive aspect of this process is discovering one's own history and culture. The negative one is xenophobia and the tendency to create the image of an enemy and accompany

[125]William E. Pannell, "Mission and Social Justice: An American Dilemma," *Toward the 21st Century in Christian Mission,* edited by James M. Phillips and Robert E. Coote (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company: Grand Rapids, 1993): 316.

it. The problem with nationalism lies in the fact that it is not only a political and a cultural movement, but it is tied with the very identity of its followers. Not, 'which side are you on?' but, 'Who are you,' becomes the crucial question. The consequences of this question began to bubble to the surface as in March of 1990 a celebration of a Hungarian national holiday in the Romanian town of Tirgu Mures turned into a deadly clash between ethnic mobs. Ethnic minorities, which live mixed with the dominant population in all nation-states, are in fact, left with only two choices: either to emigrate, under varying degrees of duress, or to accept the status of second-class citizens, with varying degrees of deprivation of rights and repression. There is never any other choice. Cristian Romocea, points out that with the exception of Ex-Yugoslavia where ethnic tensions led to violent confrontation Romania was worryingly experiencing a 'decade of general crisis and national polarization that reached the highest degrees in the whole of Eastern Europe.'[126]

Since the Christian gospel is a message of reconciliation, of the forming of a new ethnicity overcoming former divisions, the Christian record is particularly problematic. None of the major dictionaries of theology treats the theme of 'social reconciliation' – neither Catholic, Evangelical nor Protestants. Even the Orthodox social doctrine is quite weak on that point in its theological foundations, and it avoids the most urgent reconciliation issues thereafter. Most of the literature on reconciliation stresses the vertical dimension, and in doing so leaves the impression that God must be reconciled to us sinful creatures. As Volf, made clear, this leaves one with a secondary comment about reconciliation with one's neighbour, the one whom God brings across your path, as a fruit of no longer worrying about God's judgment.[127] Miroslav Volf concluded in his ground-breaking research on social

[126]Cristian G. Romocea, "*A Strategy For Social Reconciliation In The Ethnic Conflict In* Transylvania," in Religion In Eastern Europe xxiii, 5 (October 2003):11.

[127]Volf, "The Social Meaning of Reconciliation," *Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol.28/3 (June 1998): 1-34.

reconciliation that in Eastern Europe there is 'a disturbing attempt to relate the core theological beliefs about reconciliation to the shape of the church's social responsibility.[128] Of particular interest is Volf's finding that social issues have been completely left out of the message of reconciliation. Volf's argument is that separation takes place when the concept of reconciliation is linked to almost an 'exclusive emphasis on private morality conceived of as the ethical consequence of the reconciliation of a person with God and with a thoroughly a-political stance based on the persuasion that the church and state have different spheres of authority.'[129] Kool describes the inevitable outcome of this view as being separation of the public and private life, with reconciliation in Christ being relegated exclusively to 'one world only, the private realm.'[130] Volf concludes that this impacts church churches in having no resources in situations in conflict. Finding it difficult to foster reconciliation, the churches often are wrapped up in the vortex of conflict, often bent on vengeance, which spirals into an all-out aim to annihilate the enemy. Drawing from the tragedy of the conflicts in Balkans Volf calls for both theology and practice to consider the social meaning of reconciliation.[131]

Walter Sawatsky, drawing particularly on Damascus Road experience, points out that what is so striking about the gospel is that God wants us humans, to be reconciled with God because God has already embraced us and has plans for good in mind for us. When we respond to God's embrace, who is extending forgiveness in Jesus Christ, we comprehend the social reconciliation is inherent in God's embrace, and then embrace the other.[132] As Volf

[128]Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace*, 22.

[129]Ibid., 24.

[130]Anne Marie Kool, "Trends and Challenges in Mission and Missiology in Post-Communist Europe." *Mission Studies 25* vol 1 (2008)21-36.

[131]Volf, "The Social Meaning of Reconciliation," in *Transformation*, vol.16/1 (1999):9.

[132]Sawatsky, "Slavic Evangelicals in Mission within the CIS," *Lecture delivered at IBTS*, Prague, 2003. Used by permission from the professor.

suggests, what is needed is an effective response to the problems of ethnicity and ethnic conflicts that are tearing our societies apart and leave a trail of blood and ashes. In this sense, the contribution of the church to the sphere of social reconciliation must start with the affirmation of the respect for human dignity. As Lakatos points out 'human dignity, rooted in our creation in the image of God, is the primary basis for social ethics.'[133] There is nothing to differentiate between worthy and unworthy. The recognition of this aspect may bring us further towards achieving social solidarity. Only when the church in Romania will take seriously its vocation and responsibility as the reconciler of society it could become a powerful agent in strengthening social consensus.

Romanian theologian Romocea, who carried out extensive research on the ethnical conflict between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania, argues that all denominations in Romania share a common lack of coherent social teaching or praxis as related to intervention in ethnical conflicts. It is for this reason that the churches were not able to provide solutions to the ethnical conflicts focused on tension between the Romanians and the Hungarian minority that much dominated the political discourse since the fall of communism. Furthermore, Romocea does not advocate that Romanian churches should strive towards an active political influence but rather pointing towards involvement in a 'partnership between theologians, civil society and political leadership, in the sense that the former could become the interpreters of the efforts and achievements of the civil society and politicians.'[134] He calls for all denominations in Romania to give consideration to the social meaning of reconciliation as a core concept of the Christian faith and take seriously the issue of ethnic conflicts. It is suggested that to serve as agents of peace in society the Churches in Romania

[133]Lakatos, *Denominational and Cultural Models and a possible ecumenical strategy from a Romanian context, Part II*, 10.

[134]Romocea, *A Strategy for Social Reconciliation*, 24.

must 'investigate the origin of the conflict by appointing committees specially designed for such a task, to examine the social scientific literature on ethnic conflicts, to study the theory and practice of conflict resolution, and devise instruments of popular education that raise people's knowledge of the issues at stake.'[135]

Haddon Willmer argues that a social reading of reconciliation is theologically required in order for the churches to be gospel churches who carry out peace making amidst the terrible consequences brought about by a world of conflicts and alienations.[136]

Moral Education and Social Involvement. Another important issue that needs to be addressed by the Evangelical Churches is the issue of *moral education and social involvement*. During the communist regime, these both issues have been seriously affected by the lack of philosophical education, irrational laws, and corrupt officials. As Christians, we are called to recover the moral vision and to build communities, which will embody moral practices.[137] Our theological task is to present the relationship with God in such a way that a gap between this relationship and the moral life becomes impossible.

With respect to social involvement, Josef Ton addresses issues such as the plight of the orphans and the role of the women in church ministry. Ton shows how after the collapse of Communism the plight of the orphans became the horror story of the world. In the face of these issues, the need of a theology of social involvement for the Church arises.[138] Ton writes 'If we do not define what women's, ministries might be, somebody else will do it. We

[135] Romocea, *A Strategy for Social Reconciliation*, 29.

[136] Quoted in Romocea, A Strategy for Social Reconciliation, 24

[137]Lakatos, *Denominational and Cultural Models and a possible ecumenical strategy from a Romanian context, Part II*, 26.

[138]Ton, *Key Theological Themes*, 12.

many not approve the results, but by that time, it will too late for us to be heard.'[139] The crucial question is, Who is the 'we' defining what women's ministries can be? Are the women part of this 'we'? Can they participate in the discussions about their ministry and do so on an equal footing with men? Or will men define women's role for them? If they do not have a voice and are heard, the churches in Eastern Europe will remain what Tson says they should not remain 'a male-dominated society that keeps the woman in her place.'[140] This attitude of the Romanian churches male leaders towards the involvement of women in church ministries lingers on still after 20 years since the fall of communism. The survey carried out among the Pentecostal leaders within the Romanian Pentecostal Union during 2008 asking of their position regarding the ordination of women in pastoral positions shows that none of the respondents regarded the issue as most important, 3.7% of respondents deemed it important, 14% as less important and the great majority of respondents 74% thought the issue was unimportant.[141] The debate over the role of women in ministry is not isolated to Romanian Pentecostalism. An overview of the role of women throughout the history of Pentecostalism paints a somewhat mixed picture often revealing ambivalent results. Anderson points out that although early Pentecostalism has encouraged participation of women in ministry, their role was diminished in classical Pentecostal missions as the primacy of the Spirit Baptism in the lives of women ministers became overshadowed by the emphasis on the 'general and patriarchal structure of church and society.'[142] Pentecostal leaders have utilized women in leadership positions when necessary or convenient, and then have heatedly restricted their opportunities to protect men's power. Even though women have embraced roles of

[139]Ton, *Key Theological Themes*, 12.

[140]Ibid.

[141]The survey was conducted during May – November 2008 and was completed by 162 respondents.

[142]Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 275.

responsibilities in various church ministries, these are carried out under authoritative male leaders who endorse those who keep silent and submissive. The International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements concludes its reflection on the women' s position saying that 'Theological prescriptions and social prejudices have been welded together until they are all but inextricable, with little indication that women' s position within Pentecostalism has improved over 100 years.'[143] Consequently, as pointed out by Amos Yong the great majority of Pentecostal women in ministry 'struggled to reconcile their call to ministry with the prevailing expectations of their times, their churches, and even their spouses.'[144] In the same line as Anderson, Amos indicates of the steady decline of in the number of women in ministry since the first generation of modern Pentecostalism. He names the ever-increasing institutionalization of Pentecostalism as further cause for deepening the exclusion of women from positions of authority in the churches.[145]

Namsoon Kang argues that 'gender justice is still the most neglected issue in the justice discourse of Christianity.'[146] Kang argues that Christianity has undeniably 'embraced a patriarchal/kyriarchal ideology by which androcentric social reality has been legitimated, justified and reinforced.'[147] Patriarchism sustained through patterns of domination goes against the core of the Christian gospel that Kang argues to be 'a prophetic symbol of liberation and identification with the oppressed.'[148] By overlooking the prophetic voice, the

[143] R.M. Griffith, D. Roebuck. "Women, Role Of," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, ed. Stanley M. Burgess (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002), 1203-09.

[144]Yong, *The Spirit Poured Out On All Flesh*, 192.

[145]Ibid.

[146]Namsoon, Kang. "The Centrality of Gender Justice in Prophetic Christianity and the Mission of the Church Reconsidered." In *International Review of Mission*, vol.94, No. 373(April 2005):285

[147]Ibid., 288.

[148]Ibid.

aspect of gender justice has been missing from the understanding and practice of mission today. The Church can respond to the call of action for justice by moving from an ecclesioncetric to a theocentric generated mission which when related to God's justice envisions a just community, a situation in which shalom, peace and prosperity of all livings prevails.[149]

[149]Kang, 278.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The aim set at the beginning of this research was to identify some of the main facets of the emerging post-dictatorial transformation in Romania, seeking to both critically evaluate the changing paradigms from a missiological perspective and to explore what could be an appropriate framework for a theology of mission for the Evangelical church facing the new context. It particularly addresses the situation among the Pentecostal Christians in Romania. However, as this is a contextual study it necessitated an incursion into the broader context. Therefore, prior to the examination of the missiological challenges of post-dictatorial Romania, it was important to outline some distinctive elements of Romanian traditional culture from a socio-historical perspective.

Based on the subject matter of the study three realms were explored: (a) religious, (b) social and (c) ideological aspects of the Romanian culture prior to the Revolution of 1989. The close link between Romanian Orthodox Church and national culture in Romanian history was identified as the main factor shaping the national identity of the Romanians. This historical shaped identification led to the formulation of a deeply influential nationalist notion that only those who affiliate themselves with the Romanian Orthodox Church can call themselves true Romanians. However, this link between the culture and religion does not necessarily impacts the moral aspects of the Romanian culture, as according to the research, while most Romanians claim to be Orthodox and identify religion as a high national value, they are very selective in terms of practical application of their religious convictions to moral/ethical sphere of their lives. There are some vivid tension between claimed values and pragmatic values, features that were further exacerbated during the communist era leading to an ever-deepened dualization of the moral sphere. Furthermore, the transition to state socialism after

the Second World War implied not only a political change but also a deep economic transformation, which deeply affected a nation, which for decades will struggle with the striking contrasts between official myth and the harsh social reality. It is against this background that the bloody revolution of 1989 took place.

By particularly addressing the situation of the Romanian Pentecostalism since its inception, the research the following lines of inquiries explored. By tracing the development of Romanian Pentecostalism through national and regional contexts, through the democratic-Fascist era conflicts, through the Communist era, to the dawn of the 1990 and into the confusion of the present due attention was given to its early success, its mixed fortunes under communism, and its attempts to engage with the culture after the collapse of communism. It transpired that the penetration of the Romanian Pentecostalism among Romanians was a spontaneous phenomenon and not the result of organized action. In the early stages, the Romanian Pentecostals spread their faith and organized themselves without much assistance from outside. In the beginning, the Pentecostals grew steadily despite outside threats and persecution. This growth was very much a result of lay ministry as the principle 'every Evangelical is a missionary', was taken as a personal commitment. Since Pentecostalism entered Romania through Non-Romanian channels, it often led the local people, the traditional churches and the political leaders, to regard the Pentecostals as ' foreigners.'

The difficult circumstances that surrounded the First World War and the crises, which followed, provided good circumstances for the spread of Pentecostalism. The message preached by the Pentecostals was attractive to people because it gave them assurance in a time of great uncertainty. Moreover, they had a special appeal for those who were alienated by what they regarded as the corruptions of the social, political, and ecclesiastical establishments of their day.

There is no evidence of any systematic attempt of theological construction by the early Pentecostals. Their missiological praxis was mainly developed and conducted in opposition, and in polemic with the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches. The Pentecostals saw the traditional churches as dead churches and their members as non-Christians and targets for evangelism and conversion. Gathering together for prayer, singing, and preaching was very essential for believers in the early Pentecostal churches. They emphasized the importance of the Bible in personal life and they encouraged people to read it. As a result, many people started to learn to read and they often organized literacy classes for those that could not read. The Pentecostal movement started in the villages and penetrated the cities very slowly because the towns' people regarded the villagers as backward and uneducated.

The Pentecostals arrived in towns and cities as the villagers moved into the urban areas in search of work. They first settled on the peripheral urban areas and gradually moved into the central areas. From the incipient stage, the Pentecostals showed an inclination towards pietism and emotive spirituality. This tendency helped Pentecostals to easily penetrate among the lower strata of society. They did not have a great impact on society as a whole, because most of them came from the lower strata of society and had hardly any economic or political power. However locally, at village level, they often made a big impact through their way of living. The Romanian Pentecostals appealed mainly to the peasants and lower classes. They did not have access to funds for buildings, schools and other programs. This led them to develop a theology of the 'meek', which regarded with suspicion ' worldly successes'.

From their beginning, they hardly had any period in their existence in which they could afford to let go the ' besieged' mentality. They were always in the minority and were always treated with suspicion by both the larger religious groups and the state. This situation

allowed them little room to engage with the society and to contribute positively to the democratisation process in a practical way.

Romanian Pentecostalism received official recognition under the control of communist regime in 1948 for a great variety of reasons, and for this they were initially grateful. Living under the communist regime raised the issue of what attitude should Christians display towards the new regime. The positions adopted sometimes consisted in the search for responsible compromises and balancing Christian testimony and participation in the life of a communist state. The Pentecostal churches were affected in at least two ways. Firstly, the dictatorial experience had conditioned individual believers. The mind-set of the individual Christian was inevitably shaped by party propaganda and the dictatorial models. Secondly, the structures and the relations within the Pentecostal churches were conditioned by those in society. Both factors determined the shape, values, principles and standing of the churches in their theological outlook, social and political standing during the dictatorial period and much more during the transition and consolidation period.

The Pentecostals faced persecution and restraint even before the instauration of the regime but the communist dictatorship transformed this situation into a permanent and almost natural condition. As a result, the church developed a siege mentality, which was evident in their theology, preaching and attitudes. Persecution and suffering led the church to develop a theology of victimisation and ' martyrdom'. These tendencies are still surfacing in the Pentecostal movements, and will be visible for a while contributing negatively to the churches engagement in society.

They reflected, in their structures and interpersonal relations, the lack of freedom and the patterns of the authoritarian structures of society under the tyranny. The minister and the

leadership of the church often displayed policing attitudes and behaviour. These attitudes and actions were often justified in terms of the cultural context and often with the bible.

Because the authoritarian regimes excluded the church from the social and public arena, the churches in both countries developed a 'distorted legacy of pietism' with strong emphasis on personal salvation, holy life, priority for otherworldly existence and separation from the evil world. This legacy fitted quite well with their pietistic orientation inherited from the first missionaries.

Most of the past conditioning was inevitable and was harmful to the church. It has affected the churches' image and hindered their witness and mission to society. Much of this conditioning was forced upon the churches and their members and they could have done little or nothing to avoid it.

However, the churches learned positive lessons and gained valuable characteristics through this experience. During this period, both churches registered the most dramatic increase in membership. Through their suffering and resilience, they contributed to the encouragement, growth and refreshment of the universal church. During the communist period, the Pentecostal churches were places of resistance, oasis of freedom for their people. While the society was fully immersed in lies and surrounded by "a culture of lies", the church was a place of refuge, a place where truth reigned.

The end of dictatorship caused religious euphoria and led to apparent fresh interest in religion in particular in countries where religious practice was restricted. The churches in most countries, and in particular in the ex-communist, were full, and often the leaders and clergy were invited to perform public religious acts. In some circles, it was suggested that the end of the dictatorial regimes coincided with a religious revival, in particular in the countries where religion had been suppressed. However, this was an inaccurate reading of the situation.

Even if religion played an important role in liberation from the authoritarian regimes, it did not necessarily mean that a religious renewal was on its way. Instead, this phenomenon marked the re-entrance of religion into the ' public sphere', the 'deprivatisation of religion'. As time passed and faced with fresh challenges of the new reality, the people began to lose their enthusiasm for religion. At the same time the religious groups, confronted by a new condition, that they had not envisaged, began to lose their confidence and their momentum.

Before 1989, the Pentecostals offered an alternative society, an alternative place of freedom for those who belonged to it. It was a place where people experienced freedom, where people could be themselves. The church united the mundane dimension of life with the spiritual expectation. It was an alternative oasis in the middle of the harsh environment and it offered an alternative societal reality and a sanctuary for spiritual quest and development. The church developed a safety net (social, and psychological), a support network for its members, a welfare system in which people were cared for and cared for each other.

The new social, economic and political realities force the church to find other ways to become meaningful. People are now free from political oppression and have no need for the same alternative place of freedom. The exercise of 'relocation' of the church seems harder than it was first thought. The changes caught both churches by surprise and as a result, they were unprepared to face the new situation. They were 'surprised by the complexity of the free world' when they were confronted with a wide range of issues which they had never encountered or considered before (such as business and market ethics, nationalism, the role of the church in politics, etc.). Many of the church leaders and ministers, faced with these new issues, often recoiled or dismissed many of them as liberal, and continued to preach the gospel of personal salvation.

For them, because of past restrictions and lack of training and experience, it was customary to see the gospel reduced to personal salvation. However, methods used in 19th century missionary work are not fit for societies in a post-communist context, which are seeking to move towards democracy. Because of their conservative option on a number of issues, the Pentecostals are criticised at times, for advocating policies often associated with anti-liberal and even non-democratic agendas. For example, all the Pentecostal churches have expressed strong opposition to giving rights to homosexuals. They are frequently perceived as being more interested in their own social, economic and political interests (either personal, group or organisation) than in supporting and encouraging renewal of society.

Similarly, they are seen as too preoccupied with structural (and physical) expansion, pursuit of power and property, rather than committing themselves to help the poor, pursuing justice for the weak and marginalised, and empowering the powerless. Thus, the Pentecostals have a tendency to patch their ' gaps' in theology by 'fervent activism'.

Due to the limited resources and restricted freedom their theological articulation and training was very poor. The ministers and pastors were superficially trained and lacked resources. It is also true that Pentecostals are making efforts to raise their theological standards and to better equip their ministers and pastors. However, there are still gaps that are not adequately ' patched'. The Pentecostals have a tendency to emphasise the life thereafter at the expense of the life here and now and to see the role of the church almost exclusively as a vehicle to 'establish God's Kingdom' in 'peoples hearts'. Even those who have engaged in fighting for religious freedom from communism underlined that the purpose of the Church is spiritual. All administration is intended to serve the better accomplishment of those spiritual aims

The Pentecostals remain a 'denomination type' even after the collapse of the communist regime. The socioeconomic status of a large number of their members has improved greatly. Many of the members of Pentecostals are now very well educated and this standard continues to rise. They still hold some 'sect type' views but the church in general is moving towards accepting the culture and trying to transform it. Due to the fact that the churches are small groups who feel insecure and threatened from outside, they have a tendency towards uniformity (banishing any view that is slightly different), a black and white vision of the world, strong group loyalty, refutation of the culture of the large society (ex. Folk music, pop music, national dances) and discourage involvement in it.

Because of the rapid changes that are taking place in both societies the churches find it hard to keep up with the pace of transformation, and because they do not have adequate theological construction, or missionary theology (ecclesiology, political ethics, social expertise), the Pentecostals have not yet found their role and place in society. This is most noticeable in their indecisive actions, lack of long-term strategies and in their underlining reasons concerning their involvement in society. There is an urgent need for a new theology, a missionary theology.

In the light of the present research, I can conclude that the issue of contextualisation is very urgent for the Romanian Pentecostals. The period of dictatorship did not allow the Pentecostal churches to engage with the local culture and to fully contextualise the gospel. The churches were unable to engage in contextualization because the regime had a monopoly over the culture and, therefore, no one could engage with it critically. They used the culture to legitimise themselves and as a result, there was no official recognition of the 'real culture'. The regimes did not recognise the existence of certain elements of the culture. They tried to engineer the culture to suit themselves and denied aspects of the culture itself. The churches under dictatorship struggled to survive, as it was, (because of the restrictions placed on them),

they did not have time, resources and ability to engage with the culture. I show that the Romanian Pentecostal Churches have not always been able to engage with their context in a missionary way and their missiological praxis has not always been contextual.

In the past the main reasons for failing to engage fully with their contexts and to develop a missionary theology were due, in part, to external factors such as socio-political and economic constraints, and internal factors such as lack of resources, lack of vision and past traditional theological inheritances. Despite these shortfalls, Pentecostals have had a certain amount of impact on their particular societies in different ways, often according to their theological and ecclesiological inheritance and proportional to their size. Nevertheless, their impact upon society might have been greater if they had the courage, vision and strength to develop a truly contextual missiology that was in true dialogue with their contexts.

The Pentecostals find themselves at present in a different and challenging situation, where they could make a significant contribution to their societies. The societies in both countries are struggling, and it seems are unreservedly committed, to building a new social order based on democratic principles.

This exercise is proving to be very difficult because of past legacies, experiences, traditions, the complexity of the task, and the lack of expertise and resources. Romanian Pentecostals have a unique opportunity, and responsibility, to assist the reconstruction process of their societies. However, for this to happen they need to develop a theology, which engages their contexts in a creative way. In the words of Miroslav Volf, a future contextual Eastern European theology needs to be 'rooted in the Scriptures, and sensitive to the needs, struggles and aspirations of the churches and the peoples in diverse Eastern European countries. This entails that the churches rethink and realign their theological

construction to their new socio-political, cultural and economic realities and revisit their ecclesiology.

Throughout the thesis, I argue that the Romanian Pentecostalism in a post-communist context can no longer afford to be isolated from the social and political process. After reviewing her role in the dictatorial past, the Pentecostal church cannot remain silent or passive in the face of injustice, when people suffer and when the power is not accountable for its acts. It cannot just be an alternative community and an isolated church. It cannot afford to shy away from the reconstruction process either but it is called to face the challenges posed by society.

I suggest a number of ways in which a contextual missiology could be developed and a number of areas that need to be addressed. I argue that, firstly, the churches in a post-communist context need to be themselves missionary alternative communities embodying the values of God's Kingdom in their essence, structures and outlook. Furthermore, by analysing and continually observing relations, trends and values in society, the church in a post-communist context will work with others towards bringing reconciliation, healing past memories, and towards shaping the culture by challenging unjust and destructive value systems and practices and by encouraging new constructive value systems.

APPENDIX 1
MISSIOLOGICAL STUDY SURVEY – ROMANIAN PENTECOSTAL UNION

The questionaire is part of a doctoral thesis on Romanian Pentecostalism in completion at the department of Pentecostal & Charismatic studiesat the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom titled 'A Theology of Mission for a Post-Communist Context: An Integrative Approach.' This survey aims to identify key issues facing Romanian Pentecostalism today in your context. Please complete this survey in its entirety marking your answer with an X on each line and in the corresponding column. All answers that you give in this survey are entirely confidential and anonymous.

1. **According to you what are the most important tasks for the Romanian Pentecostal Church? Identify each issue in the order of importance.**

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Neimportant
Mission of the Church				
Discipleship				
Evangelism				
Numerical Church Growth				
Theological Education				
Social Involvement				
Leader Formation				
Other (specify)…				

2. **Why do you understand by the concept of Christian Mission? Which of the following elements are essential to defining the mission of the church? Identify each issue in order of importance:**

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Unimportant
Mission is God's mandate given to the church for the salvation and redemption of the creation through the message of the gospel which proclaims the Lordship of Christ over all reality				
To convert friends and or acquintances to Pentecostal faith				
Cross-cultural evangelisation				
Evangelism within one's culture and language				
Evangelisation of a people from a similar language and culture.				
In its mission, the church must cross all geographical, social, political, ethnic, cultural, religious and ideological frontiers.				
Process of church planting where there were no churches before				
Others(specify)...				

3. **In your opinion, what are the biblical foundations for mission? Identify each issue in the order of importance for your church today:**

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Unimportant
Kingdon of God				
The Bible				
The Trinity				
The Great Commission				
The Holy Spirit				
The Church				
Other (specify)…				

4. **What are the most effective methods of mission? Identify each issue in the order of importance for your church today:**

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Unimportant
Evangelism				
Charitable/humanitarian outreach				
Lifestyle evangelism				
Profetical voice in society				
Church Planting				
Church building				
Other (specify)...				

5. **According to you what are the most urgents needs of the local church? Identify each issue in the order of importance for your church today:**

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Unimportant
Unity in the local Church				
Unity in the Pentecostal Denomination				
Relation with other Protestant Denominations				
Relation with Foreign Mission Bodies				
Ordination of Women				
Missionary Work				
Programes in church for specific groups				
Type of Worship				
Other (specify)…				

6. **According to you what are the most important issues for Romanian Pentecostalism vis-a-vis the Ortodox Church? Identify each issue in the order of importance for your church today.**

	Very Important	Important	Less important	Unimportant
The need for Pentecostals and Orthodox to widen their perspective on Orthodoxy and viceversa				
The need to address Pentecostal misconception about Orthodoxy and viceversa				
The need to explore common ground themes for both Pentecostals and Orthodox				
Theological Literature to explore key issues of interest for Pentecostals and Orthodox				
Pentecostal evangelism among the Orthodox				
Other (specify)…				

7. Impact of Western Missionary Organisations in Romania. Identify each issue in the order of importance for your church today.

	Applicable	Not Applicable	Remarks
Western missionary organisation have improved the efficacy of Romanian churches mission in society			
Western missionary organisation have reservation about the transparency of Romanian church leaders in managing financial donations destined for mission projects			
Western missionary organisation have created a culture of financial and theological dependency			
Agentiile straine promoveaza accente doctrinale specifice contextului din care provin			
Western missionary organisation promote doctrinal views of the sending agency			
Western missionary organisation practice methods of mission irrelevant to the Romanian context			
Western missionary organisation contributed to the fragmentation of the Pentecostal denomination			

8. **How do you define evangelization? Identify each of the elements in the order of importance.**

	Very Important	Important	Less important	Unimportant
Implies challenging someone whose views and faith are different than my own's.				
Missionary activity aimed at unbelievers and those indifferent to spiritual matters				
Missionary activity in one's culture and language				
Missionary activity in a diffrent culture and language				
An act of charity towards people of no faith				
The process of presentation, proclamation, persuassion informing others about the person and redeeming work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.				
Other (specify)…				

9. **What are the most effective methods for evangelism? Identify each of the elements in the order of importance.**

	Most Effective	Effective	Less Effective	Inefficient
Friendship Evangelism				
Evangelism through social involvement				
Home Groups				
Evangelism through media				
Evangelistic services in the Local Church				
Evangelistic Tracts				
Evangelists				
Profetic voice in society				
Other (specify)…				

10. **To what extent are the issues listed below problematic in the contemporary Romanian society?**

	To a great extent	To some extent	To a lesser extent	Not Important
Unemployment				
Materialism				
Imorality				
Povery				
Coruption				
Abandoned Children				
Abortion				
Other (specify)...				

11. What are the specific ministry needs that need addressing in your context. Identify each of the elements in the order of importance.

	Very Important	Important	Less Important	Unimportant
Evanghelists				
Missionaries				
Religious Education Teachers				
Theological Seminaries				
Sunday School Teachers				
Youth Pastors				
Church Planters				
Christian Professionals				
Christian Politicians				
Other (specificy)...				

12. In what domains in the society should the church be involved? Identify each of the elements in the order of importance.

	Very important	Important	Less important	Unimportant
Education				
Marginalised in society				
Politics				
Culture				
Ecumenism				
Other(specificy)…				

13. Which of the following ethical issues present a challenge for the church in your context? Identify each of the elements in the order of importance.

	Very important	Important	Less important	Unimportant
Divorce and Remarriage				
Lifestyle Issues				
Family Issues				
Speech				
Homosexuality				
Pornography				
Other(specify)...				

14. Which of the following ecclesiological issues present a challenge for the local church. Identify each of the elements in the order of importance.

	Very important	Important	Less important	Unimportant
Role of the Bible in the local church				
Spiritual development of Pentecostal believers				
Liberal tendencies among Pentecostal believers				
Fundamentalism in the Local Pentecostal church				
Divions between generations of Romanian Pentecostals				
Fragementation of Pentecostal churches				
Need for theological studies among Romanian Pentecostal				
Need for a viable Pentecostal theological model relevant to the Romanian context				
The Need for Romanian Pentecostal theologians				
Other(specify)...				

Structure of the Survey

Table 1. Structure of the survey according to Sex:

Male	Female

Table 2. Structure of the survey according to Education:

Primary/Secondary Vocation School	GCSE/ A Levels	Post-HighSchool	Bachelor/Master Degree	PhD/ PhD (cand)

Table 3. Structure of the survey according to Age:

18-25	26-45	46-60	over 61

Table 4. Length of Christian Service:

0-5 years	6-15 years	16-25 years	Over 25 years

Table 5. Social and employment Status:

Pastor – position within Branch/Denomination	Leader - Position	Professor/Lecturer	Theology Student/Year of Study	Branch/County

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