

The Beginning of Eastern Orthodox Mission in Modern Indonesia 2

The Search of a Young Man	2
Islamic Beliefs	2
<i>Belief in Angels and Jinns</i>	2
<i>Belief in the Scriptures of Allah, especially: The Torah, Zabur, Injil and the Qur'an.</i>	2
<i>Belief in the End of the World, the Judgement Day, the Resurrection of the Dead, Hell, and Heaven.</i>	3
<i>Pillars</i>	3
The Conversion	4
Witnessing Activities	5
Indonesia and Christianity	5
<i>Eastern Christian Presence in the Ancient History of Indonesia</i>	6
<i>The Coming of Western Christianity</i>	6
<i>Eastern Orthodoxy Before the G.O.I.</i>	7
Discovery of Orthodoxy	8
<i>Reasons for Becoming an Orthodox Christian</i>	8
<i>Clarifying Difficulties</i>	9
Principle in Mission Work	10
Preparation for Mission	11
Arrival in the USA	12
The Mission in Indonesia Begins	12
<i>Challenges in Mission</i>	13
<i>Religious Practices</i>	13
<i>Efforts Toward Legalization</i>	14
<i>Mission in Practice</i>	14
<i>Legalization of the "G.O.I"</i>	16
<i>Development of Mission in the Capital City: Jakarta</i>	18

The Beginning of Eastern Orthodox Mission in Modern Indonesia

THE SEARCH OF A YOUNG MAN

The Orthodox Church in Indonesia was started by the conversion of a young man from Islam to Christianity. As a child, he was taught and believed that there is One God, Allah, who is One Person and One Nature, without any associates, Son or wife, Self-existent, non-begetting, and non-begotten. The Muslims believe that Christians transgress the principle of the Oneness of God with the Christian belief of the Trinity and the Divine-Sonship of Jesus Christ. In fact, belief in the Trinity is labeled the most unpardonable sin of “shirk” (associating other things to the One God) in Islam (Qur’an 4:116). A shirk condemns one as an infidel, excluded from heaven.

ISLAMIC BELIEFS

Belief in Angels and Jinns

The teaching on Angels in Islam is similar to Judaism and Christianity. The Qur’an teaches that the number of angels are countless with ten angels that any Muslim should know by name, Jibril, Mika’il, Atid, Raqib, Munkar, Nakir, Isra’il, Israfil, Malik and Ridwan. Instead of fallen angels there exists the race of the jinns (gennies) who were created separately from the angels out of material fire by God (Qur’an 7:12). The Jinns marry, bear children and have a very long life expectancy. The good jinns are Muslims and can be invoked for help by fellow human Muslims. Evil jinns are infidels following the infidel religions of their human counterparts

Belief in the Scriptures of Allah, especially: The Torah, Zabur, Injil and the Qur’an.

The Qur’an is believed to be the only reliable, unchanging and last revelation of the word of God sent down in the form of a book written in Arabic. Islamic Orthodoxy holds that the Qur’an has two attributes that of the Uncreated Mother of the Book, and the Created form sent down as scripture, while still retaining “oneness.” In the course of time, this Eternal Word is communicated by the Angel Gabriel to all God’s Prophets including Jesus Christ to form revelatory Scriptures with the Qur’an as its culmination.

Following are discrepancies which have never been answered satisfactorily by Muslim theologians:

- If there is One God, He must have only One Word, One Mind and One Logos. If there are two Words, there must be two Minds, two Wisdoms and two Logoi...two Gods. The idea of two deities is difficult to avoid.
- Islamic theology is unable to solve the problem of the existence of two eternal and in some cases, “three eternal.” God is considered to be “mounting the Throne.” It follows that God’s throne must also be eternal, otherwise God will be changeable. The existence of three eternal is also possible with, Allah, The “Ummul Kitab” or the Mother of the Book and “Al-Kursi” or the Throne.
- Belief in all the Prophets from Adam to Jesus Christ, with Muhammad being the last and most perfect. All were mere human beings and Jesus Christ was not God, nor the Son of God. The coming of Jesus was to preach Islam, not to become a Saviour, because all the prophets according to Islamic teaching were Muslims. Islam believes that Judas Iscariot or some other person, disguised as Jesus died on the cross in Jesus’ place. Jesus went to heaven where he remains. There is no need for the sacrificial redemption of the Cross as Islam does not put forth a doctrine of original sin.
- The historical account contained in the Qur’an including the story of the wars in Badar and Uhud, the story of Moses and Pharaoh and the stories of the quarrels among Muhammad’s wives. These historical events cannot be in existence from eternity and recorded in an Eternal Book.

Belief in the End of the World, the Judgement Day, the Resurrection of the Dead, Hell, and Heaven.

According to Islamic tradition a one-eyed Islamic Anti-Christ (“Ad-Dajjal”) will come and lead human beings astray before the end of times. Jesus Christ will return from heaven escorted by angels and climb down the Damascus Mosque’s minaret. He will then proceed to convert both Jews and Christians to Islam. Following this, Jesus will marry have children and rule the world with Islamic Shariah Law for 40 years, from the city of Medina. Then, Jesus will die and be buried beside Prophet Muhammad. The end of the world will follow Jesus’ death.

Pillars

A Muslim is required by his religion to perform the pillars of Islam (Rukun alIslam):

- To proclaim the Confession of Faith (Syahadah): that there is no god except Allah, and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah,
- To perform shalat or Canonical prayer in Arabic, five times a day, with genuflections, facing Mecca.
- A one month fast each year, during the month of Ramadhan

- A 2 1/2 % tithe of his belongings, called as “zakat”
- If he is able, to perform a pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, where the Ka’bah is located, the holiest shrine of Islam.

THE CONVERSION

Our conversion story begins with a Muslim boy who lived with his grandfather and began attending the Mosque at 5 years of age. As the boy grew older, he searched for a deeper certainty of God. In High School he met a former schoolteacher’s husband who had converted to Christianity. The young man debated the convert regarding the Trinity, the Divinity of Jesus Christ, His Incarnation and His being the Son of God. The young Muslim man won the debate, and remained unconvinced of the gospel’s truth.

One night after reciting prayers and reading the Qur’an, the young man saw a “vision” that frightened him. He encountered Christ for the first time in the form of light. Confused and trembling but with unspeakable joy, the young man began to ask such questions as “Who is Jesus Christ? What is he about?” Looking to the Qur’an, he stumbled in verse 45, chapter 3 the story of the annunciation which states, ”Remember when the angels said: O Maryam, surely Allah glad tidings with a Word from Himself, His Name will be the Messiah, Isa, the Son of Maryam. He is great in this world and hereafter, and he is among those who are near to Allah”. He had read this passage many times before but this time he felt it was illumined in a manner that could only have been accomplished by Christ. He began to see Christianity differently through the Qur’an itself, which, although denying that Christ is God, treats many points of Biblical history with reverence.

The phrase “a Word from Himself, His Name will be the Messiah” made the biggest impression. “So the Messiah, Isa (Jesus) is the the Word from God,” he said to himself. God seemed a mystery in the mind of this young man. He began to ponder the meaning of the “Word” through an inner dialogue of questions and answers, beginning with, “What is a word?” and finally arriving at the conclusion, “God, His Word who is called His Son, and His Spirit are not three different Gods, but the reality within the One God. Without Spirit God is dead, without Word or Mind God is an idiot. So, a One -Personed-God, without a Spirit and a Word is no God at all, rather wood and stone.” These discoveries were astonishing and he thought to himself:

“If among human beings, communication is accomplished with words and impossible without them. How much more with God. God has Only One Word, Jesus Christ. In order to know God and have a relationship with Him, one has to know His Word Jesus Christ. Now I know why I did not know who God is, because I did not know His Word. Jesus Christ. I have to believe in

Him!” The young man cried and said to God: “Oh Allah, yes I believe in Your Word Jesus Christ, and I will become a Christian.”

The young man invited Christ into his heart at that very moment. The young man was baptized into Dutch Reformed Protestant Christianity – the only Church he knew at this time - where his former debating opponent was an elder. He took the baptismal name of Daniel.

In 1974 while at a house prayer meeting, Daniel received the so-called “baptism of the Holy Spirit” complete with “speaking in tongues” and “prophesying” and became active in Charismatic Movement. Before this time he knew nothing on the existence of hundreds of denominations in Protestant Christianity or the difference between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, and nothing at all of the Orthodox Church.

WITNESSING ACTIVITIES

The young man Daniel was very active in witnessing for Christ among the young people, even while continuing his schooling. Many were converted several prayer meeting groups were founded. After high school, Daniel wanted to be an evangelist or missionary. Further, he desired to make the Gospel known to his own people, within the context of their culture, not as a “western-religion,” but the truth of God that originated in the Middle East/Israel, the land of all the prophets. Later as he was invited to preach among many different protestant churches, the young Daniel was bewildered by the plethora of groups and denominations with differing and opposing theological thoughts, traditions and practices. He also began to miss liturgical rhythm of life which he was used to in Islam and set his heart searching towards the ancient Christianity of the East. He knew nothing of Eastern Orthodox Christianity, rather his intuition told him that Christianity was born in the same Middle Eastern milieu as Islam.

INDONESIA AND CHRISTIANITY

Indonesia, located in southeast Asia, is the largest Muslim country in the world with 90% of its population of 220 million claiming Islam as their religion. There are three main races in Indonesia, the Mongoloid race of West Indonesia, the Polynesian race of Central Indonesia, and the Negroid race of Eastern Indonesia. There are also a large minority of Chinese, some Asian-Indian, Arab, Caucasian and Eurasians.

Indonesia consists of more than 13,677 large and small islands. The large islands include: Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan (Borneo), Sulawesi (Celebes), Irian Jaya (West Papua) and Bali, a world-famous tourist destination. It has an ancient history of kingdoms and empires such as Hindu Mataram Kingdom, Buddhist Sriwijaya Kingdom and the Hindu-Buddhist Majapahit

Empire. In the 15th century Islam came to Indonesia replacing the older Hindu-Buddhist civilization and making its own Islamic Kingdoms of Sumatra (Acheh), Java, etc.

Eastern Christian Presence in the Ancient History of Indonesia

During the 7th century and during the greater parts of the Sriwijaya-Majapahit periods (9th-14th centuries), eastern Christians of the Antiochian Syrian tradition arrived, followed later by the Non-Chalcedonians (Armenians). Christianity was in Indonesia before Islam came to the Archipelago. However, the Christians disappeared from the Indonesian landscape and its historical record.

It appears that the first Christian missionaries from Antioch did not ordain local Indonesian men to succeed them. After the last clergymen died, the local residents knew almost nothing of Orthodoxy, since the region was politically and geographically isolated. In the 11th century, an envoy of the Pope of Rome to Beijing, stopped over at the Pagarruyung Kingdom, West Sumatra and discovered some remnants of Christianity being practiced by local residents despite some three hundred years of isolation. From that early period until today, not one written record of Christianity survives, yet oral tradition preserved the names of three local bishops: Mar Yaballah, Mar Abdisho and Mar Denha. Most Indonesians do not know of these tenuous but deep Christian roots, and it should be stressed that it was Eastern Christianity that arrived to the island first.

The Coming of Western Christianity

In the 16th century the Portuguese came to Indonesia and brought with them Roman Catholicism. But it was the Dutch who managed to subdue Java, Indonesia, occupying it for 350 years. During their occupation missionaries arrived bringing with them Protestant Christianity. After defeating the Dutch, the Japanese occupied Indonesia in 1942. After the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Japanese power was defeated and the British ruled briefly over Indonesia. The Dutch, with the backing of the Allied Armies, wanted to return to Indonesia. The Indonesian people fought bravely against the colonialists, continuing their long struggle of fighting against foreign occupation. Finally Indonesia gained its independence on August 17, 1945, and became the modern Republic of Indonesia.

Indonesia has many ethnic and religious groups owing to the nature of the land and its history. Since its independence, the modern state of Indonesia recognizes only those religions, which existed and took active parts during the struggle for independence. The State Department of Religion recognizes only Islam, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. Every religion must be categorized under these five recognized religions or be considered illegal.

Eastern Orthodoxy Before the G.O.I.

“G.O.I” is an acronym for the Indonesian words: “*Gereja Orthodox Indonesia*” which means “The Indonesian Orthodox Church”. The Orthodox Church of the Russian tradition, the Russian Church Abroad opened the first Orthodox Church in Java in the 1930’s. In 1934, Priest Vasily Bystrov (later Archimandrite Innokentii) was appointed rector of a parish in Batavia in Java. This parish was to be part of the Harbin Diocese, in accordance with a request made by a resolution of His Eminence Archbishop Meletii of Harbin and Manchuria on November 16.

Upon arriving in Java, Fr Vasily had to reorganize the Orthodox parish and establish a church in Bandung. This was accomplished with the permission of the Dutch Government, who granted a subsidy of 1,372 Guilders in 1936. On August 12, 1938, with the intercession of the parishioners of Annunciation Church in Java (by decree of the General Parish Assembly of May 29, 1938), Fr Vasily was granted the extraordinary award of a kamilavka for his exceptionally fervent service to the Church (Ukase of the Diocesan Council of August 12, 1938, No. 1852). In October 1947, the Synod of Bishops of ROCOR awarded Father Vasily with a pectoral cross from the Holy Synod, elevated him to the rank of proto-priest.

In May 1950, Fr. Vasily wrote to his parish’s Archbishop, Tikhon of San Francisco: “After the transfer of power to the natives on January 1 of this year, life in Java has changed drastically for the worse in many respects, that is, normal, quiet life has ended and many Russian parishioners of Indonesia are leaving the country. Russians try to settle wherever they can, and worry about their future in Java, advising me to get an exit visa before it is too late... Most of the parishioners are clearly leaving Bandung this year.” Later in the same letter, Fr Vasily writes: “One way or the other, one must leave Java, apparently, this is God’s will. The hour is approaching of my departure from Java, where I served for 16 years without leaving once; I mourn this for now, but one must humble oneself and thank God. I will inform Your Eminence in advance of the exact date of my departure from Java to San Francisco.” In the early 1950’s, Fr Vasily left for the USA, where he was tonsured to monasticism and led the brethren of New-Root Hermitage in New York State.

The existence of a Russian Orthodox Church in Batavia (old Jakarta) during the last years of the Dutch colonial government in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) and the first years of Indonesian government became known to Daniel after he had contact with Archbishop HILARION of Australia. The recent ordination of the new priests by Archbishop HILARION connected the two separate histories, the one in the Batavian era and the other in modern Indonesia.

The mission of GOI, when viewed in the light of the recent connection to the Church of Russia, is indeed a “rebirth” of Orthodoxy, while being completely independent from any

foreign mission endeavor. It is also a new “phase of modern mission” movement within Orthodoxy as the new mission is being led by a local son of Indonesia rather than by the missionary efforts of a foreign mission body. It is the Church for the Indonesians started by an Indonesian.

DISCOVERY OF ORTHODOXY

Daniel was offered the position of charismatic youth spiritual advisor in a different area from where he lived in Java island, namely in the island of Sulawesi, by the newly installed Governor Willy Lasut of Manado, North Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. Governor Willy was an active Charismatic Christian and had met Daniel in a prayer meeting in Jakarta. In 1978, with the help of the governor, Daniel went to visit the largest Full Gospel Central Church in the world in order to learn how to start a prayer mountain in Manado following the pattern that existed in Korea.

During this visit Daniel met an American Baptist Missionary, Dr. Marlin Nelson of Seattle, Washington who led Daniel to study in an evangelical Protestant theological seminary, the “Asian Center for Theological Studies and Mission” (ACTS, which is an affiliate of Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA, USA) in Seoul, Korea. Dr Samuel Hugh Moffets from Princeton, NJ, a famous Asian Church Historian was its director. Daniel received a full scholarship to attend.

Meanwhile because of some political intrigues due to his religious activities, governor Willy Lasut was fired from his job and retired as the governor of Manado, giving Daniel little reason to return to Indonesia until he finished his academic work. Daniel plunged into his studies and continued on his original quest to find ancient expression of Christianity.

At the start of 1983 and nearing graduation, Daniel found: The Orthodox Church by Timothy (Kallistos) Ware in a downtown Seoul bookstore. The book gave him a glimpse of the Eastern Church he had been seeking. After asking several people the exact location of the Orthodox Church in Korea, Daniel met the priest, and later made frequent visits to this Church. He borrowed Orthodox books from the Church library educating himself in Eastern Orthodoxy. Once he understood the teaching and theological tenets of the Orthodox faith, he decided that this was the Church he had been looking for.

Reasons for Becoming an Orthodox Christian

Politically, the Orthodox Church at least in Indonesia has never become the tool of colonialism. Culturally, there are many points of similarity between Orthodox practices and Islamic ones: the usage of prayer beads, the invocation of the Divine Name (the “Jesus Prayer” in Orthodoxy, the “Dzikir” in Islam), the prostrations in prayer, the fasting rituals,

feasts, the hours of prayer, the orientation in prayer (Orthodoxy to the East, Islam –in Indonesia- to the West the direction of the Ka’bah in Mecca, the holiest shrine in Islam), etc. The idea of “theosis” seemed to Daniel to be the answer for the Javanese yearning for “Manunggaling Kawulo lan Gusti” (the union between the servant/creature and the master/creator) and that the Javanese Mystical Belief’s teaching on the “Sangkan Paraning Dumadi” (“The Origin and Destination of Creatures”) has its answer in Christ as the Origin of everything that exists, because He is the Logos through whom God created everything (John 1:1-3).

Historically, the Orthodox Church has an unbroken continuity from the Apostolic time continuing through modern times without interruption. Orthodoxy does not recognize Reformation or counter-Reformation having nothing to reform or counter-reform preserving unchanging the apostolic teachings through the ages. This fact provided confidence to the young Daniel that the purity of the apostolic doctrines were kept, lived out and proclaimed by the Orthodox Church.

In the mind of young Daniel, these points of similarity between Orthodoxy and Indonesian culture would help greatly in his mission work in Indonesia, infusing the Gospel with a fresh start and approach. He believed that this was God’s answer to prayer. He had found ancient Eastern Christianity and a way to bring the Gospel within the context of the Indonesian cultural milieu. Daniel was joyful and elated at this discovery.

Clarifying Difficulties

In spite of the clear understanding of his reasons for desiring to become an Orthodox Christian, Daniel had further struggles to resolve:

The Virgin Mary

Both the Islamic insistence on the Oneness of God and the hostility of Evangelical Protestantism towards Roman Catholicism supplied great apprehension to Daniel’s understanding of the place of the Virgin Mary in Orthodox belief. The seminarian Daniel was afraid that Orthodoxy committed idolatry, worshipping Mary, the Mother of Jesus. After much soul searching he discovered that the Bible calls the Virgin Mary “the Mother of my Lord” (Luke 1:43) and soon realized that the title “Mother of God” was not invented by Roman Catholicism. Mary is the chosen creature of God the Father for the sake of the Incarnation of His Word into the World.

The young Daniel found parallels between the views of Orthodox Christianity and Islam in regard to the Virgin Mary and the prophet Muhammad. Mary is the bearer of the Word of God made flesh in her Virgin womb, just as Muhammad was the bearer of the Word of God made book in his illiterate mind. Mary gave birth to the Word of God made flesh from her

womb as Muhammad gave birth to the Word of God made book through his mouth. The prophet Muhammad occupies a lofty position in Islam understanding and when a Muslim “highly regards, respects and loves” the Prophet, he does not feel that he impinges upon the worship of the One God. The Eastern Orthodox also “highly regard, respect and love” the Virgin Mary. Seeing the Virgin Mary in the light of an analogical practice in Islam in regard to Muhammad, the seminarian Daniel could see clearly that there is no idolatrous worship of Mary in Orthodox Christianity.

The seminarian Daniel discovered that Orthodox position in regard to the Virgin Mary has a strong biblical basis and nothing pagan in it. When it “highly regards” her, it is because the Bible says that God regarded her before anyone else, as Mary herself expresses it: “For he (God) hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden (Mary) (Luke 1:48).”

The Invocation and Relics of the Saints

Due to his Islamic and evangelical-charismatic iconoclastic backgrounds, Daniel had a very difficult time accepting icons as part of the Orthodox tradition. Only later after he fully understood the meaning of the Incarnation of Christ which holds that material creation was glorified by His resurrection, did Daniel understand the theological basis of Iconography. In Islam it is believed that the “Word of God” was sent down to the world in the form of a book, the Qur’an, which contained writings in Arabic artistically expressed in “Calligraphy.” By the same token in Orthodoxy it is taught that the “Word of God” was sent down to the world in the form of a man: Jesus Christ (John 1:1-3,14). Therefore the art-expression of this Word Made Flesh in the form a human being is: “Iconography.” Just as Islamic Calligraphy is not considered an idol, so Orthodox Iconography is also not an idol.

PRINCIPLE IN MISSION WORK

While Daniel considered the above concerns he remained conscious Indonesia’s ethnic diversity. From the very beginning he desired that part of his mission policy would be an Indonesian expression of Orthodoxy, using the Indonesian language along with a little Arabic. Since Indonesia has more than 350 different ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups, Daniel’s vision has been to have local cultural expressions of Orthodoxy to encompass the many people groups of Indonesia.

The “Incarnational” approach has been the guiding principle in accomplishing this mission. This approach states that the Gospel must be incarnated within the context of the local cultures, languages, financial support and leadership. For Daniel, the great principle of Nevius, a Protestant missionary to China, is very compatible with the incarnational approach. The Nevian principle states that, in order for any mission effort to be successful at all, it has to fulfill the criteria of “self propagation,” the proclamation of the gospel has to be

accomplished by local people with local expression; “self-supporting, as early as possible the local people must support themselves financially so that they will not depend upon foreign aid, which results in an unhealthy dependency on the foreign leader rather than the local people; and “self-rule,” as early as possible after proper training the leadership of the Church has to be relegated to the local people, so that it is not under the dictate of foreign interests and power.

A tendency to detest and loathe any sign of colonialism, whether it be political, religious or cultural was imbedded deep within the psyche of the Indonesian people after a bitter history of colonialism. Anyone who wants to do mission work in Indonesia while disregarding this Indonesian cultural psychology will be bound to fail in his endeavor. The Indonesian people will revolt against anything that smacks of foreign religious-cultural colonialism.

Daniel’s vision for Indonesia included an Indigenous Orthodox Church as opposed to one implanted from outside the local culture, interest and power. Any foreign power and cultural imposition will be deemed unacceptable. The people within the Indonesian Orthodox Church want to become Orthodox as Indonesians, interested only in the pure and simple “Orthodox Apostolic Faith” of the Church. The plan and vision for the mission work in Indonesia were not something incidental, but had been contemplated for a long time by the young Daniel from the time of his seminarian days in Korea.

PREPARATION FOR MISSION

After graduating from seminary in Korea, Daniel, went to Greece, where he stayed in the “Theological School Dormitory of the University of Athens” and later in Simono-Petra Monastery on Mount Athos. While in Greece, he learned to speak the modern Greek language which differs from the Greek of the New Testament. On Mt. Athos, his desire to have Orthodoxy with incarnational and multi-cultural approaches became more intense. Daniel had to struggle with terminologies suitable to express the faith as he began to translate the Divine Liturgy, write the first Orthodox theological treatises and translate liturgical books into Indonesian and Javanese languages. A new lexicon for Orthodox terms had to be created since one did not exist in his native language. When the newly created terms sounded too awkward and strange, he resorted to using the original Greek terms side by side with them, such as using “Theotokos” alongside with “Sang Pamiyos Widdhi.” (“Birth-Giver of God”).

Daniel kept in continuous correspondence with people in Indonesia. One of his letters, which took days and nights to write in order to perfect his explanation of Orthodoxy was 364 pages written in the Javanese language. The result of his correspondence to Indonesia was

the conversion of four young men, two being his own brothers. These young men joined Daniel in the States and are now priests in Indonesia.

Daniel had received a good education on the principles of indigenization and inculturation of the Gospel at the Protestant Seminary in Korea. He knew his culture, and he wanted to express Orthodoxy within its contexts and found that the history of Orthodoxy and many of its features are conducive to implementing that kind of indigenization and inculturation.

ARRIVAL IN THE USA

Late in 1984, Daniel went to study in the U.S., at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Masters of Theology and received ordination when his study was finished. Upon graduation from the Holy Cross Seminary he also studied at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, and at the same he was taking some more long distance theological studies. He was ordained by His Grace Bishop (now, Metropolitan) Maximos of Greek Orthodox Diocese of Pittsburgh to the Diaconate in Pittsburgh, PA (January 16th, 1988), and then to the priesthood in North Royalton, Ohio (May 25th, 1988). Since then, Daniel, the author of this article, has been known as Fr. Daniel B. D. Byantoro. In his official letter before returning Fr. Daniel Byantoro to Indonesia to begin mission work, Bishop Maximos wrote (dated on April 11th, 1988), “Rev. Bambang is a member of my diocese of Pittsburgh, with canonical ties to it...our Pittsburgh Diocese always remains his home.”

THE MISSION IN INDONESIA BEGINS

On June 8th 1988, Fr. Daniel left the States for Indonesia. First, he went to his hometown in East Java bringing with him the translations he wrote during his stay in Greece and America. In his hometown he fostered the conversion of family members, teaching them to make prosphora, and vestments from the local batik materials. Unsure of where to begin the more formal mission, Fr Daniel rented a room in a Christian Prayer Center with another person who later became his staff in the mission office. His goal was to fast and pray until he felt God’s direction. Eventually, he was directed to begin in Solo, Central Java.

Fr Daniel moved from East Java to Solo (Central Java), living in a rented house with a pavilion used for the mission office. Bible studies were started in Solo, where many of his friends who had been part of the charismatic movement lived, and from these came several mission activities. The first convert to the Orthodox faith was a young Muslim man, baptized with the name of Photios. Since then Fr. Daniel witnessed the conversion of many people to Orthodoxy holding mass baptisms in rivers and wooded areas, afraid of other’s reactions and because there was no Church in which to hold them.

Challenges in Mission

Theologically speaking, Fr Daniel Byantoro uses the existing contexts of Indonesian culture to package Orthodox teaching. Just as the Church Fathers had to face Greek paganism, Judaism, and Gnosticism in order to present the Gospel intelligibly to ancient peoples, Orthodox theology faces similar challenges in the context of the Indonesian mission. Those challenges are:

- The Islamic strand that has similarities with Judaism.
- The Hindu-Buddhistic strand that has similarities with Greek paganism.
- The Javanese-mystical strand called “Kebatinan” (the “Esoteric Belief”) that has similarities to Gnosticism. This is a blend of ancient shamanistic-animism on the one hand and Hindu-Buddhistic mysticism and Islamic Sufism on the other, and is divided into many mystical denominations and groups, just like Gnosticism was.
- The secularistic-materialistic ideals of the modern world.

The first three challenges have made the Indonesian people intensely religious. Into this religious and theological climate, the Patristic approach to ancient Greek paganism, Judaism and Gnosticism has provided a methodology to deal with the varying religious mentalities inherent in Indonesian culture. In this regard, Orthodoxy must build trust among religions in Indonesia before it can have any significant influence. By maintaining a harmonious relationship with other religions existing in the country, Orthodoxy can contribute toward combating the pernicious influence of materialistic secularism.

Religious Practices

There are many religious practices that cannot be described as belonging to any particular religion in Indonesian culture. These are practiced all over Indonesia, bearing many different names with slight variations but all have similar patterns of fasting, ascetic labor, communal meals, prayer for the dead, and the keeping of relics. Fr Daniel Byantoro had to deal with these cultural religious practices carefully to make Orthodoxy acceptable. For example, the practice of sitting on the floor for religious purposes is adopted in the worship of the Church in Indonesia. “Coned rice” instead of kolyva is used for commemorating the dead, since Indonesians do not eat bread as their main staple and do not grow wheat. The Trisagion Prayers are used to replace the traditional Indonesian practice of honoring departed ancestors. Women wear veils in the Church, as was traditionally done by Orthodox people, but also conforms to the idea of the pious woman in the Indonesian culture. Icons and relics, with a right Orthodox and biblical understanding, have replaced amulets and heirlooms that were burned when people converted to Orthodoxy. Communal meals are usually held during festivities in the Church, as well as during Lent. Some cultural symbolisms have been adopted as well for the usage of the Church, such as the usage of young coconut leaves for

decorating the Church building during festivals and feasts. In the case of fasting Fr Daniel adopted the monastic way of strict fasting that he saw practiced in Mt Athos.

Efforts Toward Legalization

With the growth of converts, an official recognition of Fr. Daniel's work was very important. A foundation was formed as a first step to gaining legal recognition for the growing mission. This foundation was named as "Yayasan Dharma Tuhu" ("The Straight Doctrine Foundation"), and then, due to the objection of some people for its Hindu sounding name (i.e. "Dharma"), it was changed into "Yayasan Orthodox Injili Indonesia" ("The Indonesian Orthodox Evangelistic Foundation") legalized with a notarized Acts "No 28, Surakarta, 12th July 1990". Through this legal notarized foundation, an office was opened, with two workers, using the pavilion of Fr. Daniel's rented house, and his empty dining room as a place of worship with a simple iconostasis. After some months the office moved to a rented room of a small hotel ("Hotel Kaloka") in the middle of the city. This foundation later became what we know as the "Gereja Orthodox Indonesia" ("The Indonesian Orthodox Church"), and does not belong to any one jurisdiction, since there are no religious bodies that have headquarters outside of Indonesia. GOI is an umbrella organization for all Orthodox jurisdictions if they want to be legally recognized when operating in Indonesia, with Fr Daniel B.D. Byantoro as the current president. This is the only legal Orthodox organization with Fr Daniel Byantoro as the only legal president and founder of the organization. No foreigner is allowed to be a head of any religious organization in Indonesia.

Mission in Practice

As had long been his vision, Fr. Daniel strove to inculcate Orthodoxy to the local culture. The Eastern Church in Indonesia became eastern in its cultural expression. A rented house in a slum area was found, to house offices and classes. This small mission had eleven workers. During this time, small theological classes were conducted with the hope of someday beginning a seminary. Unfortunately, the classes soon ceased due to a lack of financial and hierarchical support.

In these new offices in the city of Solo, Central Java, Fr Daniel adopted several forms and methods of mission: Proclamation of the Gospel in its wider sense, preaching, Bible study, direct personal evangelism, friendship evangelism, the distribution of literatures, radio broadcasting, seminars, socialization, and mission travels. For Fr Daniel, preaching was not limited to a homily during liturgical services, but also teaching the truth of Orthodoxy at non-Orthodox gatherings including Christmas festivals, family gatherings, marriage ceremonies etc., in order to introduce Orthodoxy to a wide audience. Bible Studies were not

restricted to Orthodox communities but for any interested person. Fr. Daniel's Bible studies often attracted 50 to 100 people of various faiths including Islam.

Direct personal evangelism was (and is) accomplished by our priests through house-to-house visitation, or when meeting someone on the road, in shops, or at any place the priest or the Orthodox person happens to interact with others. Evangelism was also accomplished through personal friendships with non-Christians or non-Orthodox. We sent literature to interested people within and without the city and the island. In the Jakarta area, a radio program was started with Fr Daniel as the speaker and an occasional radio program in Solo. Fr Alexios later took over this program in Solo.

Seminars on Orthodoxy were held only occasionally because of cost, which was especially high if hotel space is rented. These seminars targeted people in the middle to high-class levels of society. Last but not least, in order to open the possibility of new mission areas in this huge country of Indonesia, Fr Daniel has traveled to different parts of Indonesia, such as to Kalimantan (Borneo), to West and East Sumatra Island, Bali and to Timor Island. Fr Daniel was almost murdered by the native people on Timor Island.

Slowly most of the main services have been translated into the Indonesian language and partly in Javanese, Balinese, and the Batak language of Sumatra. Throughout the time that he was translating, Fr Daniel made several visits to the States to raise funds. Eventually, Fr. Daniel was able to purchase part of the property of the rented house. Later by using his own savings and with the help of some non-Orthodox friends in Indonesia, he was able to purchase some additional properties and a simple house in the same area. During these times, a great difficulty arose within the mission. A person from within the Church leveled accusations, slander and gossip against Fr. Daniel influencing others and stirring up the peace of the Church. This was a time of great difficulty for Fr. Daniel. Additionally, the local Roman Catholic priest and Javanese Protestant (Dutch Reformed) Church's pastor advised their respective members to stay away from any Orthodox people, accusing Orthodoxy of being a cultic and heretical denomination, labeling Fr. Daniel a cultic leader. Later on, some Muslim groups began leveling similar accusations against Fr. Daniel.

At this point, it was difficult for Fr. Daniel to introduce the word "Orthodox /Orthodoxy" in Indonesia, as it was taken very negatively by the Christian and non-Christian public. This hardship was too much for Fr. Daniel to handle on his own. In 1989, Fr Daniel decided to fly to Geneva to the WCC office to meet some Indonesian Christian leaders stationed there, asking for their help explaining Orthodoxy to their own people. Fr. Daniel urged them to explain that Orthodoxy is not a cult and is the most ancient form of Christianity. Fortunately, he did receive the help he needed. Meanwhile, Fr. Daniel maintained regular communication with his hierarch. However, owing to the difficulties mentioned above and to

the fact that he had to fight the battle alone, Fr. Daniel several times wished to quit from the whole enterprise. Yet a new strength arose from each difficult situation and Fr Daniel found that he could continue to lead the mission.

Legalization of the “G.O.I”

Fr. Daniel had a difficult time acquiring a permit from the government for the Orthodox Church since the government recognizes only five religions, with the Orthodox Church failing to fall under either the Protestant or Roman Catholic designation. A secretary of the Semarang (Central Java, 3 hours away north of Solo) Roman Catholic Diocese was sent by his Bishop to see Fr. Daniel. A letter from the late Pope John Paul II to the Vatican Ambassador, Msgr. Petrus Sambu, in Jakarta advised him to take a look at the mission work in which Fr. Daniel was engaged. Msgr. Petrus Sambu invited Fr Daniel to lunch in his residence in the Vatican Embassy in Jakarta. Fr Daniel hoped the Roman Catholic Church might make room for the Orthodox Church under its legal umbrella in the Department of religion. But to his disappointment, when Fr Daniel wrote a letter to the Indonesian Roman Catholic Council of Bishops asking for such help, the Council turned down his request.

Also a letter was sent by the then President of Lutheran World Federation, Rev. Dr. Chilton to the President of the largest Lutheran Church: “ Huria Kristen Batak Protestan” the Rev. Dr. Soritua Nababan, asking him to help Fr. Daniel in legalizing the Orthodox Church in the Indonesian State Department of Religion, but nothing came out from that letter of appeal.

At this time Indonesia no longer had a canonical tie with Bishop Maximos of Pittsburgh because of internal hierarchical contention about who had the jurisdictional right over the newly developing Church of Indonesia. Metropolitan Dionysios of New Zealand was assigned and Fr. Daniel Byantoro came to be under his jurisdiction. By this time Fr. Daniel Byantoro had moved his office from “Hotel Kaloka” to a rental property belonging to a Muslim cleric. With the help of many friends during several visits to the USA, Fr. Daniel was able to purchase this property allowing the rented house in this slum to finally be used for worship. The “Holy Spirit“ Church, which later became “Holy Trinity” Church, had an iconostasis made from a blue curtain and later, one was created with a plated bamboo screen. Parishioners sat cross-legged on a plastic mat during the Liturgy. The icons were painted in a simple style by one of the parishioners. On September 24th, 1990 Fr Daniel was elevated to Archimandrite at Holy Trinity Church of Solo during the visit of Metropolitan Dionysios and the then Archimandrite Soterios of Seoul, Korea and appointed as the “Vicar” of the Metropolitan for Indonesian Mission.

As the church continued its steady growth, Fr Daniel Byantoro desperately needed to obtain legalization for this fledgeling Orthodox Church. A strong believer in the power of fasting

and prayer, Fr. Daniel sought divine help for the situation. He went to East Java near his hometown, a 5 hour journey by bus from Solo, to rent a room in a Roman Catholic convent located high atop a mountain. He stayed there for 30 days and 30 nights praying, fasting and beseeching the help of God. At the end of those 30 days a call came to Fr Daniel from Solo. He needed to return to Solo because the Director of the Central Java Department of Religion wanted to see him.

The Orthodox Church was legally recognized after many difficult struggles, and Fr Daniel's missionary effort eventually brought official government recognition of the Orthodox Church in Indonesia on November 30th, 1991 with a legal Act of Government: "Dirjen Bimas Kristen Depag R.I, No: F/Kep/189/3336/1991. This Act was then renewed with a legal Act of Government: "SK Dirjen Bimas Kristen Depag R.I. no.: F/Kep/Hk. 00.5/19/637/1996", and was renewed again with a legal Act of Government: "SK Dirjen Bimas Kristen Depag R.I. no: F/Kep/HK.00.5/20/708/2001" on February 28th, 2001, and the latest renewal was the Act of Letter of Decision Number: DJ.III/Kep/HK. 00.5/190/3212/2006 to replace the previous Letter of Decision Number F/Kep. /Hk. 00.5/20/708/2001

Later some of the students who were converted by Fr. Daniel Byantoro through correspondence when he was on Mt. Athos, returned to Indonesia after studying in the USA. Fr Daniel Byantoro was also able to send students to Greece, Australia, and France, and later some young men were invited to study in South Korea, and were now serving as priests. Fr Daniel's brother in law, Panteleimon Sukamto, was made a deacon and later started a mission in his hometown, Pare City, in East Java. Deacon Panteleimon then moved to Fr. Daniel Byantoro's hometown and used the second floor of Fr. Daniel's house as a place of worship. But it is very sad to say that Deacon Panteleimon died at very young age of 45 years old due to heart failure, in 2001. Later a new mission was developed in this city with one of the students who had recently arrived from the States and was ordained a priest after staying occasionally with Fr. Daniel. He was assisted by Deacon Panteleimon as he served there. A donation from a US family working in Indonesia came which allowed Fr. Daniel to build a Church in Mojokerto. The building project was halted due to the protest of the Muslims, and the unfinished building became a ruin. A new mission work was also opened in Cilacap, where Fr Daniel performed baptisms along with another priest, one of the students who studied in the States. Again, he could not obtain a building permit due to Muslim objections. Similarly, another mission was started in 1990 in the village of Grasak, Boyolali, a few kilometers away from Solo. This mission was to be located in a donated church building that could not be used due to the protest of the Muslims. After another visit to the USA, Fr. Daniel was able to collect some money intended for building a permanent church building. With some additional help from the Bishop, a donation was given, and with many difficulties,

a building permit was obtained - not without a large sum of bribes demanded by the local government official - to erect a church building. At last on September 10th, 1996, the mission was able to finish the building and it has been used until now. This was the first Orthodox Church building: "The Holy Trinity Church" ever erected in, Solo, Central Java, where Fr Daniel Byantoro started his mission work.

Development of Mission in the Capital City: Jakarta

The results of the former intrigues did not subside easily, but in 1994, a clergy meeting was held, and a covenant created requiring the clergy to unite their minds and efforts, and obtaining a promise from each not to be carried away easily by slander. After this agreement the Church was at peace for a while, and the appearance of quarrels and misunderstandings did not exist on the surface for some time, although occasional tension among the clergy was still felt.

In the month of September 1996, Indonesia was put under the care of a newly created Archdiocese, with a foreign hierarch located in headquarters outside of Indonesia. This was the second time the Church of Indonesia founded by Fr. Daniel had to be under the leadership of a foreigner who resided in a foreign country with foreign taste and interests. Fr. Daniel was at first happy to have a Bishop of a similar age to himself, thinking that if they were of the same generation the new Bishop would understand his original vision and principles for missionary work in Indonesia. Later he came to realize this was a wishful thinking. Meanwhile the translation work continued with books on Orthodoxy and apologetic works for the Muslim people.

From time to time the Divine Liturgy was conducted in a foreign Consulate office in Jakarta. However, Archimandrite Daniel felt that conducting Liturgy in a foreign Embassy would be detrimental for future mission work in Indonesia, and also would not be conducive in reaching local people. Therefore he began to look for another location to house his ministry in Jakarta. In 1995 he found an old acquaintance, who was now the pastor of an Indonesian style Protestant mega-church in Jakarta. This man had converted from Islam to Christianity and became interested in Orthodoxy after talking with Fr Daniel. In 1995 when Fr. Gordon Walker visited Archimandrite Daniel in Indonesia for the first time, he was invited to give a talk on Orthodoxy by this pastor. The Indonesian Protestant pastor converted to Orthodoxy two years later. Unfortunately, for some personal reasons and some misunderstanding over certain points of doctrine and ethos of the Church, he left the Church a year later in 1998, and returned to serve his former denomination while at the same time vilifying Orthodoxy.

Fr Daniel conducted a mass baptism in 1997 in Jakarta, after months of catechism and preparations for the new converts with the newly baptized becoming members of the parish established in Jakarta. The Liturgy in Jakarta was conducted in the house of one of the

parishioners, after moving from one building to another, even to a rented restaurant room. Later the owner of the house, a famous Indonesian film star who was converted by Fr. Daniel, let the group to use one of the empty buildings on his compound. The building used was at last converted into a Church, named as “Aghia Epiphania.” This was the first Orthodox parish founded in Jakarta since Archimandrite Daniel started his mission in the capital city. Fr. Daniel had to move to Jakarta, returning once a month to Solo where the church was under the care of Fr. Alexios, overseen by Fr. Daniel, until finally Fr Alexios had to take full charge of the Church. In Jakarta, Fr. Daniel did a lot of biblical teaching on Sunday afternoons at 1pm and 6pm. Arabic and Hebrew are taught by Fr. Daniel for the sake of contextualization in mission.

Meanwhile, in October 1997, Fr. Daniel gave a seminar in Surabaya, East Java to a group interested in Orthodoxy, with no substantial results. In Jakarta, a similar seminar was conducted in November of the same year, at a Hilton Hotel, with many dignitaries invited. Fr Daniel introduced Orthodoxy to the audience of 200.

On October 12th, 1997, a family intended to donate a 2000 sq. meter lot with the plan of building a Church and an Orthodox Christian Center in Jakarta. Unfortunately due to an upheaval that happened to the Church in Indonesia and the self-imposed exile of Fr. Daniel to the USA, this plan did not materialize.

Meanwhile, the Church in the village of Grasak, Boyolali, Central Java, not far away from the Holy Trinity Church, began the process of obtaining a permit, after the death of the former village chief, a fanatical Muslim opposed to the establishment of the Church there. With the recent burning of churches in Indonesia, difficulties in doing mission escalated, but the Holy Spirit is still working so that the work of the mission will not halt. We don't know what future holds for us, but we believe that the Lord will not allow that which He has created in Indonesia to be destroyed by any evil power. The Church will grow, and the mission will proceed.

The mission headed by Fr. Daniel is a part of the Diocese of Australia and New Zealand of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia. During his service in Indonesia, Fr. Daniel was able to convert some 2000 people to Orthodoxy. We wish God's help and future success in their missionary works to Archimandrite Daniel and his co-strugglers in the faith, who have already converted over 2000 Indonesians to the salvific faith.