

EASTERN EUROPEAN CHURCHES ENGAGING ROMA PEOPLE: HISTORICAL AND MISSIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction

Quoting a government report of the 1970s, Ian Hancock reminds us that Marxist ideology described the ‘Gypsy problem’ as the Roma’s unwillingness to accept Marxist principles, because they had inherited pre-communist notions of capitalism and, with one or two exceptions, were still ‘beggars, thieves, violent and a scourge in the countryside’.¹ Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, conditions for Europe’s Gypsies have worsened dramatically. Before the wall fell down, although not all Gypsies and not all over Central and Eastern Europe, still many had a job with a guaranteed minimum salary.² When you were unemployed for more than three months, you were seen as a ‘parasite and work evader’. Therefore, when the Wall came down, and many lost their jobs, they were once again perceived by society as criminals, as before World War II.³

For the Eastern European churches, the fall of the Berlin Wall opened up many new doors for mission work. Many felt ill prepared. Some did remember ‘the good old days’ of foreign mission, when they were supporting their missionaries to China or Africa. Many churches did not have a clue of how to be ‘missionaries’ to their own nominal church members. How to ‘translate’ the gospel to those for whom Christianity was for ‘old ladies with scarves’?

Against the background of this context, the present chapter explores how the Eastern European churches have responded to the Roma people since the fall of the Berlin Wall. It first introduces the current responses of Eastern European churches from a bird’s-eye view, especially with respect to the Conference of European Churches, the European Baptist Federation, Gypsy Pentecostalism, and the Roman Catholic Church. The chapter then gives a critical analysis of the underlying ‘models’ or paradigms and related images, seeking to uncover the motivation behind these responses. Finally,

¹ Ian Hancock, ‘The Roma Today: Issues and Identity’, in Hristo Kyuchukov and Ian Hancock (eds), *Roma Identity* (Prague: NGO Slovo 21, 2010), 15:

www.slovo21.cz/nove/images/dokumenty_integrace/fin_cd_roma_identity_part%201.pdf

² Lucia Abellan and Miquel Mora, ‘The Specter of Racism in Europe’, in *El Pais* (2013): http://elpais.com/m/elpais/2013/12/30/inenglish/1388408298_024800.html?rel=rosEP

³ Abellan and Mora, ‘The Specter of Racism in Europe’.

a way forward is pointed out to overcome the limitations of these paradigms, ending with some practical suggestions. It will be argued that a key question for the Eastern European ‘majority’ churches is how they could facilitate moving from ‘mission to the Roma’ to ‘Roma churches’ or to a ‘Church for all’! The final purpose of this chapter is to initiate a process of reflection from a missiological perspective, to draw lessons from how churches and mission organizations are responding to the Roma people and why, as well as to stimulate further research at grassroots level, in which theological perspectives are taken into consideration.

A Missiological Point of Departure

In taking a missiological perspective as our point of departure, three key words are used: incarnation, translation and transformation, significant for the mission historian and theologian Andrew F. Walls.⁴ He focuses on the ‘expansion of Christian faith by its interaction with different cultures and even languages’,⁵ emphasizing the development of the church across cultures to be linked with the incarnation. It started with a ‘historical event leading to a historical process’.⁶ After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, a small group of disciples set out to do what he had commanded them to do: ‘As the Father has sent me, I am sending you’. (John 20:21). They followed in his footsteps, with the same mindset of Jesus, the Son of God, to ‘live the gospel... with incarnational love and sacrificial service’, as ‘God’s life-transforming power at work in the world’. ‘It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.’⁷ The essence of the gospel is the incarnation of Jesus Christ: He came down to take us up, to reconcile us with God. Christ’s incarnation is about Christ’s coming in a specific culture, and ultimately, being spread among cultures and traditions. Thus for Walls ‘the expansion of Christianity as a cross-cultural story’.⁸

The second key word of translation refers to the process started with the disciples to translate the message of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ in other cultures. Their purpose was to make it understandable to those to whom this message was foreign, so that it would make sense. It was a complicated task. There were no recipes. This process of translation

⁴ For an excellent introduction to Andrew Walls’ missiological thinking, see: William R. Burrows, Mark R. Gornik and Janice A. McLean, *Understanding World Christianity: The Vision and Work of Andrew F. Walls* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011).

⁵ Andrew F. Walls, *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books / Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2002), 9-10.

⁶ Mark Gornik, ‘Profiles: Andrew Walls and the Transformation of Christianity’, in *Catalyst. Contemporary Perspectives for United Methodist Seminarians* (2005):

www.catalystresources.org/andrew-walls-and-the-transformation-of-christianity. See also Burrows, Gornik and McLean, *Understanding World Christianity*.

⁷ *The Cape Town Commitment* (South Hamilton, IA: The Lausanne Movement, 2010).

⁸ Gornik, ‘Profiles’.

is closely related to another key concept in Walls' thought: conversion. It is a process of applying the authority and Kingship of Christ into thought, life, culture and mind. Therefore, says Walls: 'New life in Christ is not about cultural uniformity... but always about fresh appropriations or translations of the Christian faith.'⁹ Converts should therefore be distinguished from proselytes.¹⁰ The proselyte is 'simply and wrongly... forced to repeat a foreign cultural form of belief and practice'.¹¹ This carries much importance for the practice of cross-cultural ministry. Conversion leads to the 'embodiment of faith in diverse cultures' by way of translation. 'Theologically, God is a translator, centrally as Christ took on human form. Translation is linguistic and cultural, and is always taking place.'¹² This notion of the translation of the gospel into other cultures never occurs without a critique of culture.

Major discussions have taken place what to reject and what to accept (Acts 15). In this process, culture is transformed, Christianized. So incarnation initiates a process of translation leading to the third key word, that of transformation. In our societies, churches and personal lives, there is a need for transformation. Social transformation and spiritual transformation are frequently used notions. They are inseparably connected, and have their roots in God. He is the initiator of transformation, as stated in the Cape Town Commitment: 'The whole Bible reveals the mission of God to bring all things in heaven and earth into unity under Christ, reconciling them through the blood of his cross. In fulfilling his mission, God will transform the creation broken by sin and evil into the new creation in which there is no more sin or curse... God will destroy the reign of death, corruption and violence when Christ returns to establish his eternal reign of life, justice and peace...'¹³

These three concepts – incarnation, translation and transformation – define a missiological perspective. Spreading the gospel starts with incarnation, the message that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who became flesh to reconcile us with God. It continues with translation of the gospel into other cultures, and transformation, the impact of the conversion to Jesus Christ on our personal lives, churches, societies and cultures. These three key words are used as tools to reflect on the Eastern European churches' responses to Roma people, not with the aim of judging, but rather of analyzing, comparing and evaluating what is going on!

Knowledge about these responses and about what is going on in Roma (Christian) communities is still very limited, and often dominated by stereotyped images. Therefore, safe spaces are needed in which processes

⁹ Gornik, 'Profiles'.

¹⁰ See Walls' excellent article: Andrew F. Walls, 'Converts or Proselytes? The Crisis over Conversion in the Early Church', in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 28 (2004).

¹¹ Gornik, 'Profiles'.

¹² Gornik, 'Profiles'.

¹³ *The Cape Town Commitment*, I.10.

of listening, asking questions for clarification and learning, could be initiated, in an open and humble attitude. Such conversations should include expressing mutual fear and asking for forgiveness for what has been done wrong or what is left undone.

A Historical Point of Departure

In understanding the Eastern European Churches' responses to the Roma from a historical perspective, Klaus-Michael Bogdal's much-discussed study *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner* (Europe Invents Gypsies) serves to find a historical point of departure.¹⁴ He tells the compelling story of how, during the 600 years Roma have been in Europe, they have been perceived as 'threatening'. Based on a thorough and careful analysis of literature from the Middle Ages till our own day, it provides an insightful historical overview of the reality of the Roma over the ages.¹⁵ His conclusion is that the history of Roma people is a history of stereotypes, images, and behavioural patterns and legends – a history of 'inventions', not of realities, in which 'repeatedly exterminatory fantasies turned into exterminatory practices'.¹⁶ Throughout history, the mere existence of the Roma was considered as an omnipresent threat. The fear is fed by the image that these incomprehensible strangers form a deadly threat.¹⁷ Experience with individuals does not play any part. This threat requires a distance, exclusion. But this is not a solution; it only increases the distance. This image needed to be reinforced and repeated continuously, with refined variations and adaptations. That has happened – according to Bogdal – during the past six centuries.

This created image reinforces the certainty that is contrary to any experience, that co-existence with the Roma is totally impossible and is always linked with incalculable risks and disadvantages for the majority population. Whereas the first conclusion is related to a highly emotional threat, this second one is supported by seemingly rational considerations, related to the completely different lifestyle of the Roma. These thoughts seem to show that the attitude of distancing and exclusion is right. Because these reflections are untruthful and misleading, no trust can be built between the Roma and the majority population.

¹⁴ Marcus End, 'Antigypsyism in the German Public Sphere: Strategies and Mechanisms of Media Communication (Heidelberg, Germany: Dokumentations und Kulturzentrum. Deutscher Sinti und Roma, 2015), 33: www.sintiundroma.de/fileadmin/dokumente/publikationen/extern/2015KurzfassungStudieMarkusEndAntiziganismusEnglisch.pdf (accessed 29th February 2016).

¹⁵ Klaus-Michael Bogdal, *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner: Eine Geschichte Von Faszination Und Verachtung* (1. Aufl. ed.; Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011). See also 'Europe Invents the Gypsies: The Dark Side of Modernity', in *Eurozine*, 24 (February 2012): www.eurozine.com/articles/2012-02-24-bogdal-en.html.

¹⁶ Bogdal, *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner*. Ibid., 'Europe Invents the Gypsies', 2.

¹⁷ Bogdal, *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner*, 480.

The development of European civilization can be measured in literature by the way it views the Roma people. The 'worth' accounted to the Roma decreases, because they do not keep pace with this development in European civilization.¹⁸ Therefore the 'gypsies' are not really perceived as part of the European peoples. Rather, the greatest differences are emphasized and not the common features, not even the smallest common denominator. Unfortunately, these existing stereotypes of the Roma are not corrected, but live on till today. Europe still 'invents' gypsies! The Roma continue to be considered as scapegoats.¹⁹

Bogdal points to the 'interpretative power of science' as the root of Europe 'inventing' gypsies. For the philanthropic reformers in the eighteenth century, the Roma (Gypsies) 'did not pass the test of civilization', as they were seen as 'incapable of development' and placed 'at the bottom of their ethnic hierarchy'.²⁰ Bogdal comes to the stunning conclusion that 'not "knowledge" about the Gypsies made the Holocaust seem necessary but, the fact that after 1933 there was a power capable of imposing a particular "knowledge" on all areas of life'.²¹ He believes that the history of the Roma in Central and Eastern Europe in the twentieth century can be summarized as one of terrible suffering. Bogdal's shocking conclusion: 'In historical reality, these imaginary representations culminated in genocide'.²²

It is against this background of perpetuating 'fantasy' exclusion that we need to interpret the responses of the Eastern European churches to the Roma. Europe 'invents' the Roma, and thus sees them, not in reality, but as a stereotyped image created and repeated over the centuries. This created image still defines an attitude of exclusion held by millions of Europeans.

¹⁸ Bogdal, *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner*, 481-82.

¹⁹ Bogdal, *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner*, 482.

²⁰ In the nineteenth century, trivial Gypsy romanticism, emphasizing the images of the 'Hungarian fiddler and the Andalusian flamenco dancer', continued to give a 'distorted reflection of reality'. European Ethnology in the nineteenth century changed the Roma from a 'people' to a 'tribe', 'a pre-civilizational people... incapable of development'. In order to maintain the self-image of Europe as the heart of civilization, the Roma continued to be measured by 'one's own, supposedly more valuable, degree of civilisation'. Bogdal observes that it was ethnology that 'created' the Gypsies as a 'marginal people on the peripheries of European high culture'. He concludes that both Enlightenment anthropology and European Ethnology led to the de-Europeanization of the Roma. 'It presented the body, thought and behaviour of the Roma in such a way that their otherness again acquired threatening contours. There was no space within Europe for them. Ethnic cleansing always begins on paper.' In the first half of the twentieth century, the image of the Gypsies of a 'criminal band of swindlers, thieves and infant abductors', that had been established over nearly six hundred years, was not dispelled by racial theories, but rather redefined and intensified. This happened especially in Germany. As an entire ethnic group, they were characterized as 'antisocial', 'socially deviant' and 'work-shy'. These views were used to justify the mass murder of the Roma in World War II.

²¹ Bogdal, 'Europe Invents the Gypsies', 8.

²² Bogdal, 'Europe Invents the Gypsies', 8.

The Limitations of Paper

Mapping the Eastern European churches' responses to Roma people is an impossible task. This is, first, because the 'Eastern European churches' are a mixture of 'traditional' churches that have existed for ages, with many 'new' churches planted after 1989. Secondly, because 'off the radar' and also on the periphery, many local, often independent, initiatives are taking place, with the sacrificial commitment of many a lonely worker. Not much has been published about these initiatives. The complexity of mapping the Eastern European churches' responses to the Roma people is increased by language barriers.

Numerous studies have been published on the Roma (Gypsies) from an anthropological, sociological, ethnological, human rights and human development perspective.²³ The Roman Catholic Romologist Gernot Haupt observed in 2009 that few studies dealt with the Roma people from a religious perspective, as this element has been completely left out of the planning and implementation of charity programmes. At the same time, according to Haupt, it is this religious element that has had a decisive influence on the effectiveness and success of the projects.²⁴ More and more studies also now focus on the churches as a 'religious phenomenon' and their impact on Roma communities.²⁵ Still, a theological, missiological perspective is missing. Only recently (2009), a ground-breaking study was published on the Gypsy Pentecostal movement in Bulgaria by Miroslav Atanasov.²⁶

²³ Some of the more recent ones: David Thurfjell and Adrian Marsh, *Romani Pentecostalism: Gypsies and Charismatic Christianity* (Frankfurt, Germany: Peter Lang, 2014); Katharine Quarmby, 'Romani Pilgrims: Europe's New Moral Force', Newsweek Limited: www.mylibrary.com?id=662195; David Thurfjell, *Faith and Revivalism in a Nordic Romani Community: Pentecostalism Amongst the Kaale Roma of Sweden and Finland* (Library of Modern Religion: London / New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013); Morton Kjaerum, 'Ending Roma Discrimination in Europe: Yearning to Breath Free', in *The European Magazine* (2012): <http://theeuropean-magazine.com/529-kjaerum-morten/530-ending-roma-discrimination-in-europe>; Michael Stewart and Márton Rövid, *Multi-Disciplinary Approaches to Romany Studies* (Budapest / New York: Central European University Press, 2011); Tatiana Podolinská and Tomáš Hrustič, *Religion as a Path to Change: The Possibility of Social Inclusion of the Roma in Slovakia* (Bratislava: Institute of Ethnology, 2011): www.uet.sav.sk/files/religion_as_a_path_to_change.pdf; Laszlo Foszto, *Ritual Revitalisation after Socialism: Community, Personhood, and Conversion among Roma in a Transylvanian Village* (Halle Studies in the Anthropology of Eurasia), (Münster, Germany / Piscataway, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009); Peter Vermeersch, *The Romani Movement: Minority Politics and Ethnic Mobilization in Contemporary Central Europe* (Studies in Ethnopolitics), (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

²⁴ Gernot Haupt, *Antiziganismus und Religion: Elemente Einer Theologie der Roma-Befreiung* (Vienna: Lit Verlag, 2009), 30.

²⁵ E.g. Bogdal, *Europa Erfindet Die Zigeuner*; Foszto, *Ritual Revitalisation after Socialism*; Thurfjell and Marsh, *Romani Pentecostalism*; Thurfjell, *Faith and Revivalism in a Nordic Romani Community*.

²⁶ Miroslav A. Atanasov, 'Gypsy Pentecostals: The Growth of the Pentecostal Movement among the Roma in Bulgaria and Its Revitalization of Their Communities' (PhD dissertation, Asbury Theological Seminary, 2008); *Ibid.*, *Gypsy Pentecostals: The Growth of the*

Four Responses of Eastern European Churches

In the following part, I will deal with four responses of (Eastern) European churches with a bird's-eye view. Following an analysis of common/ecumenical documents of churches that belong to the Conference of European Churches (CEC), I will deal with some single cases of the Baptist and the Pentecostal Churches, and fourthly with the response of the Roman Catholic Church. The response of the Orthodox Church is included in the first category as they belong to the CEC. At this stage in research, it is not possible to give a more in-depth insight in and overview of how, at a local level, churches of the various Christian traditions are engaging with the Roma communities.

Miroslav Atanasov reminds us that the historical relationship between the Roma and Christianity is remarkable. Although the Roma have lived among Christians for centuries, they have always been marginalized and overlooked by them.²⁷ It is striking that the Roma 'issue' was only recently put on the agenda of the EU. In preparation for EU enlargement in 2004, many in the western part of Europe feared a massive East-West migration of poor Eastern Europeans, considered as a dangerous wildfire in Europe's back garden. Many (Eastern) European churches too have started to address the so-called 'Roma question'.

The Conference of European Churches (CEC)

The CEC, a major church body in Europe of which many Eastern European churches are members, organized a major conference on Roma in 2001 entitled *Living in Community, Equal Opportunities and Overcoming Discrimination*. With regard to making *Living in Community* possible, churches are reminded that they have been part of the history of the Roma, as the Roma have had to face neglect, harassment, persecution and murder. For true dialogue to be possible, European peoples, including the churches and councils of churches, 'need to recognize what they/we did to wrong the Roma in the past... and express their repentance for wrongs in the past'.²⁸ In many countries, churches have excluded Roma from their church services, refused them sacraments, marriage and burial services/rituals. It is also recommended that the churches become actively involved in the empowerment of Roma.²⁹ Therefore, churches are encouraged to call upon

Pentecostal Movement among the Roma in Bulgaria and Its Revitalization of Their Communities (The Study of World Christian Revitalization Movements in Pentecostal/Charismatic Studies), (Lexington, KY: Emeth Press, 2010).

²⁷ Atanasov, 'Gypsy Pentecostals', 98.

²⁸ The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, Conference of European Churches, 'Recommendations for Churches' Contributions to Living in Community, Equal Opportunities and Overcoming Discrimination' (paper presented at Living in Community – Towards Equal Opportunities and Overcoming Discrimination. The Situation of Roma in Central and Eastern Europe, Bratislava, 2nd-6th May 2001), 1-2.

²⁹ The Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe, 1-2.

governments and authorities who have the obligation to protect their national minorities. They are especially reminded of the importance of diaconal work, to improve social conditions. The role of the churches is seen rather as lobbying authorities to provide resources and to request the European Commission to do more to overcome prejudice, but their activities should not replace the obligation of national and local government.³⁰ The churches do express a general commitment to building a human community ‘based on justice, equal human rights and equal opportunities’. They envisage a community free from fear and racism.³¹ Whether the churches have a specific task apart from lobbying the EU, is not clear. So far, this has been the response of the CEC in 2001.

One decade later, the Roma issue is again on the agenda of the CEC. The European churches draft a proposal for an ‘ecumenical contribution of European churches’ to the EU framework of national Roma integration.³² The official document of the EU summarizing the EU strategy till 2020 focuses on anti-discrimination.³³ The reason seems to be mainly economic. It would require a change of mindsets of both communities, of the majority society as well as of members of the Roma communities.³⁴ European churches and diaconal organizations commit themselves to contribute to the successful implementation of the EU framework, both at a national and at a European level. They are willing to act as ‘relevant actors in advocacy and grassroots work with Roma communities’,³⁵ based on the ‘Christian conviction that every person is created in the image of God and shares equal rights and dignity as a human being’.³⁶

The churches and Eurodiaconia³⁷ recommend participation of the Roma, and are ready to co-operate with all those that consider the needs of people ‘in a holistic manner’.³⁸ It is not clearly defined what this ‘holistic manner’

³⁰ The Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe, 1-2.

³¹ The Churches’ Commission for Migrants in Europe, 5.

³² Eurodiaconia, ‘An Ecumenical Contribution of European Churches and Diaconal Organisations to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies’ (paper presented at the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies Consultation – MRE (Reformed Church in Hungary) Synod Office, 2011).

³³ ‘Member States are responsible that Roma are not discriminated against, but treated like any other EU citizens, with equal access to all fundamental rights as enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights’. Quoted from European Commission, ‘Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. An EU Framework for the National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020’ (Brussels: EU, 2012).

³⁴ ‘An EU Framework for the National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020’, 1. The first version read: ‘Integrating the Roma people will not only bring social benefits, but will also economically benefit both Roma people as well as the communities they are part of.’

³⁵ Eurodiaconia, ‘An Ecumenical Contribution of European Churches and Diaconal Organisations to the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies’ (paper presented at the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies Consultation – Mre Synod Office), 1.

³⁶ Eurodiaconia, ‘An Ecumenical Contribution’, 1.

³⁷ See online at: <<https://www.eurodiaconia.org/hu/>>, accessed on: 3 February 2017.

³⁸ Eurodiaconia, ‘An Ecumenical Contribution’, 1.

entails, neither what the specific input of the churches is.³⁹ Thus, in general, it seems that the EU is considered as the major agency responsible for implementing Roma integration strategies and the churches assist it in doing so.

As we focus our attention on Hungary as a case study, it is remarkable that Hungarian strategy for social inclusion 2011-2020, issued by the Hungarian authorities, is much more specific on the role of the churches.⁴⁰ The contribution of 'pastoral and missionary activities' is emphasized, because the 'intensive motivation' of the members of the Christian communities does have a unique impact on members of the Roma communities.⁴¹ Also it is stressed that churches and other communities reach members of Roma communities with their missionary activities.⁴² The importance of close co-operation with the Roma community and the churches is emphasized, as it may contribute to a change in the attitude and mindset of the majority society.⁴³ The remarkable fact is that it is the *government* which expects churches to assist them in dealing with the Roma issues according to their particular way of dealing with the matter. Hungarian churches focus especially on implementing diaconal aid, as well as on education in providing student housing and related community living to Roma high school and university students. They established a Christian network for student housing (*Keresztyén Roma szakkollégiumi hálózat*), consisting of five student houses.⁴⁴ In 2013, the Reformed Church of Hungary issued a strategic document on Roma mission called 'Reconciliation, Health and Hope'.⁴⁵ So the Hungarian government explicitly emphasizes the unique role of the churches. It seems they almost exceeded the primary economic objective of the framework. A very promising recent development is an initiative of the Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal and Reformed leaders of ministries among the

³⁹ It is stated, in general, that church-related organizations and local congregations can play an important role in 'bridging communities and providing for such discussions and community dialogue'. Eurodiaconia, 'An Ecumenical Contribution', 1.

⁴⁰ 'National Social Inclusion Strategy – Extreme Poverty, Child Poverty, the Roma (2011-2020)', ed. Ministry of Public Administration and Justice State Secretariat for Social Inclusion (Budapest, 2011).

⁴¹ 'National Social Inclusion Strategy'.

⁴² 'National Social Inclusion Strategy'.

⁴³ The churches could in particular play a mediator's role, which would result in increased inclusion from the side of the majority society. In this strategy document, it is also stated that Christian communities not only serve with their unique 'religious motivation', but also that church projects could help at grassroots level in social, educational and employment initiatives.

⁴⁴ 'Keresztyén Roma Szakkollégiumi Hálózat': <http://krszh.hu>

⁴⁵ Reformed Church in Hungary, 'Reconciliation – Health – Hope: Concept of the Reformed Church in Hungary's Ministry among Roma. Working Paper' (2011): www.reformatus.hu/data/documents/2013/10/25/Concept_of_Roma_Ministry_of_RCH_full_text_working_paper_fin.pdf. An elaborate vision is stated of what should happen; however, the particular targets are rather broad and at this stage still lack a specific action plan of how to accomplish these targets.

Roma to strengthen co-operation, because of their common faith and similar thinking. Their common mission statement closes with the words: 'We believe that salvation based on faith in Christ is the solution also in the life of the Roma.'⁴⁶ However, the question remains as to how the Hungarian churches will use this unique opportunity as they also face the huge challenge of reaching out to the large nominal fringe of their church membership, like many Eastern European churches.

The European Baptist Federation

The second Eastern European church 'family' is the European Baptist Federation. Local Baptist churches all over Eastern Europe are responding to the Roma people, sometimes co-ordinated at a national level. The EBF's purpose is 'to seek in all its endeavours to fulfil the will of Jesus Christ, Lord and Saviour'.⁴⁷ In their mission and evangelism work, the focus is on evangelism and church planting.⁴⁸

A unique project of the European Baptist Federation is the Anti-Trafficking Network, established ten years ago. Human trafficking is defined as the illegal trade of human beings, mainly for the purposes of forced labour and sex trafficking. Unfortunately, Roma have been portrayed as perpetrators of trafficking, but more often as victims. Many people are trafficked from Eastern Europe with a Roma background.⁴⁹

The Ruth School in Bucharest is a remarkable educational initiative with related ministries. It was established in 1992, when an American missionary challenged the local Baptist pastor, Pastor Oti, about what was going on among Roma children on the streets of Bucharest. It started as a Sunday School, and was extended into a day centre. Soon it evolved into a literary class as it was realized that most children could neither read nor write and had never gone to school. As they were close to teenage age, there was no other opportunity in a regular school programme for them to enrol into. The local educational system did not recognize that there was an illiteracy problem. In the meantime, the Ruth School also started to offer a

⁴⁶ 'Közös Küldetésnyilatkozat', in *Tükör* 2014. 'Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mind set as Christ Jesus... (Phil. 2:3-5). In following the example of Christ, co-workers in Roma Mission of Baptist, Lutheran, Methodist, Pentecostal and Reformed churches turn in humility to the Roma people, and encourage all our fellow human people to do so. On the basis of our conviction, stemming from our faith and our experience, we would like to share with them the life-changing gospel message that proclaims to all nations equally the deliverance of a sinful, lost lifestyle. We believe that salvation based on faith in Christ is the solution also in the life of the Roma.'

⁴⁷ <http://ebf.org/about-ebf> (accessed 27th September 2014).

⁴⁸ <http://ebf.org/about-ebf> (accessed 27th September 2014).

⁴⁹ European Roma Rights Center, *Breaking the Silence: Trafficking in Roma Communities* (Budapest: European Roma Rights Center and People in Need, 2011): www.errc.org/cms/upload/file/breaking-the-silence-19-march-2011.pdf

hot meal at school, along with basic medical care as well as hygiene programmes.

The Ruth School is committed ‘to giving education to the marginalized and disadvantaged, particularly those coming from Roma (Gypsy) families in order to help them reach their highest potential. Through education, the Ruth School seeks to assist in the inclusion of Roma in society as well as their future educational endeavours (high school, vocational schools, etc.)’.⁵⁰ Since its establishment, 2,000 students have been educated and taken care of. The Naomi Center, linked with the Project, now offers professional counselling to mainly Roma women, designed to help them better their lives in a way which will affect their entire families.

Project Ruth also provides leadership and biblical training for leaders of Gypsy (Roma) churches through the Gypsy Smith School, or GSS, as it is known for short. Since its initial start in 1997, over 120 Gypsy pastors, missionaries and community leaders have been trained and continue to serve in their churches and communities. The GSS offers week-long courses four times a year, at a level suitable to their needs and relevant to their culture and environment.⁵¹

Gypsy Pentecostalism

The third Eastern European churches’ response is that of the Pentecostal churches.⁵² A book was recently published on *Romani Pentecostalism* by David Thurfjell and Adrian R. Marsh from the perspective of a study of religions.⁵³ The authors seek to give more insight into the ‘multi-faceted and complex phenomenon that Romani Pentecostalism has become and is today’, and to inspire further academic interest and research.⁵⁴ This study serves as an important starting-point for future theological and missiological research! Pentecostal revivals are mentioned in a number of missionaries’ blogs and newsletters. Although we know that such newsletters tend to emphasize the ‘successes’ and not the downfalls, it should be our priority to map and study how God’s Spirit is moving among the Roma.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ http://projecttruth.ro/uk/ruth_school.htm (accessed 23rd September 2014).

⁵¹ http://projecttruth.ro/uk/other_programs.htm (accessed 23rd September 2014).

⁵² As far as I know, there is no common statement of the Pentecostal European Fellowship, a ‘network of 55 Pentecostal movements across Europe working together, with a vision to reach Europe with the Good News of the Gospel, through mutual prayer and co-operation’. Many Pentecostal mission organizations are working among the Roma. It is impossible to deal with each one of them in this presentation.

⁵³ Thurfjell and Marsh, *Romani Pentecostalism*, 7.

⁵⁴ Thurfjell and Marsh, *Romani Pentecostalism*, 7.

⁵⁵ We read of a revival in the eastern part of Slovakia: Jim Sabelle, AGWM area director for Central Southeast Europe shares: ‘But suddenly, in the midst of this misery, the Spirit of God has swept into the Roma community of eastern Slovakia. An awakening – unprecedented and unabated – is sweeping from village to village, gaining momentum as it goes... I have never, ever seen anything like it. No one can take credit for starting it,’ he says emphatically. ‘Christ

One example is offered by Miroslav A. Atanasov in his dissertation. He engages in such a mapping of Gypsy Pentecostal churches in Bulgaria by ‘building the case for Roma revitalization as a result of the Christian faith’.⁵⁶ Initially, the complex indigenous Roma Pentecostal movement was started under the guidance and support of ethnic Bulgarian evangelical leaders, but the main responsibility has now largely been transferred to the Roma.⁵⁷ The more the church is led by Roma, the more indigenous it becomes.⁵⁸ Atanasov deals with specific examples of community revitalization,⁵⁹ like the impact on Roma family life. Roma traditions were revitalized according to biblical standards in a process of discernment: ‘Being mostly younger believers, the Roma have needed and relied on that *gajo* guidance and leadership. As they mature in the faith, however, the Roma are developing their own processes of internal dialogue to decide on what to do with these practices. Some of them are rejected, some accepted, and others modified. While Roma Christians mostly agree on the handling of certain practices, there is also some variation and disagreement among them in regard to others. Fortune-telling, stealing and trickery, for example, are unanimously rejected as pagan and unacceptable’.⁶⁰ This response is ‘the work and vision of the Roma pastors who feel the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to bring about community transformation through reconstitutive discourse’.⁶¹

Whereas the Bulgarian Gypsy Pentecostal movement is indigenous in nature, many other Gypsy Pentecostal communities in Eastern Europe have their roots in the Pentecostal revival among Roma that started in 1950s in France⁶² through the ministry of Clément Le Cossec.⁶³ The scope of this chapter does not allow for an extensive treatment of this remarkable revival movement that also influenced Eastern Europe. Le Cossec established

the King has gone into the highways and byways, inviting whosoever will to come to his table. And the Roma are coming in droves.’ Krisztel Ortiz, ‘Gypsy Awakening’, in *Pentecostal Evangel*, 2013. See also Thurffjell, *Faith and Revivalism in a Nordic Romani Community*.

⁵⁶ Atanasov, ‘Gypsy Pentecostals’, 232.

⁵⁷ Atanasov, ‘Gypsy Pentecostals’, 220.

⁵⁸ Atanasov, ‘Gypsy Pentecostals’, 230.

⁵⁹ Atanasov, ‘Gypsy Pentecostals’, 234-56.

⁶⁰ Atanasov, ‘Gypsy Pentecostals’, 257.

⁶¹ Atanasov, ‘Gypsy Pentecostals’, 273.

⁶² In September 2010, the *Christian Science Monitor* had the headline: ‘In France, an evangelical Gypsy group shakes up the immigration debate.’ At the same time as the collective expulsions of Roma out of France back to Romania in August, 26,000 evangelical Gypsies gathered in the heart of France to sing, give testimonies and read the Bible. ‘The Gypsy stereotypes are no longer valid.’ According to recent statistics, out of the 425,000 French Gypsies, 145,000 joined the evangelical movement. Robert Marquand, ‘Gypsies Leave France amid Crackdown on Illegals’, in *Christian Science Monitor*, 2010. Other sources mention 200,000 out of the 500,000. Trevor Persaud, ‘Christianity Thrives among “Gypsies” despite Prejudice. Roma Revival: Missionary Efforts Continue to Succeed’, in *Christianity Today*, 54.11 (2010).

⁶³ The periodical *Lumière du monde* (1947-1960), *Vie et Lumière* (1961-1995), reports on the ministry of this movement all over the world, including Eastern Europe.

several organizations, of which the most important is *Vie et Lumière*, to which about 200 Roma churches belong. Since 1994, this organization has operated a Roma Bible School in Gyönk, Hungary, \also in Moscow and even one in Bangalore, India.⁶⁴ Le Cossec also established the *Centre Missionnaire Évangélique de Rom International* (CMERI). Marie Bidet,⁶⁵ a French Romologist, characterizes these Gypsies in her doctoral thesis thus: ‘They are serious, respectable: they vote, they don’t want to burn cars, they want everyone living in peace. That’s the opposite from their traditional image... it can be emphasized that they succeed in their approach.’⁶⁶ A sub-organization is GATIEF, Gypsies and Travellers International Evangelical Fellowship, led by René Zanellato, working in more than forty countries.⁶⁷ The movement can be characterized with three main objectives: 1. Evangelism, 2. Training of co-workers and 3. Establishing churches.⁶⁸ In the middle of the 1990s, Le Cossec counted 6,000 Gypsy preachers all over Europe. The evangelical Gypsy movement spread out of France over the whole world. Currently, more than two million believers in 44 countries belong to this movement. Marc Bordigone, an anthropologist of Provence University, describes the work of Le Cossec: ‘Le Cossec’s approach paradoxically enabled Gypsies to keep their identity through a faith, Christianity, that asserts what he calls a universal character.’⁶⁹

Le Cossec describes his ministry as: ‘Not for a minute was it a question of lecturing them with morals, telling them they should not drink, lie, steal or ‘soothsay’ any more. I knew that, by receiving the message of Christ, everything in their lives would change.’⁷⁰ Thomas Acton emphasizes that the movement does not teach its converts to be ‘ashamed of being Romani; on the contrary, it tells them that they can be better Gypsies for being Christian – and better Christians for being Gypsies – for, unlike the poor non-Gypsies who are tied down to one place by their houses, the Gypsy can carry on his witness for Christ wherever he wanders.’⁷¹

Le Cossec is clear about the holistic scope of the ‘Gypsy evangelical Mission’:

We first have to preach Christ, according to the apostle’s formula. It has always been a priority for me... We do not lose sight of the fact that our first goal is to speak of Christ, the living bread come down from heaven. We have to understand that there is no possible salvation for man apart from Jesus

⁶⁴ www.nyest.hu/hirek/elet-es-feny-a-tolnai-hegyhaton-teritok-a-cigany-apostol-nyomaban

⁶⁵ See also Frank Dawson, ‘Christian Outreach to Romany in Central Europe and Russia’, in *East-West Church Ministry Report*, 10.3 (2002): www.eastwestreport.org/issues/articles-1993-2005/93-vol-10-no-3-summer-2002. See also Atanasov, ‘Gypsy Pentecostals’.

⁶⁶ Marquand, ‘Gypsies Leave France amid Crackdown on Illegals’, 2.

⁶⁷ www.romanomissio.fi/zanelatto.htm (accessed 27th September 2014).

⁶⁸ *Vie et Lumière Inde*, 148.3 (1995).

⁶⁹ Marquand, ‘Gypsies Leave France amid Crackdown on Illegals’, 2.

⁷⁰ Farid Djilani-Sergy, ‘Clément Le Cossec: Un Serviteur de Dieu qui a Marqué Son Siècle’, (1996) www.paroles.ch (Radio Réveil).

⁷¹ Thomas Acton, ‘The Gypsy Evangelical Church’, in *The Ecumenical Review*, 31.3 (1979), 291, cited in Atanasov, ‘Gypsy Pentecostals’, 220.

Christ. He has come to earth, he has lived as a poor man, he has brought the good news of salvation by grace... If we do not ourselves have the experience of conversion, how could we communicate to others the spiritual realities the gospel supports and the testimony which goes with it? It is essential to assure the doctrinal bases to a true life of faith.⁷²

The Roman Catholic Church

In 1965, a group of about 2,000 Gypsies arrived from all over Europe on a pilgrimage to Rome. Their goal was to ask the Pope for official protection of their nomadic way of life. Gernot Haupt reminds us⁷³ that there is one sentence that has been quoted in every document since: 'You are not at the margins of the church, you are – in a certain sense – in the centre; you are at the heart of the church.' A few years later, Pope Paul VI established the *Pontificia Commissio de Spirituali Migratorum atque Itinerantium Cura* (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People). The purpose of the Council was to study 'people on the move', evangelize them, and provide them with appropriate spiritual shepherding. Under the auspices of this Council was the Department of Pastoral Care for Gypsies, which organized several world congresses.⁷⁴ A first Pastoral Letter for Nomadic people in 1999 warns of the dangers of sects that push them to abandon the church and lose their faith. Therefore, religious education is needed.⁷⁵ The document calls our attention to the positive characteristics of the Gypsy world, 'such as fraternal and generous hospitality, a deep sense

⁷² Djilani-Sergy, 'Clément Le Cossec'. Le Cossec established a separate organization to deal with the social dimension.

⁷³ Haupt is very critical about this document. Gernot Haupt, 'Discrimination of Roma People', in *Reflection Group of Roma People* (Brussels: COMECE and CCEE, 2011); www.ifsoz.org/content/download/pdf/110301Brussels.pdf, 8-9. It is a quotation taken out of context. The full greeting reads: 'Best greetings to you, eternal pilgrims; to you, voluntary fugitives; to you, who are always on the run... Best greetings to you, who have chosen your little tribe, your caravan, as your separated and secret world; to you, who look at the world with distrust and are looked at with distrust from all; to you who wanted to be foreigners everywhere and for ever...' According to Haupt, this is the original Italian text.

⁷⁴ The Fifth World Congress of the Pastoral Care of Gypsies took place in Budapest in 2003. It is noteworthy that for the first time a considerable group of Gypsies took place: priests, nuns and lay people. Clear theological principles are stated how true communion among people is realized: 'i.) when every human creature is respected as the child and image of God; ii.) if differences between persons are accepted as gifts for all; iii.) when the life of relationships is lived, humbly, along with others, in recognition of the fact that we are all strangers and pilgrims on this Earth; and iv.) if we can offer authentic hospitality to each and every one.' The Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, 'Final Document' (paper presented at the Fifth World Congress of the Pastoral Care for Gypsies, Budapest, Hungary), 30th June-7th July 2003). Practical advice is shared as to the shape of the Pastorate. The Congress recommends that 'ecumenical and inter-religious dialogue be extended to the Gypsy world as well, but deplored the sectarian approach harking back to Pentecostalism' adopted by certain groups, 'professing to be Christian', and 'exhorts Catholic pastoral operators to be aware of this danger'.

⁷⁵ Anthony Chirayath, 'Pastoral Care of Nomadic People: The Church's Response', in *People on the Move*, 81 (1999), 4-5.

of solidarity, strong attachment to the faith, and the religious traditions of their ancestors'.⁷⁶ A few years later, an important document is issued after many years of preparation. The 'Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies' deals, among others, with the issue of how to overcome suspicion, referring to what happened in the past.⁷⁷ This document was announced in the German press under the headline of 'Pope asks Sinti and Roma for forgiveness'.⁷⁸

In June 2014, Pope Francis called attention to the Gypsies in a meeting on 'The Church and Gypsies: To Announce the Gospel in the Peripheries', where he emphasized that Gypsies are one of the groups most vulnerable to new forms of slavery.⁷⁹ Following the example of Jesus Christ, he called for closeness and solidarity with the Roma.

Five Different Paradigms and Their Underlying Images

As we analyze and compare the Eastern European churches' responses among the Roma people, with what is by some perceived as the 'Gypsy problem', we find a variety of models or paradigms. A paradigm is a model or way of doing something that can be copied. Paradigms may exist parallel

⁷⁶ It also emphasizes that the participation of the Gypsies in society should be strengthened: 'It will be necessary to set up structures to guarantee the continuity of the process of furthering Gypsies' participation in society, and of their acceptance characterized by encounter, understanding and respect for their identity, by friendly dialogue and reciprocal help, also material'.

⁷⁷ 'Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies', in *People on the Move*, 100 (April 2006): www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/migrants/pom2006_100-suppl/rc_pc_migrants_pom100-suppl_orientamenti-en.html

⁷⁸ Jan Opiela expresses his disappointment as 'Guidelines' were finally published offering a pastoral theological foundation for the pastoral care of Gypsies. With regard to dealing with the past, Opiela considers it of much more importance, that at the Day of Forgiveness in 2000, the Public Intercession prayer was ministered in the presence of Pope John Paul II by Stephen Fumino Karinal Hamao from Japan, President of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care for Migrants and Itinerant People: 'Let Christians look up to Jesus, who is our Lord and our peace. Give, that they can regret, what they have done wrong in word and deed. Often they have let themselves be led by pride and hatred, by the will to dominate others, by hostility to the adherents of other religions and to those groups in society that are weaker than they, like the migrants and the Gypsies.' The Pope responded in his prayer of forgiveness: 'They have violated the rights of tribes and people, and scorned their cultures and religious traditions: Extend us your patience and your mercy! Forgive us! Therefore, we pray you, through Christ our Lord.' According to Opiela, it is remarkable that such a prayer is prayed for the sisters and brothers in the faith, since a large percentage of the Roma and Sinti have affinity with Christianity or are baptized into the Catholic Church. It took the Church almost 500 years to express such a confession of guilt, but what is 500 years in view of a history of 2,000 years? Jan Opiela (ed), *Zur Seelsorge Für Sinti Und Roma. 'Orientierungen Für Eine Pastoral Care Zigeuner'*, Die Stellung Der Kirchen Zu Den Deutschen Sinti Und Roma (Marburg, Germany: I-Verb.de, 2008), 91-92. Solms expresses his hope that the German Catholic Church will one day join this confession of guilt. *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷⁹ Pope Francis, 'Address', in Meeting of the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People: The Church and Gypsies: To Announce the Gospel in the Peripheries (Clementile Hall: Vatican News, 2014).

with each other, and they also can overlap. Paradigms help us to understand what we are doing and why. Paradigms are based on images. Various images result in various paradigms, in various formats. Bogdal's conclusion, that most of the images of the Roma are not based on reality but are inventions, should motivate us to search for that which is real. Stereotypes and negative labels have considerable impact on the way we relate to each other and are closely related with our responses. We respond in a certain way on the basis of how we view someone, what image we have. There are also multiple images of how the Roma identify themselves. The following paradigms and underlying images can be identified:

The Human Development Paradigm

The first paradigm is the human development paradigm. It has its roots in a document issued in 2001 by the United Nations Development Programme.⁸⁰ It is peculiar that this study, focusing on all Central and Eastern Europe was considered to be a 'representative study', whilst being based on just over 5,000 questionnaires for the whole region. This study became the basis for the policy of the EU in years to come. As we have seen in the case of CEC (and Eurodiaconia), this paradigm has been also adapted for 'strategy building' by numerous churches. It is no surprise that they accepted this human development paradigm, since that has long been a dominant paradigm of the European churches in their mission work in Africa.⁸¹

Characteristic of this paradigm is the image of the 'gypsy' that combines a way of life with low socio-economic and social status (the marginalized one) and is always on the move. The analysis of Klaus-Michael Bogdal revealed that these are created images of the Roma which have been dominant in European society for six centuries.

Although criticized, the image of Roma as nomads and travellers⁸² still dominates the Roman Catholic Church's response, as its ministry among the Roma is located in the 'Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People', although those who are settled now

⁸⁰ A. Ivanov, *The Roma in Central and Eastern Europe: Avoiding the Dependency Trap: A Regional Human Development Report* (Bratislava: United Nations Development Programme, 2002): www.ircwash.org/resources/roma-central-and-eastern-europe-avoiding-dependency-trap-regional-human-development-report. It is based on 5,034 questionnaires from all over Central and Eastern Europe, and allegedly considered to be 'representative', 1.

⁸¹ A well-known African missiologist described the nineteenth and twentieth-century missionary enterprise of the European churches in Africa as being part of a benevolent western movement to elevate the condition of African peoples, according to which Christianity was spread with a western cultural package. The aim was to help the poor Africans become more civilized, to develop a lifestyle similar to the western way of life, since that was considered the best. Like many African people, they viewed the Roma as poor, deprived, and thus in need of 'development', in need of 'western civilization'. The question, of course, is whether the western way of living is indeed the best.

⁸² The term 'traveller' is used in the UK to refer to the Roma (Gypsy).

comprise 90% of all Roma.⁸³ This image is theologically related to the self-image of the Catholic Church as pilgrims. Therefore, the Roma serve the Church as an eternal *homo viator*: ‘They live in such a special way, as in fact the whole Church should live.’⁸⁴

Gernot Haupt states that exclusion has led to a situation that the history of the Roma is characterized by a ‘constant being on the road. When the Christian majority society in Europe had shown hospitality to the Roma and had taken them up, in their midst and in their heart... then this permanent flight would not have been necessary’.⁸⁵ British Romologist David Mayall concludes that the images of this category are almost always negative, ‘creating a sense of conflict, mistrust and antagonism’.⁸⁶ Roma scholar Thomas Acton severely criticizes this human development approach as it is based on an incorrect image of the Roma, exclusively focusing on the social image of poverty and not addressing the key issue of exclusion.⁸⁷

So this approach is reductionist in that it focuses on alleviating one aspect of the ‘problem’, poverty, but does not deal with its roots: the walls of exclusion. It does not address the majority society’s attitude of anti-gypsyism.

From a missiological perspective, it is also reductionist. When we evaluate this paradigm from our missiological point of departure, it seeks to bring about transformation, but there is no translation of the gospel, while the incarnational aspect is missing altogether.

Chris Wright’s focus on integral mission, emphasizing that, in God’s mission, compassion and justice are closely related,⁸⁸ could help to overcome these reductions. The Old Testament perspective to care for the poor and the marginalized saturates the mind of Jesus.⁸⁹ As in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus commands his disciples to ‘Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven’. (Matt. 5:14-16), He emphasizes ‘see your good deeds’, and speaks of lives that are attractive by being filled with goodness, mercy, love,

⁸³ Therefore, there is a shift of focus from special pastoral care to pastoral care in the parishes! A holistic approach is defined as evangelism and social action hand-in-hand. Wilhelm Solms, *Konzept Der Katholischen Zigeunerseelsorge in Deutschland* (ed), Udo Engbring-Romang and Gesellschaft für Antiziganismusforschung, *Die Stellung Der Kirchen Zu Den Deutschen Sinti Und Roma* (Marburg, Germany: I-Verb.de, 2008). *Ibid.*, 106.

⁸⁴ Haupt, *Antiziganismus und Religion*, 174.

⁸⁵ Haupt, *Antiziganismus und Religion*, 174.

⁸⁶ David Mayall, *Gypsy Identities, 1500-2000: From Egipcians and Moon-Men to the Ethnic Romany* (London / New York: Routledge, 2004), 5-8.

⁸⁷ Thomas Acton, ‘Romani Politics, Scholarship, and the Discourse of Nation-Building’, in Adrian Marsh and Elin Strand (eds), *Gypsies and the Problem of Identities: Contextual, Constructed and Contested* (Transactions of the Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul: Istanbul: 2006).

⁸⁸ Chris Wright, ‘Integral Mission and the Great Commission: “The Five Marks of Mission”’, in *Public Lecture* (2013): www.loimission.net/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Chris-Wright-IntegralMissionandtheGreatCommission.pdf, 11-15.

⁸⁹ Wright, ‘Integral Mission and the Great Commission’, 12.

compassion and justice. After a decade of human development approach, a general consensus occurs that money used to ‘solve poverty’ is not a solution to this ‘problem’, as it also has an adverse effect. The projects aimed at the Roma community created new walls of division (and jealousy) with the majority society, rather than serving the purpose of bringing the Roma up to an economic standard of living to prevent them moving *en masse* to Western Europe.⁹⁰

The Human Rights Paradigm

The second paradigm, the human rights paradigm, emphasizes the importance of equal rights and equal opportunities for the Roma. The Eastern European mainline churches rightly emphasize the importance of equal opportunities, as they adopt EU strategy. However, this paradigm operates on a legal framework of thought, and not within a theological framework. The EU framework for Roma inclusion as adopted in 2011 includes this approach. The image behind this paradigm is similar to that which is behind the human development paradigm, that of the impoverished gypsy, without rights.

Evaluating the human rights paradigm from a missiological perspective, we observe the same reduction as with the human development paradigm: it seeks to bring about transformation, but the translation and incarnational element is missing altogether. As in the human development paradigm, it is important to note that focusing on compassion and social justice is part of God’s mission in serving society, but it cannot be separated from evangelism as the central element of God’s mission. Evangelism flows from the message of the incarnation of Christ, and is part of the process of translating the gospel and embodying Christ in other cultures.

Neither can the human development paradigm nor the human rights paradigm ever be the only focus, as they often focus only on the Roma and do not deal with their massive exclusion in the majority society.

The Anti-Gypsyism or Discrimination Paradigm

The third paradigm is the anti-gypsyism or discrimination paradigm. In the thorough literature analysis of Klaus-Michael Bogdal of the general ‘atmosphere’ in Europe – including Eastern Europe – regarding the Roma people over the centuries, it is clear that anti-gypsyism has been and is clearly still present in Europe. This paradigm is openly referred to in the mainline churches and Eurodiaconia network documents. There is almost unanimous agreement that discriminating attitudes prevent the Roma from having access to education, employment, housing, etc.

⁹⁰ Cf. Larry Beman (17th July 2013), *The Roma of Europe* (Kindle location 845-851), (United Methodist Women – Kindle edition).

The images behind this paradigm, related to racism, are negative images of the Roma, and focus only on the attitude of the majority society. In many churches, it is still taboo to speak openly about exclusion. It is a huge theological and missiological challenge to deal theologically with this 'apartheid system'!

From a missiological perspective, transformation is possible only as it is rooted in the incarnation. Overcoming exclusion by the transformation of deep-seated prejudices towards the Roma can flow only out of a clear focus on the message of the incarnation translated into the specific context of reconciliation with God in Christ, and on the implications in everyday life for social reconciliation. Only the Holy Spirit can work out such profound changes. This is possible only when evangelization of both the Roma and the majority society is given its central place in mission.

From a Roman Catholic perspective, Haupt suggests an approach which focuses on mission in Christ's way, by following the healing Christ, and which helps people to get on their feet. Only then do they have the possibility of starting to follow this Saviour voluntarily, and to turn themselves into healing people. So in Haupt's proposal, our three missiological concepts of incarnation, translation and transformation are closely related. Haupt therefore rejects the evangelization method of the Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, because the identity of a Christian or a convert replaces the pure ethnic Roma identity fully – no translation of the gospel takes place – even although it seems from outside that this approach is very successful.⁹¹ He uses the gospel story of the healing of the leper (Mark 1:40-45), in which the leper is touched by Jesus although, in doing so, he is acting contrary to the law of Leviticus 13. A sensible pastoral concept should start by overcoming the anti-gypsy exclusion. Only then do they have the possibility of starting to follow this Saviour voluntarily and of turning themselves into a healing people. Just as the Roma in the Pentecostal churches are being touched by the Holy Spirit, according to Haupt, in the same way they should feel the touch by other Christians in the Spirit of Jesus, whether those Christians are ordained or not. Haupt emphasizes that, in overcoming discrimination, we need to focus on both the Roma themselves and the majority society, the *Gadje*. Haupt emphasizes the importance of the creative and a variety of strategies of inclusion, in which empowerment is a basic principle. The Roma should themselves be put in the position of changing their fate; they should turn into subjects of change, of evangelization, and should not be objects of pastoral care.

From a missiological perspective, we could say that they themselves should be involved in the process of translating the gospel in the Roma culture, as is emphasized by Atanasov: 'The leading human factor in the

⁹¹ Gernot Haupt, 'Der Antiziganismus und Eine Theologie der Roma-Befreiung', in *Jahrestagung des 'Comité Catholique International pour les Tsiganes': Friedensstifter in einer romafeindlichen Umwelt* (Trogir, Croatia: 2008), 198.

revitalization process is the work and vision of the Roma pastors who feel the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in bringing about community transformation through reconstitutive discourse.⁹² Priority should be given to the stimulation of self-organization. Only in this way will the Roma experience that God has seen their distress, and that he turns to them. This turning includes and communicates a spiritual energy and strength, without which any external help provided will remain superficial and without effect. This motivating and healing turning of God can only be experienced through people. Therefore Haupt considers 'the involvement of people in Roma projects much more important than material resources and the pouring out of money'. We should as Christians 'dare to come near'.⁹³

Haupt considers the second target group to be the majority society. This element, according to Haupt, is often forgotten. He states that those involved in Roma ministry should spend at least as much time and energy in missionizing their own congregations and other church-related institutions as on the Roma themselves. Not only is the liberation of the Roma from their misery and exclusion at stake, but also our own liberation from a position of paternalism to an attitude of partnership and brotherhood.⁹⁴

From a Pentecostal perspective, in addressing the future of Pentecostalism in Europe, Raymond Pfister calls for a 'spirituality of reconciliation' to face the challenges of the 'damaging effects of cultural and religious clashes'. With Kirsteen Kim, he emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in reconciliation as the reconciling Spirit that enables a reconciling community. He thus defines the ministry of the Spirit as a ministry of reconciliation. Pfister observes that not enough attention is given to the fact that God's reconciling initiative in Christ is not limited to individual reconciliation, but that it extends to social reconciliation.⁹⁵

Pfister's proposal may offer a relevant new perspective also to the Eastern European churches as they struggle to overcome exclusion in their societies and churches. In his proposal, incarnation, translation and transformation are closely connected.

⁹² Atanasov, 'Gypsy Pentecostals', 273.

⁹³ Haupt, *Antiziganismus und Religion*, 200. Haupt emphasizes the importance of the creative and a variety of strategies of inclusion, in which empowerment is a basic principle. Roma should themselves be put in a position to change their fate; they should turn into subjects of change, and should not be objects of pastoral care. Only in this way will the Roma experience, that God has seen their distress, and that he turns to them.

⁹⁴ Haupt, *Antiziganismus und Religion*, 202.

⁹⁵ Raymond Pfister, 'The Future(s) of Pentecostalism in Europe', in William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer (eds), *European Pentecostalism* (Global Pentecostal and Charismatic Studies), (Boston: Brill, 2011).

The Evangelism Paradigm

A fourth paradigm is the evangelism paradigm. Missiologist David Bosch considers evangelism as one of the crucial elements of mission. Bosch mentions eighteen points as elements of a constructive understanding of evangelism. One of these is of great relevance to the context of Roma mission: 'Evangelism is only possible when the community that evangelizes – the church – is a radiant manifestation of the Christian faith and exhibits an attractive lifestyle'.⁹⁶

Behind this paradigm is the image of seeing people through the eyes of Jesus, with their deepest needs being reconciled with God through Jesus Christ. This paradigm considers the Roma as an ethnic and cultural minority, an image that is now also behind the new EU strategy, and following the EU behind that of many (Eastern) European churches. This paradigm is more prominently present in the responses of the Baptist and Pentecostal churches and is hardly mentioned in the mainline churches' responses.

This fact is probably related to the fact of Europe being a mission continent. In the course of its history, the church has used different ways of spreading the gospel to the ends of earth. Sometimes evangelism was done 'the McDonald's way'.⁹⁷ The three missiological principles of Andrew F. Walls are not materialized. The gospel message of the incarnation of Jesus Christ was communicated faithfully, but with no consideration for its translation into other cultures. In these cases, the gospel message was often considered as irrelevant. No transformation took place. At other times, the church almost forgot about its gospel message, and turned more into a human enterprise or business as it fully accommodated itself to the surrounding culture. It resulted in no incarnation, 'over-translation' and no transformation. In the evangelism paradigm, we face two challenges as it comes to the translation of the gospel. Into what culture should it be translated – the local Roma culture or the majority culture in which they live? And who takes the decisions in this process?

Evangelism linked with social action is often referred to as 'holistic mission'. Chris Wright reminds us of the 'centrality of evangelism' in holistic mission, as a hub is central to a wheel.⁹⁸ Often evangelism is excluded or considered as one option among many, which turns mission into a business, into an anthropocentric enterprise. Evangelism is closely linked with the translation of the gospel into other cultures, but also with transformation. He emphasizes that evangelism leads to 'obedience to Christ, incorporation into his Church and responsible service in the

⁹⁶ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in the Theology of Mission* (American Society of Missiology Series, 16), (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 414.

⁹⁷ John Drane, 'Resisting McDonaldization', in Viggo Mortenson and Andreas Osterlund Nielsen (eds), *Walk Humbly with the Lord: Church and Mission Engaging Plurality* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

⁹⁸ Wright, 'Integral Mission and the Great Commission', 7-8.

world... The salvation we proclaim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities. Faith without works is dead'.⁹⁹

Chris Wright also emphasizes the close relationship between evangelism and teaching, in building the church. Teaching, in all its forms, is an intrinsic part of mission, including theological education. It is not an extra.¹⁰⁰ Atanasov also emphasizes teaching. He states that 'while Roma churches have been strong on evangelism... their discipleship has been less effective'.¹⁰¹ It is effective discipleship that will strengthen the faith of the Roma, but it will also inevitably move them towards social transformation.¹⁰² Teaching is also important for the majority society churches, to include themes relevant for ministry among the Roma in the curricula of theological education and to focus on the missionary education of local congregations and the importance of social reconciliation.¹⁰³ This brings us to the fifth and last paradigm: the paternalistic paradigm.

The Paternalistic Paradigm

The fifth paradigm is the paternalistic paradigm. This paradigm can best be characterized as a 'we' versus 'them' paradigm, instead of an 'us' paradigm, or even a 'them' versus 'us' paradigm. What can we learn from the Roma people? Fear plays an important role in this paradigm. It is similar to the deep-seated fear in European society towards the Roma that Bogdal observes, based on widespread 'invented' images and the lack of knowledge of their daily reality. Bogdal describes how European society has tried for centuries to bring the Roma up to the same level as the 'civilized' majority society, to assimilate to Eastern European culture. Power and control are used to overcome fear of the perceived threat of the Roma, but the Roma resisted and still resist. They cling to their own ethnicity, and stick to their own cultural expressions, or what is left of it. The problems remain or even grow worse as 'we' take responsibility for 'their' behaviour and attitudes.

In the Eastern European 'majority' churches' responses, a similar spirit of hanging on to power and trying to keep control can be detected. At best, there is an attitude of not knowing how to involve them, and how to release responsibility. Often this is clothed in a different form. It could be

⁹⁹ Wright, 'Integral Mission and the Great Commission', 7-8.

¹⁰⁰ Wright, 'Integral Mission and the Great Commission', 10.

¹⁰¹ Atanasov, 'Gypsy Pentecostals', 30, 300-04.

¹⁰² Atanasov, 'Gypsy Pentecostals', 30, 303.

¹⁰³ Anne-Marie Kool, 'Missiological Issues That Need to Be Kept in Mind in Designing Ministry with Roma' (paper presented at the Roma Ministry Exploration Trip sponsored by PC USA, Refomed Guest House of Hungarian Bible Society, Budapest, 2001): https://www.academia.edu/9267182/Missiological_issues_that_need_to_be_kept_in_mind_in_designing_ministry_with_Roma (accessed 16th February 2016).

expressed as making them good Christians, good ‘Baptists’ or good ‘Reformed’.

In the terms of our missiological point of departure, there is a focus on the incarnation, but the process of translating the gospel into the Roma culture is controlled by the majority society, leading to a forced, *Gadje*-ized transformation. It is striking to see what is happening in churches with an emerging Roma leadership, with ‘majority’ churches rather playing a facilitating role, and not a paternalistic one! In such a setting, the process of translating the gospel is put into the hands of Roma pastors. So a key question for the Eastern European ‘majority’ churches is how they could facilitate moving from ‘mission to the Roma’ – in which they ‘control’ the process of translating the gospel – to ‘Roma churches’ – in which Roma pastors are involved in the process of translating the gospel, or to a ‘church for all’! In this latter case, both the Roma community and the majority church community are involved in the translation process, in each other’s context and culture, preventing an over-contextualization. It is necessary to keep on asking questions of each other, how it is perceived that certain practices are related to the gospel. It is a similar process to what has been going on in Africa, with the European mission’s churches changing into African churches.

The importance of ‘taking ownership’ is also the outcome of a study of Tatiana Podolinska and Tomas Hrustic. They ask whether churches have an impact on Roma communities in Slovakia. Among the recommendations made to local churches is that ministry works best when it involves Roma in leadership and decision-making,¹⁰⁴ and when it expects Roma to contribute financially, where possible, to the ministries taking place. People feel more included and are more willing to take ownership in the congregation when they contribute to it.

Conclusion

A massive exclusion is still going on in Europe, and also in Eastern Europe. It is an experienced reality. Many negative, ‘invented’ images exist. The Eastern European churches seek in various ways to respond to the Roma people. They are all in a learning process, together with the numerous mission organizations for ‘Roma mission’.

The key words of missiology – incarnation, translation and transformation – work out differently with different paradigms. Some emphasize only incarnation, others only transformation. In many outward places, off the beaten track, many small ‘embraces in Christ’s name’ are taking place. There are signs of revival among the Roma, hardly noticed on the official EU radar, because they operate with another, secular, worldview, unable to link with the incarnation in Christ. At most, they view

¹⁰⁴ Podolinská and Hrustič, *Religion as a Path to Change*.

religion as an interesting ‘phenomenon’, and churches as a reliable partner in implementing EU strategy. They do not view the gospel, as ‘the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes’ (Rom. 1:16). They have no antennae for the *dunamis* of the gospel that is able to bring transformation to the nominal churches of Eastern Europe as well as to Roma communities suffering from exclusion and distress by deep poverty.

Collaborative, relevant research is needed to find key local Roma figures that have played, and still play, a role in the growth of Roma Christianity. Their life story needs to be written. They are virtually absent from the standard scholarly reference works, just as was the case with many African peoples.

We know little about revivals taking place, little about the Roma Christian communities themselves or their Roma pastors. There are no dictionaries, encyclopaedias or handbooks with descriptions of the Roma church fathers and mothers, just as there weren’t of the African churches until recently. African church history was written exclusively from the perspective of missionaries and their supporting churches, without paying attention to the role of the Africans themselves in bringing the gospel to their people.

Giving the Roma Christianity a face, taking steps towards getting to know Roma church history, will not only be beneficial in teaching the Roma churches, but also in helping the majority society to move from image to reality. In this process, a key notion should be: Nothing about us without us.

We celebrated that 25 years ago when the Berlin Wall came down. On that wall was written: ‘Many small people, who in many small places, do many small things, can alter the face of the earth.’ The Eastern European churches are called, together with the Roma communities, to be his instruments in bringing light to their communities. Roma communities and churches face challenges. Many of the Eastern European churches are struggling with a large nominal fringe in their membership. The common challenge is to seek ways to work together in God’s mission in Europe! Many first may be the last and many lasts may be the first.

ROMA CHRISTIANITY IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES FOR MISSION, MODES OF APPROPRIATION AND SOCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Melody Wachsmuth

Introduction

In the twentieth century, Central and Eastern European (CEE) state socialist policies towards the Roma varied, including attempted assimilation and forced sedentarization; but generally, the policies led to an increased socio-economic stability for the Roma. The collapse of these regimes, however, for the most part led to a worsened socio-economic state and in some contexts, to a continued deterioration of relationships between the Roma and the majority culture.¹ In the last twenty years, although increased international attention, policy changes and money has been focused on Romani communities, the expected results have not materialized.² Juxtaposed to these realities is the continued growth of Roma Christianity, particularly in Pentecostal and charismatic forms.

Research in Roma Christianity has been much better documented in Western Europe – with the beginning of the Gypsy revivals in France in the 1950s that rapidly spread to Spain and beyond, leading to mission efforts into Eastern Europe and Russia. Serious research of Roma Christianity in CEE exists only in certain contexts, most notably in Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria. Despite these limitations, it is possible to see snapshots of the developing picture of Roma Christianity in CEE – from the large-scale revivals such as found in Toflea, Romania, to the work of the long-established churches in Bulgaria, to the young Pentecostal and Evangelical churches recently appearing in South-eastern Europe. Roma Christianity reflects the diverse mosaic of Roma culture and languages:

¹ Zoltan D. Barany, *The East European Gypsies: Regime Change, Marginality, and Ethno-Politics* (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 117-25, 201.

² For example, the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005-2015) was twelve-country commitment to close the gaps between Roma and non-Roma in education, housing, employment and health: www.romadecade.org/index. One report, highlighting ten CEE countries, states that, although small gains are visible, ‘summarizing data across the Decade region suggests a worsening of the situation of Roma and a widening of the gap with the total population in regard to poverty, particularly the risk of poverty’. ‘Roma Inclusion Index 2015’ (Budapest: Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation, 2015), 19: www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9810_file1_roma-inclusion-index-2015-s.pdf