

**UNIVERSITY "OVIDIUS" OF CONSTANȚA
DOCTORAL SCHOOL
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PHD THESIS ABSTRACT

**THE SPECIFIC MISSIONARY IN THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN
GREAT BRITAIN REFLECTED IN THE EXTERNAL MISSION OF THE CHURCH
AT THE BEGINNING OF THE XXI CENTURY**

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Key words: mission, migration, diaspora, Anglican, GREAT BRITAIN, MOREOM, secularization, globalization, syncretism, New Age, artificial intelligence, transhumanism, desacralization, dechristianization, bioethics, hedonism, political correctness, pastoralism

Contemporary autonomous man having a strong temptation towards deification, thinks himself master over God's creation, ignoring God or even considering Him dead, or at best isolated in His transcendence. The greed doubled by hedonism and consumption of contemporary man is infinite; this makes possible the excessive domination, absolute control and exploitation of the world without considering the spiritual as well as ecological implications of this rampant exploitation.

The British world attached to the western atheistic ideologies of previous centuries is in a full process of global secularization, being strongly influenced by the new challenges of the 21st century which have led to a strong erosion and dissolution in terms of religiosity.

Relegating religion to the private space by excluding it from the public space, due to the secularization process that has long begun, makes the voice of the Christian Church in the public space anemic, unreliable and due to the continuous assault of the British media. The British state is deeply secularized and secularized, and so is the education offered to children and young people in the British area.

The membership of the British in the Anglican Church has decreased drastically, the majority being without belonging to an ecclesiastical space. The new ideologies of the 21st century are putting pressure on British society for a heightened desacralization and de-Christiansation. This challenging and troubling state can become an opportunity for the mission of our Orthodoxy in the British space, bringing a strong witness of the Orthodox faith to the British diaspora.

The impact of contemporary changes that have affected the human person and the British diaspora community from a religious, social, psychological, political, legal, cultural and digital point of view. The missionary urgency and the timely and non-timely involvement of the Romanian clergy and laity, with the blessing and pastoral care of IPS Iosif al MOREOM, from

the British diaspora to respond as adequately and effectively as possible to all these changes and challenges are necessary for study and research and analysis.

This also led to an evaluation and decantation of the already existing Romanian Orthodox missiological research in order to find relevant specific solutions applicable in the British space. The analysis of what has already been written and applied in the field of Christian mission can lead to the identification of viable missionary paradigms, found in the Gospel, in the patristic treasury and not only, which can and must be successfully applied even today with the much-needed possibility of updating them for the times contemporary

The response of the clergy and laity in the British area must be effective, adequate and dynamic to all these challenges, and more than that it is necessary to develop a missionary strategy specific to the British diaspora.

In the chapters of the present paper, I proposed to deepen my doctoral thesis: *The missionary specificity in the Romanian Orthodox Church in Great Britain reflected in the external mission of the Church at the beginning of the 21st century*.

The choice of the research topic was made by me personally, due to the fact that I live, live, work and serve in Great Britain since 2008 and the experience here and the special context in Great Britain made me want a deepening and an intensification of the mission of our Church in British diaspora.

In this sense, Fr. university professor Dr. Gheorghe Istodor supported my efforts, showing interest in this problem. The research arouses general interest and at the same time represents a personal challenge because I want to complete my missionary training and contribute to the missionary activity of our Orthodox Church.

I would also like to state that I owe my gratitude to University Professor Dr. Gheorghe Istodor - the coordinator of my doctoral thesis - for the guidance provided regarding the research of the bibliographic material and the drafting of this work. Moreover, the guidance and research suggestions provided have proven to be extremely helpful and welcome.

That is why the purpose of the research was to diagnose the missionary challenges for MOREOM in the British diaspora and obtain missionary solutions and obtain a well-calibrated missionary strategy that can be successfully applied to the British diaspora.

The topic of my doctoral thesis refers to the diagnosis of the specific context of the British diaspora by identifying the main challenges (secularization, globalization, syncretism, artificial intelligence, de-Christianization and desacralization, secular bioethics, hedonism, political correctness) that seriously affect the mission carried out by the Orthodox clergy and laity in UK.

The novelty of the research theme resides in the inter-disciplinary and well-knit research of the contemporary context and challenges in the British diaspora and the analysis of the missionary tools already used, with the avowed desire to provide new solutions and new missionary strategies.

In our study we used the descriptive-analytical method, which empirically describes and analyzes the work of MOREOM to support its mission in the British diaspora. Other times I have used systematic analysis to discover the meaning of the mission and the synthesis of pastoral missionary tools used in the specific British context.

Another method used is the deductive-inductive one necessary to calibrate missionary pastoral instruments in accordance with the specifics of the British area decoded with the help of the sociological analysis carried out in the work. In some places, I have also turned to the historical method for a better understanding of certain enduring relations between Orthodox and Anglicans.

In chapter I entitled *The External Mission of the Church. Fundamental milestones* I presented the main rationale of the mission which is the love of God-Trinity for people. And the moment of Pentecost through the establishment of the Church as a seen community reality is the starting point in the Christian mission in the New Testament. The mission of the Church is a permanent activity, with time and without time, and we can consider that the source of the Christian mission and of the Church is Missio Dei, understood more precisely as Missio Trinitatis.

There are several doctrinal aspects of the Church's mission. In addition to the Trinitarian aspect, I addressed the Christological, pneumatological and anthropological aspects. I presented aspects about the Church's external mission; mainly, I mentioned the phenomenon of conversion, the importance of inter-confessional and inter-religious dialogue, the importance of dialogue with science, philosophy and contemporary culture. Witnessing and assuming the condition of the Christian, whether cleric or lay, in the British area is essential. Presenting an x-ray of the external Orthodox mission in the Western and British space is important to know where we are and what we can do.

In the second chapter called *Missionary Particulars Within the Framework of the Orthodox Metropolitan of Western and Southern Europe (MOREOM)* Today we theoretically approached the complex phenomenon of Romanian immigration to Great Britain at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, presenting also historical data of Romanian immigration in the west. Then I presented the concept of diaspora from a sociological but also theological point of view and I presented the configuration of the Romanian Orthodox diaspora in the world today. The historical contacts and collaborations that the Romanian Orthodox Church had and has with the Anglican Church before 1989 and up to the present day.

I highlighted the missionary necessity of establishing the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of Western and Southern Europe (MOREOM) about the history of MOREOM and about the institutional and canonical organization of MOREOM: the Archdiocese of Western Europe and its suffragan dioceses: Italy and Spain and Portugal. At the end of the paper, I presented the way in which the canonical and institutional organization of MOREOM is carried out in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

Current secular challenges to the Orthodox mission in Great Britain are presented in Chapter III, which is a dense and novel chapter, as I have tried and succeeded in pointing out, showing the essential challenges to the MOREOM mission in Great Britain. I illustrated the complex phenomenon of secularization, the impact of secularization in contemporary society, but also its reverse in our times through desecularization.

The challenge of globalization, syncretism and the effects of digitization and artificial intelligence on the human being in general and on the Christian in particular. I addressed the issue of desacralization and dechristianization, the danger of secular bioethics regarding

Orthodox life and mission. We have shown some of the strengths of British society and beyond which is secular Western hedonism. Finally, I referred to the impact of political correctness on the Orthodox mission

In chapter IV, it is entitled *Missionary solutions and strategies for the dynamism of Christian life in the British diaspora*, I presented after identifying the main challenges that hinder the Christian mission in the British diaspora, I also searched for and identified missionary-pastoral solutions to overcome the hurdle as best as possible secular ideologies present in British society. Thus, I considered that preaching catechesis, done with skill and dedication, will lead to the dynamism of the Orthodox mission in the British area.

We have obtained a new authentic pastoral strategy that has the effect of streamlining missionary activities in the British missionary context of MOREOM. Through the effective use of missionary bodies and Christian associations and by improving existing parish structures. I made some considerations about the impact of Brexit on the Orthodox mission and tried to present the possible future and missionary perspectives that await MOREOM in Great Britain.

In the Conclusions I presented the fact that the Romanian diaspora in Great Britain is directly part of the Romanian people. Even if they permanently emigrated, periodically and settled in the British territory, all Romanian communities belong to the motherland. Romanians in Great Britain, most of them, have at least two important pillars that define and differentiate them from other cohabiting ethnic groups in the UK, namely: the Romanian national identity and the Orthodox faith.

This double identity, both national and religious, makes the Romanian Orthodox Church, through MOREOM and the Romanian state, especially through the Romanian Embassy in Great Britain from London, work synergistically for the Romanian diaspora in Great Britain.

We also observe here a certain type of testimony that the Romanian Orthodox in the UK offers to the extremely secularized British society, through the humble display of his religious identity in this context. And the Romanian national identity opposes the secularization and globalization, the desacralization and the accentuated de-Christianization present in the British space.

The need for religious assistance in the Romanian language addressed to every Romanian community in Great Britain, made MOREOM, as the representative of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the UK, respond to these spiritual requirements of the Romanians in the British diaspora.

I talked about the institutional and organizational effort made by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church before, but I remind you that for the more than 1,200,000 Romanians in the UK, several Romanian clergy provide religious assistance in their mother tongue.

For the Romanian from the British diaspora, the ecclesiastical community and the place where the services are held mean home, it means Romania, where Romanians gather, pray in their language, meet other Romanians, are spiritually guided by Romanian clergy, they feel Romanian as in the country. Here St. Orthodox icons, traditional doormats, agape with Romanian dishes remind of the country, of the place of birth and the homesickness is somehow dull, subdued.

We can say that through the missionary-pastoral care of IPS Iosif Metropolitan MOREOM, who takes care of the communities of Romanians in the British diaspora, that efforts have been made and are still being made, as through the administrative organization, through the establishment of new parishes, missions and monasteries and hermitages to make possible the best possible missionary coverage in the British area in order to be able to reach every member of the British diaspora.

Thus we can consider that the Romanian diaspora in Great Britain is one of the best organized Orthodox diasporas in the UK. This missionary-pastoral work is blessed by God and reveals two important aspects, namely the first aspect shows the merit of the good-faith Romanians, who, although due to various conditions, left, emigrated, to the British area for a better life, they did not forget their Orthodox faith which they had from the country.

The second aspect is the fact that the Orthodox clergy in Great Britain, led by IPS Iosif, managed, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to provide favorable conditions for the exercise of public divine worship in the specific conditions of Great Britain.

Since the British diaspora is predominantly made up of young people, from young families, this makes me believe that the future of our Church in the British lands is assured, especially due to the dynamism specific to the young age. This together with fellow clergy and their well-formed communities make me hope for a bright future for MOREOM, for the entire Romanian Orthodox Church, for all Orthodoxy in the British area.

Finally, I would like to mention the fact that the effort of my scientific research work can also be proven by the bibliographic list - extensive and diverse - with which I closed the pages of my doctoral thesis, as the methodology of scientific research work also requires.

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