Historiography, according to Yaroslav Pelikan has to overcome history by history. David Outler, one of the architects of the Faith and Order movement, in preparing the IVth World Conference of Faith and Order in 1963 took this same saying to be the hermeneutical key of all ecumenical dialogue. Both mission and ecumenism need this key, in order to overcome the wounds of Christian triumphalism and separatism and of the ecclesiastical compromise with secular power throughout the centuries. Every new generation must re-evaluate what was inherited, in order to continue the tradition as a living tradition. Of course it is not always easy nor perhaps even possible to reconstruct an objective and unbiased configuration of complex historical events, like separations and excommunications of the past or rejectable methods of reconciliation and mission, which would no longer be ours today. One of those complex historical phenomena is the so-called uniatism: a rather pejorative collective term for very diverse initiatives to restore the unity of the Eastern Churches with the Church of Rome and its bishop — the patriarch of Western, Latin Christianity - in the course of history. Most of these initiatives took place under tragic circumstances of political threat and violence and all of them failed in as far as they caused new conflicts and divisions within the communion of the Orthodox Churches. No wonder, therefore, that uniatism and proselytism are often lumped together, especially after the turnabouts in Eastern Europe in 1989. The Orthodox Church, thus far, cannot but condemn the presence and activities of Roman Catholics, evangelicals and Eastern Rite Catholics or Uniates - like the Greek Orthodox Church of Ukraine - as illegitimate forms of mission, competing with the pastoral and catechetical responsibility of well established and autonomous Christian churches like the Russian, the Rumanian and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Similar feelings must be recognized with the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Church of Greece, the Orthodox Churches in the Middle-East, in Ethiopia and in India. We may find comparable reactions with the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Latin-America or in Africa, protesting against the missionary activities of North American

Pentecostal and Evangelical Groups. Somehow churches seem to have interiorized the political principle *cuius regio, illius et religio*, which warranted a certain religious tolerance in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, as their proper ground for claiming territorial monopolies. Other Christian groups, however, claim to be sent by God in the name of the Great Commandment of Mission (Mt.28,19-20) to so called ‘mission-fields’ left lying fallow by the established churches. As early as the time of the first missionary conferences in Edinburgh 1910, this theme of competing missions has been on the agenda of the ecumenical movement.

In the 19th century some of the European Mission Societies already came to agreements of ‘comity’, sharing financial resources or colonial privileges. Edinburgh spoke of the problem of “overlapping missions” and of necessary cooperation in view of the “unoccupied fields”. In 1920 already, at a preparatory conference on Faith and Order in Geneva, the elimination of proselytism and cooperation in missions, was listed as the first point on the future agenda. In the famous encyclical of patriarch Germanos in 1920 the solution of the problem of proselytism was one of the main aims of his appeal to ecumenical cooperation. In 1925, at the Stockholm Conference on Life and Work, vehement protests were uttered by N. Glubochovski against Roman Catholic ‘pharisaic proselytism’, comparing it with the activities of a landlord, picking the land and stealing the sheep during the illness of his neighbour. In 1956 a special committee on behalf of the Central Committee meeting in Evanston 1954, published the report *Christian Witness, Proselytism and Religious Liberty*, revised and received by the New Delhi Assembly in 1961. It remarked: “Behind the tension lies the whole ecclesiological problem, which is a major concern in our continuous ecumenical association. The territorial principle is an aspect of that problem. Unsolved problems of faith and order also contribute to the tension”. After Vatican II the problem was taken up again by the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches, which published the report *Common Witness and Proselytism* in 1970 and the report *Common Witness* in 1980. These reports were affirmed in the remarkable statement of the Vth World Conference on Faith and Order, Santiago de Compostella 1993: “The use of coercive or manipulative methods in evangelism distorts koinonia. The evangelization or proselytising of one another’s active members violates the real though imperfect koinonia Christians already share. Such activities

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6 Ib., 239.