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RELIGION AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION IN BULGARIA

This paper is an attempt to explore how religions in Bulgaria could contribute to its eurointegration. This task determined the use of the inductive method as a major tool of analysis, while the conservative nature of religion as a social phenomenon impelled the authors to structure their presentation in accordance with the major stages in the development of religion in Bulgaria since her Christianization in 865. They are:

- the stage of the monopoly of Christianity from the Baptism of Bulgaria in 864 to her conquest by the Ottomans in 1396;¹
- the time of forced but relatively peaceful coexistence of several religions in the Bulgarian lands, dominated by Islam, from the end of the fourteenth century to the late nineteenth century;
- the period of the Bulgarian nation-state, which Constitution declared that Orthodox Christianity was the “dominated faith” in the country from 1879 to 1948
- the decades of communist rule and building an atheist society in Bulgaria, 1948-1989;
- the post-communist years and a gradual return of Bulgarian citizens to the religious identities of their forefathers.

¹ The authors decided to skip the pagan period in Bulgarian history because of its specificity. Although paganism has no practical relevance to the issue of eurointegration its post-communist reading has some intriguing features. If the communist regime paid much attention to the Slavonic origins of Bulgarians, including the religion of the ancient Slav peoples, it neglected the significance of proto-Bulgarian heritage. The latter provoked a group of Bulgarian intellectuals to start studying the proto-Bulgarian contribution to the culture and history of Bulgaria. They publish *Tangra*, a journal named after the major proto-Bulgarian god. In this way they seek to achieve a balanced view on the pagan period of Bulgarian history. Some of them have clear anti-Russian orientation. At the same time, they are quite critical to the European Union which policy is going to replace the communist concept of the national identity with a European one that threatens the restoration of the proper Bulgarian identity. They protested against the proposal of the Austrian scholar Otto Kronsteiner to replace the Cyrillic Alphabet with the Latin in order to make easier the Bulgarian eurointegration. See: *The EU's Absurds*, published in Bulgarian in: <http://web.hit.bg/bgsviat/EC.html>

All these stages are discussed from the perspective of religion as a factor of stability and development. The aim is to analyze the Bulgarian experience in this field in order to reveal how religion in this country could contribute to the European integration.

1.

The analysis of the first stage, i.e. the monopoly of Christianity, is instructive for the understanding of current tensions between Orthodoxy and Catholicism at national and international level. The Bulgarian schoolbooks and even academic studies still bear old stereotypes of thinking. The majority of people take the claim that “in 865, Eastern Orthodox Christianity was officially imposed in the Bulgarian lands” for granted.² In this way, the modern notions of Orthodoxy and Catholicism are transferred backward to the Middle Ages. Such an approach undermines the sense of common Christian roots of Bulgarians with Western Europeans. It also provokes negative attitudes to Bulgaria’s eurointegration.

The analysis of the Christianization of Bulgaria reveals that it has been strongly influenced by the ninth century European geopolitics. The Bulgarian Tsar Boris made his choice between the ecclesiastical jurisdictions of Rome and Constantinople after intensive negotiations with both churches as well as with the Holy Roman Empire and Byzantium.³ His final decision to accept Constantinople jurisdiction was a result of complex factors: a lost war with Byzantium and canonical prerequisites that the Pontic and Thracian dioceses had been subordinated to the Patriarch of Constantinople.⁴ The influence of the latter, however, was dangerous for the political

2 Jenia Peteva, “The Legal Status of Church and Religion in the Republic of Bulgaria,” in Francis Messner, ed., *The Status of Religious Confessions of the States Applying for Membership to the European Union* (Milano: Giufre Editore, 2002), 224. The historical and sociological parts of this article include many incorrect facts that could mislead the foreign readers. Most probably they are a result of the use of non-academic literature by its author.

3 The best evidence for the difficult choice between Constantinople and Rome, made by Tsar Boris, are his questions to Pope Nicholas I. The Vatican archives have preserved the Pope’s answers, published in Bulgarian by Dechev, *Otgovorite na Papa Nikolay po zapitvaniyata na bulgarite* (Sofia: 1936). See also M. Schnitter, “Забравеното средновековно всекидневие на православните славяни – опит за достъп (отново за “Отговорите на папа Николай по запитванията на българите”)” [*The Forgotten Mediaeval Everyday Life of Orthodox Slavs - an Attempt for Access (again on "Responsa Nicolai I papae ad consulta Bulgarorum "*]. - in: *Crkvene studije*, vol. 2, Nish, (2005). 215-229.

4 The 28th Canon of the Forth Ecumenical Council reads: “Following in all things the decisions of the holy Fathers, and acknowledging the canon, which has been just read, of the One Hundred and Fifty Bishops beloved-of-God (who assembled in the imperial city of Constantinople, which is New Rome, in the time of the Emperor Theodosius of happy memory), we also do enact and decree the same things concerning the privileges of the most holy Church of Constantinople, which is New Rome. For the Fathers rightly granted privileges to the throne of old Rome, because it was the royal city. And the One Hundred and Fifty most religious Bishops, actuated by the same consideration, gave equal privileges (isa presbeia) to the most holy throne of New Rome, justly judging that the city which is honoured with the Sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys equal privileges with the old imperial Rome, should in ecclesiastical matters also be magnified as she is, and rank next after her; so that, in the Pontic, the Asian, and the Thracian dioceses, the

sovereignty of Bulgaria. Being conscious about it, Tsar Boris welcomed the disciples of St. Cyril and St. Methodius and asked them to spread the Slavonic alphabet in his country as well as to introduce the new liturgy in Slavonic language that mixed Byzantine with Latin elements.⁵ According to the Bulgarian ruler, the use of a native language for church purposes had to protect his people against the Byzantine aspirations.

By that time, however, the new liturgy did not intend to enhance the Slavonic or Western tendency in the Christian world. In fact, it suggested “a third way” between the Byzantine and Roman ecclesiastical models that took into consideration the new states taking shape in Medieval Europe.⁶ There were such developments among the Italian Greeks as well as in the lands under the Papal jurisdiction until the twelfth century. In fact, the negative attitude of the Latin Church to the teaching of St. Cyril and St. Methodius appeared only after the Great Schism.⁷ In this way, “the third way” did not bring reconciliation between Rome and Constantinople but was developed into an alternative of the Byzantine tradition. It was fostered by the Slavonic alphabet that did not

metropolitans only and such bishops also of the Dioceses aforesaid as are among the barbarians, should be ordained by the aforesaid most holy throne of the most holy Church of Constantinople; every metropolitan of the aforesaid dioceses, together with the bishops of his province, ordaining his own provincial bishops, as has been declared by the divine canons; but that, as has been above said, the metropolitans of the aforesaid Dioceses should be ordained by the archbishop of Constantinople, after the proper elections have been held according to custom and have been reported to him.. See: <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/chalcedon.html>. Used on 20 August 2005.

5 Maria Schnitter, “*Bogomilstvoto – mitove i fakti*” [‘*Bogomili movement – myths and facts*’]. Under print in: *Slavjanski dialozi*, vol.4, Plovdiv, 2005.

6 The “third way” hypothesis is developed on the basis of the analyses of manuscripts, found in Sinai, most of which are published. See: I.C. Tarnanindis, *The Slavonic Manuscripts discovered in 1975 at St. Catherine’s Monastery on Mount Sinai* (Thessaloniki: 1988); *Ibid.*, “Liturgiyata na sv. Petur po sinayskiya rukopis No 5N” [St. Peter’s Liturgy in accordance with Sinai manuscript No. 5N], trans. ..., in: *Srednovekovna hristiyanska Evropa: Iztok i Zapad* [Medieval Christian Europe: East and West], ed. V. Gjuzelev, A. Miltenova, (Sofia: 2002), 213-219. Stefano Parenti. *Influssi italo-greci nei testi eucaristici bizantini die „Fogli Slavi“ die Sinai (XI sec.)*, in: *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 57(1991), 165-167. Riccardo Piccio, “‘Pravoslavno slavyanstvo’ i ‘rimsko slavyanstvo’ – literaturno-istoriografski vuprosi” [“Orthodox Slavdom” and “Roman Slavdom” – literary and historiographical issues], in: *Pravoslavnoto slavyanstvo i starobulgarskata kulturna traditsiya* [Orthodox Slavdom and Old-Bulgarian cultural tradition] (Sofia: 1993), 35-137; *Ibid.*, “Questione della lingua e Slavia cirillomethodiana.” in: *Studi sulla questione della lingua presso gli slavi (a cura di Riccardo Piccio)* (Roma: 1972), 7-112.

7 Our modern notion about the liturgical and dogmatic homogeneity of the Roman Catholic Church does not fit to the ninth century realities. We often tend to forget that there were many forms and degrees of pluralism in the Christian world before 1054.

require the knowledge of Greek and thus isolated the Slavs from the West, where there was no such break with the Hellenistic tradition.⁸

In 919, Tsar Simeon found another mechanism to prevent the Byzantine danger. He transgressed against the canons and elevated the Bulgarian Church into a patriarchate. This policy of promoting full political and ecclesiastical independence brought about the concept of “tsar” as an institution equal to that of “emperor.”⁹ It also challenged the ancient Christian notion of autocephality, i.e. the inherited full canonical independence of the patriarchates of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem. Simeon’s claims for the autocephality of his Church were adopted by Serbs in the thirteenth century and by Russians in the fifteenth century. The autocephality problem lost its meaning in the centuries of the Ottoman domination in the Balkans, but exploded with new vigor in the nineteenth century. It became a burning issue after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Tito’s Yugoslavia, where some Orthodox churches insist on receiving autocephality from the Patriarchate of Moscow and from the Serbian one. These conflicts influence the narratives of the history of church and state in the corresponding countries, where the ethnic, confessional and political adherence of the scholars play a crucial role in the historical facts assessments.¹⁰

Being situated in “a zone of clash of churches” Medieval Bulgaria invented various ways for preserve her integrity. They started with the alphabet and liturgy, passed through the self-proclaimed patriarchate and the wars with Franks and Byzantines, and even made use of heretical movements such as the Bogomils’ one. It was a form of struggle against Byzantinism aimed at preserving the Bulgarian ethnic and spiritual autonomy.¹¹ This experience had an enduring effect on the evolution of Christianity in Eastern Europe. The respect of Bulgarian tsars to the native language as a means of Christianization marked a shift from the tradition of the ancient patriarchates of Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Constantinople and Rome who recognized only Hebrew, Latin, and Greek as liturgy languages. Another novelty was the principle of

8 Petar Bitsilli, *Osnovni nasoki v istoricheskoto razvitie na Evropa, ot nachaloto na Hristiyanskata era do nashe vreme* [Main directions in the historical development of Europe from the beginning of the Christian era to nowadays] (Sofia: 1993), 11-13.

9 The Slavonic institution of “tsar” differed from both the Byzantine “basileos” and the Holy Roman “emperor.” According to the Byzantine principle of symphony the State and Church were interdependent. The basileos appointed the patriarch, while the patriarch anointed the future basileos who had also priestly power. The Holy Roman emperors had not such power, but were secular rulers. At the same time, Bulgarian tsars mixed the two doctrines. They were not able to follow the Byzantine model, according to which there was only one basileos on the earth. They acted more as secular rulers but pretend to have some power over their local church. About the Byzantine model see I. E. Karayanopoulos, *I Politiki Theoria ton Bizantinon* [The Political Theory of Byzantium], tras. in Bulgarian by K. Pavklikyanov (Sofia: 1992).

10 Maria Schnitter mentions this specificity in the studies on the Bogomils phenomenon, but it is also applicable to the post-Cold War narratives of the church histories in Eastern Europe.

11 Petar Mutafchiev, “Pop Bogomil i sv. Ivan Rilski” [Father Bogomil and St. Ivan of Rila], in: *Iztok i Zapad v Evropeyskoto srednovekovie* [East and West in Medieval Europe], (Sofia: 1993), 169-185. See also Schnitter, “Bogomilstvoto – mitove i fakti”, passim.

correspondence between the boundaries of an independent state and its autocephalous church. Adopted by the Kingdom of Serbia and Kiev Rus, this model brought about a specific group of churches: the so-called *pomestni* [local] churches. It also resulted into specific church-state relations in Eastern Europe which mutual interpenetration has no parallel in any other part of the Christian world. In the nineteenth century, they were additionally deepened by the rise of nationalism that transformed the local churches into national ones. The fact that these religious institutions have become the most zealous allies of the young Balkan states is often regarded as an argument that Orthodoxy *per se* is a source of nationalism. At the same time, it seems that the link between Orthodoxy and nationalism has been an outcome of concrete political, economical and social circumstances and thus it is an object of change.

2.

Bulgarian historiography pays great attention to negative consequences of the Ottoman period, but often underrates some useful lessons from the times when Orthodox Bulgarians learned to live side by side with Muslim Turks. This hard but important experience could assist Western society who has recently encountered the problem of coexistence with Islam. In this respect, the lack of violence in the relations between the Orthodox majority and the Muslim minority in contemporary Bulgaria deserves attention. It is a result of various factors. One of them was the Ottoman *millet* system that allowed the Sultan's subjects of different faiths to live in a kind of "pluralist equilibrium."¹² At the same time, this phenomenon is far away from the contemporary notion of pluralism because until the twentieth century Christians were "regarded as no more than taxable assets."¹³

The Ottoman rule also brought about the conservative attitude of Balkan Orthodoxy concerning its doctrine. Being subjected to non-Christian power, the local Orthodox peoples became extremely devoted to their ancient religious rituals, while ignoring the Christian teaching.¹⁴ This brought about a kind of laicization of Orthodox Christianity, which was especially

12 See Dr. Resit Ergener (Bogazici University), *Economic Rationale of Religious Tolerance: Policies of the Ottoman Sultan vs. the Pope*, paper delivered at the third Annual Conference on religion, economics and Culture (Kansas City, October 22-24. Available in: <http://gunston.doit.gmu.edu/liannacc/ERel/S2-Archives/REC04/Erenger%20-%20Economic%20Rationale%20of%20Religious%20Tolerance.pdf>.

According to Ergener, "Islam ... was provided as a public good to the faithful. The equivalent of tithes, church dues, marriage fees, sale of relics or indulgences, had no place in the Islamic practice. More members for Islam meant more recipients of a public good and it was in the interest of the Muslim establishment to limit the number of entrants to Islam – by allowing conquered religious groups to continue with their practice." If the Christian Church "sought for monopoly power in the religious market place and did its best to eliminate all its rivals," "Islam relied on members of other faiths to continue to exist, to pay for the joys that the victorious faithful would enjoy." Therefore, it will be a mistake to identify the Ottoman type of religious pluralism with the modern notion of religious pluralism.

13 Ibid.

14 These observations were made by Paul Ricaut in 1760, when he wrote his book on the state of the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the Ottoman Empire. He stressed that the Orthodox subjects of the Sultan are against any changes in their religious doctrine and habits. His book is used in Bulgarian. See: Ricaut, *Segashnoto sustoyanie na Osmanskata imperiya i na grutskata tsurkva (XVII vek)* [The Present State of the Ottoman Empire and of the Greek Church (17th century)] (Sofia: 1988), 193-194.

strong in the Bulgarian lands where the local church institution had been destroyed since the fifteenth century. The situation was additionally aggravated by the late rise of Bulgarian nationalism that exposed Bulgarians to the expansionist attempts of their Orthodox neighbors, especially Greeks. As a result, the national interests of Bulgarians often coincided with the political interests of the Sublime Porte. In 1869, the so-called Bulgarian *Dobrodetelna Druzhdina* or “The Elders’ Committee” even proposed a dual Turkish-Bulgarian monarchy to be established in their Appeal to the Great Powers’ Paris Conference on the Crete question.¹⁵ Although it was rejected by the majority of Bulgarians it was a precedent without parallel in the other Orthodox nations under the Ottomans. The Sultan decree for the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate of February 28, 1870, was another example of this Bulgarian-Turkish cooperation provoked by the specific political circumstances in the Empire. Maybe this could help us to understand why today Bulgaria was able to avoid the severe Orthodox-Muslim confrontation in Kosovo as well as the reasons for the tolerant attitude of ethnic Bulgarians to their compatriots of Turkish origin.

The religious peace in Bulgaria is also an outcome of the tradition of Bulgarian Muslims to train their muftis in the country.¹⁶ In this respect, the import of muftis and imams for the needs of the Muslim immigrant communities in the West keeps and even increases not only the religious and cultural, but the economic and political tensions between them and the indigenous Christian population. At the same time, the dynamic developments in the religious sphere after the fall of communism provoke some concerns about a radicalization of the Muslim community in Bulgaria. There are fears that the young people who have recently studied in Saudi Arabia and Jordan could be influenced by wahhabism.¹⁷ There are also rumors about foreign imams preaching Islamic fundamentalism, spread by Bulgarian media and influential personalities as a result of the power struggle in the country. Bulgarian authorities are concerned that they might “destroy the traditional peaceful coexistence between Bulgarian’s Christian majority and its largest national and religious minority.”¹⁸

The next specificity of the religious development in the Bulgarian lands under the Ottoman rule was the lack of any institution uniting all Bulgarians from the beginning of the fifteenth century to 1870. In a peculiar way, the sense of Bulgarianness survived without nobility and ‘nation-scale’ institutions. This became possible thanks to the Cyrillic manuscripts, schools set up

15 There is not much written on the idea of a dual Turkish-Bulgarian monarchy. According to Bulgarian historiography, it was suggested by Russia. See. Nikolay Genchev, *Bulgarsko Vuzrazhdane* [Bulgarian Revival] (Sofia: 1988), 334-335; *Istoria na Bulgaria* [History of Bulgaria] (Sofia: 1993), 325-326.

16 The difference in the training of the muftis in Bulgaria and Western Europe was stressed by Mrs. Barbara Saegert from the University Center St. Ignatius – Antwerp (Belgium) during her research visit in Sofia as a guest of the Center for Interreligious Dialogue and Conflict Prevention at Sofia University in May 2005.

17 Albena Shkodrova and Iva Roudnikova, “Muslim Infighting Fuels Media Fundamentalist Fears.” *IWPR’S Balkan Crisis Report*, No. 519, October 7, 2004. Available in: <http://archiv2.medienhilfe.ch/News/2004/SEE/IWPR519.htm>.

18 Ibid.

at ancient Bulgarian monasteries and historical memory.¹⁹ Today, however, the strong national identity of Bulgarians suffers from the insufficient development of their institutional culture that challenges their dialogue with the European Union. On the one hand, Bulgarian society is very flexible concerning its institutions. On the other hand, this specificity could undermine the social and political stability in the country. Therefore, the European integration is extremely important for the improvement of the institutional culture of Bulgarians.²⁰

The next feature concerns the “linkage between national identity and the particular religious tradition which is ... absent throughout most of Europe.” This formula, given by Prof. Peter Berger during a discussion on Greek Orthodoxy, fits to the Bulgarian case as well.²¹ Having no national institutions, Bulgarians had to solve a twofold task: to remove the threat of Hellenizing their compatriots by the Patriarchate of Constantinople and to fight against the Ottoman power as a key obstacle to their state independence. First, they launched a movement for the restoration of their Medieval Church, which Slavonic liturgy and native hierarchy would preserve their national identity. It was additionally nurtured by the legal reforms in the Ottoman Empire (1839-1856) that allowed an ecclesiastical institution to advocate the national interests of its members before the Sublime Porte and the Great Powers. In this way the concept of the Bulgarian national identity was developed before the establishment of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1870 and before the restoration of the Bulgarian State in 1878.²² Therefore both institutions had to pay tribute to the national identity.

19 The books, written with Cyrillic letters, were one of the sources that preserved the historical memory of Bulgarians during the five-century Ottoman rule. Most of these books were created in monasteries, set up in the Bulgarian lands before their conquest in 1393. The most famous scriptoriums were situated in the so-called Small Mount of Athos around present day Sofia. Their monks produced a great number of translated and original books in Bulgarian, where they presented not only liturgical texts, but also historical ones. During their trips for collecting donations for their monasteries, these monks distributed the books and knowledge about the Bulgarian past.

20 I have discussed this problem in detail in my paper on *The Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the “Ethic of Capitalism,”* delivered at the conference “The Orthodox Spirit and the Ethic of Capitalism,” hold at the Institute for Human Sciences, Vienna and organized by the Institute on Culture, Religion and World Affairs at Boston University and the J.M. Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies at Baylor University, March 7-9, 2005.

21 Prof. Berger made this comment during the discussion on *Some Notes on Religion, State, and Democracy: The Unexceptional, Yet Instructive, Case of Greece*, a paper delivered by Dr. Elizabeth Prodromou on January 23, 2002 at the CURA Institute (Boston, Massachusetts, US) See: <http://www.bu.edu/cura/programs/working%20papers/Prodromou%20lecture.htm>; Used on August 13, 2005.

22 At this point I would not agree with E. Prodromou’s statement that “conceptions of national (and collective) identity have been permeated and shaped over centuries *by Orthodoxy* (my italic – D.K.). See: Prodromou, “Orthodox Christianity and Pluralism: Moving Beyond Ambivalence?” It is published in Bulgarian in: *Religia i politika na Balkanite* [Religion and Politics in the Balkans], trans. Ina Merdjanova, (Silistra: 2004), 202. The reason for my different opinion is the fact that

The drive for their own church led Bulgarians to the assumption that the whole nation had to belong to Eastern Orthodoxy in order to guarantee its unity. This trend was additionally fueled by the fight between Orthodox Russia and the Catholic-Protestant West over the Ottoman legacy. Under these circumstances Orthodoxy and Slavonic origins of Bulgarians worked in favor of Russia's interests in the Balkans. Orthodox Bulgarians regarded the Western Christian missionaries coming to their lands as invaders who tried to tear living parts from their national body.²³ Sometimes Orthodox Bulgarians, supported by Russian diplomats in the Ottoman Empire, asked the Muslim authorities to keep the foreign clergy away. Being part of the most important period in Bulgarian national history – the birth of the nation, the memory of these conflicts and collective experiences is still strong today. Therefore, any assumption regarding the European Union as a Catholic and/or Protestant construction could create difficulties in the process of Bulgaria's accession. In this respect, the dynamics of the relations between the European Union and Greece, as its only Orthodox member, is of great importance for the enlargement of the European Union towards traditionally Orthodox countries.

3.

The Bulgarian Principality, established in 1878, was a state where Eastern Orthodoxy was declared the “dominating faith” by the Constitution of Tŭrnovo (art. 37).²⁴ There were also constitutional guarantees for the freedom of religious conscience and practice of the non-Orthodox citizens (art. 40), who were granted the right of self-government (art. 42). These texts, however, were not observed very strictly. There were cases when the government restricted the rights of religious minorities. During the Balkan wars (1912-1913), it even tried to convert the so-called Pomaks (ethnic Bulgarians converted to Islam by the Ottoman authorities in the seventeenth century) into Orthodoxy.²⁵ This policy was not provoked by a religious zeal of the Bulgarian

Bulgarians developed their concepts of national identity before having their own church and in a process of struggle against the Hellenizing policy of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (from the 1820s to 1870). In fact, the concept of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was drawn on the basis of the concept of national identity, which first definition could be found in the work of Father Paisii Hilendarskii *Istoria Slavyanobolgarskaya* [Slavonic Bulgarian History], written in 1762.

23 Kalkandjieva, “The Image of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as a Guardian of the Bulgarian National and Religious Space” (in Bulgarian), in: *Trudove na katedrite po istoriya i bogoslovie na Shumenskiya universitet “Episkop Konstantin Preslavski”* [Annual Book for Historical and Theological Studies of the University of Shumen], vol. 2, (Shumen: 1998), p. 166-178; Ibid., “Catholicism in the Bulgarian Lands and the Decline of the Ottoman Empire: the second half of the nineteenth century” (in Bulgarian), in: *Rodina* [historical journal “Motherland”], Sofia, 1997, vol. 1-2, p. 166-186.

24 Constitution of Turnovo, published in *Bulgarski konstitutsii i konstitucionni proekti* (Sofia: 1990), 24.

25 Svetlozar Eldarov, *Pravoslaviето na vojna: Bulgarskata pravoslavna tsurkva i voynite v Bulgaria (1870-1945)* (Sofia: 2004), 98-116. Another aspect of the Pomaks' issue is the name “Bulgarian Mohamedans.” It is given to them by ethnic Bulgarians, but is considered humiliating by Pomaks themselves. According to the latter the reference to them as Mohammedans disregard their religious devotion to Islam and present them as followers of a secular leader. There are even

government. The use of force was not supported by all Bulgarian metropolitans. The conversion did not touch the non-Bulgarian ethnic groups. In fact it was justified by the belief that the adherence to Orthodoxy of every ethnic Bulgarian will guarantee the national unity.²⁶

The period of the Bulgarian national state is essential regarding the role of Orthodoxy as a factor of stability in Eastern Europe. It is connected with the peculiar situation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church that had, or claimed to have (in the interwar period) a territory much bigger than that of the Bulgarian State.²⁷ This unusual state of affairs had complicated historical, legal and canonical roots that are not object of this paper.²⁸ Here, the authors would stress only the fact that a considerable number of Orthodox Bulgarians, who had remained outside of the Bulgarian state borders (after the Russian-Turkish war of 1877-1878 and then after the so-called Unification of Eastern Rmelia with the Principality Bulgaria in 1885), were under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the same way as their compatriots in the free lands. This situation created ecclesiastical and political tensions as well as a tendency to expand the Bulgarian state borders towards the ecclesiastical ones. It needs special attention because today we face similar developments in post-Tito Yugoslavia where the canonical jurisdiction of the Serbian Patriarchate outside the borders of the Serbian State provokes tensions in traditionally Orthodox landscapes as Montenegro and Macedonia. We witness similar problems in the case of the Metropolitanate of Moldova who moved under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Romania several years ago as well as in the case of the autocephalous Ukrainian Orthodox Church that left the bosom of the

scholars who are not aware of this sensitive issue. For example, the historian Stoyan Raychevski, issued a monograph, published in Bulgarian and English, entitled *Bulgarite mohamedani* [The Mohammedan Bulgarians] (Sofia: 1998).

26 See more about this issue in Kalkandjieva, "Bulgarskata pravoslavna cuarkva i noviya zakon za veroizpovedaniata", in *Religia i politika na Balkanite*, Ina Merdjanova, ed., (Silistra: 2004), 155-156.

27 The borders of Bulgaria, drawn by the San Stephano Peace Treaty of March 1878 almost coincided with the borders of the Bulgarian Exarchate. In the summer of the same year, however, the Great Powers' congress in Berlin divided San Stephano Bulgaria into three parts: the Principality of Bulgaria (present day north Bulgaria with the region of Sofia) was declared a tributary principality of the Sultan, Eastern Rumelia (present day south Bulgaria) became an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire, while the lands with Bulgarian majority in Macedonia and Aegean Thrace were returned under the previous political regime. In 1885, The Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia united into one state that proclaimed its full independence from the Sublime Porte in 1908. In the period 1912-1918, Bulgaria's attempt to expand her borders towards those of San Stephano failed and the Orthodox Bulgarians in Macedonia and Aegean Thrace occurred under the jurisdictions of the Orthodox Churches of Serbia and Greece. The situation changed in 1941, when Bulgaria occupied these lands again. This was the last attempt to bring together her state and ecclesiastical borders. In September 1944, the Bulgarian state gave up its pretensions over Macedonia and Aegean Thrace. It was followed by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church that withdrew her headquarters from Istanbul to Sofia in January 1945. See: Kalkandjieva, "The Restoration of the Patriarchal Dignity of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church," in: *Bulgarian Historical Review*, Sofia, 1994, vol. 4, p. 101-105.

28 Ibid.

Patriarchate of Moscow. From this prospective, the study of Bulgarian experience could contribute for their solution.

Finally, the fact that a considerable part of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church's flock was exposed to national assimilation in Greece and Serbia during the interwar period made this particular church very sensitive towards minority issues. After World War I, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church became one of the founders of the ecumenical movements. She often asked their help for protecting the rights of Bulgarian minorities outside Bulgaria. During World War II occupation of Macedonia and Aegean Thrace, the Bulgarian Church was tolerant to the Orthodox Greeks. It also let the Orthodox Serbs leave the occupied zones without persecution.²⁹ Her humanity has been proved two more times: in 1915, when she gave asylum to the Armenians after their Genocide in Turkey and in the early 1940-s when she saved the Bulgarian Jews from extermination in the Nazi camps.³⁰

4.

Although the communists came to power in Bulgaria on September 9, 1944, as part of the Fatherland Front parties coalition, they established their political monopoly only in 1948. Until then they succeeded in undermining the basis of ecclesiastical institutions in Bulgaria, but delivered their major blow on religion between 1948 and 1953. During this period, religion lost its role in Bulgarian society and Orthodoxy ceased to be a factor of national consolidation. The parochial life of the Orthodox Church³¹ was ruined. The Catholic community was left without clergy after a series of anti-Catholic trials in 1951-1952. The Protestant and the Muslim communities, who had more flexible structures, were able to preserve their religious activities to a limited degree. In short, religious identities did not matter under communism.

One of the most profound changes in the church-state relations in communist Bulgaria was "the separation of church from state" promulgated by the Constitution of December 4, 1947. This formula followed the Soviet model, which aim was to isolate religion from society. Most analyses, however, have omitted the replacement of the conjunction "and" (used in the formula for church-state relations, adopted by the modern European states) with the preposition "from," introduced by the Bolsheviks. It has been probably considered a matter of translation and thus, nobody has reacted against Art. 13 § 2 of the post-communist Constitution of Bulgaria that preserves the phrase "separation *from* state." At the same time, the implementation of this text confuses the authorities

²⁹ The attempts for a forceful conversion of Bulgarian Pomaks from Islam to Orthodoxy was denounced by Metropolitan Simeon of Varna as anti-canonical and anti-human. See: Eldarov, 115-116.

³⁰ *The Power of Civil Society in a Time of Genocide: Proceedings of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church on the Rescue of the Jews in Bulgaria, 1940-1944*, Albena Taneva and Ivanka Gezenko, eds, A. Taneva, trans., (Sofia: Sofia Univ. Press St. Kliment Ohridski, 2005).

³¹ During my studies in Oxford University (2000-2001), I used to visit the church services in the - the Church of the Holy Trinity and the Annunciation. There are two parishes there: one run by Bishop Kallistos Ware from the Patriarchate of Constantinople and another – by Bishop Bassil from the Patriarchate of Moscow. This experience helped me to understand the importance of the parochial life and to realize that the communist regime destroyed the parochial structure of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. D. Kalkandjieva

who tend to disregard the democratic principle of separation of powers in the sphere of church-state relations.

The communist policy of isolation of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church from society, however, did not mean her end as an institution. In the beginning, this Church was used as a tool for transforming the traditional love of Bulgarians for Russia into love for the Soviet Union. Until the late 1950s, together with the other Orthodox churches from “the camp of peace and democracy,” the Bulgarian Church was involved in the Soviet propaganda efforts to ‘unmask’ the Vatican and the World Council of Churches as “servants of imperialism and warmongers.”³² In the 1980s, there were even attempts to rehabilitate the Orthodox Church’s image as a guardian of the Bulgarian national identity under the Ottoman rule, but they did not foresee the restoration of her proper religious and social functions.³³

5.

The overthrow of Todor Zhivkov’s regime in 1989 launched new developments in society. In the last fifteen years, religion took part in reinstating the indigenous identity of Bulgarians, free from the ideological paradigm of communism. Its potential to influence the national stability as well as the peace in the Balkans was restored as well.

Mapping Religious Identities in Post-Communist Bulgaria

According to the 2001 census, about 82,6 % of Bulgarians affiliate themselves with Eastern Orthodoxy, 12,2 % with Sunni Islam, while the others belong to non-Orthodox Christian denominations, Judaism³⁴ and New Religious Movements.³⁵ These figures, however, do not

³² These issues are discussed by Kalkandjieva in *Bulgarskata pravoslavna curkva i durzhavata, 1944-1953* (Sofia: Albatros, 1997) as well as in her dissertation on *Ecclesio-Political Aspects of the International Activities of the Moscow Patriarchate, 1917-1948*, defended in the History Department of the Central European University (Budapest) in 2004.

³³ About religion in Bulgaria under communism see: Kalkandjieva, *Bulgarskata pravoslavna tsurkva i durzhavata*; Ibid., “The Catholic Church in Bulgaria and the Cold War,” in: *L’Europe et la Méditerranée: Stratégies politiques et culturelles (XIXe et XXe siècles), Actes du colloque de Nancy-Malzéville (4, 5, 6 septembre 1997)* sous la direction de G. Meynier et M. Russo, (Nancy: Presses universitaires de Nancy, France, L’Harmattan, 1999), p. 229-241; S. Eldarov, *Bulgaria i Vatikana, 1944-1989* (Sofia: 2002); Mitko Mateev, *Na slovoto ti upovavah...* [Memoirs on the communist trial against the Protestant pastors in 1949] (Sofia: 1993); Mihail Gruev, *Mezhdurpetollachkata i polumeseca. Bulgarite musulmani i politicheskia rezhim (1944-1959)* (Sofia: 2003).

³⁴ Bulgarian Jews are mostly Sephardic, expelled from Spain. There are also Eshkenazi Jews from the German lands who came to Bulgaria between the fifteenth and twentieth century. The mother tongue of Sephardic Jews is Ladino and they have begun to study Hebrew recently because many of them moved to Israel. The language studies are another factor enhancing their ethnic and religious identity in the post-communist era.

³⁵ It is interesting that the post-communist statistics on religion in Bulgaria do not resister any atheists. About the religious statistics see “The International Religious Freedom Report 2004, released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, available in: http://www.usembassy.bg/policy/irf_03.html. The number of adherences of the different

reflect the real state of religiosity in Bulgaria today. According to the instructions for the fulfilling of the statistical cards, the religious adherence is regarded as “the historically determined adherence of the individual or of his/her parents and forefathers to a certain group with concrete religious views.”³⁶ This approach increases the proportion of the Orthodox population. It also reveals a tendency to bring closer the religious and ethnic identities, while blurring the difference between real and formal believers. At the same time, the mentioned statistical data point to Orthodoxy and Islam as the most important factors for the religious peace in the country. This understanding urged an international team of scholars to run a project, entitled *Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria* (1994-1997). According to their conclusions, the relations between ethnic Bulgarians and ethnic Turks are not determined by their religious affiliation.³⁷ They also revealed that ethnic Bulgarians are more open to those Jews who have converted to Orthodoxy than to those who belong to Judaism. At the same time, the religious affiliation of the Roma people has no influence upon their distance from the other ethnic communities in Bulgaria.³⁸ In the case of the Pomaks, however, we witness another situation. They turned to be equally distanced from both ethnic groups: Bulgarians and Turks. Religion separates Pomaks from the former and ethnicity – from the latter.³⁹ It seems that the Pentecostals are the most open for integrating people without regard to their ethnic origins.⁴⁰

religions and confessions varies. According to the official statistics only 70,000 Muslims live in Bulgaria, while the unofficial figures reach the number of 175,000. See: Albena Shkodrova, *Muslim infighting fuels media fundamentalist fears*, available in: <http://archiv2.medienhilfe.ch/News/2004/SEE/IWPR519.htm>. If the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute reported only 42,000 Protestants in 2003, the Bulgarian Protestant denominations insist on having about 100,000 members. Dony K. Donev, *Post-communist Believers in a Postmodern World*, a paper delivered at the conference “Christianity and Human Rights,” held in Samford University, Birmungham, Alabama, November 13, 2004, available in: http://www.samford.edu/lillyhumanrights/papers/Donev_Postcommunist.pdf.

³⁶ See *Religious Structure of the Population*, a summary of the results of the 2001 census on the religious structure of the Bulgarian population, presented in the website of the Bulgarian National Statistical Institute. Available in: www.nsi.bg/Census/StrReligion.htm .

³⁷ The project results are published in Bulgarian and English by Foundation “International Center for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations”. The project was sponsored by the PHARE Programme. *Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria*, Antonina Zhelyazkova, ed., (Sofia: IMIR, no year), 174.

³⁸ The Roma population in Bulgaria belongs to various religious organizations. Traditionally Bulgarian Roma people belonged to Orthodoxy and Islam. In the last decades, however, many of them joined to Protestant churches especially to the Pentecostals. There is also a small number of Roma people who joined the Greek rite Catholic Church.

³⁹ Conclusions based on the field work accomplished by Maria Schnitter in the region of Asenovgrad (a city near Plovdiv). The Bulgarian journalist, Ms Rada Domuschieva, discussed the new developments in the town of Dzhebel, inhabited mainly by Pomaks in a program transmitted on the BTV channel on September 16, 2005. She showed how the new imam, who had recently come to the town closed the Muslim graveyards and forbade Pomaks to bury their dead there

The mentioned study on Christian-Muslim compatibility, however, was strongly influenced by the pre-1989 tendency to give priority to ethnicity over religiosity. It underrates the post-communist effects of the previous policy to ethnic and religious minorities. The communist regime sought to destroy religion,⁴¹ while suppressing the Turkish and Jewish minorities due to their sentiments to states, situated outside the Iron Curtain.⁴² This selective approach created conditions for the intensification of religiosity in Bulgaria after 1989. Another problem is the use of the word “Christians” as a synonym of Orthodox Bulgarians that excludes the Catholic and Protestant Christians from the research. The project timing, also imposed certain constraints on its research. Launched in 1994, it was focused on regions with ethnically mixed population, where there were century-long traditions of peaceful co-existence, while the ‘Christian’ regions were not explored. Meanwhile, the Christian-Muslim encounter in these places has been intensified by the growing migration within and immigration into Bulgaria as a result of its democratization and eurointegration.⁴³

because they did not want to do it in accordance with Islam, i.e. they buried their dead in clothes instead naked. They also used to inscribe the names of their dead relatives on the grave stones. Now the local Muslim community is in despair. They do not know where to bury their dead in the future. At the same time, the municipal authorities and the local representatives of the influential ethnic party – the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, keep silence.

40 I am thankful for these observations to Mario Marinov from the South-East Bulgarian University of Blagoevgrad, who has researched the Protestant churches in Bulgaria.

41 According to Daniela Kalkandjieva, the antireligious policy of the communist regime had a limited degree of flexibility. While attacking the religiosity of people on an equal footing, it differentiated the controllable religious institutions such as the Orthodox Church from those who were under the influence of religious organizations outside the Iron Curtain (Israeli Judaism, Turkish Islam, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism and others).

42 According to the typology suggested by Anna Krusteva, the ethnic policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party covered a wide spectrum from the recognition of the ethnic minorities in the beginning of the Cold War, through their integration in the next years, to the assimilation of the ethnic Turks in the mid-1980s. See: Krusteva, “Bulgarian ethnic policy,” *Ot etnichnost kam migratsiya* [From ethnicity to migration] (Sofia: New Bulgarian University, 2005), 39-43. The article is published in *Transitions*, 2001, No. 1.

43 The migration aspect was revealed during the parliamentary elections on June 25, 2005, when the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF) won 34 deputies in the National Assembly thanks to the mobility of its voters (mainly Muslims of Turkish and Bulgarian origins as well as a considerable number of Roma). During the last municipality elections in Bulgaria, the MRF won the elections in the ethnically mixed regions thanks to the voters, who work and live in Turkey but were taken by buses to vote in Bulgaria, where they have second citizenship and address registration. The suffrage of the Bulgarian citizens of Turkish origins, who have worked in Turkey for years, provokes hot discussions in Bulgarian society in the last two years. See: http://www.mediapool.bg/site/mizbori_03/2003/11/03/06_031103mi.shtml; <http://www.mediapool.bg/show/?storyid=105640>. Used on 17 August 2005.

The lack of open conflicts between the Orthodox and Muslim communities in Bulgaria has made scholars blunt about the mobility issue for long time.⁴⁴ In late August 2005, however, the situation changed. The appointment of district governors nominated by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms provoked sharp protests in several Bulgarian cities.⁴⁵ They were extremely strong in Varna that was declared “Orthodoxy’s stronghold.” This slogan was supported by the Orthodox Metropolitan of Varna and his clergy as well as by 17 local civil and political organizations.⁴⁶ These events call for new studies on the dynamics of Christian-Muslim encounter in Bulgaria. They have to take into account not only the internal migration, but also the growing immigration of Muslims attracted by Bulgaria’s accession to Europe.⁴⁷ This research also has to pay attention to the great degree of ‘laicization’ of Muslims in Bulgaria. They eat non-*halal* meat, including pork.⁴⁸ They also limit their religious duties to the Friday Prayer.⁴⁹

The relations between Orthodox Christians and Sunni Muslims, however, do not cover the whole religious spectrum. Two seminars on *Youth and Interreligious Dialogue* (May 13-15 and July 1, 2005), organized by the Center for Interreligious Dialogue and Conflict Prevention at Sofia University, revealed some intra-religious tensions. The Christian communities in Bulgaria continue to be divided by their Western or Eastern European orientation, inherited from the previous times. At the same time, the Orthodox community is inclined to show some respect to the Catholic ones, especially to that of Latin rite, while preserving its hostility to the Protestant churches and new religious movements. These attitudes have parallels at an institutional level. The Synod of Patriarch

44 See the IMIR project on *The Neighbourhood of Religious Communities in Contemporary Bulgarian Society*, headed by Prof. Georgi Fotev. See: <http://www.imir-bg.org/bulgarian.htm>

45 See: “Tsurkoven skandal za oblastniya na Varna” [Church conflicts concerning the governor of Varna], in: *Sega* [newspaper “Now”] from August 30, 2005, available in: <http://www.segabg.com/30082005/p0010001.asp>. See also “Parties protest nomination of ethnic Turkish district governor,” published in Bulgarian News Network on August 23, 2005. Available in: <http://www.bgnewsnet.com/story.php?lang=en&sid=20584>.

46 A hint for the attitude of the non-Muslim Bulgarian citizens towards the Muslim ones could be seen in the fact that the Higher School of Islamic Studies in Sofia has no label with its name at the front door, situated on 18 Kozloduy Street in Sofia.

47 Prodrumou pays special attention to the change of Greece’ religious profile caused by the mass immigration over the last decade. This change turned Greece into a frontline state in its efforts to address the issue of religious pluralism as they relate to criteria for citizenship and to the quality of democracy. See: Prodrumou, *Some Notes on Religion, State, and Democracy*.

48 The Jewish people in Bulgaria also do not observe the religious prohibitions about pork. There is a small group of Jews who have come from the former Soviet Union. They are more radical and insist on the strict following of the requirements of Orthodox Judaism. I have received this information through informal interviews with Bulgarian Jews.

49 The laic attitude of Bulgarian Muslims to their religion is quite different from the more radical type of Islam in the former Soviet Union. Most probably it is an outcome of the experience of their forefathers, who lived in the Ottoman Empire and thus had not been capsulated in closed societies as the Muslims in Orthodox Russia. Being linked with the prevailing religion and the political power in the Ottoman Empire this Muslim community did not feel threatened by the other religions and thus was not very strict in observing the rules of Islam.

Maxim left the World Council of Churches in 1998, but agreed to welcome Pope John Paul II as a “political leader” during his visit to Bulgaria in May 2002.⁵⁰ At the same time, the Orthodox intellectuals took different positions concerning the Pope’s visit. Some regarded it as humiliation for the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, while the others saw in it an opportunity to increase her prestige in society.⁵¹

Another set of religious tensions is emerging between the Muslim and the Judaist communities in Bulgaria. It seems to be a post-communist phenomenon.⁵² Most probably it has been caused by the recent emigration of many Bulgarian citizens of Jewish origins to Israel that makes their relatives in Bulgaria more sensitive about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is additionally nurtured by the reinforced religious identity of the Muslim population in Bulgaria.⁵³ At the same time, this development does not put the religious peace at risk because it concerns minorities who usually live in different regions.⁵⁴ There are also tensions on political and ethnic grounds. The recent parliamentary elections caused frictions between the Muslims of Bulgarian

50 See the interview of Metropolitan Neofit of Russe before the newspaper *Standard* (May 25, 2002), available in: http://www.pravoslavieto.com/interviews/2002/mitr_neofit.htm. Metropolitan avoided to use the word “ecumenism” under the pretext of its negative connotation, but stressed that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church had been an active member of the Movement for Peace through Churches (which was actually Stalin’s idea). At the same time, the Metropolitan appreciate the significance of the Pope’s visit to Bulgaria. At the same time, if Pope John Paul II addressed the Bulgarian Patriarch with “Your Holiness,” the Patriarch referred to the Holy Father with “Christ is risen!” See: “Solemn address of Pope John Paul II to Patriarch Maxim” (Sofia, May 24, 2005) available in: <http://mediapool.bg/site/bulgaria/2002/05/24/0013.shtml> and “Address to John Paul II during His visit” available in: http://www.pravoslavieto.com/docs/slovo_pMaksim.htm. Both documents are in Bulgarian. Still the Pope’s visit to Bulgaria passed in a very smooth way, while, two years earlier, the Greek Orthodox clergy protested against the Pope’s visit and called him “the grotesque two-horned monster of Rome.” See: *Guardian*, March 20, 2000.

51 See the debate between Kalin Yanakiev and Georgi Kapriev, which summary is published in Bulgarian in *Kultura* [newspaper “Culture”] No. 26 from June 28 2002, available in: www.online.bg/kultura/my_html/2234/papa.htm

52 The growing tension between Muslims and Jews in Bulgaria could be also part of the pattern described by Adam Seligman in a discussion over religion and democracy. According to him, Muslim immigrants in the European Union are not influenced by the European secularism, but they are becoming more Muslim. The small number of Jews who live in Europe also are becoming more religious. See: Prodromou, *Some Notes on Religion, State, and Democracy*.

53 The study of Arabic as the language of the Holy Koran is a new development in Bulgaria. Being equally important for both Turkish speaking and Bulgarian speaking Muslims it enhances the sense of their common religious identity. The way of clothing, the religious fests and ceremonies work in the same direction as well.

54 Jews are usually concentrated in the big cities as Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna, while the Muslims live in more rural areas, situated in Northeast and South Bulgaria.

origins (Pomaks) and those of Turkish ones.⁵⁵ It seems that only the Protestant churches are the zealous supporters of the interreligious dialogue in Bulgaria. Their openness is a complex outcome of several factors. Protestants learned “to recruit and retain members under conditions of repression” in the pre-communist times, when the Orthodox Church dominated over the other religious groups in Bulgaria.⁵⁶ The number of their believers was characterized by steady growth even under communism.⁵⁷ They also have an extremely flexible structure that helps them to exist in the modern secularized environment, avoiding the institutional crises of the classic Christian churches – the Orthodox and the Catholic one.

The end of atheist society impelled the Bulgarian Orthodox Church’s desire to restore her pre-communist monopoly in the religious sphere. In the early 1990s, the Orthodox clergy initiated a series of ‘crusades’ against the new religious movements that had appeared in Bulgaria. In the early 1990s, the activities of a charismatic church called “Emanuel” in the city of Plovdiv fueled one of the biggest confrontations. Together with other “sects” it was accused of being structure of Western intelligence services that “ruin the traditional churches and religions” and destroy the Bulgarian state and nation.⁵⁸ These attacks ceased by 1998, when the crisis within the Orthodox Church reached its climax. A “Pan-Orthodox Council,” held in Sofia (September 30 - October 30, 1998) attempted to find a canonical solution for the division within the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Its failure increased the conservatism of the Synod of Patriarch Maxim and the ecumenism of the Alternative Synod. The former has certain doubts about Bulgaria’s accession to Europe,⁵⁹ while the latter welcomes the dialogue with other religious communities. Disappointed by the schism

⁵⁵ This assumption is based on the evidence presented by the Bulgarian private TV enterprise “BTV” in the “Reporterite” [The reporters] Program, broadcasted before the parliamentary elections in June 2005. A survey, made during the workshop on *Youth and Interreligious Dialogue* revealed also a tendency some Muslim people to consider their nationality Muslim as well. The data, however, is not statistically sufficient, to claim that this tendency has future.

⁵⁶ These observations have been made by Paul Froese in his article dedicated to the religious situation in Soviet Russia, but they are applicable to the Bulgarian conditions as well. See: Froese, “Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why Atheistic Monopoly Failed,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Mar 2002, vol. 43, Issue 1, p. 39.

⁵⁷ According to Dony Donev, in 1975 the Protestant movement in Bulgaria reported 13,000 members [See: Klaus-Detlev Grothshen, *Bulgarian* (Guttingen: 1990), 564] and grew to 55,000 members in the 1980s [See: Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *Christian Witness to Nominal Christians Among the Orthodox: Report of the Consultation on World Evangelization Mini-Consultation on Reaching Nominal Christians among Orthodox*. (Pattaya, Thailand: June 16-27m 1980. January 26, 2004)]. See: Donev, *Postcommunist Believers in a Postmodern World*.

⁵⁸ See Alexander Dolev, *Sreshtu sektite* [Against the Sects], available in Bulgarian in: http://www.pravoslavietoc.com/books/sreshtu_sektite.htm.

⁵⁹ According to a survey, conducted by the pro-Maxim website www.religiabg.com, 63 % of 284 participants are against the eurointegration of Bulgaria. They argue that this will alienate people from Christ as well as from the Orthodox way of life. It will also increase the proselytism of other Christian denominations and religions. Available in: <http://religiabg.com/index.php?p=anketa&id=33>.

some believers looked for new solutions. They set up new Orthodox entities similar to the Protestant churches or moved under the jurisdiction of foreign Orthodox churches.⁶⁰ Some of them are inclined to preach very conservative Orthodoxy that contradicts to the principle of gender equality,⁶¹ while others are open to cooperate with Protestant churches.⁶²

The New Law on Religion and the Bulgarian Orthodox Church

The affiliation of the majority of Bulgarians with Orthodoxy determines the significance of this particular denomination for the religious peace. Therefore, the legal status of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has been in the focus of all analyses dealing with religion after 1989. They reveal many cases when the secular authorities have favored the Orthodox Church at the expense of other religious entities. In most cases, however, this attitude has not been a result of a wish to suppress the rights of the non-Orthodox believers, but of the desire to protect the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as a source of indigenous national identity. The latter has been inspired by the nineteenth century concept of nationhood which is still very popular as well as by the consciousness about the post-communist “vacuum of values” in society caused by the previous atheist policy. At the same time, the overemphasis on Orthodoxy does not correspond to the principles of democracy and pluralism adopted by the European Union. The difficult way to reconciliation prolonged the application of the communist Law on Religion. Adopted in 1949, it continued to be in force, with slight changes, until the end of 2002.⁶³ In this way, the law was not able to give adequate solutions for the changes in the religious map of post-communist Bulgaria.

60 These new Orthodox communities have not been object of a special study, but in the last three years I have collected some information about some of them through interviews with Orthodox believers and students from the Faculty of Theology of Sofia University. Except for some charismatic Orthodox movements organized around their priests, there are also small groups who returned to the old Church calendar. One of them is the Bulgarian Orthodox Old Calendar Archbishopric set up in 1968, when the Bulgarian Patriarchate adopted the new calendar. The others have been established in the late 1990s. They are connected with various Greek and Russian old calendar churches. For example one of them was established by Ivan Latkovski, a former Senior Assistant at the Theological Faculty of Sofia University. He joined the Russian Orthodox Autonomous Church led by the Suzdal and Vladimir Metropolitan Valentin. See: http://www.orthodox-christian-comment.co.uk/news-new_sect_at_sofia_theological_fa.htm.

61 One of the new Orthodox small churches forbade women to wear trousers. It also requires women to put kerchief on their heads during the liturgy. This is a novelty for Bulgarians, who do not share this Russian tradition.

62 Such an Orthodox entity is the Christian Ecumenical & Apostolic Church that has been recently set up but still has no recognition by the Bulgarian Court. The Church is run by a bishop and several priests (Vili Altunov, Mario Yonov, Mihail Novak, etc.). Their major aim is “to reform Eastern Orthodoxy.”

63 The problems caused by the post-communist application of the old Denominations Act are discussed by Emil Kohen and Krassimir Kanev in their article “Religious Freedom in Bulgaria.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. XXXVI, Winter-Spring 1999, Nums. 1-2, p. 243-264.

Meanwhile, the hopes that the restitution of possessions of the Orthodox Church, based on the Law of Land Property (1991)⁶⁴ and the Law of Restitution of Buildings confiscated by the State (1992)⁶⁵ will improve her positions in society, did not come through. In fact, the restitution was bound with the political struggle between the two major parties: the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF). On March 9, 1992, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, run by a person connected with the UDF, declared the 1971 election of Maxim as Bulgarian Patriarch null and void.⁶⁶ This act provoked an institutional crisis within the Church and split her hierarchy into two synods. One was headed by Patriarch Maxim and supported by the BSP, while the so-called Alternative Synod was backed by the UDF. All the attempts to heal the division by administrative measures, court decisions, and ecclesiastical councils failed. The new Denominations Act, adopted on December 20, 2002, intended to solve the problem.⁶⁷ It really made a step forward in the religious sphere. At the same time, its Art. 10 did not bring reconciliation in the religious sphere. It grants *ex lege* recognition to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, while prescribing court registration to the other religious denominations. According to Art. 10,

(1) The traditional denomination in Republic of Bulgaria is Eastern Orthodoxy. It has a historical role for the Bulgarian State and is of actual importance for the state life. Its voice and representative is the autocephalous Bulgarian Orthodox Church that under the name 'Patriarchate' is the [legitimate] successor of the Bulgarian Exarchate and is a member of the United, Holy, Ecumenical and Apostolic Church. It is governed by the Holy Synod and represented by the Bulgarian Patriarch, who also is the Metropolitan of Sofia.;

(2) The Bulgarian Orthodox Church is a judicial entity. Its structure and government are established by its statutes;

(3) Clauses 1 and 2 shall not serve as a ground for offering privileges or any advantages by a law.

This specific recognition of the Orthodox Church has a negative effect on the religious peace in Bulgaria and its accession to Europe. Despite its objection by the Council of Europe and various human rights organizations⁶⁸, the mentioned article had the support of most Bulgarian statesmen.

64 Durzhaven vestnik [State newspaper] No. 17 from March 1, 1991.

65 Ibid., No. 15 from February 21, 1992.

66 Metodii Spasov [Director of religious Affairs], "[Patriarch] Mazim has never been elected as patriarch in accordance with canons," *Demokratsia* [newspaper "Democracy"], No. 137 (713) from June 10, 1992. In a similar way, on February 10, 1992, the Directorate of religious Affairs declared "the election of Mr. Gendzhev in 1988 as Chief Mufti of the Muslims in Bulgaria null and void and proclaimed his removal from that position." See the Judgment of the European Court of Human Rights on the Case Hasan vs. Chaush (Strasbourg, October 26, 2000), available in: <http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/kirchenrecht/nomokanon/urteile/eughmr001026.htm>. In fact, both religious institutions had to restore considerable properties.

67 An English translation of the Denominations Act of 2002 is available in: www.religionandpolicy.org/show?p+1.1.292

68 See the PACE Resolution 1390 (2004) available in: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/TA04/>

It was justified by Art.13, § 3 of the 1991 Constitution that reads: “The traditional religion in Republic of Bulgaria is the Eastern Orthodox denomination.” They also referred to the interpretation given by the Constitutional Court on February 18, 1998 that “the traditional nature of Eastern Orthodoxy expresses its cultural and historical role for the Bulgarian state, as well as its present significance for the state life and especially by its impact on the system of official holidays.”⁶⁹ The defenders of the *ex lege* recognition, however, have omitted the different meaning that the new bill gives to the mentioned constitutional text. It is no more Eastern Orthodoxy that is defined as “traditional religion” in accordance with the 1991 Constitution, but the Orthodox Church, i.e. a particular religious institution.

This metamorphosis was realized by the means of the term *veroizpovedanie* [denomination].⁷⁰ According to § 1 of the “Additional Instructions” of the bill, “denomination” means “a totality, embracing a religious community with its religious beliefs and principles as well as its institution,” while the term “religious institution” is “a registered, in accordance with the Denominations Act, religious community, that has the quality of judicial entity with the corresponding ruling organs and statutes.” In this way, the traditional character of Eastern Orthodoxy as a religion/denomination (Constitution, Art.13, § 3) is transferred to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as an institution, representing the same denomination (Denominations Act). To make this transformation possible, the law preamble does not speak about Orthodoxy, but about “the specific and traditional role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in the history of Bulgaria for the creation and development of its spirituality and culture.”⁷¹ This declaration is explained in Art. 10 of the Denominations Act, reading that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church represents Eastern Orthodoxy. Such an explanation, however, confines Orthodoxy to a national or even nationalistic frame.

The *ex lege* recognition of the Orthodox Church also implies that some legal regulations do not concern her activity. This particular institution seems to be exempted from the regulations of Art. 8, foreseeing restrictions of the religious rights, when the freedom of religion is used against “the national security, public order, people’s health and the morals or against the rights and freedoms of other persons” as well as when religious societies and institutions are used for political ends (Art. 7 (1) and (2)). Therefore there are doubts whether religious institutions are really equal before law. The fear that the new religious movements that have recently appeared in Bulgaria will enhance religious fundamentalism in society does not justify the selective approach to non-Orthodox confessions. Only the lack of distinction between the religious entities in the Denominations Act will guarantee the fulfillment of Art. 6 § 2 of the 1991 Constitution that reads: “All citizens are equal before law. No limitation of rights and privileges, based on race, nationality, ethnical affiliation, sex, origin, religion... is allowed.” By this moment, however, only the candle

ERES1390.htm.

69 Prof. Nenovski, “Our Church Is ‘Registered’ by the Constitution,” *Trud* [newspaper “Labor”] from December 23, 2002, p. 26.

70 The Bulgarian word *veroizpovedanie* means “denomination” when it relates to a religious entity, but could be translated also as “faith” or “confession” when used with reference to the religious adherence of an individual.

71 The Preamble is available in Bulgarian in: <http://www.paragraf22.com/pravo/zakoni/zakoni-d/74857.html>.

industry and the church plate production of the Orthodox Church, headed by Patriarch Maxim, was exempted from the WAT by the Bulgarian Ministry of Finances.⁷² Another example is the unaccomplished restoration of the possessions of the Catholic Church and other non-Orthodox religious organizations. Most “religious programs” on the national radio and television are *de facto* limited to Eastern Orthodoxy, while the other confessions are either underrepresented or omitted.

The Denominations Act raises also the question about the compatibility between the secular and the religious in contemporary Bulgaria. It was provoked by the formula, linking the Patriarch’s office with that of the Metropolitan of Sofia (Art. 10, § 1). On this occasion the Bulgarian Constitutional Court was approached with a request to pronounce several texts of the Denominations Act, including Art. 10, “as incompatible with the Constitution and inconsistent with the European Convention for Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the Convention) and with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (the Covenant).”⁷³ This was a precedent in the Court’s history. The constitutional judges were involved in a discussion on canons, a sphere where they have no competence. Some of them expressed an opinion that the Patriarch’s office had to be bound with that of the Metropolitan of the capital city or Sofia on the basis of the 34th Canon of the First Ecumenical Council (325).⁷⁴ Others disagreed because a civil bill as the Denominations Act could not incorporate religious principles that engaged the secular state with religion. In their view, this was against the constitutional principle of separation of church and state. Still their number was not sufficient and the challenge of the text of Art. 10 was dismissed.⁷⁵ In this way, the mixture of secular and religious elements is still presented in the Bulgarian civil law and could provoke conflicts in the religious field. This danger became a reality on July 21, 2004, when the police occupied the premises used by the Alternative Synod. As a result, 250 churches and other properties of the ‘alternatives’ were transferred to Patriarch Maxim.⁷⁶ It seems that the conflict could not be solved without external assistance. In this respect, the PACE’s recommendations as regards Art. 10 of the Denominations Act could help. In the case of paragraphs 1 and 3, they suggest “to ensure that the special recognition given to Eastern Orthodoxy does not lead to the discrimination of other religions for practical purposes.” At the

72 The exemption of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church’s candle industry from the WAT was announced on January 13, 2005 in: <http://www.religiabg.com/?p=oldnews&id=3653>. It was justified on the basis of the new Denominations Act. According to the Minister of Finances, the trade with candles and church plate is used for the Orthodox Church’s financial self-support and thus it has to be exempted from the WAT.

73 See: Decision No. 12 of July 15, 2003 in Constitutional case No. 3/2003, which English summary is available in: http://www.constcourt.bg/constcourt/ks_eng_frame.htm

74 Decision No. 12 of July 15, 2003 in Constitutional case No. 3/2003, *Dŭrzhaven vestnik*, No. 66, 2003.

75 The Bulgarian Constitutional Court consists of 12 judges. Its decisions are valid only in case that 7 or more judges have supported them. The case of the Denominations Act was discussed by 11 judges 6 of whom were against art. 10.

76 See: *Bulgaria: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor on February 28, 2005. Available in: http://www.usembassy.bg/policy/human_rights_04.html.

same time, they recommend either to delete the provision for the *ex lege* recognition of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church or ensure that her leadership is legitimate according to Orthodox canonical law.⁷⁷

Orthodox Bulgarians vs. Non-Orthodox Bulgarians

At a community level, the Denominations Act also hides risks for the religious peace in Bulgaria because the Non-Orthodox citizens do not feel comfortable about the text of Art. 10. Public figures often speak about the Orthodox people as Christians, while referring to Catholics or Protestants as if they are not Christians.⁷⁸ Much more dangerous is another tendency, operating on a wider religious basis, that confront Orthodox with non-Christian citizens of Bulgaria. In this respect, the official address of Patriarch Maxim's Synod to the Bulgarian people, broadcasted by the Bulgarian National Television four days before the bill's adoption (December 16, 2002), is very symptomatic. According to it, the new law "makes clear and further develops the Constitutional formula for "traditional religion."⁷⁹ It was also considered as a recognition of the "natural rights of the Orthodox majority of Bulgarians."⁸⁰ The address concluded:

... the vote "for" and "contra" the texts, recognizing the Bulgarian Orthodox Church ... will be a clear and undeniable sign [revealing] who takes the side of the forces that have been working against

⁷⁷ See Resolution 1390 adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly of the Council of Europe, adopted on September 7, 2004, available in: <http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/WorkingDocs/doc04/EDOC10065.htm>. According to this resolution,

"a. paragraphs 1 and 3 (special recognition of Eastern Orthodoxy and the principle of non-discrimination): recognising that the wording of these provisions is not objectionable *per se*, to ensure that the special recognition given to Eastern Orthodoxy does not lead to the discrimination of other religions for practical purposes such as state or municipal support, restitution of property, treatment of taxation matters, teaching of religion, etc.;

b. paragraph 2 (*ex lege* recognition of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church): either to delete this provision outright, thereby subjecting the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to the same registration requirements as other religious communities; or to ensure in other ways without interference by the executive that the leadership of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church is legitimate according to Orthodox canonical law."

⁷⁸ The Bulgarian tendency to limit Christianity to Eastern Orthodoxy has parallels in the West, where the Christian religion is often limited to Catholicism or to sometimes to Protestantism.

⁷⁹ Address of the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church concerning the debates on the draft of the new Denominations' Act, read by His Holiness Bulgarian Patriarch Maxim on Channel 1 of the Bulgarian National Television on December 16, 2002 (Before the adoption of the law) and published in the *Tsûrkoven vestnik* [Church Newspaper] No. 1, 2003: http://synpress.bglink.net/index_broevie.htm

⁸⁰ It is important to mention that the word used in Bulgarian – "*estestven*" could be translated also as "logical" or "self-understandable." Address of the Holy Synod from December 16, 2002.

our kinfolk Church for years and who respects the freedom of our religious convictions, the unity and authority of the Republic of Bulgaria.⁸¹

Although the advocates of the Orthodox Church's special status do not use the phrase "natural rights" they are not far from it. In their view, it will be a humiliation for Orthodox Bulgarians, if the law requires this Church to observe the same rules as the non-Orthodox religious institutions. They justify the exclusive application of such rules to the non-Orthodox religious denominations as a means against the appearance of religious fundamentalism.⁸² Their opponents, however, consider that Art. 10 provides for substantial difference between a particular Orthodox Church and the other religious entities that have to pass through a court registration. In fact, the law divides the denominations into three categories, according to the procedure of their recognition: the Orthodox Church of Patriarch Maxim receives it *ex lege*; the religious institutions registered on the basis of the previous law (Muslims, Armenians, Catholics, Jews, etc.) are automatically recognized and preserve their status of judicial entities;⁸³ the religious confessions, who have not been recognized, have to apply before the court in agreement with the full procedure fixed in articles 14-20 of the bill.

At first glance, the 'obsession' with Orthodoxy demonstrated by the Denominations Act story seems to be a purely religious product. In fact, it is an outcome of contemporary political developments, combined with old stereotypes of thinking. People continue to use modern concepts of Orthodoxy, while referring the Medieval Ages. Their views on the role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church are still colored by the nineteenth century national concept. Some Orthodox Bulgarians are not able to overcome the paradigm of the East-West division, reinforced by the ecclesiastical borders between Catholic-Protestant world and the Eastern Orthodox one as well as by the Cold War experience. The clash of these stereotypes with the post-communist political and economic developments brings about new tendencies in the religious field. One of them is linked with the Alternative Synod whose appearance was not only result of the struggle for political and economic power in the country but also an attempt to break with the communist past of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The other tendency is expressed by a group of academicians. *The Bulgarian National Doctrine*, published in 1997, imposes on the state the duty "to keep the unity of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church" (Art. 31).⁸⁴ This approach, however, was a gesture to the past rather than a step to the future. Finally, the failure of the new Denominations Act to resolve the ecclesiastical question reveals its complicated nature and calls for complex measures for its final solution.

Religion in Bulgaria and International Peace

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² See the article published by Prof. Nenovski.

⁸³ According to the text of § 2 of "Transitory and Closing Regulations" the Directorate of Religious Denominations is obliged to transfer the files of these confessions to the court for their formal registration.

⁸⁴ The text of the doctrine is available in Bulgarian on: <http://www.sarakt.org/doktrina.htm> Used on 17 August 2005.

The impact of religious developments in post-communist Bulgaria on international affairs is one of the less studied issues. The events of September 11 provoked fears about the radicalization of Islam in Bulgaria, but the analyses do not present evidence to take them seriously. By this moment, the religious minorities in Bulgaria are not a source for concerns but a means of dialogue with nations belonging to the religious traditions of Islam, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism. At the same time, the role of Orthodoxy in international affairs is either neglected or treated in accordance with Huntington's thesis that the Orthodox nations are less able to develop stable democratic system than the Catholic-Protestant ones.⁸⁵ The Synod of Patriarch Maxim is often accused by the 'alternatives' of linking Moscow and Belgrade in an Orthodox axis directed against western democracies.

Although, Huntington's views seem to be supported by the slow democratization of the former communist countries and the Yugoslav wars, there are serious counter-arguments such as the successful coexistence between Orthodoxy and democracy in North America and the Greek membership in the European Union. To a great degree, the negative attitude to Eastern Orthodoxy is an outcome of the underdeveloped studies on its institutional, societal and historical development. One of the few experts on Orthodoxy, E. Prodromou, mentions its openness to democracy, based on the Trinitarian notion of unity in diversity and on its "traditional beliefs that freedom, choice, and human agency are prerequisites for all forms of social change."⁸⁶ The specificity of Orthodoxy roots in the Church's response to democracy which is certain, while that to pluralism is ambivalent.⁸⁷ Today, Orthodox figures rely on democratic premises and practices when they express their ambivalence towards pluralism.⁸⁸ In her view, "Orthodoxy's engagement with democracy ... comes at time when questions about the effects and limits of pluralism are pressing not only for the Orthodox, but just about everyone else as well."⁸⁹ In fact, we could see similar patterns in the behavior of the Catholic Church, whose hierarchy is open for interreligious dialogue but has concerns about religious pluralism because its relativism undermines the sense of the only single truth and God. ⁹⁰

In the case of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church the international dimensions of her activities are shadowed by domestic problems. There are, however, some important aspects that need to be discussed. The first of them concerns the text of Art. 10 of the Denominations Act. According to it, the present Bulgarian Patriarchate is "the legitimate successor of the [former] Bulgarian

⁸⁵ S. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," in: *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, v. 72, No. 3.

⁸⁶ Prodromou, "The Ambivalent Orthodox," in *Journal of Democracy*, April 2004, v. 15, Num. 2, p.65.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 71.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 73.

⁹⁰ This statement was made by Cardinal Casper during the presentation of the Bulgarian translation of his book *Jesus Christ*, held in Sofia University on April 1, 2005.

Exarchate.”⁹¹ This formula is too broad and does not make clear which areas of succession are concerned. It could provoke conflicts with the neighbor Orthodox churches, because the canonical territory of the Bulgarian Exarchate has included their present dioceses in the period 1870-1918 as well as during World War II. It also has the potential to add fuel in the present conflict between the so-called Autocephalous Macedonian Orthodox Church and the Serbian Patriarchate. In fact, the representatives of the former have been referred to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church several times since the beginning of their movement for Macedonian autocephality.

The complicated history of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church since her restoration in 1870 gives examples about the negative impact of unsolved canonical problems on international affairs. It reveals that differences between the political and ecclesiastical borders in states where Orthodoxy is the traditional religion of the majority of population create tensions and open conflicts with neighbor countries. We witness such problems in the territories of the former Soviet Union and Tito’s Yugoslavia. In this respect, the Bulgarian case could serve as a basis for their overcoming.

The Bulgarian Orthodox Church has the potential to influence the dynamics of the inter-church relations in the Orthodox world. Her traditional devotion to the Russian Orthodox Church makes predictable her position in eventual conflicts between the Patriarchate of Moscow and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. At the level of Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church tends to take the side of Moscow. Her withdrawal from the World Council of Churches is a new development that brings the Bulgarian Orthodox hierarchs closer to their Russian brothers in Christ. This tendency is additionally nurtured by the internal crisis in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In this respect, the Bulgarian Patriarchate lags behind the Romanian Orthodox Church famous for her ecumenism and pro-western orientation.

The last aspect of the link between Orthodoxy and international affairs concerns the church calendar. In 1968, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church changed the old calendar style with the new one, similar to the Gregorian calendar, used by Catholics. The change took place during the most heated disputes on the Macedonian autocephality. In fact, it brought about the end of the Bulgarian negotiations with the Macedonian Autocephalous Church, because the latter used the old style. After the fall of communism, some Orthodox Bulgarians set up old calendar parishes, under various Russian and Greek canonical jurisdictions. The calendar question could provoke problems not only within the Orthodox community in Bulgaria, but internationally. In fact, most the Orthodox countries, who are recent or future members of the European Union, use the new calendar. In this way, the common celebration of Christmas contributes to the sense of common Christian roots, while the Orthodox Easter stresses the different denominational identity.

The presented analysis on the role of religion in Bulgaria as a factor for stability and development reveals its complexity. The fall of communism created conditions for the democratization of Bulgarian society, including the sphere of religion. The religious identities have been reinstated and the life of religious communities has been normalized. At the same time, religion is challenged by the principles of democracy and pluralism as well as by the processes of globalization. As a result, areas of potential conflicts could appear at several levels:

⁹¹ This territorial aspect of the succession issue was mentioned by my colleague Dilyan Nikolkchev during the Conference on the Denominations Act, organized by the Rule of Law Bulgarian Institute, held in Sofia on 18-19 December 2003.

- between state and religion (The role of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church as preserving and conveying values is overemphasized by secular authorities at the expenses religious minorities, whose rights have not respected. It also touch the issue of the different responses to globalization: the secular and the religious);
- between the Orthodox community and non-Orthodox ones (Their relations experience some tensions, especially in the case of the Orthodox-Protestant encounter.);
- within the Orthodox community (They include the conflict between the two synods and some tensions between the old and new calendar Orthodox communities. To a great degree they are an outcome of the inability of the Orthodox Church to come to terms with her communist past as well as the lack of clear vision for her mission in a democratic and pluralist society. These problems have not only religious, but also political, economic and social sources).

Another set of problems concerns the international dimensions of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church' activities. They have different roots:

- canonical (with regard to the Macedonian autocephality and other similar issues);
- ecclesiastical (with regard to the church calendar and the participation of laity and priests in the Church's government);
- legal (with regard to the international legal regime, e.g. EU Constitution, human rights, etc.)
- demographic (with regard to the decline of the Orthodox population and the growing number of non-Orthodox immigrants to Bulgaria)
- conceptual (with regard to the differences in the secular and religious concepts and visions of religious freedom, tolerance, pluralism, national security, democracy, secularization, globalization)
- terminological (with regard to the use of the same or specific terms by the various Christian churches and denominations that create misunderstanding)

The above mentioned problems call a series of measures in the field of religion. The changes in the Denominations Act, suggested by the Council of Europe, are a good start but they should be combined with other initiatives aimed to improve the culture of interreligious dialogue in Bulgaria. They should include:

- seminars and other activities that promote interreligious dialogue and culture in society;
- dissemination of academic knowledge on religious issues via interdisciplinary publications as well as discussions in the electronic media and Internet;
- academic religious studies (The present theological faculties at Bulgarian universities, the Sofia Institute for Islamic Studies and the Theological Evangelic Institute are *de facto* confessional higher educational schools that lack real academic approaches.);
- interdisciplinary research projects on religion (that will harmonize the used terminology and will develop specific methodology for the needs of religious studies);
- national and international network of experts on religion (that will help to exchange experience, research results and consultations).

The listed initiatives will help to overcome the narrow approach to religious issues, limited to their judicial or confessional aspects, that still prevails in Bulgarian society. They will help to develop further the present static patterns of religious coexistence into interactive models of a dialogue between religions and within them, i.e. between their denominations. They will contribute to the peaceful structuring the relationship between state and religion. Finally, they will satisfy the

need of experts, able to give adequate answers to the challenges and dynamics in the religious field at national and international levels.