

ALL EUROPEANS ARE EQUAL ...
BUT AREN'T SOME LESS EUROPEAN THAN OTHERS?
REFLECTIONS ON EUROPE
AND ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

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‘The Russian-Ukrainian relationship is to Eastern Europe ... what the Franco-German relationship is to Western Europe. Just as the latter provides the core of the European Union, the former is the core essential to unity in the Orthodox world.’

Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations...* 1997¹

‘Canonical territories of the Church are those over which the sovereignty of the Church is traditionally established with regard to its believers who live on these territories. For the Russian Orthodox Church these are the republics of the former Soviet Union, except for Georgia and Armenia.’

On-Line Pravda, 22/09/2001²

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to look in some detail into the question whether the predominance of an Orthodox-Christian religious tradition in a number of Eastern and Southern European countries presents a serious barrier for these

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¹ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London &c, 1997), p. 168.

² See: <http://english.pravda.ru/society/2001/09/22/15898.html>

countries to be full members of the European Union. To answer this question one needs to assess the nature of this Orthodox tradition and its impact on society and politics, critically to reflect on the nature and identity of "Europe" as a historically developing cultural realm, and to diagnose the processes of economic and political integration and expansion that lie behind it. In trying to realize these aims, I shall combine three perspectives: first of all, empirical elements taken from social theory; secondly, a couple of notions borrowed from political philosophy; and finally, the perspective of a citizen of the European Community with a considerable degree of affinity with post-Communist Eastern Europe. I hope this combination of statistical facts, conceptualization, and commitment will contribute to further the discussion about a topic that, one way or another, may prove to be of vital importance for the future of this part of the world that I and probably most readers of this essay live in.

"Orthodox Christianity", like "Islam", is often called an obstacle to a successful integration of these countries into the larger European Union, since it is assumed to entail a "Byzantine" concept of church-state relations, or an "Asiatic" concept of political rule. The farther east we go, the less "European" social relations and political institutions are said to become. Does the "Orthodox World" really belong to "Europe", or is it a world of its own? I want to address this question against the backdrop of the current discussion of the popular "civilizational" paradigm as exemplified in Samuel Huntington's notion of a "clash" of civilizations. My criticism is not aimed at his position as such, but at the type of conceptualization that it represents, and the consequences it has for "Europe".

This paper consists of four parts. The first one discusses the question whether it makes sense to speak of the "Orthodox World" in analogy with the "World of Islam". The second part looks at the expansion of the European Community as an "unlimited" project and the possible consequences it may have for the issue of religious freedom, particularly in countries like Russia and Greece. The third tackles the question of "European identity" in a more systematic manner, and situates both "Europe" and "Orthodoxy" against the present-day, globalizing world of liquid identities. The fourth part, finally, discusses the issues of secularization and deprivatization of religion in relation to the specific situation of the post-Soviet European countries, focusing on the largest of them, i.e. Russia.

1. IS THERE A "WORLD OF ORTHODOXY"?

I begin with some statistics. A dozen European countries have a significant or even predominantly Orthodox-Christian religious tradition.³ These are: the Russian Federation (59% = 84.6),⁴ Belarus' (80% = 8.2), and Ukraine (52% = 24.6);⁵ and further also Moldova (98% = 4.5), Rumania (87% = 19.3), Bulgaria (82% = 6.1), Serbia & Montenegro (65% = 7.0), Macedonia (32% = 0.6), Bosnia-Herzegovina (31% = 1.2), Greece (98% = 10.6) and the larger part of Cyprus (78% = 0.6), and Georgia (84% = 4.1). In addition, there are substantial Orthodox minorities in a number of EU-member states: Finland (1% = 0.05), Estonia (12.8% = 0.2), Latvia (15% = 0.35), Lithuania (4.1% = 0.15), Poland (1.3% = 0.5), and Slovakia (4% = 0.2); and in a couple of non-EU-member states: Albania (20% = 1.4), Kazakhstan (44% = 6.6), and Kyrgyzstan (20% = 1.0). Close to half of all European Orthodox Christians live in the Russian Federation.

The predominantly Orthodox countries constitute a relatively intact geographic space since the times these areas were Christianized. Orthodox Christianity has never reached out to the wider world in the way Catholicism and Protestantism have done, partly because none of these countries was able to establish colonies (unless one wishes to consider Siberia and Central Asia as such). As Victor Yelensky recently stated, 'Eastern Orthodoxy is still a "territorial religion" to a much greater extent than it is a global one' (see reference in n. 47 below). Politically the situation is far more diverse. Greece has been a member of the EU since 1981. Cyprus has become a member in 2004. Romania and Bulgaria are candidates for admission in 2007. Macedonia, Serbia & Montenegro, and Bosnia-Herzegovina will probably join the

³ Data taken from the CIA World Fact book (<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/fact-book/index.html>) and checked against other sources. General estimates of the total number of faithful vary between 225,000,000 (Major Religions of the World Ranked by Number of Adherents: http://www.adherents.com/adh_rb.html) and 300,000,000 (Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople: <http://www.ec-patr.gr/docdisplay.php?lang=en&id=583&tla=en>). In brackets I add the percentage of the population and the absolute number of Orthodox in millions.

⁴ The data for Russia vary considerably; the 59% is from a 2003 survey published at <http://www.portal-credo.ru> and quoted from Nikolaj Mitrokhin, *Russkaja pravoslavnaja cerkov'* (Moscow, 2005), p. 38.

⁵ The situation in Ukraine is particularly difficult to assess because there are several Orthodox Churches.

EU in the near future, but Belarus', Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and certainly Russia, will have to wait much longer, if they ever succeed at all in becoming members of the EU. Most countries have a common history as republics of the former Soviet-Union or satellite states of the Soviet empire. In Greece and the former Yugoslavia Orthodoxy has always been closely linked to the struggle for independence from the Ottoman Empire.

For Huntington religious tradition is a determining factor for the identity of a country and he is convinced that it make sense to speak of the "World of Orthodoxy". He revives an old paradigm when dividing the world into seven or nine major "civilizations", most of them defined by their religious background, including the "Western", the "Islamic", and the "Orthodox civilization".⁶

What is there to justify this idea of an "Orthodox World"? In the first place, most of the Orthodox countries have for some time been subject to authoritarian or totalitarian regimes and have only very recently become (quite fragile) democracies. Authoritarianism in Europe, however, has not been limited to the Orthodox world (cf. Spain and Portugal, or Poland and the Baltic states), nor is totalitarianism. Democracy functions well in Greece and Cyprus for several decades now, and prospects look good Macedonia, Bulgaria, and Romania. Georgia and Ukraine have recently seen successful attempts 'to get rid without bloodshed' of an unwanted government, to use Karl Popper's minimal definition of democracy.⁷ It may be true that monotheistic religious traditions have some potential for an authoritarian political theology, this has never been the only option, nor is it typical of Orthodox Christianity.

Secondly, the Orthodox countries are generally poorer than neighboring countries with a predominantly Roman Catholic or Protestant population – the exceptions are Greece and Cyprus, which both have a per capita GDP that is almost twice as high as that of Croatia and slightly higher than that of Slovenia.⁸ In 2000, predominantly Orthodox countries ranked third in terms of average GDP with US\$ 7,508, well after Protestant (US\$ 14,701) and Catholic countries (US\$11,170), and slightly ahead of predominantly Buddhist countries (US\$ 6,321).⁹ To be sure, these numbers are heavily influenced

⁶ *Clash*, map 1.3, p. 27.

⁷ Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (London, 1945; repr. 1966), vol. i, p. 124.

⁸ On the basis of CIA World Fact Book data.

⁹ Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular; Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 49, table 2.3.

by the importance of Russia: its GDP (US\$ 9,800) is almost 5 times that of Moldova (US\$ 1,900). Often this is explained by the underdeveloped work ethic and the lack of perception of “this world” as a valuable object of work and industry.¹⁰

Thirdly, of course, these countries share a common religious tradition which, like that of the Roman Catholic Church, claims to be the “One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic” Church that is in full accordance with the Nicene Creed and as a matter of fact constitutes the *only* true branch of Christianity since the schism of 1054. Three characteristics of the Orthodox Christian tradition in particular deserve attention: the first is the idea of a national religion that is linked to the fact that Orthodoxy is divided into 16 independent (14 autocephalous and 2 autonomous) national churches; the second is its rejection of religious pluralism on its “canonical territory”; the third is its traditional political theology, the core of which is the notion of a *symphony*, rather than either unity or strict separation, of secular and ecclesiastical powers (see further below).

The very essence of Huntington’s statement that ‘every civilization sees itself as the center of the world’ legitimizes his endeavor, but also presupposes that there is an “external” position that allows for alternative perceptions of the world.¹¹ History is the sum of the effects of individual and collective human action that is guided not only by material interests, but also by the ways in which the world is conceptualized and by a certain vision of what is thought to be a good society. Writing a History of Civilization is never politically innocent, but always also an intervention in the reality that is described. Oswald Spengler was clearly aware of this when he wrote the first line of his famous book: ‘In diesem Buche wird zum erstenmal der Versuch gewagt, Geschichte vorauszubestimmen’.¹² Spengler’s agenda was not only academic, but also political, and the same applies to Huntington’s agenda, which ‘provides an easily grasped and intelligible framework for understanding the world, distinguishing what is important from what is unimportant among the multiplying conflicts, predicting future developments, and providing guidelines for policy makers’.¹³

¹⁰ This point needs further elaboration – there is some, but not much literature on the topic of Orthodox Christian work ethic.

¹¹ *Clash*, pp. 54-55.

¹² Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (München, 1918; repr. 2000), p. 3.

¹³ *Clash*, pp. 36-37 in particular.

Members of a civilization can see themselves as the center of the world only if intellectuals provide them with the conceptual material necessary for such an x-centric construction. The elements of this construction are present in Huntington's definition of a civilization.¹⁴ First of all, civilizations exist in the plural: although 'the idea of civilization in the singular has reappeared in the argument that there is a universal world civilization,' this argument 'cannot be sustained'. Second, civilization is not the opposite of "culture"; attempts to distinguish technical-material civilization from the "higher" values and moral qualities of culture 'have not caught on', and consequently, 'civilization and culture both refer to the overall way of life of a people, and a civilization is a culture writ large'. Third, civilizations are 'comprehensive', which means that 'none of their constituent units can be fully understood without reference to the encompassing civilization'. Fourth, civilizations are 'mortal but also very long-lived,' and they are dynamic. Fifth, they are not political entities, and they may contain one, as in the case of Japan, or many political units, as in the case of Western civilization. Finally, their number is relatively fixed.

The civilizational paradigm has two very effective aspects. One is to *organize conflict*: to understand local conflicts in terms of larger, civilizational ones has both analytical and political advantages. Also, to the extent to which this paradigm assists people in determining their identity, it enables them to take sides, it gives them an idea of what they are fighting and dying for, and it serves to legitimize in civilizational terms conflicts which "in reality" are about something else (a conflict on oil or fresh water, or the like). Secondly, the paradigm also strengthens *internal cohesion*. In both cases, it proves fit to engage in the "we" vs. "them" opposition that stems from the logic of the political, and it is in its capacity to assign political conflict a *place* – at the "fault lines" between different civilizations – and a *subject* – a "we" or "them" –, that it is political. This aspect comes to the fore in the possibility, as recognized by Huntington, to reduce his oligo-civilizational world to a binary opposition of "the West and the rest".¹⁵ Rejecting the cultural bifurcation of Orient and Occident, the ideological bifurcation of (free) West and (communist) East, and the economic bifurcation of North and South, Huntington suggests

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 40-45.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 33.

a bifurcation between 'the West as the hitherto dominant civilization and all the others, which... have little if anything in common among them. The world, in short, is divided between a Western one and a non-Western many'.¹⁶ In his mind, there is a Western "we" that is significantly different from other "we's", turning the latter into equally many "them's", but potentially also reducing them to a single "them". Whether as external 'conflict organizer' or as internal 'cohesion generator', the key to the civilizational paradigm is that by providing a conceptual framework for practical action it works as a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The Huntingtonian paradigm draws a dividing line across Europe from Pechenga in the North to Kotor on the Adriatic: 'For forty-five years the Iron Curtain was the central dividing line in Europe. That line has moved several hundred miles east. It is now the line separating the peoples of Western Christianity, on the one hand, from Muslims and Orthodox peoples on the other'.¹⁷ In general, I agree with Wil van den Bercken that Russia, Belarus' and Ukraine belong to the European cultural space,¹⁸ and I think that the same applies to Transcaucasia, the Southern shores of the Mediterranean, and, indeed, Turkey. The question is, however, whether they also belong, or should belong, to the European *political* space. Orthodox Christian Greece is an interesting case in point. Huntington writes emphatically: 'Greece is not part of Western civilization... In their opposition to the Turks, Greeks historically have considered themselves spearcarriers of Christianity. (...) Yet Greece is also an anomaly, the Orthodox outsider in Western organizations. It has never been an easy member of either the EU or NATO. (...) Its behavior as president of the EU's council in 1994 exasperated other members, and Western European officials privately label its membership a mistake. (...) Greece will undoubtedly remain a formal member of NATO and the European Union. ... however, those memberships also undoubtedly will become more tenuous, less meaningful, and more difficult for the parties involved'.¹⁹

What Huntington really means is that Orthodox Greece tends to support and seek alliances with other Orthodox countries, e.g. Serbia and Russia, as in the Yugoslavian conflict, against Catholic Croatia and Muslim Turkey,

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 36.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

¹⁸ See his article in the present issue.

¹⁹ Huntington, *Clash...*, pp. 162-163.

while Croatia got the immediate support of Western European countries and of the Vatican and Turkey was backing Bosnia. There obviously is a lot of religious rhetoric displayed in these issues, but it may be questioned whether religion is not simply employed ideologically to legitimize policies based on national and economic interests, rather than being the issue at stake. If Orthodoxy is so important to Greece, then how to explain its hostility towards neighboring Macedonia, forcing it to adopt the absurd name of Former Yugoslav Republic? In the meantime, Greece is also supporting the European ambitions of Croatia, Serbia-Montenegro, and Albania. “Muslim” Turkey and Albania, “Orthodox” Greece, Romania, Russia, and a number of other countries are successfully cooperating in the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. So, there is every reason to question any religio-centric diagnosis of Greece’s uneasy position in Europe.

2. EUROPE UNLIMITED?

The question of the limits of its expansion is an obvious problem for Europe today. Right now this question presents itself with regard to Turkey on the one hand, and to some of the Orthodox countries (among them Bulgaria and Romania) on the other. But if the EU remains an attractive option both economically and politically, other countries are likely to apply for admission. No doubt “Islamic” Bosnia will be among these. It may also be expected that Ukraine and Georgia will be next, and there is no a priori reason why Israel or Lebanon might not follow suit.²⁰ The criteria for EU membership are economic (free market, healthy finances), political (pluralistic and democratic government), and humanitarian ones (human rights, minority policies), but not cultural or religious ones. As it expands and thus diversifies, Europe will have ever fewer grounds to set a limit to itself.

“United Europe” is an undetermined project. Zygmunt Bauman, who calls Jorge Luis Borges ‘one of the most eminent among the great Europeans’,

²⁰ Interestingly, Israel is a long-time participant in the Eurovision song contest, and Lebanon intended to participate in 2005. The contest’s name comes from the Eurovision TV Distribution Network, ran by the European Broadcasting Union (EBU). Any EBU-member may participate in the contest, including African and Asian countries like Israel, Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya and Syria. Of these, Israel and Morocco have already participated (source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurovision_Song_Contest).

articulated one extreme: ‘First, the “essence of Europe” tends to run ahead of the “really existing Europe”: it is the essence of “being a European” to have an essence that always stays ahead of reality... Second, while the “really existing Europe”, that Europe of politicians, cartographers and all its... spokespeople, may be a geographical notion and a spatially confined entity, the “essence” of Europe is neither the first nor the second.’²¹ Alternatively, others might argue that “Europe” is simply the actually existing EU, and “Europeans” are citizens of one of its member states. Both the reduction to actual citizenship and a broad definition, which would include, say, Mario Vargas Llosa and Salman Rushdie, have their kernel of truth, and this broad scope defines the very problem.

In fact we see a EU with a “natural” tendency to include ever more European countries, having a hard time to “limit” itself, and we see around the EU a number of countries that would like to join at some point. There is, indeed, no pertinent reason why the EU should not include Lebanon, if that country further develops into a stable and prosperous democracy with a free market and respect for human rights. After all, it was from Phoenicia that Zeus abducted Europè. With Lebanon as a member state, Europe would return to her birthplace and bring her offspring along.²² Other motifs from the myth that are worth mentioning are the notions of fertility, long life, and justice: Europè gave birth to Minos, Sarpèdon, and Radamanthus, the first becoming a king of legendary riches, the second being given longevity by Zeus and living for three generations instead of one, and the third becoming a law-giver and supreme judge of the underworld.²³ Of more importance still, is the motif of migration: it was by traveling from Phoenicia to Crete that Europè could give birth. Since then, she has moved on to the Aegean realm, the Hellenic and Roman Empire (re-including Phoenicia), split into Eastern and Western Europe, and now gradually collects the European lands, soon, perhaps, to reconnect with Asia on the shores of the Bosphorus.

“Europe” is an unlimited project, not because it will go on forever, but because it does not contain an intrinsic limit. EU enlargement follows the

²¹ Zygmunt Bauman, *Europe: An Unfinished Adventure* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 5.

²² H. Lamer et al., *Van Goor's Encyclopedisch Woordenboek der Klassieke Oudheid* (Den Haag, 1976), p. 130, and S.A. Tokarev (ed.), *Mify narodov mira*, 2 vols. (Moscow, 1980), vol. i, pp. 419-420.

²³ Tokarev, *Mify*, vol.ii, pp. 152, p. 410, and p. 363.

model of cooptation: the “really existing EU” decides whether aspirants qualify for joining the club. Like children playing a game, the established members need good reasons to exclude new candidates. As these reasons cannot be quantitative (the argument that the EU must not become too large too quickly has transient relevance only), they have to be qualitative. But the criteria applied to candidates for EU-membership do not contain any geographic, ethnic, religious, or linguistic element:

‘In Copenhagen on 22 June 1993, the European Council stated for the first time that “*the associated countries in central and eastern Europe that so desire shall become members of the European Union*”. At the same time, the European Council laid down three major criteria that candidate countries must meet before they can join the EU.

- First, a political criterion: candidate countries must have stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities.
- Second, an economic criterion: candidate countries must have a functioning market economy and be able to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union.
- Third, the criterion of being able to take on the obligations of EU membership, including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union. This means candidate countries must adopt the entire body of EU law – known as the *acquis communautaire*.²⁴

These criteria were formulated in view of a possible admission of a number of Central and Eastern European countries, but in themselves they do not exclude other countries. In the 2005 draft of the Constitutional Treaty, a phrase was included stating that EU-members should be “European” countries, but without specification of what “European” means: the “Europeanness” of both Turkey as a candidate and Cyprus as a member can be contested. If they can be called “European”, there is no good reason why Lebanon or Israel would not qualify as well. Of course, Europe may “end” where other polities –Iran or Russia? – put an end to its expansion, but any such limit is extrinsic, not intrinsic: it is a limit to, not of Europe.

| ²⁴ See http://europa.eu.int/abc/12lessons/index3_en.htm

The criteria for EU membership allude to the place of religion and church when referring to human rights and respect for minorities. Freedom of religion and conscience are evidently among these rights, and the minorities include not only national or ethnic, but also religious ones. Articles 9 and 14 of the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* (Treaty of Rome, 1950) make this clear:

‘Article 9 - Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

* Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.

* Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

Article 14 – Prohibition of discrimination

The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any ground such as sex, race, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status’.²⁵

The situation with respect to religious freedom varies considerably among the predominantly Orthodox countries. On the basis of the annual ‘International Religious Freedom Report’, issued by the US State Department, one can divide them into six groups: i) Belarus’ is a special case because it is a democracy in name alone and because of the 2002 Concordat between the state and the Belarussian Orthodox Church (which falls under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate); ii) Serbia & Montenegro, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Cyprus have a nearly clean record (there is a conflict between the Serbian and the Macedonian Orthodox Churches on Macedonian territory, there are some

| ²⁵ Quoted from <http://www.hrea.org/erc/Library/hrdocs/coe/echr.html>

tensions between Orthodox Christians and Muslims on Cyprus, and there are cases of aggression against Muslims in Bulgaria, but none of this receives government support); iii) in Romania and Moldavia, the central government respects the constitutional right to freedom of religion, but local authorities sometimes restrict the activities of “non-traditional” religions; iv) in Greece, the central government is said to respect the right to freedom of religion, but non-Orthodox groups or movements can be subject to all kinds of restrictions; v) in Russia, where Orthodox Christianity is defined as the main ‘traditional religion’ in a law on religion, the central government does not prevent the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) from attempting to protect its position in society; vi) in Georgia, finally, the only CIS-country lacking a law on religion, and with a State-Church Concordat, the situation appears to be considerably worse.²⁶

The “Orthodox countries” have as a rule mentioned religious freedom and non-discrimination in their constitutions. The Russian Federation has included them in its 1993 Constitution:

‘Article 28

Everyone shall be guaranteed the freedom of conscience, the freedom of religion, including the right to profess individually or together with others any religion or to profess no religion at all, to freely choose, possess and disseminate religious and other views and act according to them.

Article 19

1. All people shall be equal before the law and court.
2. The State shall guarantee the equality of rights and freedoms of man and citizen, regardless of sex, race, nationality, language, origin, property and official status, place of residence, religion, convictions, membership of public associations, and also of other circumstances. All forms of limitations of human rights on social, racial, national, linguistic or religious grounds shall be banned.
3. Man and woman shall enjoy equal rights and freedoms and have equal possibilities to exercise them’.²⁷

²⁶ See <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2005/c15679.htm>, with links to the various countries, and, for Georgia, http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=400

²⁷ Quoted from the official government and presidential websites: <http://www.constitution.ru/en/10003000-01.htm> and <http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/articles/ConstMain.shtml>

Obviously, a constitution is a vital document only if it is respected and acted upon by government officials, independent judges, individual citizens and their organizations. The 1977 Soviet constitution equally guaranteed freedom of religion:

‘Article 52. Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited.

In the USSR, the church is separated from the state, and the school from the church’.²⁸

But as with the entire constitution, the application of this article was limited by the notorious Article 39, which stated that ‘enjoyment by citizens of their rights and freedoms must not be to the detriment of the interests of the society or the state, or infringe the rights of other citizens’.²⁹ Moreover, the Soviet state had an explicit program of constitutionally backed “atheistic propaganda”.³⁰

Although the situation has improved since Soviet times, and the Russian federal government tries to stimulate the respect for constitutional rights and liberties, for example, by training local government officials, it is not difficult to find reports on violations of freedom of religion in Russia today.³¹ The initiatives and actions of the ROC, backed by local authorities, against what it considers proselytism on its “canonical territory” (the former Soviet Union, minus Georgia and Armenia), are based, in terms of the juridico-political order, on the notorious 1997 “Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations” [*Zakon o svobode sovesti i o religioznykh ob’edinenijakh*], which replaced the more liberal “Laws on Freedom of Conscience” of 1990 of the USSR and of the RSFSR (with the dissolution of the USSR, the latter

²⁸ Quoted from: <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/77cons02.html#chap07>

²⁹ See <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/russian/const/77cons02.html>

³⁰ See, for example, Jane Ellis, *The Russian Orthodox Church* (London & New York, 1988), pp. 251-255.

³¹ For a survey, see the 2003 International Religious Freedom Report on Russia, published by the US Secretary of State: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24430.htm>, and Forum18, named after article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <http://www.forum18.org/index.php>.

remained in force until the new bill of 1997).³² The bill of 1997, qualified by Zoe Knox as ‘arguably the most contentious legislation in post-Soviet Russia’, ‘does not recognize a state religion,’ but ‘its preamble identifies Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism as “historical religions” and recognizes the “special contribution of Orthodoxy to the history of Russia and to the establishment and development of Russia’s spirituality and culture”’.³³ In practice, it is used as an instrument to favor the four “historical” religions, and the ROC in particular, and to obstruct other religious organizations than those registered in 1982 (when Leonid Brežnev was Secretary-General of the CPSU) ‘to freely... disseminate religious and other views’.

Greece ‘is the only European Union country to ban proselytism in its Constitution, despite condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights in 1993 for this,’ and a country where ‘the police can still prosecute religious communities who operate or build places of worship without the permission of the government and the Orthodox Church’. Both facts have led human rights watcher Altana Filos to qualify the issue of religious freedom as ‘the Achilles’ heel in Greece’s human rights record’.³⁴ The U.S. State Department, in its *International Religious Freedom Report* on Greece, points out that ‘while the Government generally respects this right [freedom of religion], non-Orthodox groups sometimes face administrative obstacles or encounter legal restrictions on religious practice’.³⁵ The position of the Greek Orthodox Church and its relations with the State are set forth in Article 3, par. 1 of the Constitution (1975/1986/2001), where it is stated that ‘the prevailing religion in Greece is that of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Christ’.³⁶ Article 13 specifies religious freedom as follows:

³² See Zoe Knox, *Russian Society and the Orthodox Church* (London & New York, 2005), pp. 2-4, and, on the bills of 1990, Dmitry V. Pospelovsky, ‘Russian Orthodox Church in the CIS,’ in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed. Michael Bourdeaux (Armonk NY & London, 1995), pp. 42-44.

³³ <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24430.htm>; cf. Knox, *Russian Society*, pp. 1-3. An English translation of the 1997 bill is available at <http://www.stetson.edu/upsteeves/relnews/freedomofconscienceeng.html>

³⁴ From a critical report by Altana Filos at http://www.forum18.org/Archive.php?article_id=321; see also Bert Groen, ‘Dominant Orthodoxy, Religious Minorities and Human Rights in Greece,’ in *Orthodox Christianity and Contemporary Europe*, eds. Jonathan Sutton and Wil van den Bercken (Leuven, 2003), pp. 439-454.

³⁵ See: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2003/24411.htm>

³⁶ *Constitution of Greece* (1975), quoted from <http://www.uc3m.es/uc3m/inst/MGP/NCR/greece111.htm>

- ‘1. Freedom of religious conscience is inviolable. The enjoyment of civil rights and liberties does not depend on the individual’s religious beliefs.
2. All known religions shall be free and their rites of worship shall be performed unhindered and under the protection of the law. The practice of rites of worship is not allowed to offend public order or the good usages. Proselytism is prohibited.
3. The ministers of all known religions shall be subject to the same supervision by the State and to the same obligations toward it as those of the prevailing religion’.³⁷

In Greece, as in Poland, the predominant religious tradition is closely connected with national consciousness and struggle for political independence. This is a different situation from that in other Orthodox countries, such as Russia, where part of the ROC in Soviet times went underground (the “catcomb” Church) or abroad (the ROCA).³⁸ All the same, we perceive a tendency, in at least two Orthodox countries, Greece and Russia, to give the “traditional religion(s)”, Orthodox Christianity (and, in the case of Russia, also three others) a privileged position and tacit approval or active support by government officials.

3. “EUROPEAN, I PRESUME?” *QUIS JUDICABIT?*

One way of setting a limit to the expansion of the EU would be to formulate a definition of European identity that would make it possible to decide which countries are European and which are not. However, such a definition is hard to formulate, and not only that, it even seems to be a mistake to think that identity is something that can be “found”: identities result from a specific type of repeated human action called *identification*, either by the identity-carrying entity itself, or by another actor, and they always imply difference:

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Jane Ellis noted in 1986/8 that the underground True Orthodox Church was ‘reputedly still numerous’ and functioned in complete secrecy (*The Russian Orthodox Church*, p. 485, n. 54). More recent accounts state that it is completely marginalized; by contrast, the ROCA [or RPCZ – *Russkaja pravoslavnaja cerkov’ za rubežom*] is a serious force, both within and outside Russia; as yet not still recognized by any other Orthodox Church, it presently negotiates a reunification with the ROC (Mitrokhin, *Russkaja pravoslavnaja cerkov’*, pp. 466-467).

‘there is no identity that is self-present to itself and not constructed as difference’.³⁹ Identity necessarily produces its “constitutive outside”, i.e. the identity that one has *not*: if you are a boy, you are not a girl, if you are black, you are not white, if you are Orthodox, you are not Roman Catholic. It should be noted that this “constitutive outside” can be pluriform as well: the opposite of Orthodox is “non-Orthodox”, a “negative” identity that is filled in positively by others as Roman Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, agnostic, etc.

The question of a European identity is essentially “open” – and this openness even is part of the European identity –, and therefore cannot yield a discriminative criterion. Therefore, EU expansion, rather than being based upon an established European identity as its criterion, forces Europeans to rethink the question of what it is that makes Europe Europe. The question how “Orthodox countries” can fit into “Europe” depends therefore, apart from pragmatic considerations of economics and geopolitics, on what is considered to be “European” and on who decides on this, the EU or Europe as a cultural realm. Can “Western Europe”, where the European integration started in 1951 with the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), decide on what is “Europe” and impose its definition on “Eastern Europe”, a notion that was recently considered as an invention of the Enlightenment by Larry Wolf?⁴⁰

When Catherine the Great, in her *Nakaz* [Instruction] of 1768, wrote that ‘Russia is a European state’,⁴¹ she was neither stating a matter of fact, nor expressing an intention: she was *identifying*, i.e. she was performing a specific kind of speech act. It is an *illocutionary* act, i.e., something which comes into being in the act of pronouncing, and one might even argue that *all* forms of identity exist by virtue of repeated illocutionary acts of identification. However, there is a difference between acts of identification which have the form “I/we/you am/are X” and illocutionary acts of the type “I promise...” or “I greet...”. In the latter, utterance and fact *coincide*; the first, on the other hand, *mimic* what Searle calls *propositional* acts. Moreover, an identity thus created also has material effects, and these effects can properly be called perlocutionary, i.e., they come into being not *in*, but *through* the speech

³⁹ Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London & New York, 1993), p. 141.

⁴⁰ Larry Wolf, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization in the Mind of the Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994).

⁴¹ Quoted from *Imperial Russia. A Source Book 1700-1917*, ed. B. Dmytryshyn (Hinsdale IL, 1974, 2nd ed.), p. 65. I thank prof. Wil van den Bercken for this reference.

act.⁴² In that sense, there is a difference between *confirming* the European character of the Dutch state by saying “the Netherlands are a European state”, which relies on partly implicit statements as well as on institutional facts, and *affirming* the European character of the Russian state. The second of these statements may be contested, the first one (probably) not. The perlocutionary effect boils down to the coming-to-be of a “reality” that turns the speech act into a true statement, while this truth did not exist before the statement was made.

This kind of identifying speech act is highly characteristic of the modern individual subject, who is considered – and considers itself – the sovereign authority with respect to its own identity: if someone is uncertain as to her or his identity, this person is referred back to her or his responsibility as a self-determining individual. It is in this respect, for example, that Baptists and Mennonites are typically Modern: ‘In the 16th-century Reformation, state-church theologians chose the pejorative terms ‘anabaptist’ (or ‘catabaptist’) to designate a variety of more radical Reformers who called for baptism of adult believers upon confession of faith, and who thereby broke with the medieval unity of church and society’.⁴³ The modern subject is Anabaptist by definition: even an identity that is given by one’s parents, for example, needs to be reconfirmed, which points to a subject conceived as *tabula rasa* unless and until it identifies itself as X, Y, or Z.

Of course, this realization is easily inflated into the idea that one “can be anyone”, but the point rather is that who one is, is one’s own responsibility. Huntington cites the example of a certain Rachel Newman, who from being ‘a musician, a poet, an artist and, on a somewhat political level, a woman, a lesbian and a Jew’, overnight turned into an American patriot because of September 11.⁴⁴ Whether one is *primarily* a Jew or a communist, a man or a Chechen, an American or a poet, is never *given* or simply *found*, but neither is it a *mere* construction: the same Rachel Newman writes that she

⁴² For a concise discussion of this distinction, see John Searle, *Mind, Language and Society* (London, 1999), pp.136-137.

⁴³ John Howard Yoder, ‘Mennonite Thought,’ in *The Oxford Companion to Christian Thought* (Oxford, 2000), p. 422.

⁴⁴ Samuel D. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (New York, 2004), p. 4, referring to: Rachel Newman, ‘The Day the World Changed, I Did Too’, *Newsweek*, 1 October 2001, p. 9.

‘*realized* that I had been taking the freedoms I have here for granted’ [italics mine]. The whole point is captured in the two primary meanings of the verb “to realize”: ‘1. To understand or appreciate fully. 2. To make real or concrete’.⁴⁵

Consequently, nobody ever “is” a “Chechen”, an “Orthodox”, or a “European” before either identifying himself and/or being identified as such. Somebody’s identity often is the effect of repeated identification by others: a school system, for example, produces and reproduces national identity long before children start wondering “who they are”, and so do other “ideological state apparatuses” such as the army or the civil service. When, therefore, Europeans (or Russians, for that matter) start asking themselves what it *means* to have a European identity, they tacitly assume that they *are* Europeans – the point is, of course, that they *are* Europeans *because* they assume that they are: the truth of their identity is in the very assumption. This is why the question of “Who we are we” may appear reasonable, even obvious, to those who already ascribe to a certain identity, but are unclear as to its meaning. The fact that identities are never given, and hence not found, but (re)produced, has further implications. One is that identities are always *multiple*, the other is that a *hierarchy* of identities is never given either. This explains why, for example, if someone claims both a Greek or Swedish *and* a European identity, the question “which comes first” is yet to be decided.⁴⁶

Social theorists like Zygmunt Bauman contend that under conditions of globalization identities are unstable and “liquid” by definition. If this is correct, then any attempt at stability amounts to the creation of an illusion (but illusions can be highly effective). In a recent book on the way Orthodoxy reacts to the present-day global situation, the ‘picture that emerges is less of a people stubbornly refusing modernization and more of a people seeking to maintain a stable Orthodox identity in an unstable world’.⁴⁷ The Orthodox

⁴⁵ *The New International Webster’s Comprehensive Dictionary of the English Language* (Chicago, 1996), p. 1050.

⁴⁶ See, e.g., the survey by Laurie Buonanno and Ann Deakin (‘European Identity,’ in *European Union Enlargement*, ed. Neill Nugent (Basingstoke, 2004), p. 87, table 6.1), in which people were asked whether they considered their identity as national only, national and European, European and national, or European only

⁴⁷ Victor Roudometof, Alexander Agadjanian, Jerry G. Pankhurst (eds.), *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age: Tradition Faces the Twenty-First Century* (Walnut Creek CA, 2005), back cover.

tradition certainly is not the only one seeking to maintain a stable identity in an unstable world. There is currently a world-wide resistance against the effects of economic globalization, aptly articulated by Rüdiger Safranski when making a case, against “normative globalism”, for the rehabilitation of the notion of “Heimat” and arguing, ‘wir können global kommunizieren und reisen, wir können aber nicht im Globalen wohnen’.⁴⁸

It is interesting to see that the trend Safranski represents is itself global, or, more precisely, *glocal*: there are local differences, but these are differences with respect to a phenomenon that in itself is global. The desire to maintain a stable Orthodox identity thus is one of many examples of the struggle for the right to “protect” one’s identity against the onslaughts of globalization and individualization. This aspect is particularly relevant with respect to the European integration and extension, as the latter is *both* part of the complex of processes that is gathered under the umbrella concept of “globalization” *and* an attempt to limit its impact. For this reason, the expansion of the EU is a *paradoxical* process, reflected in the tension inherent in a notion as “social market”. This mirrors the ambiguous stance of many Orthodox vis-à-vis globalization: in point of fact, the spectrum of reactions to globalization, ranging from acceptance or even endorsement (globalism), through attempts to change its direction (alter-globalism), to outright rejection (anti-globalism), cuts across religious and non-religious conceptualizations of the world.

An important effect of globalization is what is often called “deterritorialization”: geographical location is becoming less important, not in the sense that “place” is no longer important, but in the sense that places can easily shift within a larger and, in principle, “global” space. The attempt to maintain a stable identity in an unstable world is by no means limited to the Orthodox religious tradition, but is a widespread reaction. Even the European common market, which from the perspective of local economic actors in various European countries appears as an opening of the economic space, is a way of closing off a global perspective. The same seems to apply to the idea of a religious, and, more generally, a world-view and life-style market. The idea of religious freedom perfectly matches the market idea, since it boils down to the freedom to “buy” any religion or no religion at all. And there is an interesting parallel, to be explored further, between the tendency of Orthodox

| ⁴⁸ Rüdiger Safranski, *Wieviel Globalisierung verträgt der Mensch?* (München, 2003), p. 24.

churches to *close* their alleged canonical territory to “foreign products”, and the tendency of local markets in the post-Soviet world to “close” themselves. As Outhwaite and Ray write: ‘Since 1992 there has been an increase in barter in the Russian economy, which has been estimated to account for around 50 percent of trade. (...) In this economy of networks, obligations and knowledge built on informal contacts and mutual complicity, people from the former Communist Party enjoy extensive cultural capital. (...) ...corruption... is also a way of protecting local enterprises against global competition.’⁴⁹ If this parallel – which is not limited to Russia – holds, then the position of Churches that try to protect their territory may have less to do with the religious tradition in question, and more with general socio-economic processes of globalization and modernization.

Reluctance and hesitation with respect to globalization is thus, itself, a global reaction, and Orthodoxy is no exception. In an official document issued by the leadership of the ROC in October 2004, we read:

*‘Acknowledging and respecting the principle of the citizens’ equality before the law irrespective of their attitude to religion, the Council nevertheless hopes that the legislation will develop in a way that would show a better understanding of the fact that Orthodoxy is the traditional religion on the territory of the CIS countries and the Baltic states, with the absolute majority of the nation belonging to the Orthodox Church in many of these countries. (...) Retaining and restoring their Orthodox identity must be the foundation of their future as free and spiritually strong nations. When this is proclaimed at the level of state laws, it will contribute... to the realisation of the unique constructive potential of the Orthodox peoples’ [italics mine].*⁵⁰

Three elements in this document require closer attention: the first is the recognition of religious freedom, coming to the fore in the acceptance of equality before the law, irrespective of religious adherence; the second the idea of canonical territory, expressed in the idea of a “traditional religion on the

⁴⁹ Larry Ray and William Outhwaite, *Social Theory and Postcommunism* (Malden, MA, 2005), p. 136.

⁵⁰ Official declaration of Patriarch Aleksij II and the Holy Synod of the ROC, of 07/10/2004, quoted from Pravoslavie.ru: <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/ennews/041007144634>

territory of the CIS countries”; and the third is the notion of the “unique constructive potential of the Orthodox peoples”. The first may be mostly verbal, the second, as we have seen, is problematic, but the third element is challenging: an exclusive focus on the question whether or not predominantly Orthodox countries are a “problem” with respect to Europe may keep us from perceiving *positive* resources in the Orthodox-Christian tradition for a common European identity, enriching rather than endangering the latter (and the same, obviously, applies to the Islamic tradition). Three elements come to the fore immediately.

The first is the importance of the *conciliarity* principle in the Orthodox tradition: from an Orthodox perspective, the patriarch of Rome, i.e. the Pope, can never be more than a *primus inter pares*. The hierarchical principle that lies at the heart of the Western branches of Christianity, and that has materialized in the structure of the Roman Catholic Church but was rejected by the Protestant Churches, was never that much present in Orthodoxy. The conciliarity principle, which is “democratic” rather than “monarchic”, is reflected in the relatively loose structure of Orthodox churches, and it defines the position of the patriarch of Constantinople.

The second, linked to the first, is the lack of the problem of *sovereignty*. The question of sovereignty has haunted European political philosophy since the beginning of the Modern period, and continues to dominate present-day discussions with respect to the EU: the partial transfer of sovereign power to “Brussels”, which is a matter of fact, immediately generates the question how national sovereignty can be saved. In the West, the fact that the spiritual authority, the Pope, was also a secular ruler, complicated the separation of the realms of state and church. The Modern response to this figure of a spiritual power claiming worldly power, exemplified in the works of Thomas Hobbes, is to claim spiritual power for the worldly sovereign. This solves the problem at the level of the nation-state, where it leads to the notion of religious tolerance (of those religions which are not the sovereign’s) and to the idea of civil religion. But the direct link of the nation-state with the concept of sovereign power has generated a core problem of present-day European integration, perceived as “losing sovereignty”.

The third, finally, is the notion of *sobornost*, an application of the principle of conciliarity to societal life. Dating back to the early 19th-century Slavophiles, it consists in an attempt to conceive of society in a way that

avoids the juxtaposition of collective and individual. While never really elaborated as a blueprint for the construction of a “good society”, the notion has the important critical potential of offering a pair of extremes, namely individualism and collectivism, which are to be avoided.

But, however fruitful it may be, does this complex of ideas, irrespective of its actual “weight” within the “Orthodox World”, belong to the European cultural and socio-political realm? In other words, if the Russian patriarch Aleksij II *cum suis* are right about the “unique constructive potential of the Orthodox peoples”, can it be used in building a “common European home”, to borrow Mikhail Gorbachev’s expression? In a speech at the Londen School of Economics in November 2005, Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople asked the question ‘does the message of Orthodoxy matter in a United Europe?’.⁵¹ He answered it with an emphatic “Yes”:

‘With approximately 300 million faithful in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Middle East but also in the New World, the Orthodox Church is a force of unity, a stabilizing factor, and an essential component in the ongoing process to create a new European reality, ... (...) Because of its decentralized structure, Orthodoxy is in a position to reach, in a much more direct and effective manner, its faithful through its 16 local Churches, operating under the coordination of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, first among the equal Churches of the Orthodox commonwealth. (...)

Historical Constantinople and modern day Istanbul is a city where religions and cultures converge. (...) ...Orthodoxy, headed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, whose headquarters are situated in a predominantly Muslim city, has all the credentials to assume the role of a bridge between Europe and Islam. In the same manner, the staunch support extended by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to Turkey’s membership to the European Union, is linked to the belief that Europe will benefit greatly by integrating a predominantly Muslim country, willing of course to adopt European principles, such as respect for religious freedoms and minority rights’.

If we want to address the question whether the “Orthodox World” can belong to “Europe”, the following fundamental question presents itself: Should we

| ⁵¹ Quoted from <http://www.ec-patr.gr/docdisplay.php?lang=en&id=583&tla=en>

derive a core notion of European identity from the existing EU, the “old” plus the “new” Europe, and then look whether predominantly Orthodox countries fit this identity or not? Or should we focus on Europe as a cultural and historical entity, not to be identified with the political entity that is the EU, and define a European identity on that basis? On the latter hypothesis, one might even argue that Europe is *incomplete* if the traditionally Orthodox part is not included. This would not imply, to be sure, that all countries with an Orthodox tradition should be included, but it would imply that a substantial presence of Orthodox Christianity in the EU would enrich Europe’s cultural identity and political potential. Is then, after all, the religious factor decisive?

4. DEALING WITH RELIGION IN A POST-SOVIET WORLD

The religious factor is largely absent from publications on social and political theory of the countries of the former “Eastern Bloc”. In a recent survey by William Outhwaite and Larry Ray, religion is mentioned only once in connection with the role of the Roman Catholic Church in Poland.⁵² In literature on the expansion of the EU, religion and church are likewise largely absent.⁵³ This is understandable: freedom of religion is one of the guiding principles of the EU and one of the basic human rights that EU-member states must actively endorse.

However, the religious factor *is* present and churches *do* play important and different roles in Europe. The discussions on the EU Constitution yielded some strong statements from both advocates (among them, Pope John Paul II, Patriarch Bartholomew, and Metropolitan Kyrill of the ROC) and opponents of a reference to the alleged “Christian” identity of Europe.⁵⁴ The public role of the church in a number of matters has been a source of concern in at least two EU member states (Poland and Greece) and one neighboring state (the Russian Federation). One could be inclined to speak of a

⁵² Outhwaite and Ray, *Social Theory and Postcommunism*, p. 86.

⁵³ See, e.g., the *European Union Series* edited by Neill Nugent (Houndsmills & New York); over 25 volumes published so far.

⁵⁴ On John Paul II’s idea that Christianity is ‘the very root of European culture’, see Michael Walsh, ‘Catholicism and international relations: papal interventionism,’ in *Religion and Global Order*, eds. John L. Esposito and Michael Watson (Cardiff, 2000), p. 113.

resurgence of religious faith, unless the reappearance of the Church in Orthodox countries hides a process of secularization.

The standard “solution” of the issue of the relation of religion and society in European Modernity has indeed been “secularization”, but this is an ambiguous notion that, as José Casanova has argued, means at least three things: i) emancipation of secular spheres from religious institutions and norms; ii) decline of religious beliefs and practices; iii) marginalization of religion to the private sphere.⁵⁵ Casanova convincingly shows that ‘those versions of the theory of secularization which... conceive the process of secularization as the progressive decline of religious beliefs and practices in the modern world’, conflate the three meanings, with the result that ‘the sudden eruption of religion into the public sphere’ becomes inexplicable.⁵⁶ Can this be of some help in assessing the present-day situation in post-Soviet countries, particularly in Russia?

Recent research shows a clear contrast. In Soviet times, the three senses of secularization were present and reinforced each other. The post-Soviet situation shows a continuity on the first parameter: Russia, Ukraine, Bulgaria, and other Orthodox countries are usually regarded as “secular societies” and Church and State affairs are largely separated. On the second parameter, some have reported a change in the situation: ‘In Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, the number of those who declared their belief in God and their adherence to the Orthodox tradition rose in the short-term, immediately after the fall of communism, but ... commitment to the Church, and the level of religious practice, are as low today as in the most secularized Western European societies’.⁵⁷ As for the third parameter, religion, i.e., Orthodoxy and the other “traditional” religions, has reentered the public sphere (where it had been replaced by official atheistic Marxism-Leninism) and is most visibly present in such traditional “ideological” circles as the school and the (particularly in Russia,⁵⁸ but this has not led to an increase in religious faith.

⁵⁵ José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago, 1994), pp. 19-20.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 17ff.

⁵⁷ Norris & Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular*, p. 113.

⁵⁸ Nikolaj Mitrokhin reports that in both fields the influence of the ROC has been considerable, but is now declining (Mitrokhin, *Russkaja pravoslavnaja cerkov'*, pp. 328-337 and 357-378). One cannot avoid noticing the similarity in the title of the course of “Foundations of Orthodox Culture” (*Osnovy Pravoslavnoj Kul'tury*) that is taught by the clergy in public schools and the old “red subject” (*Osnovy marksizma-leninizma*).

Figures vary, but there is a clear difference, and even a ‘gulf’ (thus Knox) between Orthodox self-identification and active worship⁵⁹: in 1996 65% of the population believed that the ROC is vital for Russia, but only a mere 6 or 7% ever attended church services;⁶⁰ in 1999 75% identified themselves as Orthodox (80% of these said to believe in God); in one poll of 2003 59% of the respondents declared themselves to be Orthodox, in a second one the number even raised to 71% (87% of these said they believed), but only 0.5 to 2.1% of the population attended the Easter services.⁶¹ Apparently, it is very well possible to call oneself an Orthodox without attending church or even to believe.

The question is which of these figures is to be taken more seriously. Obviously, the Moscow Patriarchate is worried about the empty churches, as it also is about the low and still declining level of education of its clergy.⁶² From the perspective of a secular Europe, the other figures may be much more alarming, since they indicate the extent to which Russians still hold their religious tradition, and even their church, to be vital to the national interests of Russia. This would suggest that as a rule they are probably very receptive for their church’s policies, irrespective of whether they themselves are believers or not. To put it bluntly: a majority of Russians, and a vast majority outside the main cities, may be well at ease with a situation in which one Church, to which they do not actively adhere, “rules”. The parallel with the predominance of one single ideology in the past is too obvious to be ignored. The only difference is that under the Communist regime the political power and its ideological legitimization were in one and the same hand, while they are now divided among various instances that entertain a harmonious or even “symphonious” relationship.

The traditional Byzantine concept of symphony (Russian *simfonija*), articulated by Emperor Justinian in the sixth century, plays a key role. Civil (secular) and ecclesiastical (spiritual) power rule jointly. The domains are not strictly separated and one power is not subordinated to the other: ‘Nach

⁵⁹ Knox, *Russian Society*, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Paul Badham, ‘Religion and the Fall of Communism,’ in: *Religion and Global Order*, p.145, referring to the *Keston Newsletter*.

⁶¹ Knox, *Russian Society*, p. 148, and Mitrokhin, *Russkaja pravoslavnaja cerkov’*, pp. 38-41.

⁶² Mitrokhin, *Russkaja pravoslavnaja cerkov’*, pp. 352-353, who quotes Patriarch Aleksij II as having stated that, in comparison to Soviet times, the ‘average spiritual, educational, and even moral level of the clergy has declined catastrophically’.

diesem Verständnis muß der Staat der Kirche dienen, sie materiell und äußerlich unterstützen. Die Kirche dagegen hilft dem Staat dabei, die innere Ruhe des Volkes im Glauben und in der Sittlichkeit zu bewahren... Der Staat ist der Schutz der Kirche, die Kirche ist das Gewissen des Staates'.⁶³

In Russian history, reality was a far cry from this ideal. As Knox states, 'any semblance of *symphonia* ended with Peter the Great's reforms', which meant the complete subordination of the ROC to the state, and after a short period of freedom in 1917, the ROC paid for its privileged position – its 'Golden Cage' [*zolataja kletka*] – under the Soviet regime with large-scale infiltration by the KGB.⁶⁴ 'It has been demonstrated, Knox writes, that although the separation of church and state was enshrined in successive Soviet constitutions, the regime regulated and controlled the Moscow Patriarchate and discriminated against religious communities and individual believers'.⁶⁵ To this it should be added that the Soviet regime also helped the Moscow Patriarchate to establish its jurisdiction in Ukraine, largely against the will of local religious communities. When the Holy Synod of the ROC states that the 'canonical territories of the Church are those over which the sovereignty of the Church is traditionally established with regard to its believers who live on these territories', it suffices to ask *who* established this sovereignty.⁶⁶ In the post-Soviet era the ROC does not explicitly seek to re-establish the symphony model. The Russian constitution of 1993 clearly separates state and church, acknowledges the secular nature of the first, and excludes the establishment of a state religion.⁶⁷ At the same time, the ROC clearly enjoys its privileges, including economic ones, and one can say that it gets as close to the ideal of symphony as is possible in a secular state, which it has no choice but to accept.

The question remains, however, whether these aspects of the relations between state and church, politics and society, in Russia or the former USSR, have to do with the specific nature of the Orthodox religious tradition, or are, rather, to be explained in terms of the history of this part of Europe. The proper answer to this question, it seems to me, is: both. On the one hand,

⁶³ Konstantin Kostjuk, *Der Begriff des Politischen in der russisch-orthodoxen Tradition* (Paderborn &c, 2005), p. 232; cf. Knox, *Russian Society*, p. 106.

⁶⁴ Knox, *Russian Society*, p. 107; cf. Kostjuk, *Der Begriff*, pp. 232-233.

⁶⁵ Knox, *Russian Society*, p. 107.

⁶⁶ See: <http://english.pravda.ru/society/2001/09/22/15898.html>

⁶⁷ Knox, *Russian Society*, pp. 110-112.

the traditional notions of symphony, national religion, and canonical territory are part of the Orthodox tradition and eminently fit the current role and position of some Churches. On the other hand, the situation in Russia – and probably also in Belarus’ – differs from that in other Orthodox countries, and may well be explicable in terms of Russian (including Soviet) rather than Orthodox traditions, including the history of “enforced collaboration” of the ROC with the Soviet regime.

As Philip Boobbyer has demonstrated, religion played an important role in the dissident movement and the political opposition in Soviet Russia in the 1970s and 1980s. For many dissidents, religion, not forbidden but certainly marginalized, was a source of inspiration and strength.⁶⁸ The Church, however, looked with suspicion at attempts to employ religion in anti-Soviet activities, and those members of the clergy that chose to leave the “Golden Cage” – Gleb Jakunin, Aleksandr Men’, and Georgij Kočetkov are well-known examples – were not supported or protected.⁶⁹ While it is true that ‘as more and more people became disenchanted with Communism... they turned to the one surviving institution which was not identified with Marxist ideology’,⁷⁰ it is also true that the ROC was heavily infiltrated with the KGB *and* that it was one of the few institutions on which *perestrojka* had little effect, which amounts to saying that the vast majority of those who owed their place in the Church’s hierarchy to collaboration in the Soviet period, retained their positions, while the critics were forced to leave the Church.⁷¹ Not associated

⁶⁸ Philip Boobbyer, *Conscience, Dissent and Reform in Soviet Russia* (Abingdon & New York, 2005), particularly chapter 6, ‘In Search of Inner Freedom’.

⁶⁹ Jakunin, one of the most active supporters of Yeltsin against the leaders of the coup in 1990 (cf. Badham, ‘Religion and the Fall of Communism,’ p.145), was also among those who urged for a critical self-evaluation of the ROC (cf. Boobbyer, *Conscience*, pp. 204ff). As for Men’, ‘the churchman who most captured the imagination of the intelligentsia... did not represent the church hierarchy at all’ (ibid., p. 205).

⁷⁰ Badham, ‘Religion and the Fall of Communism,’ p. 143.

⁷¹ As members of parliament, Jakunin and another priest, Vjačeslav Polosin, took action to investigate the connections between the ROC and the KGB during the Soviet years. Under political pressure, the ROC installed a commission, but as Nikolaj Mitrokhin reports, ‘information about its activity (if there was any) was never made public’, while Jakunin and Polosin found themselves outside the Church. Jakunin was excommunicated in 1997 after the Holy Synod had decreed that priests could not hold political office (a decree that is fully in line with the traditional doctrine of symphony of secular and ecclesiastical powers. Polosin, who was member of the Duma until 1993, subsequently became a Muslim theologian (Mitrokhin, *Russkaja pravoslavnaja cerkov’*, p. 258 and 642; Kostjuk, *Der Begriff*, p. 232; Knox, *Russian Society*, p. 12).

with official Marxist-Leninist ideology, the ROC is certainly associated, by adversaries and advocates alike, with the USSR: the curious “red-brown” coalition in Russia that combines elements of right-wing ideology, such as xenophobia and anti-Semitism, with Soviet nostalgia and anti-liberalism never fails to refer to the Orthodox Church.⁷² But the fact that nationalists call upon Orthodoxy, and even the fact that there are numerous connections between nationalist and anti-Semitic currents and some members of the ROC establishment, the clearest example being the late Metropolitan of St.Petersburg, Ioann (Snyčev; 1927-1995),⁷³ do not turn the entire ROC into an anti-Semitic, nationalistic, or reactionary organization. They do point, however, to a Church that has a hard time establishing itself in society.

The reluctance to deal with the religious factor in discussions about the expansion of the EU and European identity reflects a general embarrassment of secularized politicians and intellectuals with respect to religion. In the course of modern history, European societies have found different solutions to the problem of religious pluralism. While a separation of church and state is common to all of them, even if there is a state church, the relationship of religion and politics differs from a strict exclusion of religion from the public sphere, as in France, to an acceptance of political articulations of a religious world-view in the numerous cases where there are Christian Democratic political parties, as in Germany, the Netherlands, or Italy. These parties have accepted the secular character of society and politics, which explains their position in the political establishment. A potential problem arises, however, with those religious groups that do not accept the separation of state and church or the secular authority of the state. The principle of freedom of religion becomes powerless at this precise point: unless religious groups or organizations engage in activities that violate criminal law, they have to be accepted as members of a religiously plural society, and as long as they keep to the rules of democratic politics, they have to be accepted in political society and, eventually, government.

At this point, the difference between toleration and religious freedom becomes pertinent: for Hermann Lübke religious toleration is ‘die politische Praxis der Duldung devianten religiösen Bekenntnisses und abweichend

⁷² Knox, *Russian Society*, chapter 5 (pp. 132-155).

⁷³ See Kostjuk, *Der Begriff*, pp. 122-128, for an analysis of Ioann’s “Orthodox fundamentalism”.

gelebten Glaubens aus dem pragmatischen Interesse der Wiederherstellung bürgerlichen Friedens'; religious freedom elevates 'das was zuvor lediglich pragmatisch, nämlich um Schlimmeres zu verhüten, geduldet war, in den Status eines subjektiven, das heißt einklagbaren Rechtes'.⁷⁴ Historically, the two concepts can be illustrated with the figures of John Locke and Baruch de Spinoza: Locke, in his famous *Letter on Toleration*, makes very clear, who he believes should (Protestants of various sorts, Pagans, Muslims, and Jews) and should not be tolerated (Roman Catholics, and atheists fall into the latter category). Spinoza advocates both negative religious freedom – freedom *from* religion – with respect to the state, and positive freedom – freedom *to* religion (and non-religion) – with respect to the individual.⁷⁵

The replacement of pragmatic, and hence reversible toleration by religious freedom as a matter of principle, manifest in the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights and in most modern constitutions, implies that the citizen who enjoys the second does not need the first. But it also makes the polity defenseless to religious groups that do not accept the notion of subjective individual freedom that is implied by the principle, with the result that it has no other option than either to return to a regime of toleration or to rely on the optimistic expectation that all human beings will, in the long run, prefer religious freedom. The principle of freedom of religion also means the established churches cannot claim any privileged position within a given territory or population. A regime of tolerance is typical of situations where an established church stands in a privileged relation to the political regime: England in Locke's time represented such a situation, in which the state decided which other religions to tolerate in addition to the Anglican state church.

⁷⁴ Herman Lübbe, 'Politik und Religion nach der Aufklärung,' in idem, *Politik nach der Aufklärung* (München, 2001), p. 40.

⁷⁵ Locke: 'That Church can have no right to be tolerated by the Magistrate, which is constituted upon such a bottom, that all those who enter into it, do thereby, *ipso facto*, deliver themselves up to the Protection and Service of another Prince' and 'Those are not all to be tolerated who deny the Being of a God' (John Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Indianapolis, IN, 1983), pp. 50-51; on those that are to be tolerated see p. 54). Spinoza: 'Quapropter hic... concludimus nihil reipublicae tutius, quam ut pietas et religio in solo charitatis et æquitatis exercitio comprehendatur, et jus summarum potestatum tam circa sacra quam profana ad actions tantum referatur, cæterum unicuique et sentire, quæ velit, et quæ sentiat, dicere concedatur' (Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus*, cap.XX, in *Opera – Werke Lateinisch und Deutsch* (Darmstadt, 1989), vol. i, p. 620).

Both the Lockean and the Spinozist model explicitly presuppose a separation of the affairs of church and state.⁷⁶ However, while Church (affairs) and State (affairs) can be separated legally and constitutionally, religion and politics cannot. The secularization of the polity, moreover, implies that the political regime itself, the juridico-political order, and the Constitution are man-made by definition, and, therefore, subject to political decision, including the possibility to undo the separation of church and state. In other words: a fundamentalist theocracy can be established by fully democratic and constitutional means, not involving any criminal or violent act. This is why established “secular” liberal-democratic polities are rightly concerned about the possibility of “fundamentalism” articulating itself politically within those societies. As a matter of fact, we witness here a reprise of the traditional problem of “fanaticism” in Modern societies: securing political rights and liberties generates the possibility of the legitimate articulation of positions and movements that oppose those very rights.⁷⁷ Hence, while the affairs of *state* and *church* can be effectively separated, arguably even to the benefit of both, *politics* and *religion* cannot be separated so easily, at least not in a stable manner, because in a free polity they rely on the repeated decision, by a majority of politicians and citizens, to draw this line – and, obviously, it can be drawn differently. At a third level, finally, any such separation is simply absurd when it comes to the interaction of religious traditions and conceptualizations of society and polity.

The situation in Orthodox countries like Greece or Russia can be characterized as a combination of a substantial or even complete *separation* of church and state affairs, a *constitutional* recognition of religious freedom as a principle, and a policy of *tolerance* organized around the national Orthodox Church. The tension between the second and the third element is obvious, while the first makes the construction as a whole endurable for society (fundamentalist or hierocratic agendas oppose these aims in these countries as in other Euro-

⁷⁶ Locke: ‘the Church it self is a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the Commonwealth’ and: ‘The only business of the Church is the Salvation of Souls...’ (p. 33 and 39). Spinoza: ‘Ex his clarissime videmus, I. quam perniciosum et religioni et reipublicæ sit sacrorum ministris jus aliquod decretandi vel imperii negotia tractandi concedere;’ (cap. XVIII, pp. 562-563)

⁷⁷ For an excellent discussion of the tension between fanaticism and civil society in European Modernity, see Dominique Colas, *Le glaive et le fléau* (Paris, 1992).

pean states). If this diagnosis is correct, one should then ask whether this situation is typical of Orthodoxy in general, or whether the Orthodox tradition at least favors it. I think this question must be answered negatively. First, other Churches, including the traditional Churches in Western and Southern Europe, have gone through a similar process of gradually and often grudgingly accepting a situation in which they no longer automatically were the privileged Church, even if they continued to be the established (state) church. Second, there is a tension between the “absolute” claim on truth that is raised by any religion or church (or any secular world-view, for that matter), and the factual situation of plurality: one needs to get accustomed to it. What is characteristic of Orthodoxy, however, is the stage where Orthodox churches are presently situated along a line of development that has been typical of Western Modernity. Whether this trajectory is seen as progress or as decline, it is clear that “Orthodoxy”, at least the Church hierarchy in some Orthodox countries, is “lagging behind”.

CONCLUSION

The notion of canonical territory, combined with the idea of a national religion, can present a serious hindrance for the integration of predominantly Orthodox countries in the EU. The example of Greece suggests that similar difficulties may hamper European integration of other “Orthodox countries”. At the same time, Macedonia, Cyprus, and Bulgaria demonstrate that the idea of a traditional religion is not necessarily linked to the exclusion of other denominations from the territory. Orthodox minorities in other countries, moreover, seem to be well accommodated to their position of being one out of many faiths in an open “religious market”: they may not *like* religious pluralism, but they seem capable of coping with it.

The politico-theological doctrine of *symphony* presents a challenge to Western European conceptualizations of polity and society in their relation to church(es) and religion. The absence of clear boundaries opens possibilities for interaction. The various models of state-church and politics-religion relationships have to be reassessed. The central question at this point is whether the notion of symphony can be made compatible with a situation of religious pluralism.

The doctrine of *sobornost'*, according to which community and individual cannot exist without each other, can play a significant role in attempts to

question the self-evident nature of individualism and neo-liberalism.⁷⁸ It seems questionable, however, whether the Orthodox churches can play an important role in this discussion, unless they accept that, as such, there is nothing Orthodox – or Christian, for that matter – about the idea of a society in which the principle of free individuality does not exclude the possibility of community. As with the notion of universal human rights, the fact that ideas arose, historically, within a Christian context, does not limit them to that context, and not one group can claim to “possess” them. By their very universal character, these values resist to be claimed by any specific religious tradition or church, by any social movement, or, indeed, by any political body such as the EU. The paradox of “constructive potential” is that it can only realize itself if it joins a common building project, i.e. by giving up its uniqueness and singularity to become a particular element in a whole.

What “Europe” is facing today is not a clash of civilizations which would force it to exclude the “Worlds” of Orthodoxy and/or Islam, but a conflict between different, and at points fundamentally opposed conceptualizations of polity and society (including religion). The lines of division between these conceptualizations do not follow the “fault lines” that separate Huntingtonian civilizations, nor do they coincide with the divide between religious and non-religious world-views, but rather do they form a pattern of oppositions and coincidences between different visions of the good society. As Edward Said formulated it, ‘Rather than the manufactured clash of civilizations we need to concentrate on the slow working together of cultures that overlap, borrow from each other, and live together in far more interesting ways than any abridged or inauthentic mode of understanding can allow.’⁷⁹ For this ideal to become a reality a degree of openness to differences is required which has often been heralded as typically European, but which seems to have reached a point where this asset turns, in the eyes of many, into a weakness. It also requires on the part of Orthodox churches that they give up their privileged position as national churches with a canonical territory – a move already made by many “modernist” Orthodox, but not by all in the hierarchy. As always, these things are a matter of political will and *Zivilcourage*.

⁷⁸ For a discussion of present-day Orthodox-Christian social thought, see the special issue of *Studies in East European Thought*, forthcoming in 2006.

⁷⁹ Edward M. Said, *Orientalism* (London, 1978; repr.2003), p. xxii.

The first big test case might be Ukraine, if only because the alleged Huntingtonian fault line runs across it. At present, its economic underdevelopment, weak democracy, and widespread corruption are obvious barriers for its admission to the EU. If these barriers are lifted and if the EU decides to go on with its expansion, the case of Ukraine will offer the first important test of whether a major “Orthodox country” with a Soviet past can be part of a European polity. But before that will happen, at least Bulgaria and Romania will already have added to the EU’s “Orthodox experience”.

SUMMARY

This paper addresses the relation between the Orthodox-Christian tradition and European integration. Orthodoxy is the predominant religion in a number of European countries within, on the threshold of, and bordering on the European Union. First, the idea of a relatively monolithic “World of Orthodoxy” is addressed in a critical discussion of the Huntingtonian paradigm of clashing civilizations. Secondly, the paper points out that European integration as a project is open and without intrinsic limit. A discussion of the situation with respect to human rights, particularly freedom of religion, in predominantly Orthodox countries leads up to a key question: who decides about what does and what does not belong to “Europe”? Against this background, the difficulties and differences in dealing with religion in a post-Soviet world are addressed. This amounts to the conclusion that Orthodoxy presents Europe both with hindrances, challenges, and potential contributions.